

Fresh Paint

Inspiring new artworks, straight off the easel

Anne Penman Sweet

The pathos and mystery of oil tankers intrigues this Australia-based artist. Anne has long been interested in industrial imagery, particularly weathered and aged scenes, of which these huge ships have proved the most compelling examples. “There is something human and vulnerable about them and the challenges they face,” she says. “I see them as metaphors and carriers of stories.”

Despite the potentially gloomy subject, Anne’s warm palette saturates her paintings with emotion. She works instinctively, challenging preconceived ideas and paying little attention to theory. “Colour is an extraordinarily complex subject,” she adds, “and I feel I am just scratching the surface of my understanding.” She opts for Old Holland paints because of their quality and extensive colour range and loves Australian brand Langridge’s low-toxic medium, which suits her painting style.

Battling a deadline, Anne painted *Ara* in less than a week, which forced her to forgo extensive preparatory drawing and underpainting. Instead, she worked from reference material with a sense of what she wanted to achieve. The background, which is simplified to allow the ship to impose itself, was painted with a large, round brush. “I roughed in a blue-green oil wash across the canvas, graduating from light to dark, and from top to bottom,” says Anne. “When it dried, I applied the second layer – this time from dark to light, and from top to bottom – in warm hues for maximum contrast with the cool underpainting.”

While the paint was still wet, she stripped back areas using solvent and medium. A rubber squeegee created a mottled effect, revealing the wash beneath. She then lightly blended the paintwork. The tanker was added with a metal builder’s scraper wet-in-wet. Controlling this process proved a challenge. “It was risky and could have gone horribly wrong,” says Anne. “The whole process was very stressful.”

Ara may have been tricky to paint, yet it’s anything but to view. With its sense of calm and grace, it’s a beautiful tribute to the might and majesty of human industry.

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ANNE’S TOP TIP

Overlay transparent glazes of colour, from light to dark, to create depth and form



RIGHT *Ara*, oil on linen, 122x153cm

