

## **Transcending the Photo Reference in Painting**

### **Course Description**

This workshop is designed to guide the students toward creating a painting from a photo reference, using both indirect and direct traditional painting techniques. It aims to instruct painters on how to use the photograph to create a painting that surpasses the look of the photograph, not simply imitates a photograph.

The workshop will explain how to create a useful photo reference, covering topics such as ideal lighting, camera settings, lenses, Photoshop, and printing. The process will begin with preparations such as choosing a composition through quick sketches from a variety of reference photos, progressive oil sketches with limited use of the photograph, and then laying in the composition with an imprimatura wash. When that is dry, the students will learn to create color relationships that portray the space and volume, creating the illusion. Emphasis is then placed on paint application and ways of activating the surface.

By focusing on deliberate brush stroke and maintaining accurate color relationships rather than rendering, the application of paint to describes the form. We will accentuate the structural volumes of the form over the contour, concentrating on relating all parts of the picture to each other with an organized palette. From there, students will be guided towards deciding what information is useful to look for and what usual pitfalls to avoid when interpreting a photograph. Deciding when and how to invent and experiment is perhaps the most crucial part of the process.

Students will be encouraged to look more at the painting itself than the photographic source, using it only for initial reference. We will explore ways of seeing the picture objectively, how to imply detail without overstating, and what level of finish works best for the particular painting or style. The painting will develop through indirect layers of opaque and transparent painting to achieve the delicate nuances of flesh and other surfaces. Methods of Glazing and Scumbling will be discussed.

The final result can be a painting that captures the essence of your subject (and your connection with that subject) and contains the intimacy of the human touch that transcends a smooth photo-realistic image. There are a variety of results varying from abstraction/improvisation to a more illusionistic representation. All will be discussed and the challenges and rewards of each will be explored.

A maximum of 15 students per workshop. Students may work only in Oil paint (no alkyd or water soluble substitutes). Students must have some knowledge of working with oil paints, and be familiar with basic supplies and clean up procedures. Beginners are welcome. All students are required to submit 5 jpegs of their oil paintings (no larger than 1000K) to the venue prior to registration so Alyssa can gauge the level of experience among the class and adjust appropriately. No film or audio recording is permitted, students may be asked to leave if they are found making any recordings. A detailed materials list, with notes, will be distributed upon registration up to 3 weeks prior to the class to ensure time to prepare. Students are required to be prepared for class on the first day. Alyssa will provide photo references for the students to use for the workshop, they are not encouraged to bring their own photographs.

## **Bio**

Alyssa Monks is blurring the line between abstraction and realism by layering different spaces and moments in her paintings. She flipped background and foreground using semi-transparent filters of glass, vinyl, steam, and water over shallow spaces in her 10-year long water series. Today, she is imposing a

transparent landscape of infinite space over evocative subjects.

The tension in her paintings is sustained by the composition and also by the surface quality itself. Each brushstroke is thickly applied oil paint, like a fossil recording every gesture and decision, expressing the energetic and empathic experience of the handmade object. "I strive to create a moment in a painting where the viewer can see or feel themselves, identify with the subject, even be the subject, connect with it as though it is about them, personally."

Alyssa's work is represented by Forum Gallery in New York City. She lives and paints in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Her latest solo exhibition "Resolution" was in March and April of 2016 at Forum Gallery. Monks's paintings have been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions including "Intimacy" at the Kunst Museum in Ahlen, Germany and "Reconfiguring the Body in American Art, 1820–2009" at the National Academy Museum of Fine Arts, New York. Her work is represented in public and private collections, including the Savannah College of Arts, the Somerset Art Association, Fullerton College, the Seavest Collection and the collections of Eric Fischl, Howard Tullman, Gerrity Lansing, Danielle Steele, Alec Baldwin, and Luciano Benetton. In 2015, Alyssa gave a talk at the TEDx event at Indiana University discussing her recent work, which is featured on TED.com. Recently, she was named the 16th most influential women artist alive today by Graphic Design Degree Hub.

Born 1977 in New Jersey, Alyssa began oil painting as a child. She studied at The New School in New York and Montclair State University and earned her B.A. from Boston College in 1999. During this time she studied painting at Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence. She went on to earn her M.F.A from the New York Academy of Art, Graduate School of Figurative Art in 2001. She completed an artist in residency at Fullerton College in 2006 and has lectured and taught at universities and institutions nationwide. She continues to offer workshops and lectures regularly.

Alyssa has been awarded the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant for Painting three times and serves as a member of the New York Academy of Art's Board of Trustees.