RED, RED ROSE
by Leslie Smith
INTRODUCTION

Bobbie Burns, the Scot poet, wrote what is arguably the greatest love poem ever written. Its title is, “Red, Red, Rose.” There is a red rose—and it is so red that it doesn’t even look real. I imagine that this is the rose of which he was speaking.

SURFACE

Tall Mantle Clock #63197

PALETTE

Dazzling Metallic Emperor’s Gold #14069
DecoArt Americana Acrylics:
  Alizarin Crimson #13179
  Asphaltum #13180
  Black Green #13157
  Celery Green #13208
  Eggshell*
  Hauser Dark Green #13133
  Hauser Medium Green #13132
  Lamp Black #13067
  Light Avocado #13106
  Oxblood #13139
  Red Alert #13536
  Scarlet #13295
  Snow White #13001

MEDIUMS

Americana Dura Clear Soft Touch Varnish 8 oz*
DecoArt Adhesion Medium (for plastic numerals if that is your choice) #84185

BRUSHES

Papillon by the Artist’s Club:
  1” Glaze Wash #20103
  Filbert size 6, #20118
  Round size 4, #20161

Note: Round brushes are my current brush of choice. I can flatten them to make a flat or filbert. I can point them to make them behave like a round or liner.

MISC. SUPPLIES

Fine grit sandpaper

Transfer paper, stylus, etc.
Standard painting supplies (palette, water container, etc.)
Numerals, face, hands, and clock works of your choice

TECHNIQUE AND THEORY

This piece is painted in multiple layers, each subsequent layer being warmer, brighter, lighter, and more detailed. But, we are going to introduce a second “trick” to our layers. The background layers, and leaves are all painted using a variety of greens. Green is the complimentary color to red, which is the color of the roses and the only other color in the painting. The green, being placed adjacent to the red, will make the green more intense. The red, being placed adjacent to the green, will make the red more intense.

We are also going to undercoat the roses with those same green paints, which by the way, were chosen because they are all opaque. The three red paints we will use are all transparent and will allow the greens to show through. You may be used to his technique using different values of grey to undercoat an entire painting. It is called grisaille. But, a monochromatic undercoating can be any color. When browns are used, it is called a brunaille. When greens are used, it is called a verdaille.

The dark and medium reds were selected because they are transparent. The lightest (highlight) red is semi-opaque. By the way, Cadmium colors are transparent: Cadmium Red, Orange, and Yellow. But, by using a complimentary color (green) as our undercoat, it will entirely change the way the red works. It actually makes the reds more exciting.

Landscape artists sometimes use a red undercoat to add vibrancy to a forest scene. The may use an orange undercoat to a sky or sea scape. We employed the same logic in reverse: a green under painting to our red roses.

DecoArt publishes a chart listing the Americana paints and groups their opacity into three groups: transparent, semi-transparent and opaque. When you substitute paints, it is usually necessary to find something that is not only close in color/hue, but also the same in transparency.

decoart.com/resources/Americana_Opacity_Chart.pdf
*discontinued
PREPARATION

Do yourself a favor and purchase the clock guts before you start. If you have it in your stash, find it and try it out. The wood comprising the clock face is 1/4” thick. The hole for the face is 5 1/2” in diameter and the hole is a standard 3/8” to fit the shaft of most clock kits.

You will want the shaft on your clock to be thick enough to go through the hole and extend another 1/8” or so to hold the retaining nut. If it is too long, you can glue a square of wood to the back of the clock face. The minute hand should be 2-1/2” to 2-3/4” long. The tips can be cut off with care.

I used purchased plastic numerals and painted them with a mixture of Emperor’s Gold and DecoArt’s Adhesion Medium. You could also paint the numbers on as Roman Numerals or Arabic numbers.

Sand, Seal, and sand again. Remember: always sand
in the direction of the wood grain. Pay special attention to the areas that will be gilded. They may be rough because they are end of grain; and, every imperfection will show once they get a shiny finish.

Basecoat the body of the clock with Lamp Black; basecoat the gold areas (top and bottom edges—rim about clock face) with Oxblood.

