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If you want your figurative paintings to tell a story, learn **Paul “Tex” Lecor’s** tricks and techniques for working from life in acrylics.

Painting engaging stories

Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated by elderly people — their experiences, their labors, their *joie de vivre*. My sketchpads are filled with rough sketches of people going about their everyday business, especially people who work with their hands, such as lumberjacks and farmers. I love their big hands, their wrinkles and

the faraway look in their eyes. I have painted many of them sitting down somewhere in the middle of the fields or taking a break from their many chores. I try to catch the defiant look, the satisfaction of a life well-spent working hard for what they have earned.

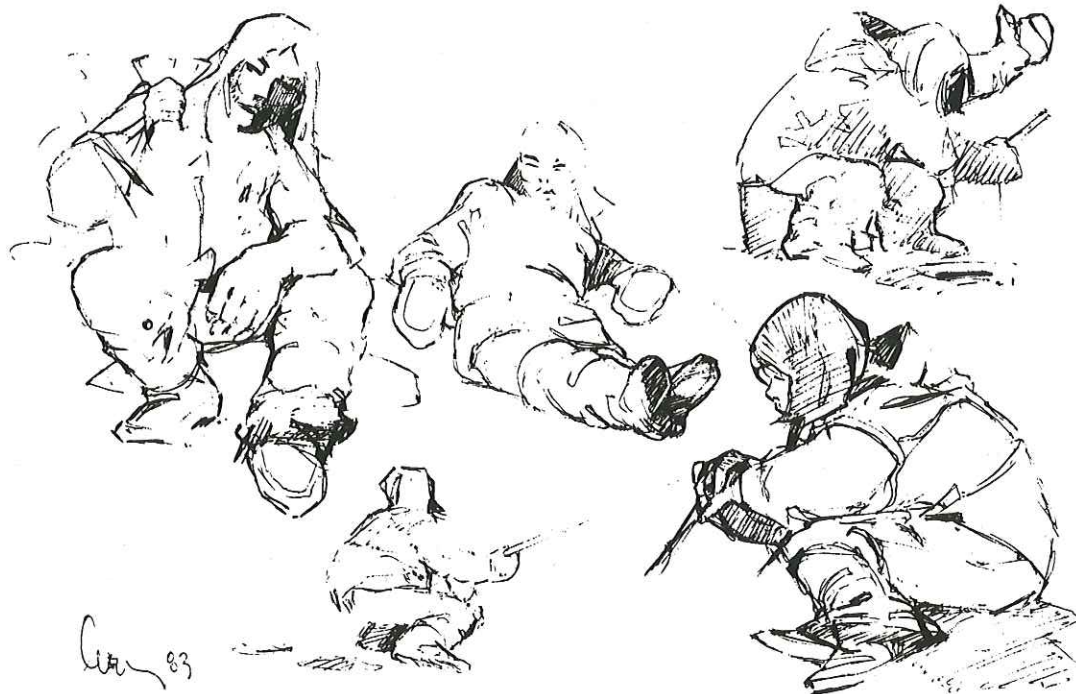
I do not search for details but treat my subjects as sculptures. Light and shadows give them the

right expressions. I try to stop time, to capture a moment by getting the right movement and the right attitude. There is always a story in my paintings.

Working from life

All subjects interest me — still life, nudes and landscapes — as long as I have a pencil or brush in my hand. But nothing inspires me more than trying to capture the stories written in the wrinkles of a person’s face. When painting my “personages”, I usually work with models I find during my pilgrimages in little villages. By talking and exchanging with my subjects, I get a good idea of who the people are. This helps with conveying the facial expressions and the personalities in the final portrait.

To capture my subjects while on the road, I carry my sketchpad so I never lose out on a possible



