

Euclid Art Association

March 6, 2023 Zoom Meeting

Aja Dandridge, "Art in the Eye of the Beholder"

The Euclid Art Association held its March meeting on Zoom featuring South Euclid artist, **Aja Dandridge**. Aja's demonstration was a tutorial on how to paint eyes in acrylic. Twenty members zoomed in to watch as Aja's canvas went from nothing but a light wash underpainting to dramatic piercing eyes. "Eyes evoke a lot of emotion and speak to people," she said. Aja, a self taught visual artist, has only been painting professionally for the last 5 years. Before that she was an illustrator. She likes painting in acrylics, because "it's forgiving." Mainly, her art focuses on Black Culture, Fantasy and a hint of Egyptian Mythology.



As the demo started, Aja explained that the light wash underpainting on her canvas gives depth and helps establish the shadows. Starting with the eyebrows, she sketched the outline of the eyes, not using a pencil but a brush loaded with burnt umber and Mars black (*a heavy opaque pigment, dense black in color with a brown undertone, made from mineral iron oxide and thus named after the alchemical name for iron: Mars*). At this stage the eyes looked like a "rough skeleton".



Working from the inside of the eye outwards, she darkened in the iris, making sure her paint was diluted. Next, she painted the white of the eye with a mixture of brilliant blue, titanium white and dab of burnt umber, which gave the eyeball a nice realistic effect. She continued to work the whites of the eye to create the shadow under the eyelid, using burnt umber and Mars black. Burnt Sienna with light pink and dab of titanium white added subtleness under the eye. "You're just building layer upon layer of paint," she said. Now, it was on to the iris. She worked from the darkest color to the lightest color. Aja established the pupil using Mars black, followed by the eye color, a mixture of cadmium yellow, burnt Sienna and unbleached titanium. She moved her brush from the top of the pupil to the outer edge, while painting around the iris. She repeated with yellow strands of paint and then "flicked" some lighter color. The name of the game for her is "the more layers you use the more interesting the eyes become."



We continued to watch as Aja used her dry brush to blend more shadows in and around the eye. She said that lighting and shadows play a big part in defining facial features, like shaping the nose. The last feature she added were the eyelashes, which again added depth and dimension to the eyes.

Her demonstration was well suited to Zoom, as we could all clearly see the details as she painted. We thank Aja for sharing her talents with us. Chat comments were very positive. "I really enjoyed the evening. Thank you so much! Excellent guidance!" "Thank you, Aja. I learned a ton from your excellent tutorial." "Thank you. These eyes are amazing!"