**PAINTING INSTRUCTIONS**

**Background Foliage**

The background will be painted in layers, each slightly more detailed and lighter in color. Remember that paint appears to be darker once it dries. If you wish to experiment, add a little Snow White to both Black Green and Hauser Dark Green. You should immediately see that the Hauser Dark Green looks quite blue. The Black Green, in the other hand, is much warmer. This gives up
both temperatures from the very start: cool and warm.

For the first layer, lay out Lamp Black, Black Green and Hauser Dark Green in your palette. Using a 1” flat that is not cleaned between paint changes, start at the bottom of the clock and slip slap (large almost blended “x” strokes) with Lamp Black. This ensures a dark background and also dresses your brush with Lamp Black. Keep your strokes straight and angular; avoid curves and circles.

As you work upwards, start picking up some Black Green (about 2–3” from the bottom) and continue with the same loose strokes. As you continue upward, there will be less Lamp Black in your brush and more Black Green. By the time you get to about 1” beneath the clock face, start picking up Hauser Dark Green. The brush should hold only Hauser Dark Green by the time you get to the top of the clock, even though some of the original Lamp Black will still show through.

Our second layer attempts to be more defined, warmer, and appear to be shaped more like rose leaves. Nonetheless, this layer is also completed with a 1” flat brush that is not cleaned in between changing paints. We will, however, not work from dark to lights. Values (how dark a paint is) will be chosen randomly. To bring this layer further forward, we will add Hauser Medium Green and Avocado, which are not only lighter than both Black Green and Hauser Medium Green, but also lighter.

Randomly pick up Hauser Dark Green, Hauser Medium Green, Avocado, or Light Avocado and paint in leaves as demonstrated in Figure 1. Cover most of the clock, leaving only the upper left bare. We can always go back and add more leaves later.

Figure 2 shows the progression of the second layer leaves. The following are some guidelines (not hard and fast rules). There is a central vein that curves slightly and divides the leaf into two halves. It is painted with the same flat brush, using the line edge and “flicking the brush,” so the vein is narrower at the very tip. Each side of the leaf is painted with a fairly dry brush on its full side, starting at the leaf’s edge and “flicking” towards the vein.

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The leaf and vein are the same value on either side of the vein at the tip; this makes the vein fade into the leaf at the tip. The leaves are painted at both ends: both the tip and where the stem attaches. The amount of leaf showing on either side of the vein will also make the leaf appear to tilt forward, backward, etc.

If these background (shadow) leaves get too bright, pick up one of the darker greens; if they are so dark that you can’t see them, pick up one of the lighter greens. They should all angle outward from the major rose. The younger leaves would be further away from the main rose, be lighter, and be smaller than the older leaves near the bottom of the clock. The tips of older leaves would curve downward (gravity), but younger leaves might still curve upward. The leaf can contain one, two, or all of the greens.

It’s only habit, but I tend to drag my brush towards the vein to paint the back section and away from the vein to paint the front section. Don’t overthink this layer; most of it will be covered up by the roses and more detailed leaves that come next. Figure 2 shows the sample at this stage in the bright Florida sunlight. This allows you to see them better, but they are more subtle in typical indoor light.

If you look at the final project, it should be clear that 99% of the first two layers are covered up on the clock’s front. So, why go to the effort? For me, it is both warm—up and practice. I also make decisions about the painting to come. Every painter subconsciously introduces their own style into every piece they paint. Some painters never paint sharp lines; their brush always curves. The leaves and petals on their floral pieces are soft and rounded.

On this piece, I chose to make many of the leaves and petals angular, pointed, and sharp. This layer lets me practice how the leaves are painted, and I get to play with and see how the different greens mix both in my brush and on the piece. In the end, a few of these leaves will peek through and they add another layer of depth and dimension to the final painting.

A special note: As you look at the following figures, you will see that the painting changes continually throughout the painting process. A leaf may be removed; a petal may be turned a different direction. Be mindful of your painting and open to adjusting it at every step.

Let dry. Transfer the line drawing for roses and leaves; do not transfer the buds or tiny branches at this time.

