

Theme – African savannah sunrise in monsoonal time.

The scene. The setting is a snapshot of the African savannah after the rains at sunrise with water and wildlife everywhere the area becomes green and flourishes for the first few months. Without going overboard and looking like Noah's Ark, I tried to capture a busy but relaxed scene of the animals going about their morning duties. I used the Lion pride hopefully to be instantly recognisable of Africa. To me the effects of monsoonal rains in Africa has always fascinated me and seemed an amazing, beautiful and precious process of Mother Nature. This is why I have chosen it as my theme for this competition.

Step 1. My mixed media consists of airbrushing, hand painting, clear, white and coloured acrylic. Using regular tips I filed, shaped then painted them freehand using my airbrush. I used colours yellow to orange for my sky, a purple for the distant mountains (I cut out a stencil I handmade from a piece of paper for the purple mountains) and a khaki green as the base for my foreground as a base for the scene.

Step 2. To create my scene I hand painted in the sky (yellows, gold, bronze and orange), distant trees (black).

Step 3. I sculpted my Lions straight onto the airbrushed nails using a mixture of white and coloured acrylic trying hard to get the bone structure and skin folds and expression of the lions to come through. I ended up hand painting over some of my sculpted items as I really wanted a stronger colour with more variety too. I then sculpted in the water for the lions to drink from in blue acrylic and my rocks and leaves on the closest tree all out of acrylic. Then I filed the sculptures that joined between 2 nails for a better fit and gave the other sculptures a light buff and dusted it all off.

Step 4. Next in order I freehand painted in my background

- trees (brown, black, beige grey and 3 different shades of green),
- Elephants in the background walking (3 shades of grey and white),
- Birds black birds in the distant flying to water and white birds flocking and landing in the tree to eat from (black and white),
- water (3 shades of blue),
- Zebras grazing and swishing their tails (white and black),
- rocks (2 shades of brown, yellow and a black),
- vegetation (6 different shades of green for the grass) then over the foreground tree (brown, black, beige grey and 4 different shades of green),
- Lions, the king is lazing around overlooking his family, the two cubs up and watching something to play and pounce on, lioness drinking (2 shades of pink, black, white, grey, yellow, 3 browns, 10 shades of orange/ yellow) and a few more blades of grass to finish with the acrylic paints that I mixed together myself to get a lot of the shades.

Step 5. To hand paint I started with the basic shapes then used more shades to add detail, shade and highlight my scene.

Step 6. I really didn't want my whole scene to be glossy so instead I airbrushed a clear acrylic over the whole scene to get more of a satin finish rather than matt or gloss. I then decided to use a clear gloss over the foreground sculptures (foreground tree, lions, water and right hand side rocks) to make them more prominent and give the scene some more depth.

Getting the lines perfect and straight on the zebras, sculpting the lions to be a correct shape with expression in each one and the millions of blades of grass proved to be quite a task for me. To do the hand painting I used only 3 techniques, striping , stippling and normal painting. My tools are a striper brush, a normal no2 artist brush and used this same brush to stipple the paint for effect on the foreground trees leaves.

My tools that I used are

- 3 different paintbrushes,
- acrylic art paint in 2 metallic colours and flat colours which then mixed to get a variety of shades,
- a handmade and stencil for the mountains,
- airbrush,
- airbrush acrylic paints,
- acrylic in white, clear and colours using a kolinsky brush.

Note : I wanted just a plain, earthy background so it did not overwhelm the scene so I placed it on the back of an indigenous shield made of wood that has been carved and burnt out. Photo was taken using a Kodak Easyshare DX6340 digital camera and edited using Irfanview free software.