

AS SEEN IN THE  
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**Roger Dale Brown**

# Foundational Truths

While Roger Dale Brown approaches each scene he paints differently, there are underlying truths for each work

**I** equate painting with a symphony. I orchestrate my paintings from start to finish like a conductor orchestrates a musical piece. Each scene calls for a different approach. I let each particular scene dictate how I do this. By approaching a painting this way, I never formulate a style. It keeps me fresh. I do adhere to foundational truths and I always keep these truths in my mind no matter how

I choose to approach the painting.

I simplify the scene into large abstract shapes, no more than three to five. Each of these shapes has a specific value and each value has to relate properly to the others, while making the shapes unique to one another. The values within each of these shapes should be in close contrast so it can retain its identity. I am constantly comparing values, shapes, lines and edges

to create a more believable painting. The “art of comparing” is vital to creating representational art. I also ask myself, “What is the main idea of the painting and what is the central focus of the scene?” I try to put the horizon line above or below the center of the canvas depending on my main idea. I ask what is the dominate color and temperature of the scene. I decide if the scene is mostly in shadow, mostly in light, silhouette, front lit, dark-light pattern (Notan), or local tone. I also practice visualizing the result of my painting. Understanding my lighting situation and getting a clear image of what I want my painting to look like in its final stage makes it easier to transcend from the science of art to the emotion of art. By doing this, my chance for success greatly improves.

I typically start with a white canvas and cover it with a wash of complements or monochromatic earth tones as a base to work from. I understand that what I do at the beginning will directly effect the painting later on. I always think three steps ahead. I know if I use washes now, I can let the





***Along the Harpeth***, oil on linen, 30 x 40" (76 x 102 cm)

I wanted to show the quality of the sunlight in the water; both the reflections of the sky and the way the light bounced off the bottom of the river, which creates a wonderful aqua color in the winter and early spring.


complements or earthy colors show through as I apply the actual color. The washes make the actual colors more effective. Remember, a color can't exist or be effective without its complement. Next, I work in shapes and the value of the shapes. Part of the puzzle to a successful painting is the separation of light and dark, color choices, varied shapes, keeping all of them separated while keeping them united in the whole scene. It's the shapes that hold the beauty in a scene. The connection between these shapes—whether applied or suggested—create the design, balance, tension and energy in the painting. Some of the shapes will have softer edges while others will have harder edges, depending on the atmosphere, its distance, and its importance to the main idea of the painting.

Sometimes I work from dark to light, but

not always. To represent a day where the values are more even, or closer, I work from a middle tone and spread my values as I work. Most of the time I will carve out, or wipe off, the shapes and design from the initial washes, using a paper towel or cloth. I then start adding values and color using direct and indirect painting methods to build my scene. Once I get my values and shapes in place, I will raze (knock back) the shapes of the painting by scraping, scumbling, hitting, notching and raking, using an assortment of tools including a palette knife, paper towel, card or painter's tool. This creates a surface quality that helps me echo the feel of the day. I then start to build the painting back up in specific areas such as the focal point or other areas of interest, creating tension and balance within

the scene. After I build up certain shapes and detail, I might raze certain areas of the scene again, leaving specific sections and adjusting others. The scene or effect I am trying to accomplish is what determines how many times I raze the painting.

There are several reasons I raze a painting. It helps create a surface quality and helps me manipulate the paint to echo the scene. It also tames certain areas so it doesn't compete with the focal points. It softens edges and can create diffused light effects. It also introduces colors into colors, creating a more harmonious painting.

The final stage of a painting is to bring it to a crescendo. I fine-tune areas and concentrate on bringing my focal point and other important areas to a more finished quality. 

# My Art in the Making Narrow Passage



## STAGE 1

### SETTING THE TONE

This is the most critical stage of a painting. It sets the tone for the rest of the painting. I start with a coral color wash, dividing the canvas into large abstract shapes of unequal visual weight. The undertone sets up the colors and value for the subsequent steps. The whole scene has a cool red glow about it, so I used the coral wash or undertone to get that effect or feel from the start. When I start adding color, I can let some of the coral wash come through to create a vibration of the diffused light in the color composition. Again, this is the approach I chose to do with this specific scene. Sometimes I block in with a monochromatic wash, sometimes with an earth tone wash, and sometimes with nothing, working on white canvas. It all depends on the scene. There is no formula.



## WHAT THE ARTIST USED

For this painting, I used oil on linen on a 36-by-48-inch format. For this particular scene I thought it would show better on a larger format.