Leaves—Underpainting

The leaves are painted using a wide variety of greens. From dark to light, we have: Black Green, Hauser Dark Green, Avocado, Hauser Medium Green, Light Avocado and Celery. In addition, we can also use Lamp Black (but is it used very sparingly—see below). Eggshell will be added very sparingly to the leaves later. These eight values (degrees of darkness) are all relative. For example, Hauser Medium Green is lighter than Black Green but darker than Celery. In other words, areas painted with Hauser Medium Green will appear to come forward of those areas painted with Black Green but recede further back than those areas painted with Celery.

The leaves are first roughed in using the 1” flat—the
same as when painting the background. However, veins, highlights, and details are added with my favorite #4 Papillion round brush. Notice that the leaves become smaller as you paint the younger leaves near the end of the stems. The leaves on the clock face are both small and very subtle (incomplete and contain only a few small areas that are light). **Figure 3**

Follow the photos to paint your leaves and determine when you should select a lighter or darker paint. However, if you choose a different paint—lighter or darker—all it will do is turn the leaf differently than shown in the sample. The leaves are natural; there is no “wrong” way for them to be shown. The sample merely shows the leaves in a manner that appeared to be pleasing.
to me at the time I was painting them.

As a special note, leaves are a common component in decorative painting and flipping the edge of a leaf is a neat detail that adds interest and sophistication to any painting. If you look at real leaves, especially where they flip and curl, the very edges are straight lines and not curved. **Figure 4**

**Figure 5** provides a closeup of three leaves and how the values of each side alter the way the leaf appears to lie. The light source is upper left. The location(s) of the highlight(s) on each leaf is determined by where the light strikes.

When, done, inspect your leaves. Make a few even lighter and warmer. This will make them come forward. Change any leaf that seems to be distracting or take your attention away from the center of the painting where the roses lay.

Find a few triangular shapes tucked behind a rose petal or between some leaves and darken them with Lamp Black that fades out into the surrounding greens. Add a few broken lines to represent branch ends. **Figure 7**

Even though we “think” we are done with the leaves, continue to inspect them while painting the rose underpainting. The same greens will be on your palette,
so putzing and fixing will be easy.

The fuzzy white lines you see in the figures are the draft roses. As I paint them, the shapes of their petals will be refined. The final photos and line drawings will reflect these improvements.

**Roses—Underpainting**

The roses are under-painted with the same greens as the leaves and the #4 round. However, there are some significant differences:

(1) Eggshell is added to the palette.

(2) Matching the placement of values, as shown in the photos, is important. Unlike the leaves, they are not random. The roses are spheres. This (and the upper left light source) dictates both the placement and location of highlights on and in the roses.

(3) Blending between values is more important than it was on the leaves. Blending softens the roses.

(4) Each of the roses is, as a whole, larger, lighter, warmer, and brighter, depending upon its placement. The bottom rose is the dominant rose. It is the largest, lightest, brightest, warmest, and most forward. The next two roses are further back; the third rose (second row right) is tucked even further back. The fourth rose, straddles the clock face and comes forward, but not as far as the bottom rose. The next roses/buds are furthest back. Each rose’s respective positions is established by the values used.

Our rose petal edges consist of wavy lines that include “innies” and “outies.” Ruffles are created along the petal edges by changing values in small, well-blended triangles. Once you decide to make one or the other lighter (innies or outies), be consistent throughout the painting. For this project, I chose to make the “innies” the raised part of the ruffles.

Paint the roses, one petal at a time, following the photos and using the round brush. You may encounter areas where the value of an outer edge of a petal is the same as the value of the leaf it touches. That means that one of the two must be made darker than the other; whichever is behind needs to be darker. Alternatively, the petal that is over or in front can be made lighter.

This design is unusual for decorative painting in that there is no focal area. The goal was to make each element of the design equally important and still maintain depth. (Many paintings with groupings do not have focal areas and Monet is a perfect example of an artist who often painted without them). The large bottom rose is the primary rose or rose 1 (see line drawing for numbering). It is the furthest forward and anchors
the bouquet. There is a hierarchy. The primary rose is painted with the most flips—the most ruffles—the best blending—the sharpest edges—and the most areas that are bright, light, and warm. Rose 2 and rose 3 get a bit less attention. By the time you get to the clock face, rose 4 is “very loose.” The same holds for the half open flowers, the buds, and the leaves. The buds on the sides are barely there. The further away from rose 1, the less detail and sharpness is employed.

