

PAINTING BEYOND FASHION



**Basic painting and drawing principles and techniques from the Renaissance to the present
by John Hagan**

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All artwork is by John Hagan unless attributed or known pre- 20th century masterpieces!

NEW [Information for new CD release!](#)

LATEST: A fuller view of particular paintings available as prints can be seen by pressing [here](#).



FIRST THE PEARL - A LESSON IN HOW TO LOOK AT THINGS

An apprentice painter might learn how to hold a brush, mix colors or how to use a palette knife, but it matters nothing if the same person does not learn how to 'look' at things, and to look with the eye of someone who wants to explain the world in terms of paint. After many years of learning to 'look' we come to understand the nature of things and how they relate to each other.

This first lesson is an entertaining introduction to give you some idea of what I mean by 'looking'. Don't be too worried if the world I now introduce seems alien at first, because as you progress with the lessons, you will begin to understand that the real joy of painting is not so much occupying your hands, as truly understanding the laws, the lights and shades, and the memories of all the things around you.

OK, I think I remember what a pearl looks like. Ah, its been so long between pearls. I will try to construct one from memory, first principles and logic.

To begin, let us imagine the largest pearl in the world sits on a red table in a room with a blue ceiling. I am the viewer and I view the perl from the front while behind me is a window. Outside it is a fine bright sunny day.

Now if the pearl was someone elses 'eye' we must imagine **what it would see!!**.



It would see me, basic and a little crude - but that dosen't matter at this stage?



The window in the same condition.



Together ...



Add a blue ceiling, some walls and a red table (this is roughly what the pearl would see if it could see). Next we squeeze it into a round shape (with a computer this is easy, in a painting you would work backward.) I am a little disappointed at this stage as it looks rather raw and nothing like a pearl. But, staring failure in the eye, we must proceed (forever faithful to our logic).



So lets us rid ourselves of the black edges. Then, since a pearl is not a perfect mirror, I will blur everything ...



Now we can add a little milky screen (I somehow remember pearls are a little milky, aren't they?)



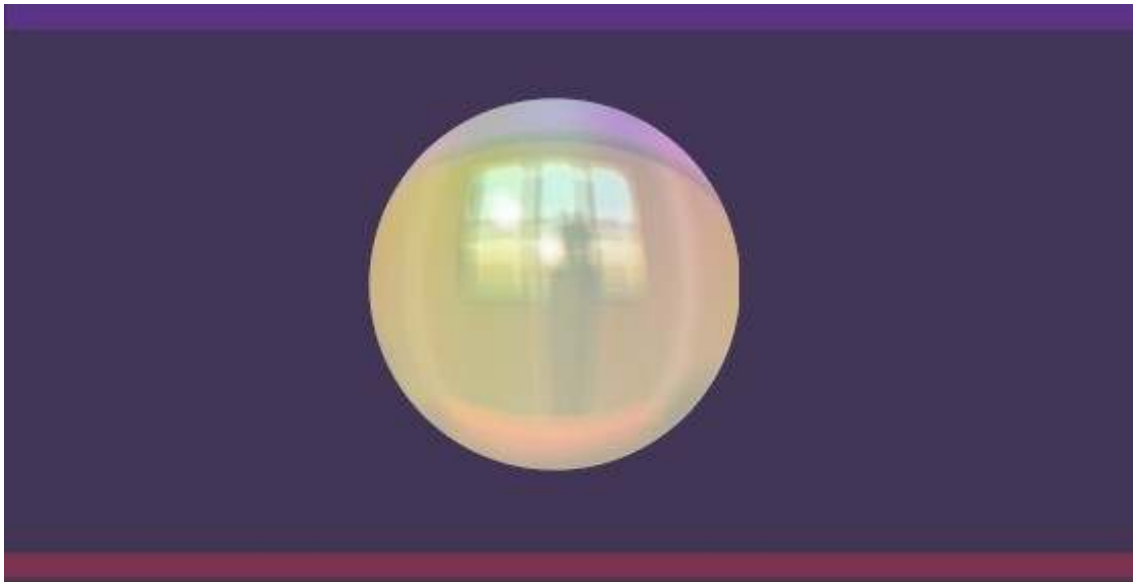
Still too much saturated color and dark values - so maybe another yellowish screen (glaze) ...



