



Article: Finishing Off



...Before

After...



This is a painting produced during a demonstration at an art club in North Yorkshire. As often happens with demos, where time is finite, a work reaches a stage where 'Finishing Touches' are all that are required to complete it. Wherever possible, I always like to send a preview of the final painting to the art club concerned, along with notes so that its members can see what decisions I've made in order to complete it. This is an illustrated example of such an occurrence.

[1] The light, negatively-painted trees on the right-hand side just didn't look right, so I scrubbed them out and re-designed that area with some tree trunks that were a little more substantial.

During any demonstration, the practical application of negative-painting is always a useful addition to the proceedings. In this case, with the whole scene being back-lit, I couldn't really explain the occurrence away without developing the darker tone behind them more. In the end, I decided a complete turnaround was the most logical option.

[2] I built up the foliage throughout. By this, I mean increasing the amount of actual 'leaf' detail. This is something that always has to be done in a subject like this to ensure that correct scale is maintained (removing any 'giant' leaves for instance). Having said that, I've also tried to keep the looseness of the piece by not overdoing that detail - and concentrating it only in certain areas.

Maintaining the correct sizes of objects relative to each other throughout a subject, when demonstrating, can be a problem. Because decisions are being made 'on the hoof', scale tends to get pushed low down on the priority list. Overlarge sheep or, in this case, leaves, can be the result - nothing that can't be put right!

[3] I felt that the left-hand trees also needed a little more developing. Although I liked the distant tree sticking up on its own, I felt it looked a little too isolated, a bit too sparse, so, I extended the foreground, overhanging, branches more in order to make it all 'slot together' in a more pleasing way.

You should constantly monitor the overall design of your painting, to ensure that it remains well-balanced throughout.

[4] I built up the reflections (particularly in the foreground) and added waves to the bottom edge of the boat to prevent it looking like it was hovering across the water's surface.

[5] Believe it or not, I removed the two figures and re-painted them in. I'm not too sure why - I guess they just didn't look quite right. There didn't seem to be quite the right 'interaction' between them for my liking. Hopefully they now look more natural.

[6] Finally, I finished off the towpath in the foreground. This was hardly touched at all on the night, and I desperately wanted to reduce the straight-edged, 'tidy' feel to the long grasses. Also, I've added a few more stones to break the area up.