



# Early Morning in the Avon Valley

## Step One

The canvas I am using is a reasonably large piece, 120cm X 92cm double thick stretched canvas, so the best thing to do is get some colour on it before you start sketching out your subject. I did this by using an 8cm flat brush to move the mix of Burnt

Sienna and Perlyne Crimson around the canvas. After doing this I wiped it over with a soft cloth, just to smooth out the colour a little. You can see I have started to work on the placement of my subject, which for this painting is a rock outcrop only minutes from where I live.



Final Step



Step 1

### Step Two

Next step is to roughly render your subject onto the canvas. Try and be as free as you can when doing this process, don't be too caught up with your end vision. I normally lay out what I am painting in

charcoal. This stage in the painting is a very important part, getting the placement and composition of your work is everything, so take your time now and get it right. You of course can alter things as you go along but this process cannot be undervalued. >>



Step 2

### Materials List

- Double thick stretched canvas
- Charcoal
- Raphael brushes: Size 18, 14 and 8
- Westart riggers: Size 1 and 2
- Art Spectrum oil paint:
  - Cerulean Blue
  - Langridge oil paints:
    - Cad Yellow
    - Cad Orange
    - Cad Red Light
  - Burnt Sienna
  - Burnt Umber
  - Ultramarine Blue
  - Cobalt Blue
  - Gamblin oil paints:
    - Dioxicean Purple

“Take a bit of liberty with what you are painting. Whether it is in the studio or plein air, don’t get bogged down by objects within the landscape. Don’t start feeling as though you have to stick with what you see.”



Step 3

### Step Three

I normally get the sky in first, making a general placement of how I want to see things such as the clouds. Take out trees, rocks or even clouds that don't seem to fit within the composition, remember you are a painter not a photographer. Make it your own.

### Step Four

My next step is to try and get my values right, even as a semi abstract painter I still have to take value into account. I do have some leeway, unlike say, a realist painter, who must be quite exact with value so their painting reads well. I also start working in my darks, as you can see from the boulders in the upper left of the painting. Again, try and be a little free with your colour. You still have a lot of room left for corrections, so get them done now rather than trying to correct things when the painting is

### Artist's Hints & Tips

- While I have listed Langridge paints here, they can be a little dear to buy if you are not a professional artist or at least selling some of your paintings. I would say though, try not to buy cheap paints. The quality is poor and will not last or give the finish you want.
- Take a bit of liberty with what you are painting. Whether it is in the studio or plein air, don't get bogged down by objects within the landscape. Don't start feeling as though you have to stick with what you see.



Step 4



nearly finished. While I am blocking the boulders in I am also working with the clouds to give them more shape and fullness. At this point of the painting it's all about adjusting things, making sure the work is reading right, not just in value but also within its form, colour and temperature. I also start defining the shadows, in fact you will see even in the charcoal drawings the shadows have been thought about. The middle ground is also taking form now.

## Step Five

The far hills have been worked on a little more, I felt they needed to be pushed a little further off into the distance. The early morning light is now being felt more within the painting. I tend to accentuate colour within my work so while still trying to make it read right and not confuse the viewer's mind, I will push the colour as much as I can. I have laid the boulders in while trying not to continue making them the one "round" shape you can fall into doing when working with rocks. Funny thing is, many of the boulders around my neck of the woods are just that, very round. Just remember, if you need to adjust your shapes a little so they read right, do it, don't let your painting suffer because you are being too dogmatic and staying too true to the subject matter. You will also see that I have started putting in some trees. I did this for a few reasons. There are trees within the subject I am painting but more than that, I feel the placement of these ones draws the viewer into

the painting and up to the larger boulders. You will notice the shadow colour is more pronounced now.

## Final Step

Having reached this point I again look at the painting in areas; the rear, middle and foreground. I spend time sitting in a chair in my studio which is about 10 metres from the painting. This gives me time to look at areas that are not working. I will also look at how the light is falling and how the shadows fall within that light's source, taking into account the sun's position. While I was following the points, I have just outlined and noticed that there were two areas I felt the painting needed adjustment. The first one is in the foreground area in picture five, for me that area was too busy and did not read well. So I took out some of the small rocks where I felt it needed it. Remember, don't be afraid to adjust your subject by leaving out or adding things that may have been in the landscape or not there when you were viewing. The other part that was adjusted was the foliage of the trees. I felt they were too round and clashing with the shapes of the rocks. Again, if I stayed true to the original scene I painted this from, I would have left them round just as they looked within the landscape.

## Artist's Hints & Tips

- In the early stages, charcoal is a very giving medium and can be rubbed out and not show through your finished painting. Sure, there will be some light lines as you rub out and redraw the subject but charcoal will not leave the heavy marks lead pencils will if you are too heavy handed like me.
- If I need black I normally mix Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Umber to get it.
- Play with it, have fun, make it your own. There are many artists who will do a realist view of the landscape and stick to exactly what they see. I say, whatever floats your boat. The main thing is to enjoy what you are doing and make it your own. I have done well as an artist because my style is recognisable. Aim towards finding your own style, this will come from being yourself and following your vision.
- Make sure you spend time sitting and viewing your work, even leave it for a few days or a week and work on something else. I find that this helps me to distance myself from the work and when I get back to it, my view is fresh.