

Listening without hearing

by Ali Cavanaugh

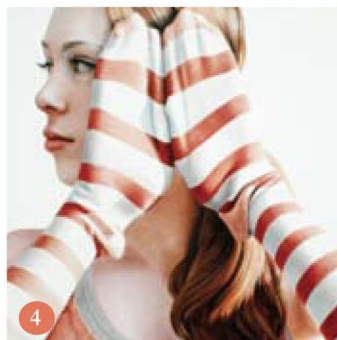
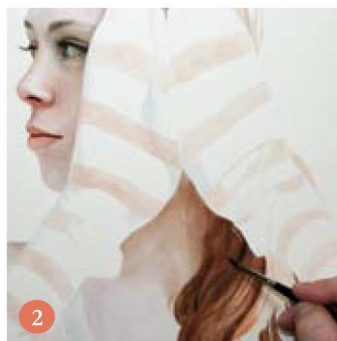
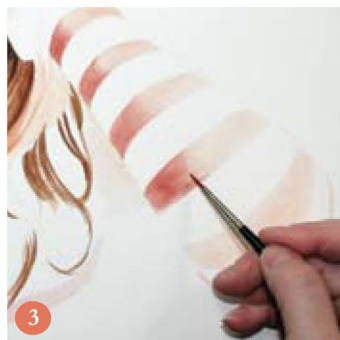
Initially, I am inspired by the physical characteristics of the women that I paint, but am quickly drawn deeper into their emotional side. This connection I have with my subjects is often spontaneous and unexpected. I'm constantly in a state of awareness, taking in imagery, colors, and patterns that I, in turn, use to reflect the subject's both physical and emotional reality. This leads me to portray the figure in intuitive and abstract compositions surrounded by white contemplative space.

This painting called, *Listening without Hearing*, is a good example of my painting process using Daniel Smith® watercolors on Ampersand's Aquabord™ clay surface. I would say that my process most closely resembles that of egg tempera because of how I build up paint layers by using tiny overlapping brush strokes. I layer complementary colors to build up depth; orange over blue or red over green, for example.

I discovered Ampersand Aquabord™ a number of years ago and have been using it exclusively ever since. It can be ordered in the 1/8" flat panel that fits standard frames or with the 2" deep cradle that does not need additional framing. Aquabord has quickly become a favorite for water-media because once sealed, watercolors do not need to be covered by glass and because of its forgiving and absorbent clay surface that allows the artist to lift out areas of pigment back to a white ground. Ampersand released a new and improved surface this year that is softer and warmer, not in color, but in touch. It is velvety and lush. The pigments remain vibrant and seem to pull up even easier than the previous surface (for the artists that do a lot of lifting). My method is mostly 'additive' as I only lift out when modeling hair.

Step 1: Working from a photograph, I first started out by sketching my figure very lightly with a 4H graphite pencil. Using a size 1 round brush and a combination of Perylene Maroon and Van Dyke Brown, I redefined my lines with lightly pigmented water, establishing the most basic contours. I spent some time modeling the profile of the face using Perylene Maroon, Cadmium Red, Sap Green, and Payne's Gray. I slowly built up the depth of color using very wet watery layers.

Step 2: On the hair, I continued with a combination of the Perylene Maroon and Van Dyke brown. Still using my size 0 round brush, I layered thin veils of value. To accentuate the texture of the hair, I partially lifted color with a damp brush, blotting in between lifts and then added more darks for dimension and fullness.



Step 3: I began to build form in the striped arms by using layers of Cadmium Red, Lemon Yellow and Van Dyke Brown. As the form of the figure started to take shape, I began to develop brighter tones in the areas of reflected light. I used primarily Cadmium Red and Lemon Yellow and applied it with a size 0 brush. I went in with my 00 and 000 brushes to redefine the delicate details in the eyelashes and ears. The colors that I used are: Van Dyke Brown, Indigo, Perylene

b. 1973, St. Louis artist Ali Cavanaugh's compositions are strong and intuitive, thanks not only to being a wife and mother of three, but also to the variations in her experience, such as hearing loss, that made her adapt to and recreate the world around her. Her work has received extensive recognition and is in corporate and private collections around the world.

www.alicavanaugh.com

- Ampersand™ Aquabord™ with 2" Deep Cradle
- Daniel Smith® Extra-fine Watercolors
- Daniel Smith® Series 75 Synthetic Round Brushes #s: 000, 00, 0, 1, 2
- 4H Graphite Pencil
- Krylon® UV Archival Varnish (Matte #1378) optional
- Minwax Polycrylic® optional

More about Aquabord™: www.ampersandart.com/aquabord.html



Ali Cavanaugh, *Listening without Hearing*, watercolor on Ampersand Aquabord™, 16x20x2"

Maroon, and Burnt Umber. Keeping my transitions subtle, I added more pigment to the stripes, hair, and neck area, still working with very wet layers to build depth and form.

Step 4: In the final stages of the painting, I continued to add darks and details to the hair with reds and browns. I concentrated on the shirt more with reds, browns, and yellows. Then, I painted a few more light layers into the face. At this point, I wanted to create balance and bring everything into focus.

Finally, I evened out the skin tones with thin washes of color and then added some Payne's gray into the core shadows on the white stripes of the sock arms. To finish, I sealed the surface of my paintings with Krylon® UV Archival matte varnish and the wood cradles with Minwax Polycrylic® protective finish. ■

