

Atelier®

ARTISTS' ACRYLIC

— Est. 1965 —

July 2019: *I am Jennifer VonStein, and I have been Chroma's Resident Artist for almost 13 years. I work primarily with acrylics, oils, watercolors and mixed media/collage, and I do my best to help artists with their practical considerations or concerns about materials for their art. Although I am based in the USA, I consult with artists worldwide and will be writing some articles along with Chroma's founder, Jim Cobb. If you have feedback or any questions you would like answered in a future article, please email me at jvonstein@chromaonline.com.*

In The Studio, Step by Step

I often tell artists that painting is solving a series of problems. It sounds negative - perhaps saying that painting is addressing a series of challenges would be more inspiring. Sometimes, paintings just magically flow and almost create themselves. But let's face it, from deciding on how to represent the 3-dimensional world on an essentially 2-dimensional surface, to managing the pictorial dynamics of an abstract painting, to making an authentic gestural mark, to figuring out how to get your paint to DO what you want, painting can be tough.

That's where a willingness to explore materials and gaining the personal, hands-on knowledge of what your materials can do is so helpful. Because when you have a working knowledge of how to manipulate paint, you can concentrate on the "loftier" problems in a painting. What's the easiest way to manipulate paint? Through the use of painting mediums.

The new Atelier Mediums are described as on a "viscosity" ladder from Thin to Middle to Thick to Heavy. Acrylic painting mediums alter or enhance the consistency of your paint, which has a huge effect on the mark making. Therefore, if you have an idea of what you *want* to your paint to do, choose a medium that will *do* it. For example, if you need to make long flowing lines, choose a medium that will thin your paint, in this case that would be the Thin Medium.



What does this mean in the studio? For me, it means I can approach the technical aspects of my work in a more considered way, which then frees me to paint in a more expressive fashion. Let me show you in this recent painting created with Atelier Interactive Artists' Acrylics and the new Atelier Mediums over 4 paint sessions of 3-4 hours each.

Stage 1 - Laying In

This painting is of one of my models, J, and is on a 30" x 24" canvas. I started by applying Atelier Free Flow Gesso in Light Red Ochre. I like to use this color as a base for my figurative works because the underlying earthy red adds punch to the subsequent semi-transparent flesh tones. I used vine charcoal to make a grid, so I could more accurately place the features (Image 1). I used photos and color studies as my references; on my palette I had Naples Yellow, Cadmium Yellow Light, Cadmium Yellow Medium, Naphthol Red Light, Quinacridone Red Violet, French Ultramarine Blue, Pthalo Blue, Raw Sienna Dark, Burnt Sienna, Carbon Black, Transparent Perinone Orange, Cobalt Turquoise Light and Titanium White. Additional colors included Pastel Lemon, Pastel Coral and Pastel Mist from the Atelier Pastel range of colors.

