



Community Outreach — Oakland Veterans Painting Portraits

The veterans are struggling to paint portraits. I've pointed out to them that it's a matter of practice. By the time they finish the first portrait, the self-portrait won't be so daunting. As the master portrait painter, Dongfeng Li says, "Don't worry about likeness in a portrait. Just paint a good painting."

At last week's gathering, some people finished their portraits while others started drawing their self-portraits. We started with a meet and greet, and Pat brought Bruynzeel Expression Watercolor Pencils. One participant used a blue pencil to add shadows to the head, while another used a grey pencil to create monochrome dog portraits and a person. Then Pat Moseuk played easy jazz on her phone, and we pretty much zoned out to paint and draw.

We shared our work at the end of class. It's funny how when you see your work from a distance with others looking on, it is easy to see that a nose is too long or that the face is turned and not straight on as the artist had drawn it. Working in a group makes the time pass quickly, plus we get to learn about each other; for example, one vet will be vacationing in El Salvador, her country of origin.

Next month, we will continue drawing and painting self-portraits, with an emphasis on composition and creating great paintings without worrying too much about achieving perfect likeness.

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