SOFTWARE & TECH

Paint This With Jerry Yarnell

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The Joy of Learning to Paint with a Master

For countless aspiring artists, the journey of learning to paint can feel both exhilarating and intimidating. The blank canvas stares back, a silent challenge that demands confidence, skill, and a guiding hand. For over two decades, that guiding hand has been provided by a beloved figure in the world of art education: Jerry Yarnell. His iconic PBS series, **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** , has transformed the way millions approach landscape painting, breaking down complex scenes into simple, manageable steps. More than just a television show, it is a community, a philosophy, and a testament to the idea that anyone can learn to create beautiful art. This article delves deep into the world of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** , exploring its unique teaching methodology, its impact on aspiring artists, and the timeless techniques that make it a cornerstone of modern art instruction.

Whether you are a complete beginner holding a brush for the first time or an experienced painter looking to refine your approach, the lessons from Jerry Yarnell offer a refreshing blend of technical precision and creative freedom. The series demystifies the painting process, making it accessible, enjoyable, and deeply rewarding.

Who is Jerry Yarnell? The Man Behind the Easel

To understand the magic of the show, one must first understand the man. Jerry Yarnell is not just a talented painter; he is a dedicated teacher. His career spans decades, during which he has authored numerous books, created a comprehensive line of art products, and, most notably, developed the instructional format that would become **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** . His artistic style is characterized by vibrant, dramatic landscapes, often featuring luminous skies, majestic mountains, tranquil lakes, and the rugged beauty of the American West. However, what truly sets him apart is his gentle, encouraging teaching style.

Yarnell understands the frustration that comes with trying to replicate a complex image. He learned his craft through years of trial and error, and his teaching is infused with empathy and practical wisdom. He speaks directly to the viewer, treating them not as passive observers but as active students. His calm, methodical approach makes even the most intimidating painting techniques feel achievable. By the time the credits roll on an episode of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** , the viewer hasn’t just watched art being made; they have participated in the creative process.

The Unique Structure of Paint This With Jerry Yarnell

What makes **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** so effective is its carefully engineered structure. Unlike art programs that race through steps, Yarnell organizes each episode in a logical progression. The show is built around the concept of "building blocks," where each layer of paint serves a specific purpose and is applied in a deliberate sequence.

From Blank Canvas to Finished Masterpiece

Each episode begins with a blank stretched canvas that has been lightly toned. Yarnell then guides the viewer through several key stages:

- The Underpainting (Block-in): This crucial first step involves mapping out the major shapes and values using a limited palette of thinned paint. Yarnell typically uses a warm brown like Burnt Sienna to sketch the composition. This stage is about placement and proportion, not detail.
- Building the Sky and Background: The sky is often painted first because it sets the mood and establishes the lighting for the entire painting. Yarnell demonstrates how to create soft gradients, dramatic clouds, and atmospheric perspective.
- Developing the Midground: This is where the focal point of the painting often resides. Whether it is a stand of trees, a waterfall, or a rustic cabin, Yarnell provides clear instructions on how to build form and texture.
- Foreground Details and Highlights: The final layers focus on adding the sharp details that bring the painting to life. This includes highlights on water, blades of grass, rocks, and foliage. He teaches the "less is more" philosophy when adding fine details.

This sequential method is a hallmark of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** . By breaking the painting down into these stages, the student never feels overwhelmed. Each step builds confidence for the next.

Core Techniques Taught on the Show

The longevity of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** is due in large part to the solid technical foundation it provides. Yarnell covers a wide range of fundamental painting techniques that are applicable to both oils and acrylics, though he primarily teaches with oils.

Mastering the Palette Knife

One of the most distinctive aspects of Yarnell’s style is his use of the palette knife to create texture. He demonstrates how to load the knife with thick paint and scrape it across the canvas to create the illusion of rocky cliffs, snow-covered peaks, or bark on a tree. This technique adds a three-dimensional quality to the work that is difficult to achieve with a brush alone.

Creating Luminous Skies

Jerry Yarnell is famous for his skies. He teaches a specific method for blending colors wet-into-wet to create soft, realistic clouds. He emphasizes the importance of value (lightness and darkness) over color. A sky with correct values will look convincing even if the colors are not perfectly matched. He often uses a "push and pull" technique with his brush to soften the edges of clouds.