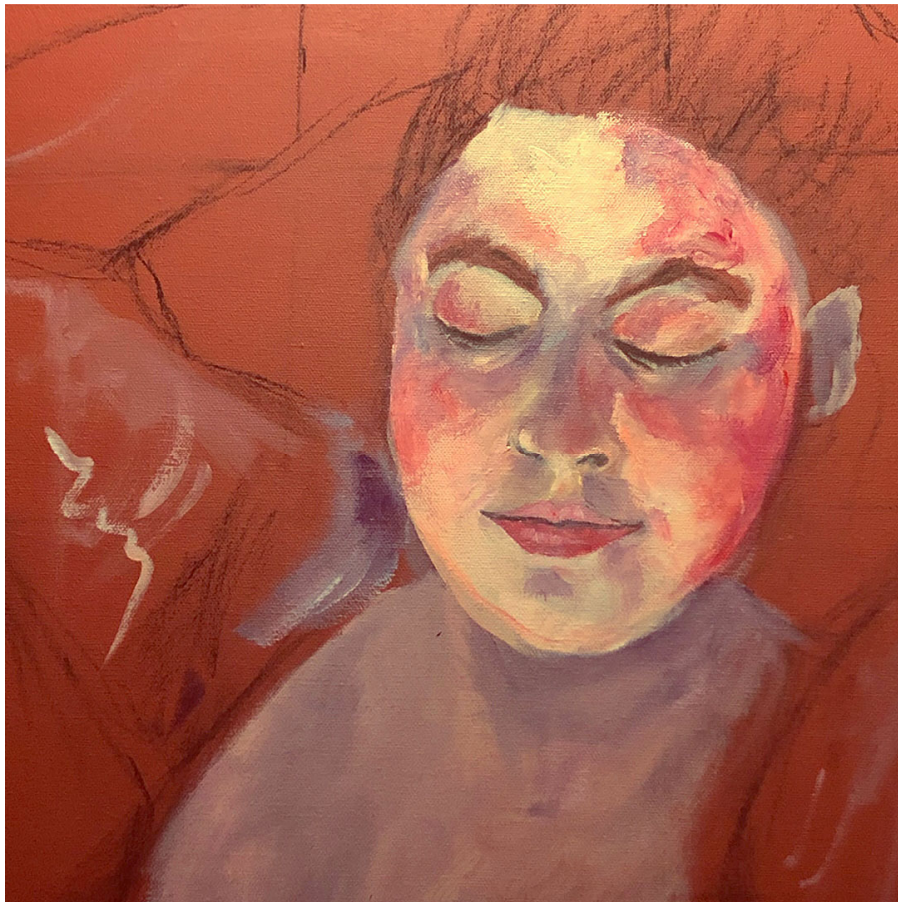


Image 1 - Atelier Free Flow Gesso and Atelier Thin Medium

In my approach, after getting the initial features down in charcoal, I want to cover my surface with paint. I am not interested in subtle blending, but I do try to get basic tonal transitions and values down. Because I wanted to lay in fairly quickly, I chose Atelier Thin Medium to dilute my paint. (Yes, I could have used Atelier Free Flow, but there is not the same range of colors nor did I have a lot of Free Flow in my studio when I began this painting. Better to use what you have when it is time to paint!) I created my color mixture, then added Thin Medium as needed to create smooth mixture.

One of the things that I liked about my initial lay in was the light effect that was developing. The brash lighting and unreal flesh tones reminded me of the Moulin Rouge paintings by [Toulouse-Lautrec](#). Once I realized this, I knew I wanted to keep this unintentional effect. I believe that one reason why this happened was because I was able to easily create a fluid paint using the Thin Medium and my Atelier Interactive colors. I didn't need to worry over the technical aspect of getting my paint to come off the brush the way I wanted; instead I could explore the emotional impact of colors, one of "loftier" problems of painting I mentioned in the beginning of this article.

