

The Reverse Glass Painting Technique

Beginning with a clean piece of ordinary window glass, the artist starts by signing their name - backwards.



Following the signature, the artist next paints the finest, foreground details. Once the paint is dry, more details, layers and background motifs can be added. A second layer of paint may also be added for richness of tone. This process is repeated until the artist is satisfied or has run out of glass.

Usually, but not always, the artist works with a sketch under the glass. I sometimes draw it twice: first as it looks in 'real life' and as it should appear in the final painting, and then tracing it onto a transparent plastic sheet which I can flip over. Once flipped I am able to view the image in it's mirror reflection and check it for balance and secret symmetries.

When I first started in this technique I was told that reverse glass painting is not for the impatient. And it's true. The Croatian Naive has influenced not only the way I paint, but also impacted on how I approach almost every aspect of my creative work as I've learned my patience the hard way.

To begin with, nothing can be rushed. Oil paints can take anywhere from three days to two weeks to dry, depending on their pigment and viscosity. This can be a bonus as I lay down brushes for the school run, but it also means that very little can be done ahead of the previous layer's drying time.

Next, it takes a steady hand to paint everything from the pin-prick details to writing my name backwards. This is particularly true of the stars which I paint over many hours, across many days, with a cocktail stick. But it also means, that when it's time for a pause, I stop. I know that forcing any part of the painting to happen faster only leads to heartbreak.

Therefore most of my paintings take a minimum of six months before they are finished and dry enough for me to step away from them for the first time to see the full effect. That moment is absolute magic - for until that moment I really don't know what kind of painting I've created or if I'll even like it.

Some paintings can take longer though, particularly if there are many galaxies of stars: for 'Phoenix Dreams' I spent over 40 hours just painting the stars. And some paintings take years: I started painting my 'Seeking Harmony' series in 2011 but only finished them in 2014 after a long break. In my studio I have sketches for paintings that date back to 2010, still waiting for their chance to reflect on the world.