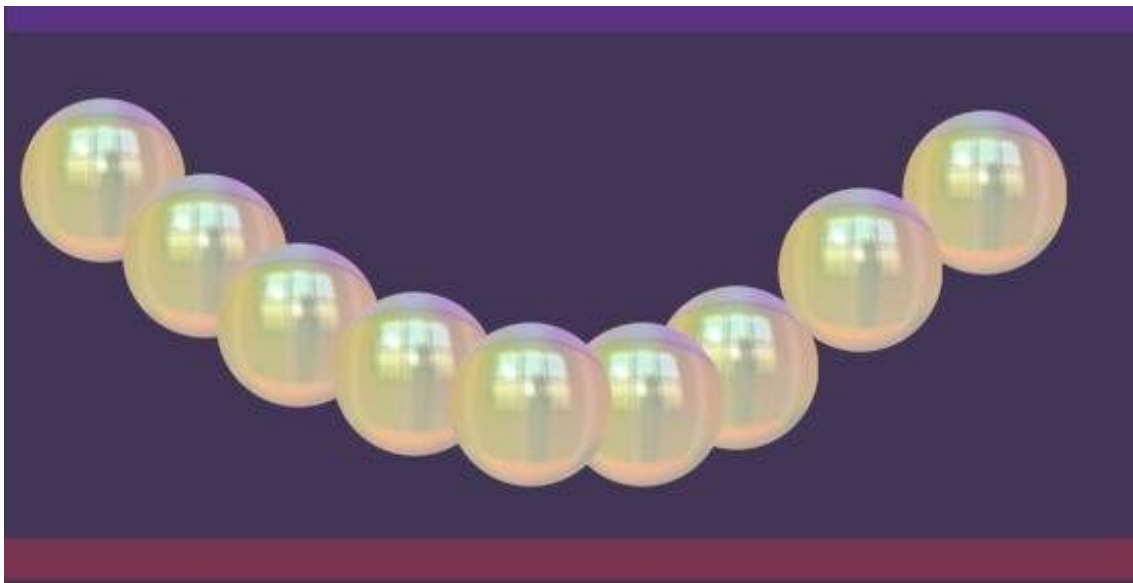
OK ; Now let's cut it out and give it a hard edge ... as it is not made of fur! (later we will look at a lesson on how edge effects texture) ...



That's looks better. Now for the suggested table and ceiling



But can't I have a string, seeing I made it myself?



Why, I'm virtually rich! So why can't a pauper have a millionaire's imagination? I expect any artist can always be rich beyond the dreams of mere mortals, the difficulty becomes one of keeping reality in plain view.

PS. I am concerned you may think I am confusing computer graphics with oil painting. I am not as this is a lesson about 'looking'. In either case we must still learn the essence or nature of things before we can make them - using paint or computers. With our 'pearls,' as with the world, that is the starting point, and remember, everything exists in **relationship** to light and other things nearby. The rest is simple logic - either with a brush or computer. OK, lets look some more into the world of the painter.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Draw and color your own string of pearls using oil pastels or crayons. Hint ... use a toned paper for background. Allow 40min.



[GO TO ... looking into a deeper, deeper world](#)
.....or back to [lesson list](#)