I use a large egbert to block in and a variety of tools to apply and/or take away. This includes, bristol #4, #8 sable flat, #4 short bristol, sable flat, #2 long bristol, paper towel for texture, credit card to scrape and create texture, palette knife,

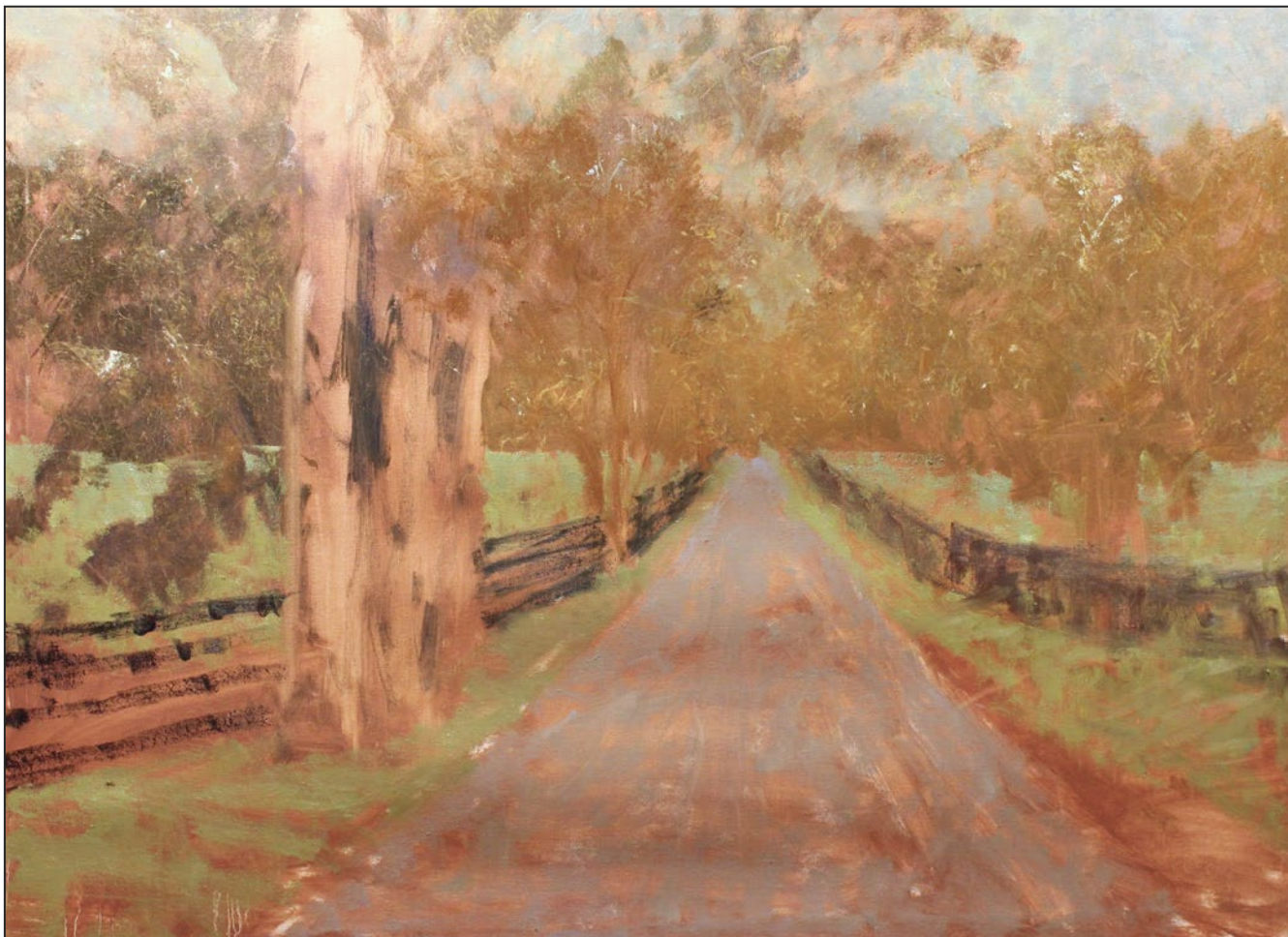
and a 3-inch chip brush for softening and creating organic texture.

The colors I used are: titanium white, cadmium yellow lemon, cadmium yellow light, cadmium red light, quinacridone rose, ultramarine blue, cobalt blue, cerulean blue, indigo blue, burnt sienna, raw umber, and I use gamsol for my turpentine.



