



Ellen Buselli New York, USA, *The Old Melting Pots*, oil, 20 x 24" (51 x 61 cm)

Finalist

My Inspiration

Vintage cast-iron melting pots have beautiful weathered matte surfaces and compelling humble wabi-sabi beauty. Although they are quite heavy and utilitarian made to withstand extreme heat over open flames, there is an elegance to their simple lines and basic design. When I saw and purchased several in a flea market in upstate New York while antiquing one summer, I was and still am very inspired to paint them in my still life setups. There is a sense of timelessness in their turn-of-the-century quality, and these objects are reminiscent of the paintings of Emil Carlsen, one of my favorite turn-of-the-century painters.

My Design Strategy

The largest pot is center stage flanked by

supporting elements and objects. The earth tone color palette creates a calm classical order, pleasant and soothing to view. Although the painting is dominated by the large, matte brown melting pot, it is complemented with the soft whites of the fabrics and white pitcher, and by the blue-grey and copper metal pot. The theme of utilitarian objects is elevated to higher beauty by their own loveliness and grace.

My Working Process

I prepare a toned canvas of a mixture of burnt sienna and ultramarine blue, leaving brushstrokes visible for texture. Once dry, I begin with a painted sketch of the setup in monochromatic tones of umber. At this stage, I am concerned with the source of light, the cast shadows, the overall dark to light values, and creating an

accurate drawing of shapes, perspective and relationships between the objects on the picture plane. Once the painted roadmap is established, I will then roughly and loosely paint in the background including the light and shadow areas, leaving the brushstrokes visible for texture interest. From that point onward, I will then paint in a very direct and immediate manner, mixing the correct colors and values on my palette as I go. I try not to rework areas once completed but will build up textures where needed and enhance light accents and darker shadows once the first direct painting process is completed and dry.

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