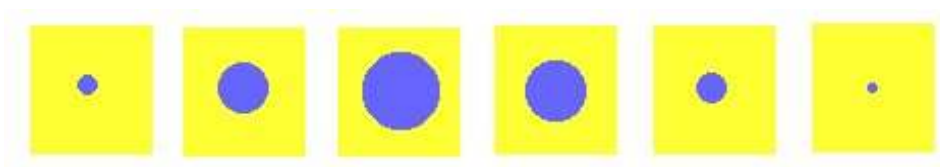


1-1 TO CREATE THREE DIMENSIONAL SPACES

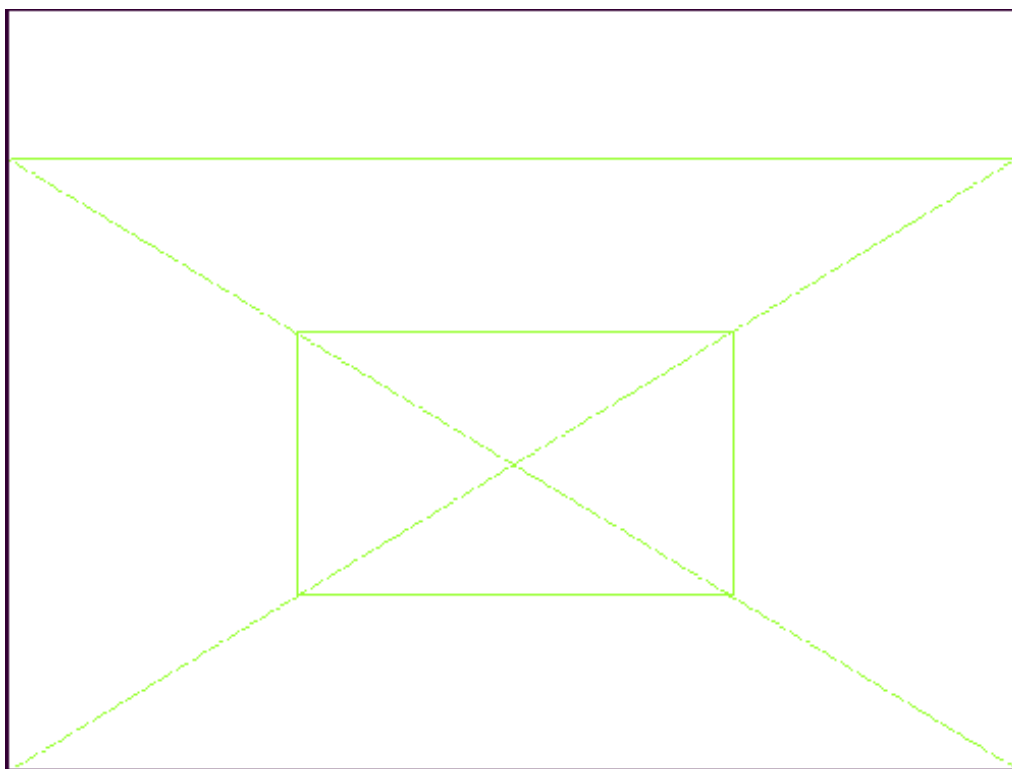
The rendering of a three dimensional landscape, portrait or still life on a two dimensional surface is to some people a trick, and we know tricks are mostly magic! As with magic some people are content to just observe and wonder at the skill of the magician, others want to know how the trick is done, while a few want to do it themselves.

If we lived in a yellow two dimensional world and a blue ball passed through

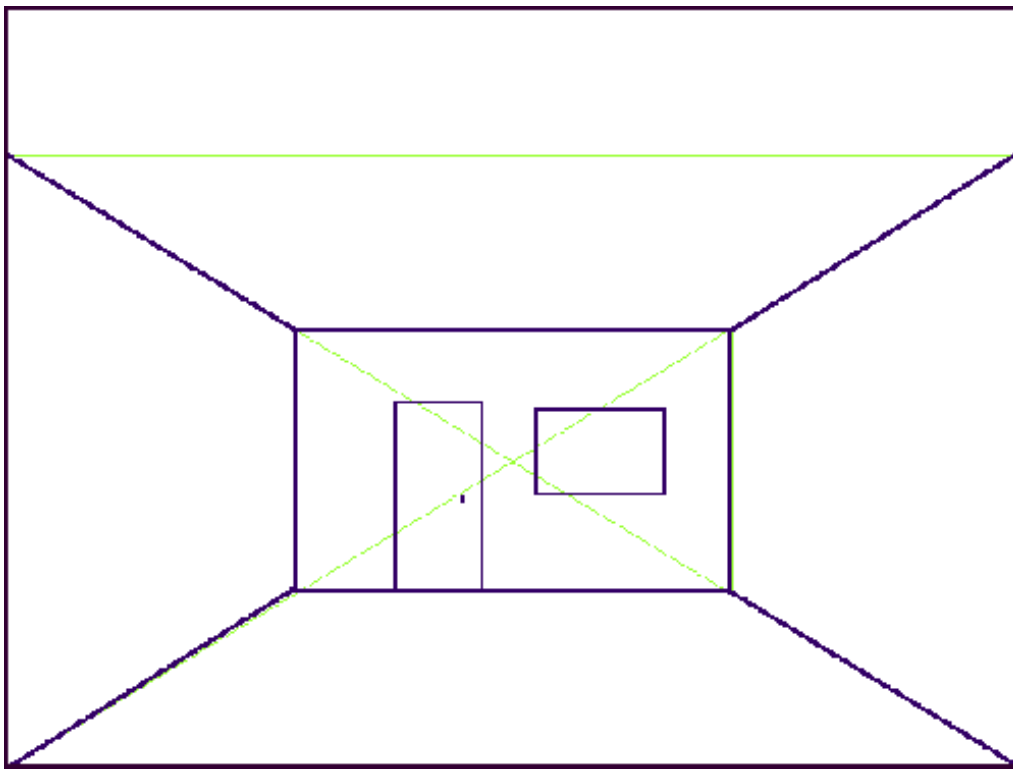
we would experience something like this:



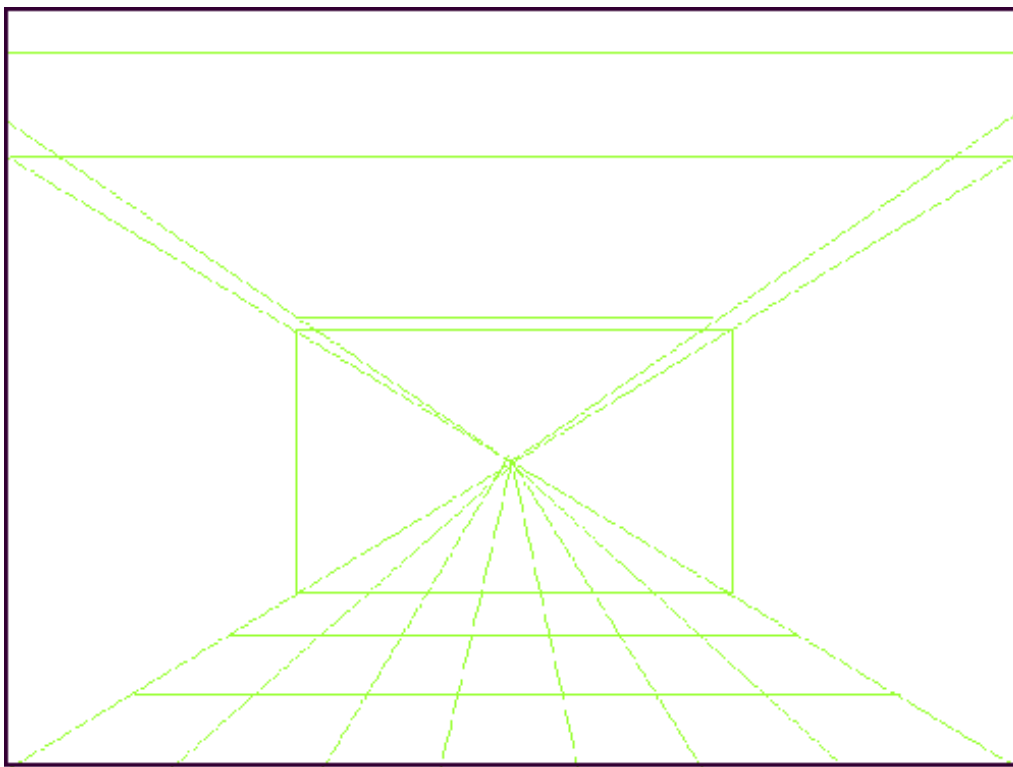
Fortunately we don't, instead ...



Let us imagine we live in a giant room where the floor is the ground and the sky is the ceiling. I have drawn the room with two rectangles and four lines.

