

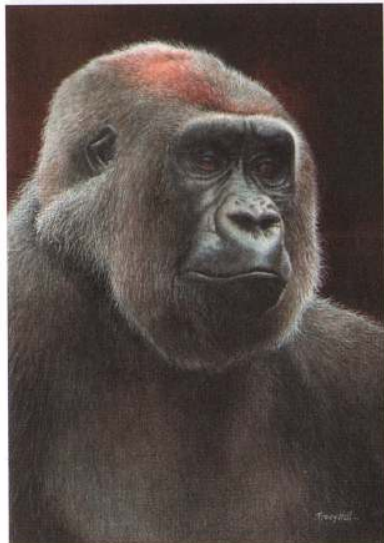
# Small and bright

The creation of a true miniature presents many unique challenges. From choosing the right tools to making the final tiny brushstroke, Tracy Hall takes you through the stages of painting a detailed portrait of a western lowland gorilla, called Effie, so small it will fit in the palm of your hand

Painting in miniature is an intensely personal experience. The challenge of conveying your idea in such a small space, and the level of concentration required to execute it, can be daunting. It is also hugely enjoyable as you become completely absorbed in the tiny world you are creating, in the same way that the intimate nature of miniature art later draws the viewer in for a closer look.

No matter what size your work, it's always good practice when painting wildlife to spend as long as you can watching your subject. While it's true that there is no substitute for being able to observe animals in their natural habitat, this isn't always possible and zoos and wildlife parks offer a good alternative for artists. Sketching, making notes and taking photographs combine to help you remember when you're back in the studio.

*Pensive* (below), the subject of the following demonstration, came about after a visit to London zoo where I spent time photographing the gorillas. I was particularly drawn to one individual, called Effie, so I decided to do a portrait of her. I wanted to keep it very simple and used several photographs for reference, none of which were particularly good as photography is not my strong point. However, I was able to take little details from each one and completely ignored the cluttered backgrounds. I also



◀ *Grey Heron*, watercolour, 3½×2in. (9×5cm). Herons can arrange themselves into such interesting shapes that a simple background can sometimes be most effective.



▶ *Chipmunk*, watercolour, 2×2in. (5×5cm). The warm background picks out some of the colours used in the chipmunk's fur and the bark to tie the different elements of the painting together.

▼ *Long-eared Owl*, watercolour, 3½×2in. (9×5cm). These owls can be hard to spot in the daytime as they hide in trees, so the complex branches became an important feature of the painting, which reflects their behaviour.

played up the lighting from my reference photographs to give the piece more impact.

This painting received a Highly Commended award for the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation's Wildlife Artist of the Year exhibition at the Mall Galleries, London, in the summer of 2010.

### Hints & tips

- Watercolour paper can be damaged easily at the drawing stage by excessive erasing or pressing too hard. If you are worried about damaging the surface, do your initial drawing on a separate sheet of paper then trace it when you are happy.
- Check the proportions carefully before you start to paint. Hold your work up to a mirror to see mistakes more clearly.
- Avoid textured surfaces for a miniature painting. Whatever you use, it needs to be completely smooth.
- Use a little less water as you add more detail. Aim for the consistency of double cream.
- Choose brushes that hold a good amount of paint and keep a very fine point.
- If you are working from photographs, don't be afraid to alter, leave out or combine aspects to achieve the result you are after. They are just a starting point.

◀ *Pensive*, watercolour, 3½×2¼in. (8.5×5.5cm). Follow Tracy as she paints this study over the page.



The Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers' annual exhibition will be held at the Mall Galleries, London, from 2pm on Tuesday 15 October to 1pm on Sunday 27 October. For more information visit [www.royal-miniature-society.org.uk](http://www.royal-miniature-society.org.uk). Find out more about Tracy's work at [www.watercolour-artist.co.uk](http://www.watercolour-artist.co.uk)



## MINIATURES

### DEMONSTRATION *Pensive*

#### You will need

■ Surface

- Saunders Waterford Hot-pressed watercolour board 3½×2¼in. (8.5×5.5cm).

■ Winsor & Newton Artists' watercolour

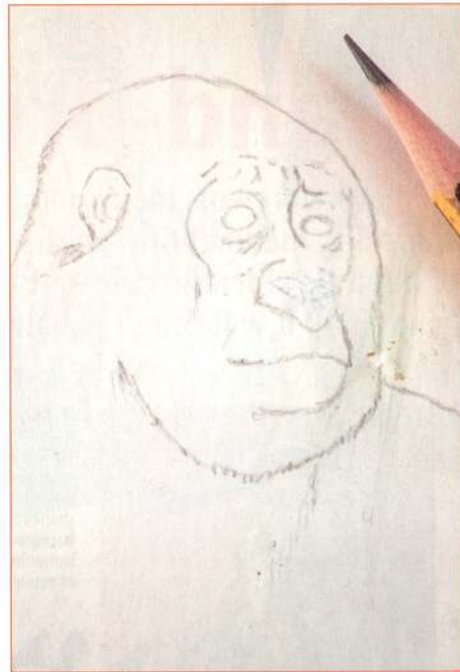
- Payne's grey
- French ultramarine
- Burnt sienna
- Yellow ochre
- Titanium white