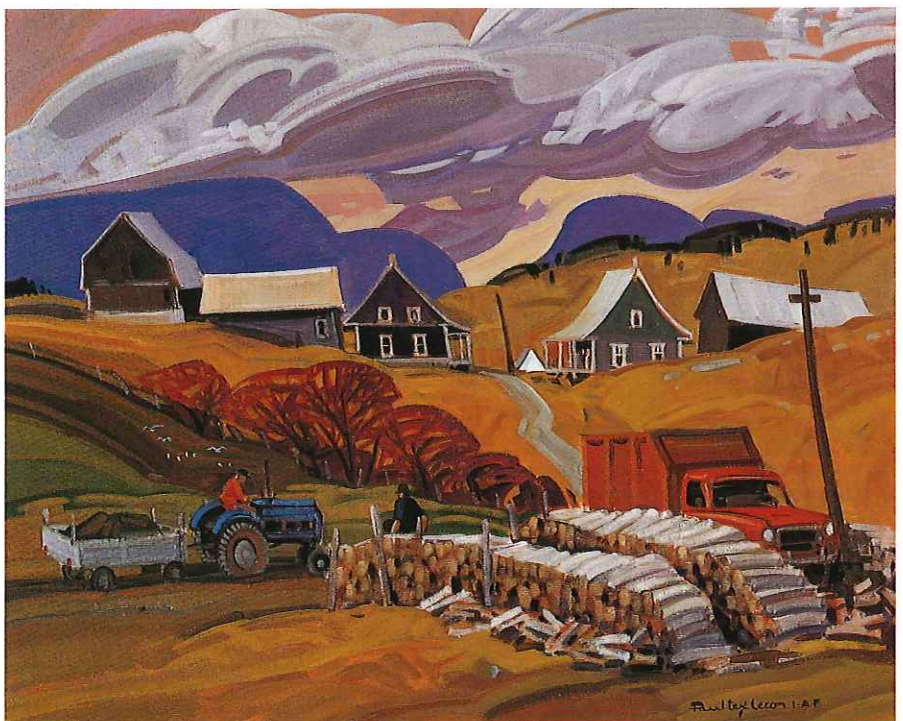


14 Juillet (July 14th), acrylic, 24 x 30" (61 x 76cm)

painting. The recorded information in my sketches is very important to my art, which is why I have collected about 50 full sketchpads in my studio. I refer to them often, frequently putting several figures together to design a good composition.

Painting with acrylics

As much as I love to sketch on location (and to paint landscapes on location, too), I prefer to take my time to develop my portrait paintings in the studio. This way, I can refine my compositions so they tell stories in an engaging way. Then I begin to paint in acrylic, always working on a toned



Le Cordees de bois (The Wood Pile), acrylic, 24 x 30" (61 x 76cm)

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Art in the making Telling a story — “Pour Le Championnat”

This is exactly the type of subject I love to paint. These men are playing for the championship. What a game it is! With the right materials, a good composition and a sculptural approach to portraying the figures' expressions, I can capture a moment that tells a timeless story.

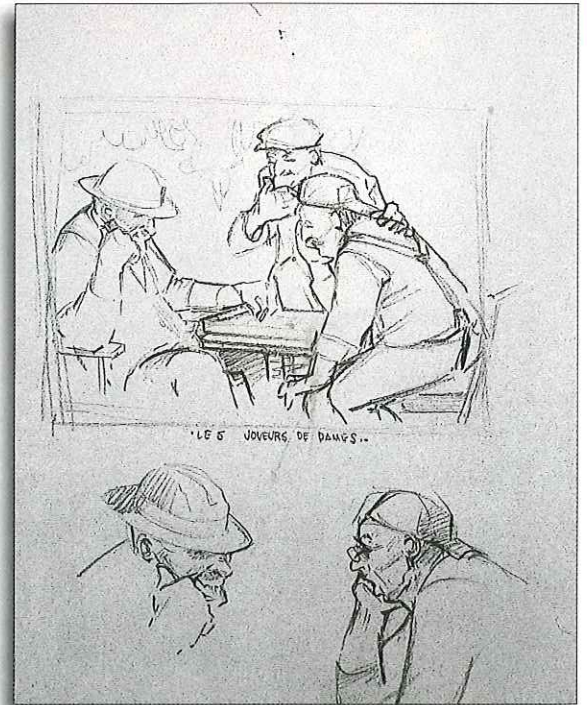
What the artist used

Toned canvas

Full range of acrylic paints

High quality synthetic brushes

50-50 mix of water and matte acrylic varnish



1 Recording the characters

I began with a rough sketch of some elderly men. I drew small close-ups to capture their features and expressions.



4 Creating an environment

Starting with the background, I built up the detail in the windows, wall and greenery with glazes of transparent acrylic paint. I then started to put in the cast shadows, and began to prepare the underpainting of some of the figures.



5 Building up details

At this point, I added more colours to the clothing, using more opaque applications of paint and paying attention to tonal qualities and patterns. I also worked on the wooden chairs. All of this was in preparation for the most important step to come.



2 Refining the composition

I then transferred my sketch onto a well prepared, red-orange toned canvas. For me, this is when the detailed drawing takes place. I adjusted the composition by adding another figure to allow the spirit of these people (wrinkles and all) to play out on my canvas. The characters are starting to unfold.



3 Setting the stage

Next, I started to block in the tonal areas with washes of warm greys and reds. My stage was being set, but I decided that yet another character was needed in my drama.



6 Bringing out personalities

Finally, I put a face to each of the characters, adding each person's individual expression, bringing out each of their personalities, making them appear alive and involved with the thrill of the championship game. I also painted in the all-important Winner's Cup.



