David M. Kessler Fine Art

5 Step Acrylic Abstract Painting Process

Step 1: Put in Dark Value Shape.

I begin with the dark value shape for two reasons. The first is that since I am starting with the darkest values first, I know that all other paint added will need to be lighter in value and most likely will contain white paint. Second, I want my center of interest to be somewhere adjacent to my darkest value. I am trying to get the darkest value next to the lightest value accent color to create my center of interest.

Step 2: Put Accent Color in Center of Interest Area.

I now look at my dark value shape and try to determine where my center of interest (accent color) would most naturally occur. I then place my accent color there. This is really just a place holder, we'll come back and refine this area in step five.

Step 3: Put in Middle Values.

I now begin to lay in my middle value shapes. I usually begin by working out from the edges of my dark value shapes, blending the edges as I go. You don't want the edges of your dark value shape to dry before you can blend them. Don't be afraid to modify shapes and values as needed to make the composition more interesting.

Step 4: Put in Light Values.

Now I begin to add my lightest values. To create the lightest value, I will use more white paint than with the middle values. The easiest way to determine how light they should be is by mixing them on your palette first. Gradually bring more white paint to the color as needed to get the right value. Refine shapes and values as needed to improve the composition.

Step 5: Refine Center of Interest.

Now I return to my center of interest area to do two main things. First, I want to mix several different variations of my accent color to use to refine my center of interest. I will use the lightest value next to the darkest dark value for maximum contrast. Use a variety of color and value for the accent color to make it interesting. Second, I want to make sure my dark value edges are sharp enough and/or dark enough directly adjacent to my accent color. Remember, my goal is to have the darkest dark value next to the lightest accent color to make my center of interest pop.

Bam! You're finished.