

Sgraffito Landscape



INTRODUCTION

In this project, you will utilize your knowledge of color and line to create a “Sgraffito Landscape” by mark-making textures and patterns into wet acrylic paint. This project can be an imagined landscape, a scene based on a photo, or a plein-air painting.

“Sgraffito” (Italian: “to scratch”) is an art technique used in painting (as well as other mediums such as ceramics, glass, printmaking, and so on) in which a layer of wet paint is scratched off to reveal other complimentary colors beneath. Many artists use this process to draw images directly into their paintings – thus blurring the boundaries of media.

Time: 1-hour recommended.

MATERIALS LIST

1. Liquitex Acrylic Gouache, Soft Body Acrylic or Heavy Body Acrylic (in colors of your choice)
 2. Tool to draw into wet paint (skewer stick, paper blending stump, palette knife, pointed end of a paint brush, even a sharpened pencil will work)
 3. Canvas
 4. Brushes
 5. Cup for water
 6. Paper towels
- Optional:**
- Liquitex Slow-Dri Medium





PROJECT STEPS



STEP 1:

Applying the Undercoat

Paint an even coat of acrylic paint onto your canvas. Consider the colors you'll use in Step 2 of your landscape. Remember, the scratches you draw in Step 3 will be this undercoat color.

NOTE: The viscosity of acrylic paint that you choose can change the dynamic of your painting. Liquitex Acrylic Gouache has a smooth, matte texture that retains opacity. Liquitex Heavy Body paint has a buttery, thick consistency that when dry, holds peaks and leaves brush strokes with a satin sheen in opaque and transparent colors. Liquitex Soft Body also has a satin sheen, however it has a more fluid and smooth viscosity.



STEP 2:

Planning Your Landscape

Whichever landscape you're planning to paint – imagined, photo, plein-air – remember to keep it simple to start and gradually add definition with line and possibly more layers of color down the line. Break down your landscape into shapes. – maximum 4 in Step 3. This example only uses 3 major sections, with another added later.

TIP

Did you plan your color scheme? Use a color wheel to see what colors will make each other jump, such as complimentary colors. If red was your underlying coat, you may not want to use it for the Step 3 layer – how will you see your scratched lines in red, all around red? Colors of similar value will also be challenging to distinguish.



STEP 3:

Painting the Sgraffito Layer Coat

After choosing your colors and simplifying your landscape, begin painting. Don't let this layer dry before Step 4! You will be drawing into wet paint, so the faster this step takes the more time you have to draw. Acrylic paint dries within several minutes so consider mixing Liquitex Slow-Dri Medium with your paint if your landscape is large and complex. I recommend a ratio of 8:1 of paint to Liquitex Slow-Dri Medium.

TIP

Think about what is closest to you versus furthest away as you start. If there's a large tree in the foreground, consider waiting to put it in until Step 5.



PROJECT STEPS



STEP 4:

Quick! Sgraffito!

Promptly begin scratching in your drawing before paint dries. Think of textures that mimic the features in your landscape – tree bark, leaves, grass, mountain ridges, water, etc.

NOTE: Pushing too hard with a very sharp tool like a palette knife can scrape off the under-layer color.



STEP 5:

Let Dry & Repeat

Let previous layers dry completely. Perhaps you want to incorporate a tree in the foreground – now's the time. Continue to add layers and sgraffito as you're inspired.



ABOUT THE ARTIST



Pamela Erhardt

I am a Colorado-based, Cleveland-born, world-travelled, mixed media artist. In my artwork I seek to capture the science of emotion. I combine various media and documentation of autobiographical lists and memory maps to paint emotion in a conceptual language. I pull artistic inspiration from my surroundings, feelings, experiences, and my thoughts, transferring that to various surfaces and making each artwork unique and personal to that moment in time. I have a narrative approach to drawing and painting, paying great attention to transformation and object symbolism. Within this symbolic narrative I create paintings that embody universally recognized feelings while unearthing personally significant elements of my current place in time and space. The challenge and desire for me is to paint imagery that will convey not only my thoughts and feelings but also create a separate emotional experience for the viewer.

My paintings may be viewed online at www.pam-map.com or on Instagram @pfe_art

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