■ Brushes

- Rosemary & Co Series 33 Kolinsky Sable (short handled) Nos. 3, 1 & 10/0

■ Miscellaneous

- HB pencil sharpened to a fine point
- Kitchen roll
- Magnifying glass



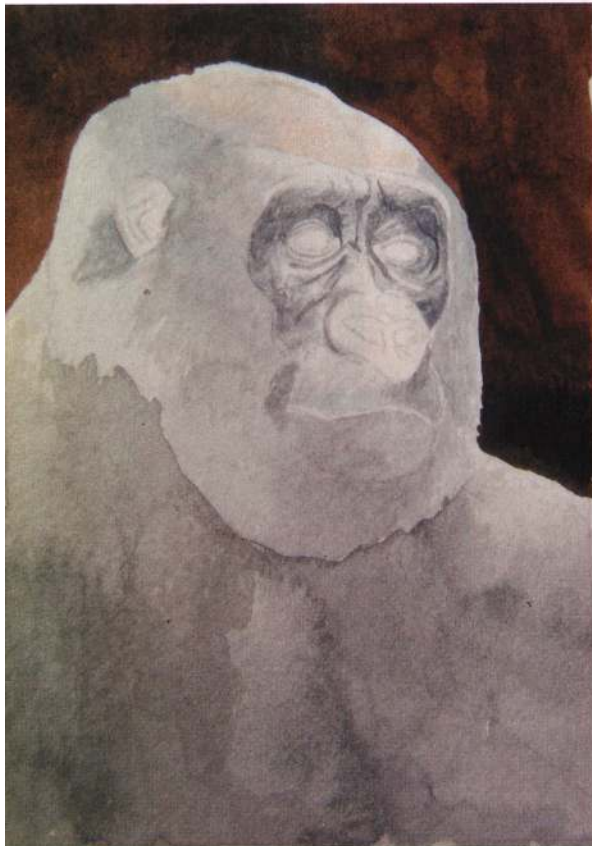
All images here (except the finished painting) have been reproduced larger than actual size to help you follow the painting process in more detail. Refer to finished painting for actual size.

#### ◀ Step 1

Using a sharp pencil, mark out a rectangle of 3.25×2.25in. on the watercolour board. Lightly draw the outline and main features, taking care not to press too hard and gently erasing mistakes until you are happy with the drawing. I have made these lines darker than usual so they will show up on this page. These pencil lines are only intended to act as a guide when you start to apply paint.

#### Step 2 ▼

Loosely block in the background using the No. 3 brush and a mixture of burnt sienna with a dash of French ultramarine. With the same brush block in the main body and face with a thin wash of Payne's grey, taking care to leave the area around the nose and eyes untouched. Using the same mixture, begin to define the features of the face, avoiding going too dark yet. It is more effective to build up the tones gradually with lots of layers.



#### Step 3 ▼

With a No. 1 brush begin to work on the background. Mix burnt sienna with a little French ultramarine and apply the paint in a series of tiny dots, blending them together as you go. I have kept it slightly lighter on the left and becoming gradually darker towards the right. Using a mixture of French ultramarine and burnt sienna begin to define the contours of the body with the No. 3 brush.







**Step 4 ▲**

Switch to the No. 10/0 brush and start to add the hair on the body using short strokes in the direction of the hair growth. Vary the length of the hairs and don't press hard; try to do a little flick with your wrist. Add a little titanium white to the mixture to make it opaque and add more hairs over the top. Let this dry, then use the No. 3 brush to lay a glaze of French ultramarine and burnt sienna over the hairs you have done. Work quickly and lightly to avoid smearing the opaque paint. Let this dry then repeat the process as many times as you like to give the effect of depth and thick, coarse hair. Using the No. 3 brush mix a little yellow ochre and burnt sienna and add a thin wash over the cheeks and the top of the head.



**Step 5 ▲**

Using the No. 1 brush and Payne's grey with a little burnt sienna begin to define and mould the face, working carefully and slowly over small areas at a time and blending in hard edges as you work to leave the very lightest areas untouched. By this stage I am using a hand-held magnifying glass to help see the finest detail. Using burnt sienna and French ultramarine outline the eyes with the No. 1 brush and burnt sienna with a touch of yellow ochre for the eye itself. While this is still damp, add the pupil using burnt sienna and French ultramarine. When this is dry, mix titanium white with a touch of French ultramarine and carefully add the highlight.



**◀ Step 6**

Continue to add the hairs around the face and head and paint the ear using Payne's grey with a little burnt sienna. At this stage make up a thin wash of burnt sienna and glaze over the body and head, avoiding the face, and add a final layer of hair all over, finishing with a very light mix of mainly titanium white for the final few hairs. Don't overdo it or you will lose all the layers you have so carefully built up underneath. The final stage is to finish adding the details to the face and darken the areas around the eyes, which are in shadow.

► The finished painting *Pensive*, watercolour, 3½x2¼in. (8.5x5.5cm)

