

ANATOMY OF A PAINTING

Art And Article By Jack J. Wells

Some of the most frequently asked questions about my paintings are; “where do you get your ideas?” and “where do you start?” and “do you always draw it in first?”.

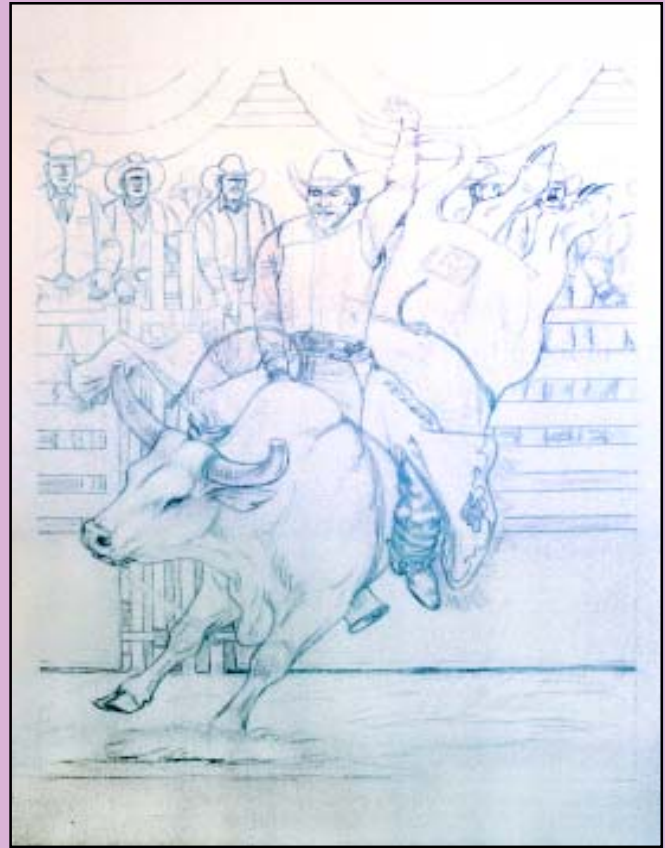
Well, *my* ideas come from *my* own personal experiences. There is an old saying for art or any endeavor, “*Do well what you know best and you’ll do good*”. I was raised around horses and cattle, so that’s what I know best, so that’s what I try to do best in my paintings. But, you can paint any subject well if you know it well.

The second and third questions I answer the same: I always start with a good sketch of my main subject. This way I can establish my parameters and limitations. Here’s how I do it.

Step #1. I usually use a light blue layout pencil for my sketch. These lines are not as harsh as a graphite pencil which could discolor some of your lighter painting pigments.

Step #2. I like to start with the background and work forward. Here I laid in shadowy areas and put some color on the banners.

Step #3. Next I blocked in the people in the background without a lot of detail because I didn’t want them to detract from my main subject.



Step #1



Step #2



Step #3



Step #4. When I blocked in the big yellow chutes area I established the highest value of any mass area in the painting.



Step #5. Putting in the arena dirt completed coverage of the background areas. This helps to achieve the correct values of the main subject.



Step #6. I then worked on the bull rider from hat to boots. I wanted to finish him completely before I started on the bull (by the horns).



Step #7. You'll notice that I did the front half of the bull entirely, this helped me control the color saturation and get the desired results.



Step #8. Finishing the back half of the bull became easier because all I had to do was match the colors to the finished front half. (Sometimes if you try to work an area too big you can lose the ability to keep the same hue going.) Then I put a light purple wash over the entire background, this toned down all of the background values and made the foreground stand out more.

Step #9. After step #8 I thought I was finished, until I realized that the painting would frame-up better if it were a couple of inches taller. So I used an old artist's trick of adding more foreground, to the foreground.

So basically, I start with a good drawing and paint my way from the background forward, adjusting my values as I go. I hope you can use some of this information. Please feel free to ask me more about what I may have left out.