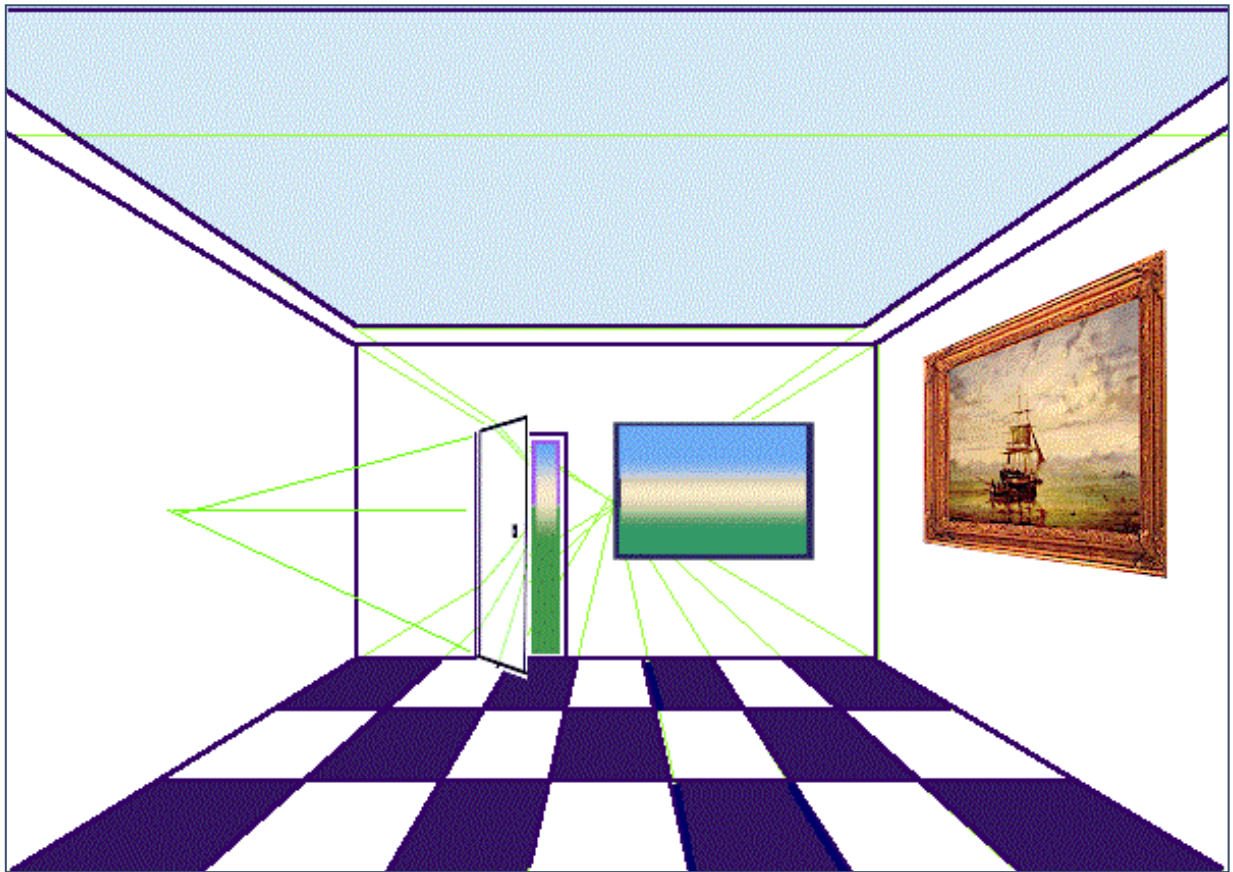


Add a door and a window... and we create a space.



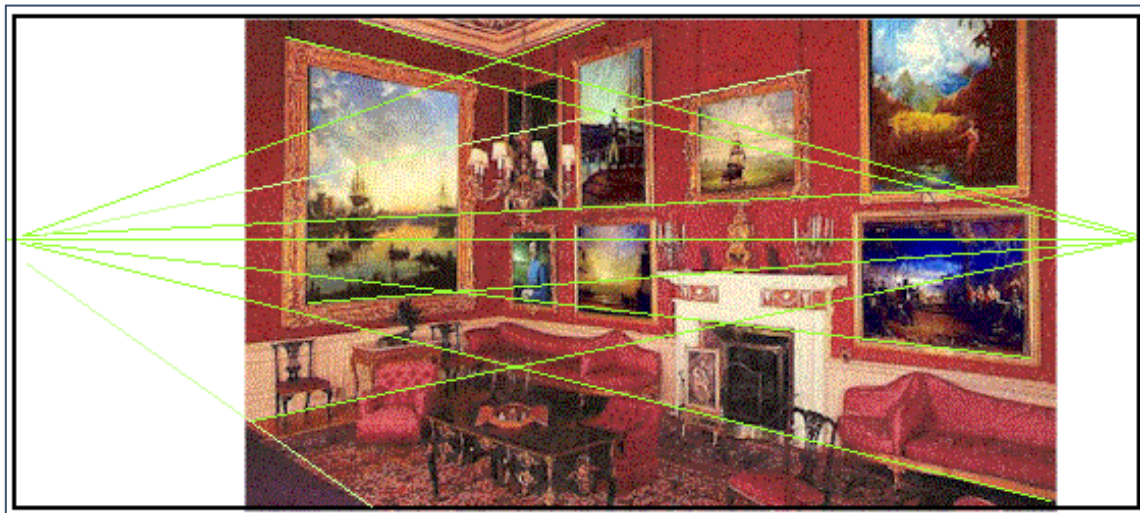
I shall add some lines to help put tiles on the floor and suggest cornice around the ceiling.