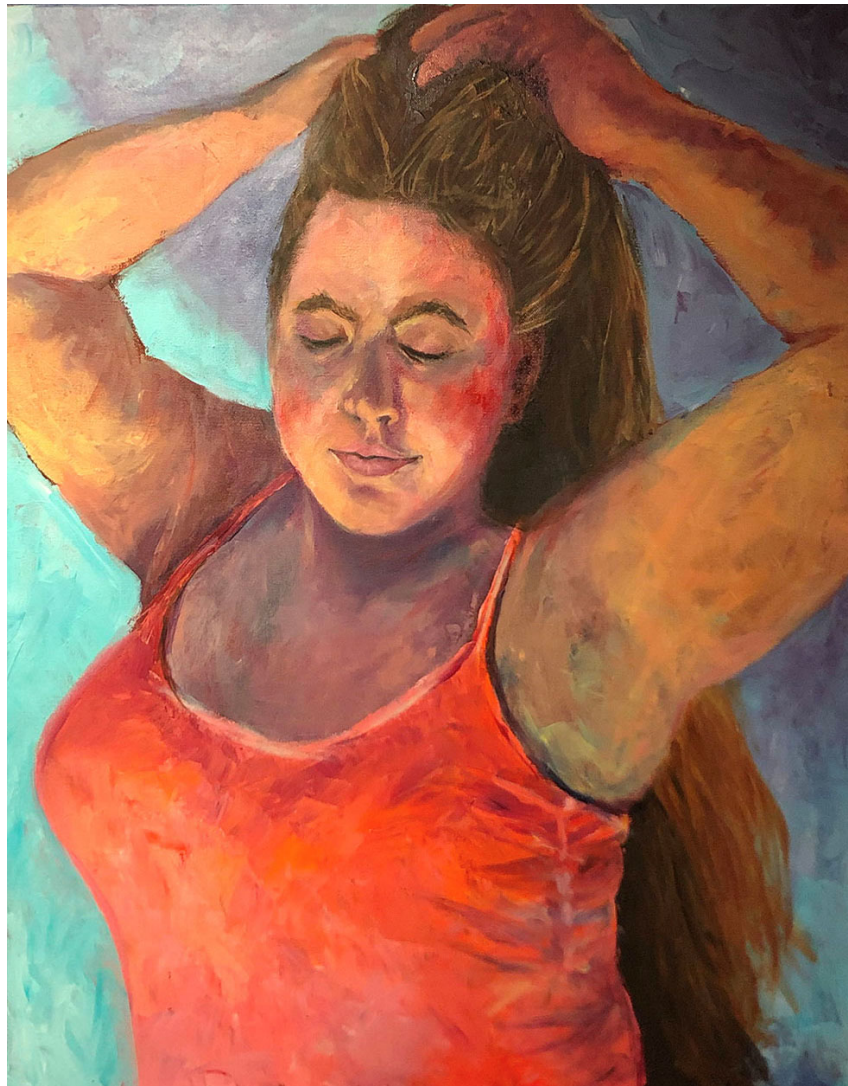
Stage 2 - Developing The Base



Image 2 - Getting the color down with Middle Medium

For this stage of the painting, I wanted to show the transitions in the face, shirt and arms. I chose to use the Middle Medium, because it provided a silky consistency that left just enough of the bushy texture I wanted. As before, I mixed colors on my palette and added Middle Medium as I went. Because this was a large canvas and I was working in a hot studio, I used the Unlocking Formula as needed to keep the paint on the surface blendable. In keeping with the Toulouse-Lautrec feel, I kept the edges sharper to emphasize the contours. Again, by getting the paint to move the way I wanted, I could concentrate on other things. like building my values. I didn't need to fight with my materials (Image 2).

Stage 3 - Time To Finesse And Fuss



*Image 3 - Using **Thick Painting Medium** for painterly effects.*

Now the fun really began. Using the Thick Painting Medium, I painted her dark blonde hair and scratched into it for highlights (Image 3). The Thick Slow Medium provided the painterly, brushy quality I want, and made it easier for me to work wet-in-wet and blend colors, like oils. I

felt I had lost some of the brash lighting, so I used the Thick Painting Medium for impasto glazes to add depth to the highlights and shadows (Image 4). I knew that the colors were unnatural, but that was ok. I was aiming to represent a certain emotional state

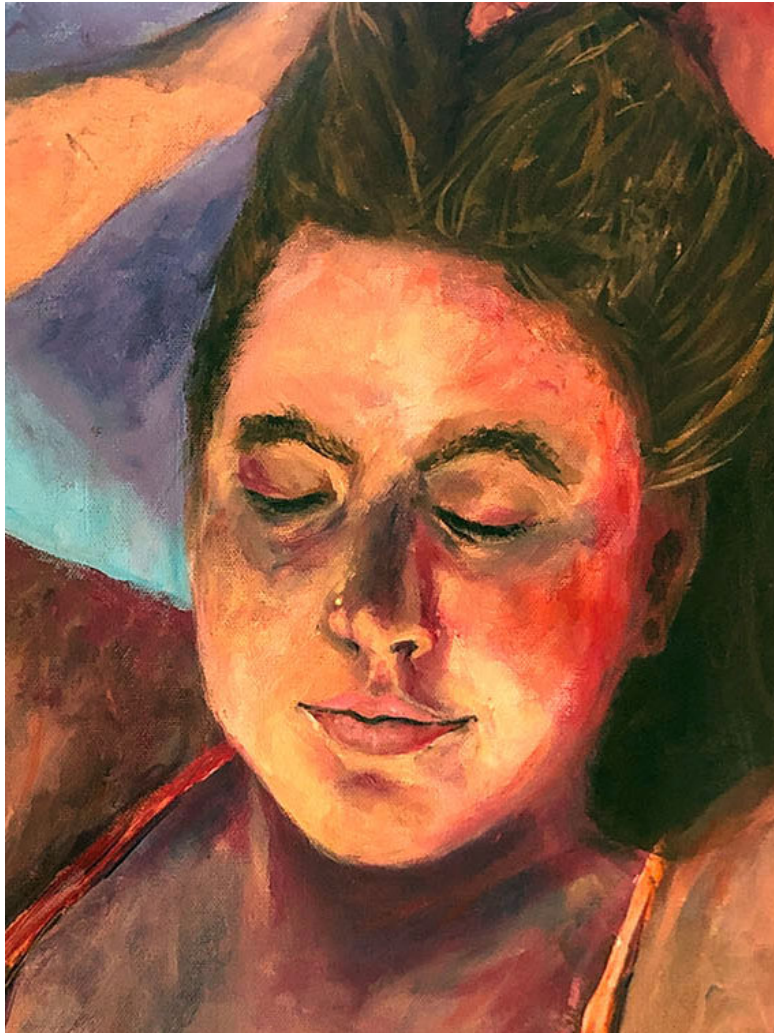


Image 4 - Detail of highlight and shadow glazes created with Thick Painting Medium

Stage 4 - Wrap It Up

I continued to use the Thick Slow Medium as my main medium on day 4. I would add it to color mixtures, just enough so that I had that wonderful, impasto heavy glaze quality that I could blend wet-in-wet if I wished. I liked the structure of the piece, although I did correct the angle and shadows in the back arm that had bothered me from the beginning. I used Unlocking Formula a few times, to soften the eyebrows and adjust the color of the back shadow. I was able to respond to the painting and do what needed to be done to resolve the piece. After letting it cure, I applied 2 coats of Chroma's Invisible Solvent Varnish to bring out the transparent darks in the shadows of the flesh and hair, and to even the sheen of the painting.

