

Charlie Gardening, Summer 2007

This is a quick run through the steps I took to produce the picture of Charlie Gardening. There are lots of steps missing – particularly in Painter – because I didn't record them. Also, the picture didn't develop to a set workflow. It evolved as changes made with each brushstroke, many by luck, set off new ideas. Had I done the picture from scratch the next day it probably would have looked quite different. Here is the original photo:



My starting point was that I liked the feel of the image and the pose, but not the composition. Working in Photoshop (CS3) a crop seemed the way to get what I wanted and after experimenting I ended up with the picture to the right. And after I removed the reflection of the car in the window, the image far right....

This work was done in Photoshop (CS3). I did try using the buzz filter to simplify the background but eventually decided against it because it seemed to make the image too static. I relied on doing some big brushwork in Painter to simplify and loosen the background. So then I took it into Painter and set it up in Colour Clone mode. Then I chose Artists Canvas as the texture and filled the image with a greyish green. The idea was that the image would emerge from the background – surrounding the figure with the dark solid colours on a bright summery day would give the wrong effect. I used a number of brushes – all customised. The first was a weird one that I love starting off with, based

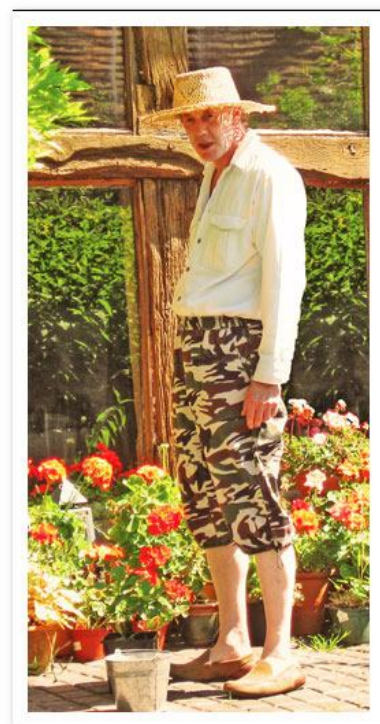


on one of the Artists Oils – it brushes in origami like shapes randomly and creates a little of the effect of the Impressionist filter.

Then I worked with my version of the Artists' Sargent Brush – with some of canvas texture showing through here and there. But all very loose. It had to be loose because I had no detail – particularly in the face - to work with. I brought in only a little detail, generally with a small bristle (not camel) brush because I was determined that the detail would not kidnap the picture. This also meant I deliberately stopped working in Painter before I would normally have done. The image I took back into Photoshop was this (right)



I could almost have left it at that pretty much as an understated sketch. But I wasn't happy with the temperature of the picture – the lack of sunny heat in it – nor with areas like the combat trousers (his children hate them!) which I wanted to bring out a little more. So I went back to the original picture I had taken to Painter and added some yellow filter and a little more colour saturation. The image I ended up with is right -

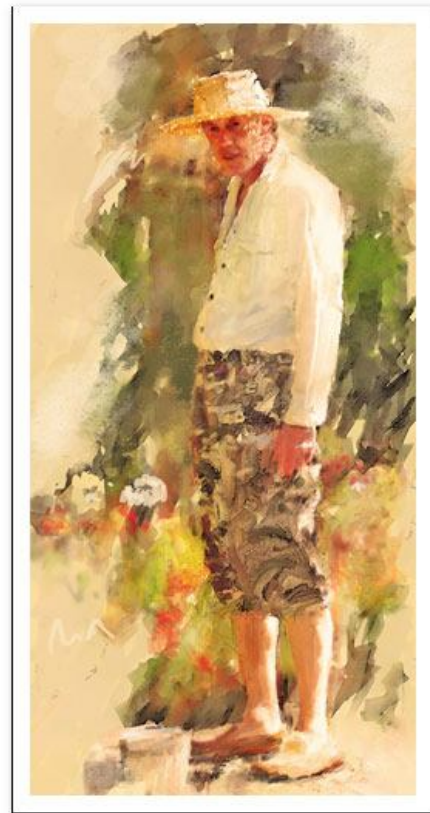


Using the warmed photo as a source I used a Pattern Tool brush – or a number of them – to add warm areas, mix up the background and some more detail (for example the mottled sunlight pattern on his left cheek) . I like some of the Chalks, Small Tip, Drippy Water and Soft Round which are pretty versatile used with various settings. I also used some Dry Brush filter here and there. Not the Watercolour filter because it darkened too much. I still wasn't sure if I was going for a loose oil or loose watercolour look – I'm still not! After a while I ended up with the version to the right. Again, I wouldn't have been altogether unhappy with this as a rough sketch to keep.



Though the green background worked, it still didn't get across how hot the afternoon of the photo was. So, still in CS3, I used the Shadow/Highlight filter to create more of an HDR look and went mad with some of the yellow and orange filters. Added a touch of sharpening and got to the version on the right...

I put this version out for comment while I took a break and then, following some good advice, tightened up the white flowers and made the left show a little clearer and darker. The final image is below -





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