Please refer to the lesson in the 'drawing' section called 'room interior CVP' for a more detail and practical instruction.



Let us extend a few lines and add some detail. You will note that if you extend the lines forming the top and bottom of the open door they will meet on the same level as the other convergent lines.

Given the basic structure you could practice adding things yourself.



This example is called 'two point perspective'. Complete the 40min. lesson called 'room interior two point perspective' in the 'drawing' section and keep this page as an introductory theory sheet. Now let's now go outside ...

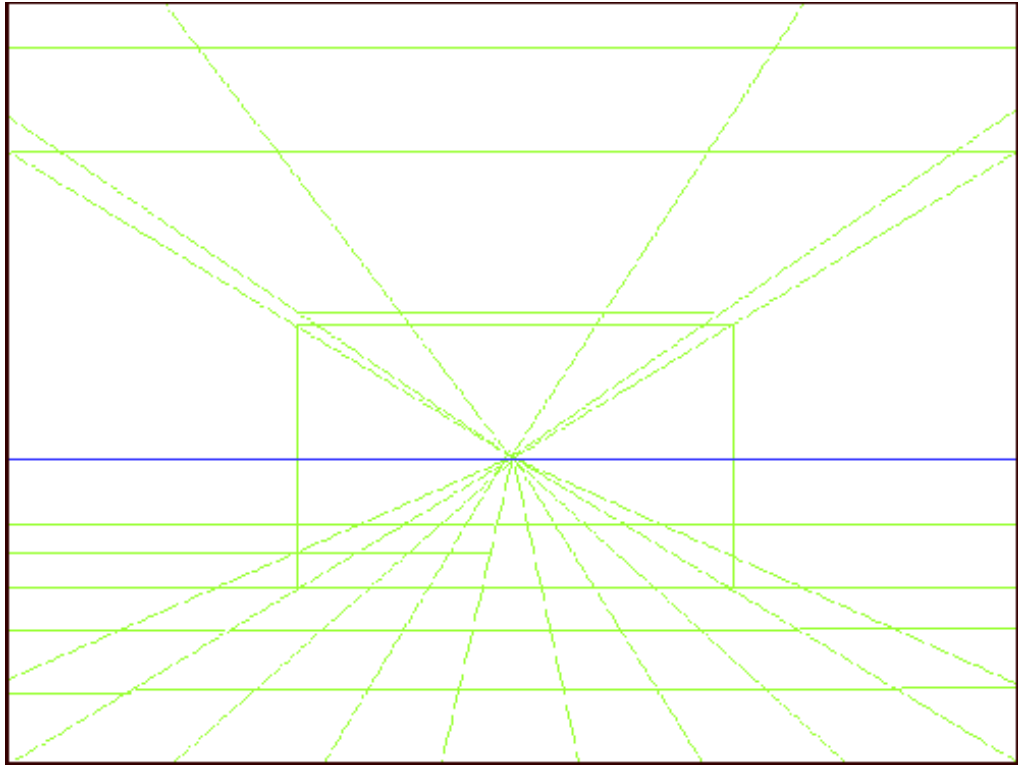


[GO TO ... perspective - let's go outside](#)

.....or back to main [lesson list](#)

