Victorian Pansies
(watercolour on stretched hot-pressed paper)

1.

I pulled the reference for these from my 'image bank' of personal plant photographs, piecing together a composition little by little, with great care and time, to pleasingly fit within a square.

Happy with this, the edges of petals were masked to protect them from later washes of darker colour - the soft pale edging being an attractive feature.

The vision I have of the final piece is for it to glow with luscious tapestry-like colours and vibrant green leaves, with a richly dense setting.

2.

The leaves were painted in first, using warm yellow-greens and darker blue- greens, with a soft highlight sheen conveyed on many, using a pale turquoise blue. This blue would also work to complement the coral colours planned for some of the flowers. Shadows were placed where components overlap each other.

I then started on the pansies, different colourways one by one to gauge colour balance effects. The dark one, beginning in the bottom right, will give a useful visual weight to the final piece and aid visual richness.

3.

I completed all the flowers and buds, using dark reds and purples, with paler pinks and corals for alleviating foil contrasts. The pansy on the upper left is particularly bright with a flash of saturated yellow- I used some artistic licence here to keep the colours vibrating visually.

The dark central blotches of the flowers were rather dull and flat, so I added some tinted opaque white with fine strokes of the brush, radiating from the central areas, to render a more velvety texture.

I then drew in a few more leaves for negative shapes to come and realised I needed to extend some of the pansy stems.
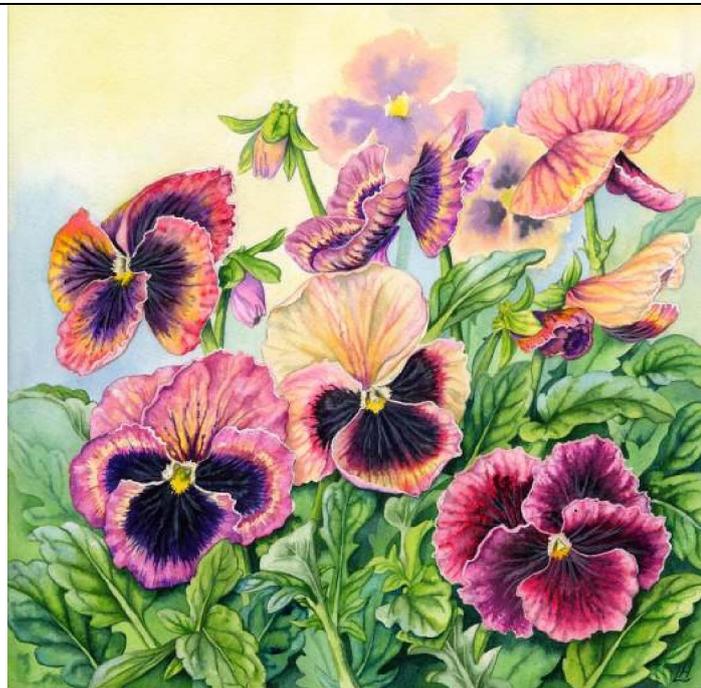
4.

Selected colours for the ground were: a warm blue to complement the orange tones; naples yellow variant to complement the predominant purples; some pale pink and peach to suggest out of focus pansies set back from the main; a range of greens for between the leaves, and from which to create softer effect leaves by painting 'negatively' around them to bring them out. This process took place step by step, filling in the gaps from bottom to top, working in stages from right to left. I particularly enjoy this process for the gradual transformation that takes place - the building of visual context.

Two impressionistic pansies filled a gap, aiding the viewpoint of looking slightly upwards from close range and giving some visual recession.