

establishing the large forms, light effects, and design. The portrait isn't vignettted; she works out a full design. She then crops the brown-paper sketch, completed in one sitting, to establish the dimensions of the work.

Next, she goes directly to her canvas with paint and large brushes (mainly white bristle filberts from Winsor & Newton) to create what she calls her "start." She begins with the large masses, getting them properly placed on her primed, untuned Claessens canvas. "We're not talking about eyebrows at this point," she says with a laugh. This looser approach derives from the Boston School rather than the Academic painters who laid colors over carefully executed drawings. Minifie loosely dabs in color notes for the major areas, including the hair and background. The flesh tones,

"When you're with a person you pick up a lot more than just visual likeness. You get the feel of them. A different kind of presence comes through in a painting done from life."

however, must be accurate because "it's easier to redraw an eye later than come up with a whole new way to get colors to work." As a result of streamlining her portrait process, the artist has learned the importance of getting values, especially the dark ones, correct early on.

Next, Minifie establishes the four or five largest areas of color, making sure they work together. "Don't look at the colors separately," she warns. "You must get them working together in the beginning." This requires looking at relationships and asking, "Is this yellower, redder, grayer, greener, more neutral?"

Minifie mixes her colors, mainly Rembrandt and Winsor & Newton, on a large brown wooden palette, avoiding the use of medium as much as possible. In addition to flake white she



Girl in White
2002, oil, 34 x 26. Private collection.

works with a basic palette of cadmium lemon yellow, cadmium scarlet, yellow ochre, viridian, ultramarine blue, Venetian red, Indian red, alizarin crimson, and ivory black. For flesh tones she combines cadmium lemon yellow and cadmium scarlet or Venetian red. To create shadows or to cool a color, she adds ivory black or viridian. "Flesh tones are built up of many variations," she notes. "Think of them as

variations of a theme instead of separate colors. See where the flesh is redder or more yellow, more intense or more neutral. And look at one color in relation to the others, remembering that a flesh tone can be affected by what you put behind it."

It's important, Minifie says, to understand how forms work, and in this initial stage to get them to turn. "The head is, first and foremost, a