In addition, the further back, the darker the subject. Rose 3 is the furthest back and the darkest of the four open roses.

**Figure 7** provides side by side contrasts.

After establishing your verdaille, you may wish to let it dry and then protect with an interim coat of Soft Touch varnish. This will allow you to wash off subsequent painting with soapy water if you decide you don’t like it and you make that decision before the over painting dries too much.

**Roses—Overpainting**

We will be painting with the roses with only three red paints: Alizarin Crimson, Red Alert, and Scarlet. See **Figure 8**

Coat the entire rose with a thin, even coat of Alizarin Crimson. Don’t worry about the divisions between petals. Coat the entire rose. I used a size 6 filbert; the absence of sharp corners helped me avoid streaks.

Pick up some Red Alert and paint over the areas previ-
ously highlighted in the underpainting. Blend into the Alizarin Crimson layer. With the same dirty brush, pick up some Scarlet and repeat, but focus on the highlights in the upper left portion of the rose.

Scarlet is not transparent, so care must be taken that it doesn’t travel into areas that are intended to be darker shadows or shading. The final highlight is often painted with an semiopaque or opaque paint when using an overpainting/underpainting technique. The viewer sees through transparent paints, but looks at opaque paints.

As you work with transparent paints, there are a couple of important considerations. (1) Always be sure to shake the paint well before using. This is especially important if the paint has sat around in your studio or the store for any length of time. The pigments must be evenly dispersed. (2) The paint can be applied thinly or thickly; each will give you a different effect. (3) The paint can be diluted with blending medium or just water; I use water. (4) Even though they are labeled transparent, too many coats or too thick of an application will not be transparent. Learn to use transparent paints with control.

Let the rose dry. Coat over the entire rose again with Alizarin Crimson (unless you really like the orange of the final highlight). Rinse brush clean and re-paint one or two (?) of the darkest areas (the center of the flower and maybe another triangular shadow/shading) with Black Green.

Randomly edge leaves and bud sepals with broken lines of Asphaltum using your round brush. Also, use Asphaltum to randomly paint over the stems and insert some more “twiggy” branches.

When you are happy, sign your name.

The Pizazz and all that Jazz
Technically, the painting is done. But, there are always some neat little extras that you can add to make it a “bit more sophisticated.” Here are some suggestions for this project.

Further darken the background with a wash of Lamp Black and/or Black Green anywhere you find a triangle formed by the intersection of two objects. There is no black on the roses. (Review Figure 7)

Assure that a couple of leaves are lighter, brighter, and warmer—at least in the area of Rose 1. Use Eggshell for these final highlights.

“Smudge” Alizarin Crimson into some of the darker areas of the background to simulate distant roses.

Edge the rose petals on the lower and/or right side with thin broken lines of Light Avocado. Be sparing. They are already present in Figure 9 by so faint that they can barely be seen. They do, however, make a difference.

Paint a pair of ladybugs on the top of the clock. First undercoat with Celery and then paint the bodies with

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<th>Red Alert</th>
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**Figure 8**
Burgundy. Highlight with Red Alert and finally Scarlet. Add dots of Lamp Black with a stylus. To make their black heads visible against the dark background, edge lightly on the right with a thin line of Celery. Mine are so tiny that I can’t get a decent picture of them.

Decoupage a copy of Bobby Burns’ poem inside the clock.

**FINISHING**

Apply one or two coats of Emperor’s Gold to the top and bottom edging. Once dry, apply two or more coats of DecoArt American’s Soft Touch.

Glue or paint the numerals on the clock face. Assemble clock works according to the manufacturers’ instructions.
line up with clock
face, sides, and staddling
To ensure your pattern is at 100%, this box should measure 1" x 1" when printed.
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Align with side of clock - the one bud is shown in both top and bottom line drawings.
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