7 Protecting the work

When "Pour Le Championnat" (acrylic, 24 x 30" or 61 x 76cm) was completely dry, I finished it with a 50-50 mix of water and matte acrylic varnish.

Try this outdoor acrylic experiment

There's no need to hesitate to paint outdoors or to use the wonderful medium of acrylics. Want to have some fun learning how? Then try this little experiment:

On your next painting trip take with you only a few tubes of acrylic colours:

- Burnt Umber
- Yellow Ochre
- Red Ochre
- Deep Green
- Cobalt Blue
- Off White

Also bring along several little prepared panels, let's say 8 x 10" (20 x 25cm), toned in a colour that's appropriate to the season. Find a natural subject you like and let yourself loose. Use broad strokes and don't hesitate to let it flow.

When back in your studio, put the little sketches against the wall and choose your favourite.

Next, put it near a 30 x 40" (76 x 102cm) canvas toned with the

same colour as the little panel. Use the same colours plus maybe two more, such as Light Green and Violet Permanent. Now try to reproduce the little panel on the large canvas, using the same strokes and vigour you exhibited in painting the original. The result will be so astonishing you won't believe your eyes. It may not be your usual way of painting, but it's your soul and guts that will appear in front of you. That is what real painting is all about!

This experience will help you learn to capture the fast-moving lights and shadows usually found when painting outside, especially in early morning or late afternoons. It will also help build your confidence by separating you from the average monotonous landscapes. Plus, it will introduce you to the many ways you can use acrylic paint. What makes a good artist is the difference of personality and style, so have fun when you're creating your art!

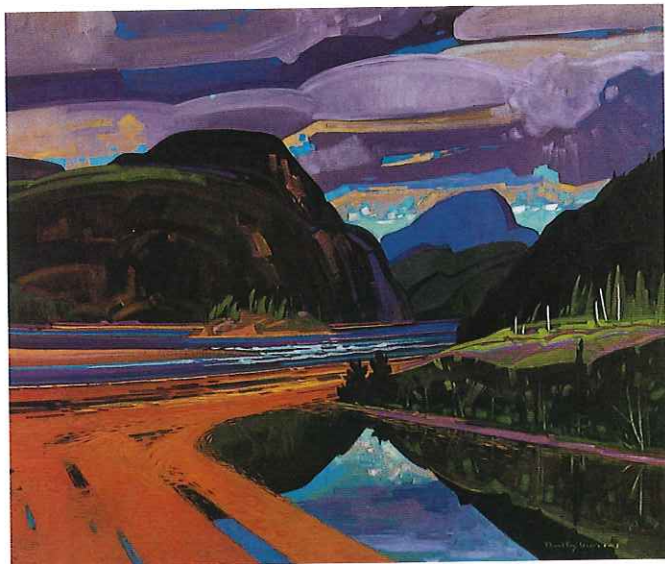
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ground with the best quality paints and synthetic brushes.

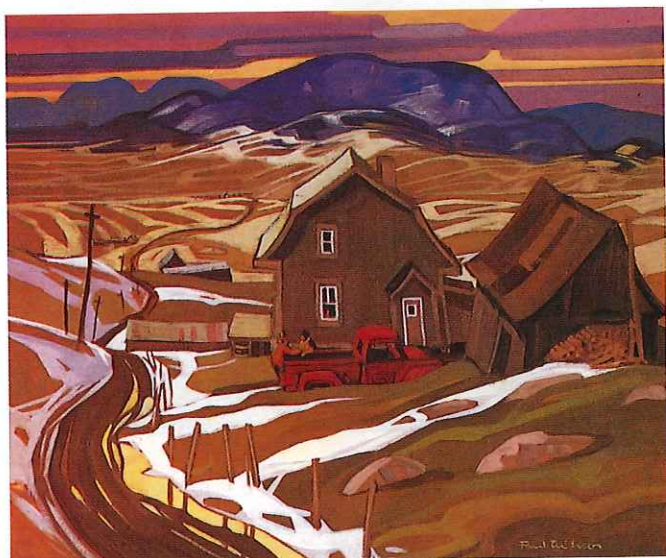
The main reason I use acrylics is because they are so flexible. They can be applied in transparent glazes to build up the patterns of lights and darks, the background colours and the shadowed areas. Then I can apply them more heavily, sometimes opaquely, to establish the more important areas of the painting, such as the faces and hands. The clear contrast of different values achieved with opaque paint helps me define the facial features and expressions in a sculptural way, which brings out the character and personalities of my subjects. Finally, I can handle acrylics as if they are watercolours, using thin washes in delicate, beautiful hues to make final

Le paysan (The Farmer),
acrylic, 24 x 30" (61 x 76cm)