Painting Water and Reflections

Water can be a challenging subject for beginners. Yarnell breaks it down by teaching how to paint the water surface first with horizontal strokes, then adding reflections that are slightly distorted. He demonstrates how to use vertical and horizontal lines to create the illusion of ripples and movement.

Tree and Foliage Techniques

From the majestic oak to the delicate birch, Yarnell provides specific methods for painting trees. He teaches the "blob and blend" technique for creating leaf clusters, emphasizing the need for variation in color and value to suggest depth. He also demonstrates how to paint realistic branches and trunks.

Supplies and Materials: What You Need to Get Started

A key part of the accessibility of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** is that he does not require extravagant supplies. He advocates for quality materials, but he focuses on a limited, practical palette. His recommended starter kit typically includes:

- Colors: Titanium White, Cadmium Yellow Medium, Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Red Medium, Alizarin

Crimson, Ultramarine Blue, Cerulean Blue, Burnt Sienna, and Ivory Black or Van Dyke Brown.

- Brushes: A variety of flat and filbert brushes in different sizes. He specifically likes "script" or "rigger" brushes for fine details.
- Canvas: Stretched canvas or canvas panels that have been pre-primed.
- Medium: A reliable painting medium (like linseed oil or a solvent-free gel) and a thinner (like odorless mineral spirits for oil paints).

Yarnell often stresses that the student should learn to control the consistency of the paint. "Stiff" paint holds its shape (good for texture), while "buttery" paint blends easily (good for skies). Learning to manage this consistency is a core lesson found throughout **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** .

Why Paint This With Jerry Yarnell Endures

In a digital age filled with fast-paced video tutorials, the deliberate and thoughtful pace of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** is a breath of fresh air. The show is not about getting to the final product quickly; it is about enjoying the process. This philosophy has created a devoted following. Viewers appreciate the repetition of core concepts. They are not just learning to paint a specific scene; they are learning how to *see* as an artist.

Building a Community of Painters

The show has also spawned a vibrant community. Online forums and local art clubs often dedicate meetings to following along with an episode of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** . This social aspect of learning is invaluable. Painters share their results, ask questions, and encourage each other. Jerry Yarnell himself often interacts with fans, answering questions and providing further insights on his website and social media channels. This sense of belonging is a powerful motivator for beginners who might otherwise give up.

Tips for Beginners Watching the Show

If you are new to **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** , or new to painting in general, here are a few practical suggestions to get the most out of your experience:

1. Don't chase perfection: Your first painting will not look like Jerry's. That is okay. The goal is to learn the process, not to replicate the exact image.
2. Pause frequently: Watch an episode in segments. Pause after each major step and try to catch up before moving on.
3. Use a limited palette: Start with just the core colors he recommends. This prevents confusion and helps you learn color mixing.
4. Focus on values: Yarnell often says, "Value does all the work, color gets all the credit." Squint at your painting to see if the dark and light areas are working.
5. Practice the basics: Spend time practicing the palette knife technique and sky blending on small pieces of canvas before tackling a full painting.

Expanding Your Skills Beyond the Show

The content of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** is extensive. With hundreds of episodes covering everything from snowy winter scenes to vibrant autumn forests, there is a deep well of knowledge to draw from. As you progress, you can begin to apply Yarnell’s techniques to your own reference photos. This is the ultimate goal of the series: not just to copy Jerry, but to internalize his methods so you can paint your own landscapes with confidence.

Many advanced students of **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** move on to develop their own unique styles. They have the technical foundation to paint accurately, but they have also been encouraged by Yarnell to experiment and take risks. The show teaches the rules of composition and color theory, but it also teaches when those

rules can be broken for artistic effect.

Conclusion

In a world that often rushes, **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** invites us to slow down, pick up a brush, and discover the joy of creation. It stands as a monument to the power of patient, clear, and encouraging instruction. Jerry Yarnell has successfully taken the elitism out of art and replaced it with a welcoming embrace for anyone willing to try. His methods are sound, his teaching is heartfelt, and his legacy is measured in the thousands of paintings hanging on walls across the world—paintings created by students who once believed they could not paint. Whether you are looking to learn a new skill, find a relaxing hobby, or connect with a community of like-minded creatives, **Paint This With Jerry Yarnell** offers an enduring and beautiful path forward. The canvas is waiting, and as Jerry would say, "Let's get painting."

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