

Guide to painting



Editors' picks



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Artist Emilia Izquierdo on how she paints

The process of creating a piece always goes between using the brush a cloth to take out and then put colour back

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Emilia Izquierdo
The Observer, Sunday 20 September 2009
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Emilia Izquierdo

Triptych: Mrs Mao-Jian Qing/Mrs Elena Ceaucescu/Mrs Imelda Marcos
2009, oil on aluminium, 62 x 50 cms each
All images courtesy the artist


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I never draw first, then add paint. The process of creating a piece always goes between using the brush, and occasionally the pencil, and a cloth to take out and then put colour back. I find that I can convey weight, texture and volume by working with oil and a cloth like this.

For my Mouths series I worked on aluminium and used pencil and oil paint. The shine of the aluminium comes through parts of the painting, creating interesting transparencies; this is most apparent when I have primed the aluminium with transparent rather than white primer. The surface of this type of support was also an important part of the painting as its reflectivity helped to emphasize the movement of the mouths.

The series reflects on the expressive language of the mouth. People often say one thing, yet the expression and twists of their mouth are conveying a completely different message. I wanted to explore this, so read widely - Samuel Beckett's 'Not I', Eadweard Muybridge's studies of movement, Oscar Wilde's stage directions for actors, Francis Bacon and James Joyce's obsession with mouth diseases and Goya's acute depiction of the mouths of his subject. I decided that the best way to show the association/disassociation of the mouth with what is being said is by painting the mouths of public figures; they are known to most people and have lived their lives mainly through words.

I used two mouth positions per character to show the action of talking - when exhibited the mouths became a wall of talking with no sound. I find ideas are better explored in multiples, emphasizing transition, time and movement. Sequences, movement, the moving image - it's all an important part of my work.

In some case I worked from photographs for this series, in others I used video stills when I could get a hold of good resolution clips. I founds lots of different ones first, then pick the shots I need: for this series I was looking for the image that perfectly captured a momentary expression. When getting the right proportions is important I sometimes start a piece of work with a grid, but not always - there is no right way to work from an image like a photo. How you look at your source material will always depend on what you are aiming to do with your work.

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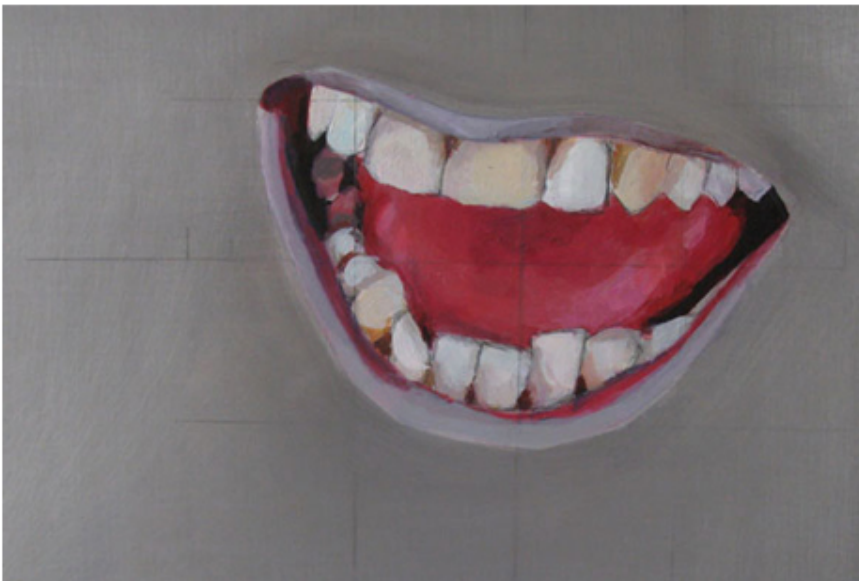
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Emilia Izquierdo

Benezir Bhutto (detail), 2009
Oil on aluminium, 27 x 31 cms
All images courtesy the artist



Emilia Izquierdo

Silvio Berlusconi (detail), 2009
Oil on aluminium, 27 x 31 cms
All images courtesy the artist

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Emilia Izquierdo

Condoleezza Rice (detail), 2009
Oil on aluminium, 27 x 31 cms
All images courtesy the artist



Emilia Izquierdo

Hermann Goering (detail), 2009
Oil on aluminium, 27 x 31 cms
All images courtesy the artist





Emilia Izquierdo

Triptych: Mrs Mao-Jian Qing/Mrs Elena Ceaucescu/Mrs Imelda Marcos
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