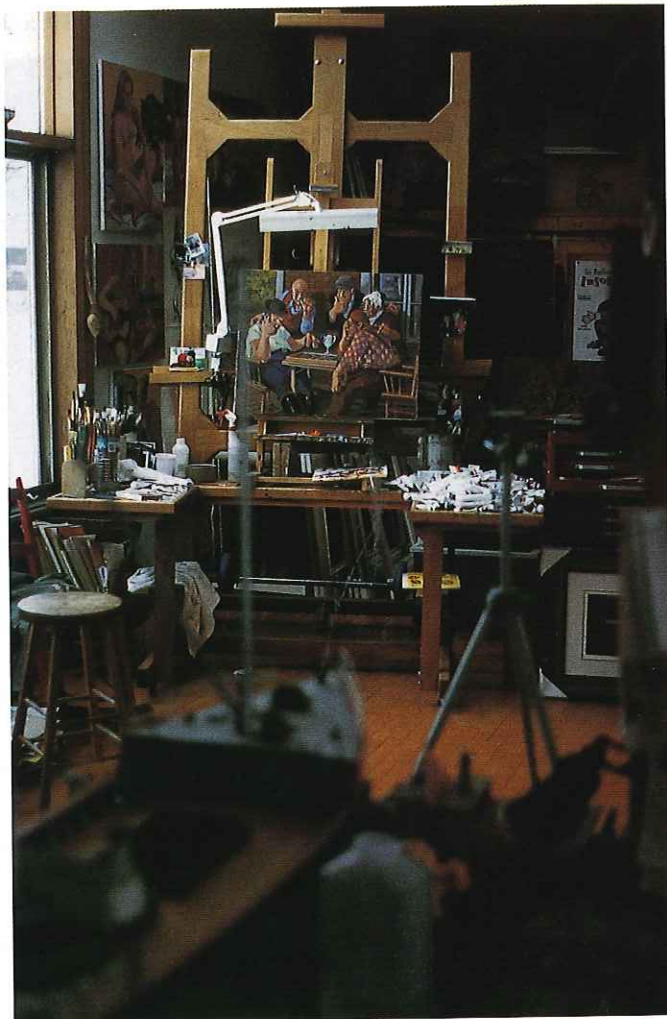




Bois sur la Saint-Maurice (1988), acrylic on canvas,
30 x 36" (76 x 91cm)



Rang de l'Ours, Charlevoix (1986),
20 x 24" (51 x 61cm)



“When painting my ‘personages’, I usually work with models I find during my pilgrimages in little villages. By talking and exchanging with my subjects, I get a good idea of who the people are.”

Après le dynamitage (1988), acrylic on canvas, 30 x 36" (76 x 91cm)



Riviere Tunulik (1988), acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40" (76 x 92cm)

adjustments in colour and/or value. It's a wonderful way to enhance the feeling of depth or improve the harmony in a new work.

Leaving a legacy

I have the impression that my subjects are fast disappearing so my paintings of people will document history for future generations. Thank God for the stories and pictures you will leave to future generations as well. I hope that these little hints I have shared will give you the pat on the back that will make you want to do the world's greatest trade — the trade of being an artist and feeling good inside. □



Puis la femme (How's the Wife?), acrylic, 24 x 30" (61 x 76cm)

About the artist

Paul "Tex" Lecor was born in 1933 in Saint Michel-de-Wentworth in the Lachute region of Quebec. He studied painting, interior decoration and drawing, as well as advertising and commercial art, at l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Montreal. In the 60s, he taught at l'Atelier Libre and tried to make a living from his painting. At the same time, he was developing an interest in the world of show business and began a career in stage, radio and television. Meanwhile, he continued to paint the scenes he glimpsed on his jaunts throughout Quebec, adopting the "new" medium of acrylics, which he found well

suited to his working style. It was not until 1976 that he gave his first exhibition. In 1986, he became a co-founder of the Institute of Figurative Arts and gradually left the entertainment world to devote himself completely to painting.

Witness to a disappearing rural and maritime way of life, particularly that of the Charlevoix region, he hopes to preserve this heritage in the collective memory of Quebecers as well as to promote the figurative painting tradition abandoned by the art establishment but not by the public.

He is represented in Quebec by

Galerie Archambault, Lavaltrie; Le Balcon d'Art, St-Lambert; Galerie d'art du Chateau DB, Mont Tremblant; Galerie Bonheur du Jour, Magog; Iris, Baie St-Paul; Le Chien d'or. Other galleries include The Koyman Galleries, Ottawa, Ontario; The Loch and Mayberry Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba and The Light House Gallery, Moncton, New Brunswick. For further information about this artist, please contact Denis Beauchamp at Multi Art Ltd. by e-mail at nbeauchamp@multi-art.net