

Ziggy, Maine Coon

acrylic paint and ink on paper
23 cm x 25.5 cm

This was painted for a commissioned feature article in Artists and Illustrators magazine, summer issue 2009, to demonstrate the rendering of fur textures.

My pet cat, Ziggy, seemed a good choice with ready reference to hand! Spring garden flowers provide a domestic garden setting for him and the spanish bluebells were incorporated specifically for the rich purple to complement Ziggy's yellow eyes.

A tonal drawing of the fur was rendered to guide the painting process, and care was taken for the plants to be of appropriate scale to the body. Ziggy's legs and back were to be visually 'lost' in the surrounding foliage



The grasses and flowers were painted in first, starting with the mid tones and working to the darks and lights, leaving gaps between the structures for later filling in.

Then I started on the face - ears, eyes, nose - using opaque white for eye highlights and overlapping ear tufts. Starting with the eyes seems to give early identity to a portrait and drive forward the painting.



I blocked in the main fur light and mid tones with acrylic paint using a light and darker brown, concentrating the latter where the darker fur was to be concentrated. This was quite a slow process.

The chin and nose area was painted with a creamy white.

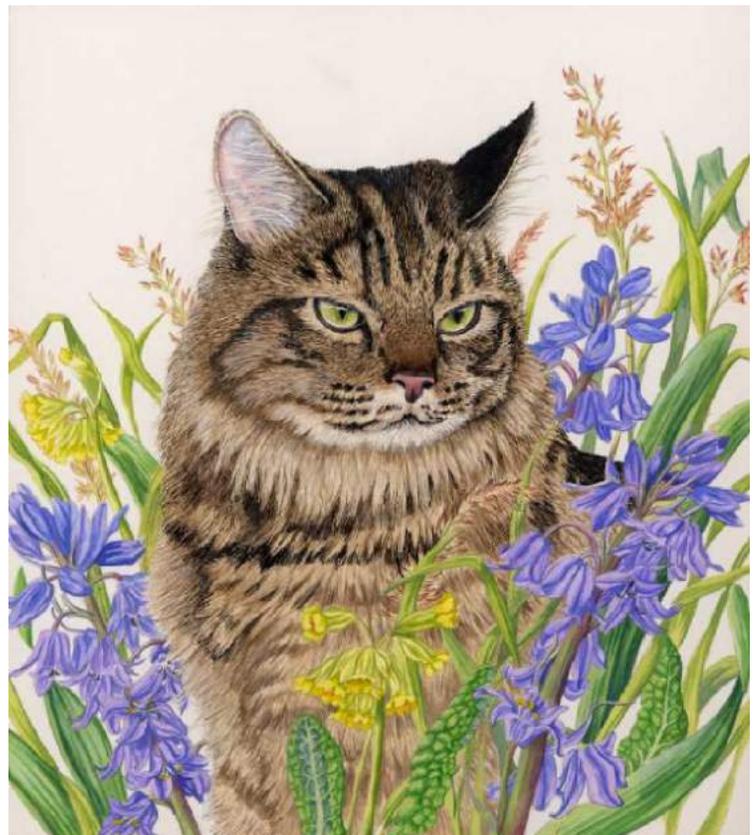
All areas of fur are now ready for the dark chocolate brown hairs to be worked in, observing a banding pattern typical of tabby coats.



Because of the sheer quantity and fineness of dark hair running throughout all areas of the body, but to different degrees, I enlisted the aid of a dip pen. Mixing a couple of dark brown/black dilutions of acrylic ink, I worked into the coat to texture the lighter areas and build up the dark areas to describe the distinctive markings.

The lighter fur visually overlaps these dark areas.

You can see the unfinished fur in the bottom half of the portrait to compare.



I completed the coat by overlaying some light hairs over the dark to enhance the tufted effect, and used a rigger brush to paint in the whiskers in white acrylic ink in long sweeping strokes.

Ziggy's coat took a few days to complete.



Finally the stage I love the most.

All the gaps between the plant were filled in with colour with denser grasses and stems suggested.

Softer loose brushstroke grasses in grey-blue tones were added at the back to aid visual recession in this tightly packed composition.

A cloudy sky, using wet into wet acrylic and glazing, conveys movement and mood.