If this had been a smaller painting, I could have used the Thick Painting Medium as my main medium for the entire process. However, because I knew this would be a painting that would come together over multiple sessions, I chose medium that helped me at each stage of the process, for my style. At any point, I could have moved to a different medium if that's what I needed. You certainly do not need to start with the Thin Medium, and then the Middle, and so on. That's one of the joys of painting with acrylics - you do not have to worry about painting fat-over lean like you do with oil paint. Instead, by thinking about *what I wanted my paint to do*, I was able to make the color mixtures the right consistency so *the paint would do what I wanted*. I believe that these new Atelier Mediums make the technical aspects of painting easier, allowing me to explore my style and respond to the painting's pictorial needs (Image 5).

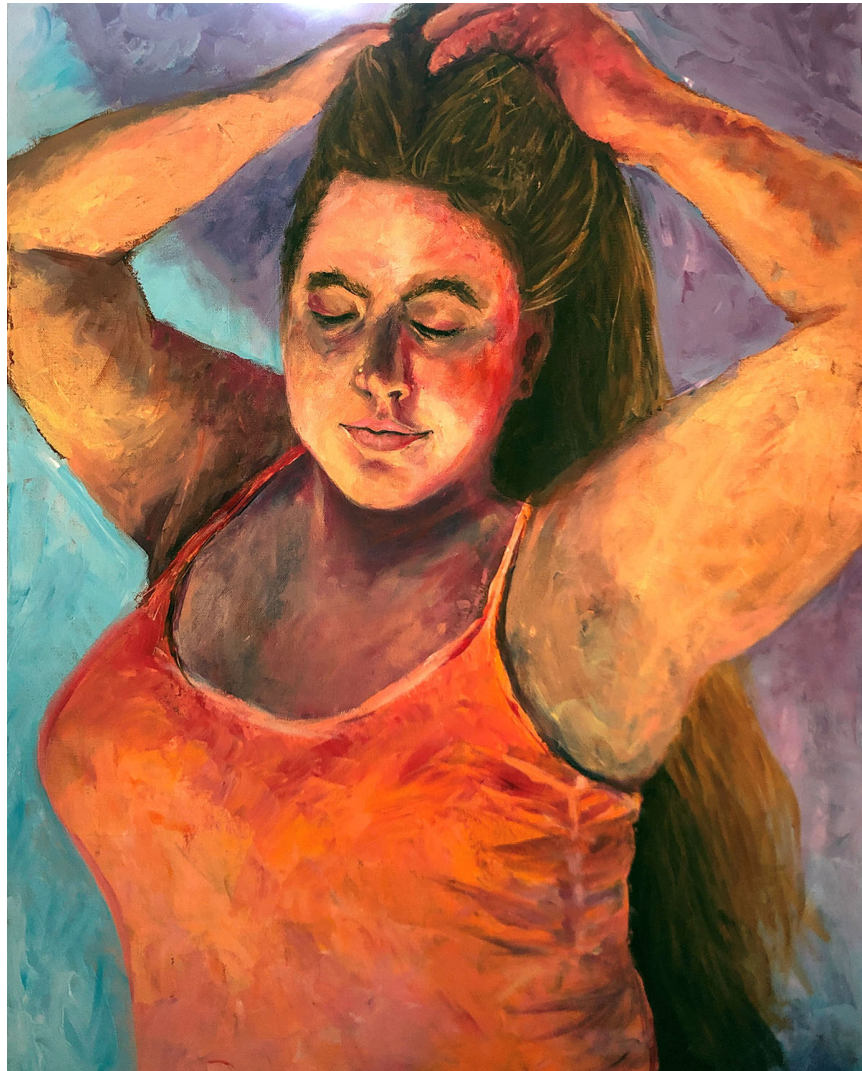


Image 5 - J as Lover after Toulouse-Lautrec

If you have any questions, please email me at jvonstein@chromaonline.com.