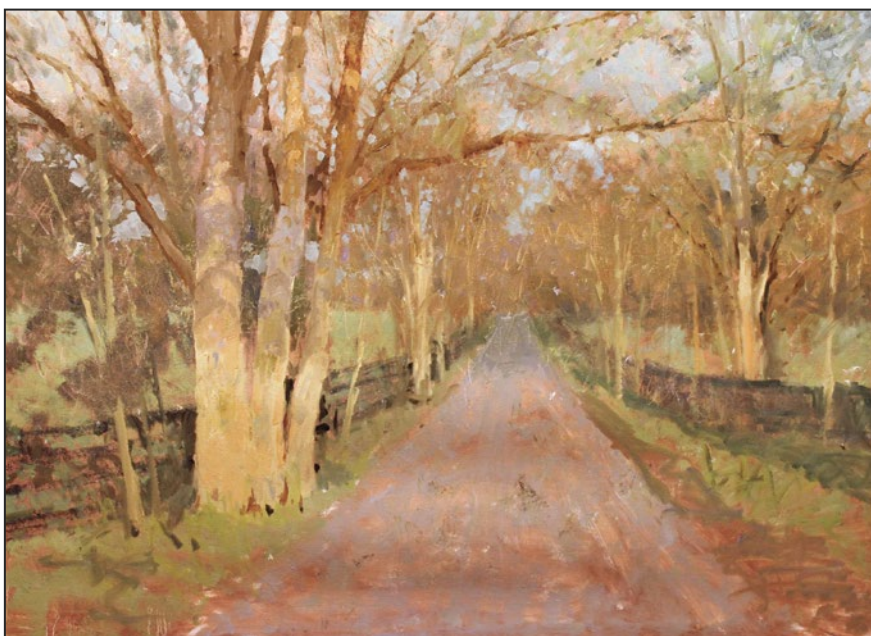
Reference Photo





## STAGE 2 CREATING DESIGN

After the initial washes I start to add color and carve into or wipe off the paint with a towel, creating my design and also adding some main elements such as the trunk and foliage.



## STAGE 3 COLORS

I start adding more color concentrating on the shapes of color, light and dark. I always keep my values close within each large shape, the shape of the road or the shape of the tree foliage, for instance, so the shape can retain its identity. If the values have too much contrast within each shape, I will lose the specific shapes or masses, and the painting as a whole will become too busy. I also establish the key visual elements of the fence and rock wall at this early stage.

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#### STAGE 4 RAZING AND TAMPING

This stage is where the painting really takes shape. All prior steps were important to set up this moment. I raze the painting especially in the middle ground and the background. I used a palette knife to scrape and soften edges, to bring light and dark shapes together. Using a paper towel, I tamped down the back edges to create atmospheric perspective and to help create the illusion of distance. Tamping with a paper towel also will create a modeling effect that emulates the scene's foliage and vibration of strong late-day light. I put reflective light in the branches and trunks and make some darker trunks and branches. As I do this, I am paying close attention to the shapes between objects, making them unique, to create a sense of the randomness that is in nature.



#### STAGE 5 ADJUSTMENTS

I continue by adjusting temperature, color and edges where needed to epitomize what I have visualized for the final painting. I start adding thicker paint and sharper edges in focal areas while softening and toning in others in an attempt to create a lyrical movement throughout the painting.

***Old Hickory***, oil on linen,  
18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm)

Creating a balance was important, so I concentrated on the strategic placement of lines. I feel that is important in a tree portrait to carry the viewer's eye through the painting and it creates balance in the painting as a whole.







**STAGE 6 FINISHING ELEMENTS** *Narrow Passage*, oil on linen, 36 x 48" (91 x 122 cm)

When finishing, I add as much as the painting will hold, bringing it to the brink and then pulling it back when I have pushed too far. I push the values and color until I feel I have told the story the best I can.

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**Street Car**, oil on linen, 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm)

To bring the streetcar forward, I kept my values tight and tonal in the background, while having more contrast, chroma and sharper edges in the streetcar.



**On Dock**, oil on linen, 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm)

This painting needed tight values and softer edges to capture the day. I scraped and tamped to create the effect in the distance, but kept the edges crisper and added more chroma on the boat to bring the bow of the boat forward.





*Cattails*, oil on linen, 24 x 36" (61 x 91 cm)

This scene had an evenness in color and texture, so I simplified my color palette to represent the amber and blue tones, and to help replicate the sense of that day.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**B**orn in Birmingham, Alabama, Roger Dale Brown now lives in Franklin, Tennessee. His earliest artistic influences were pen-and-ink drawings and etchings done by masters of the past. Brown spent countless hours in his youth sketching historical buildings, figures and seascapes in pen and ink.

His initial studies in oil followed the impressionist technique. He studied with nationally recognized artist Everett Raymond Kinstler, landscape artist Scott Christensen, and mentored with Dawn Whitelaw. He has continued his studies with Quang Ho and Charles Warren Mundy as well as studying the writings of Edgar Payne, John Carlson, and Andrew Wyeth.

Brown believes that studying and painting from life is essential to being a good artist. He spends hours painting on location to enhance his ability to see the nuances of a scene, a day or an object. He considers this

one of the elements necessary to create a successful painting both on location and in the studio. Brown captures the emotion of the scene by drawing on his knowledge and his dedication to art.

Traveling the country seeking out history, culture and landscapes is important for Brown and his fiancée, artist Beverly Ford Evans. "By studying the facets of a location, I get the knowledge and inspiration to create my paintings," he says.

Brown promotes art education through teaching, lecturing, demonstrating and publications, believing that passing along information is an obligation to generations of new artists.

His oils have been displayed throughout galleries in the United States and have won many awards including the Gold Medal from the Hudson Valley Art Association; First Place in the *Barnes and Farms National Juried Art Show*; Museum Purchase Award

and third place at the Easton Plein Air competition; Best of Show at the *Central South National Juried Show*; among others. His work has also been accepted in the Oil Painters of America *National Juried Exhibition* and Greenhouse Gallery of Fine Art's *Salon International*.

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