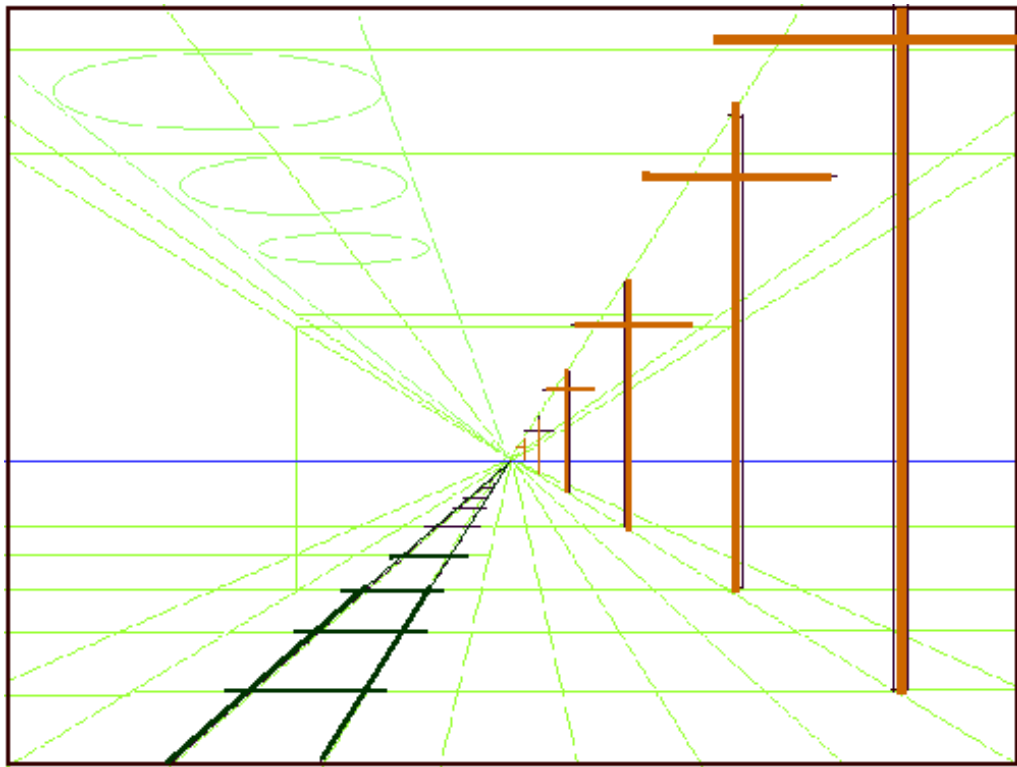
1-2 SOME 3D SPACES ... CONTINUED

Let's go outdoors.

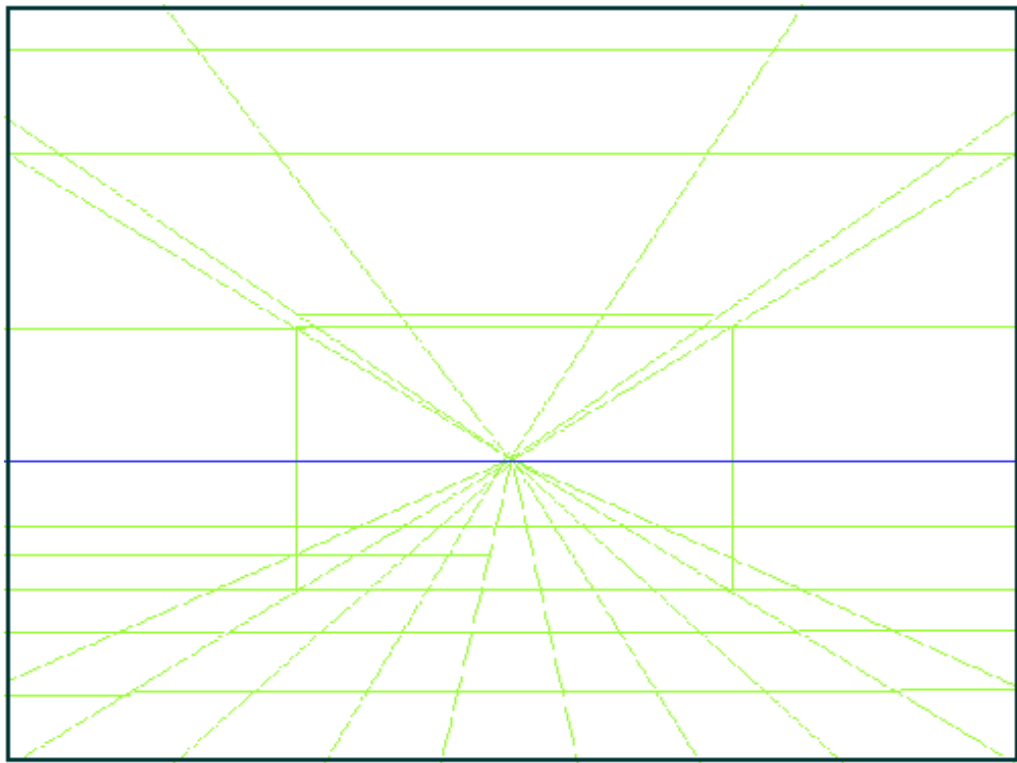


Extend a few lines and the blue line now becomes the 'horizon line'.

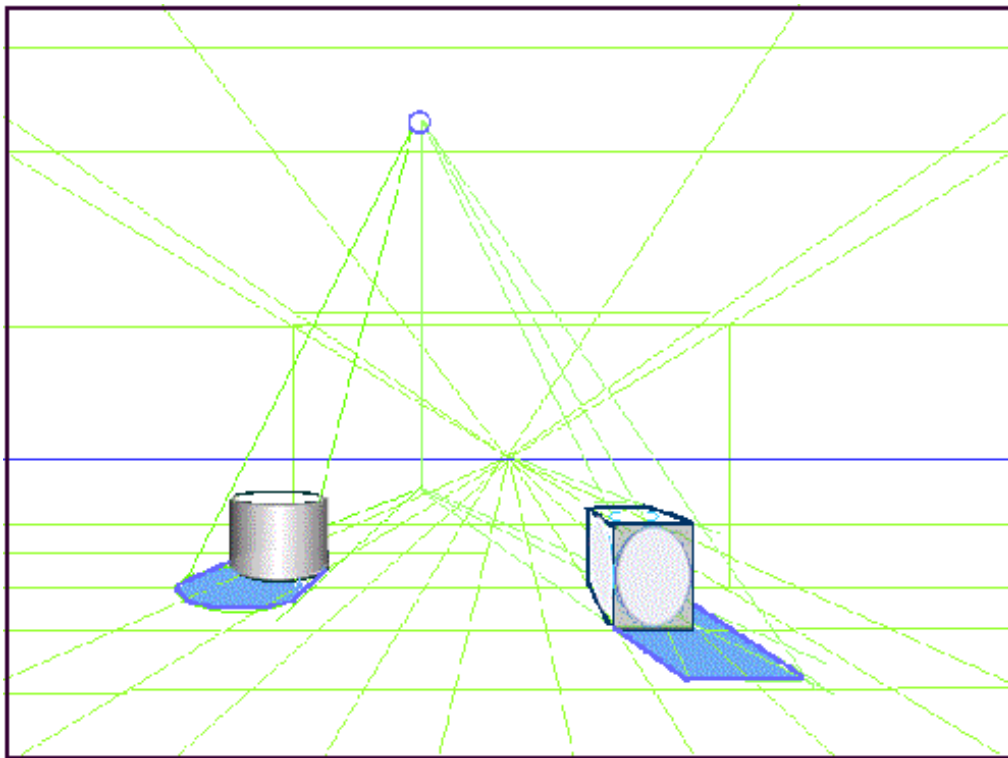
add a few visual clues ... try it



... a railway line, telegraph posts and suggestions of clouds. Please refer to 'drawing' section lesson 5 called 'raliway' for the practical lesson that accompanies this theory sheet.



Let us look at the structure again ... and draw a cube ... and ...



... indicate a light source and plot a shadow (it gets complicated very quickly doesn't it? To plot the shadow drop a vertical line from the light source. From where it hits the ground radiate lines from that point to intersect lines from the light itself.) Note the method of drawing ellipses on the surfaces of the cube. When you feel comfortable try drawing and plotting the shadow of an archway using two point perspective. Please refer to 'drawing' section lesson 8 called 'shadows' for the practical lesson that accompanies this explanation or theory lesson. Let's stay outdoors...



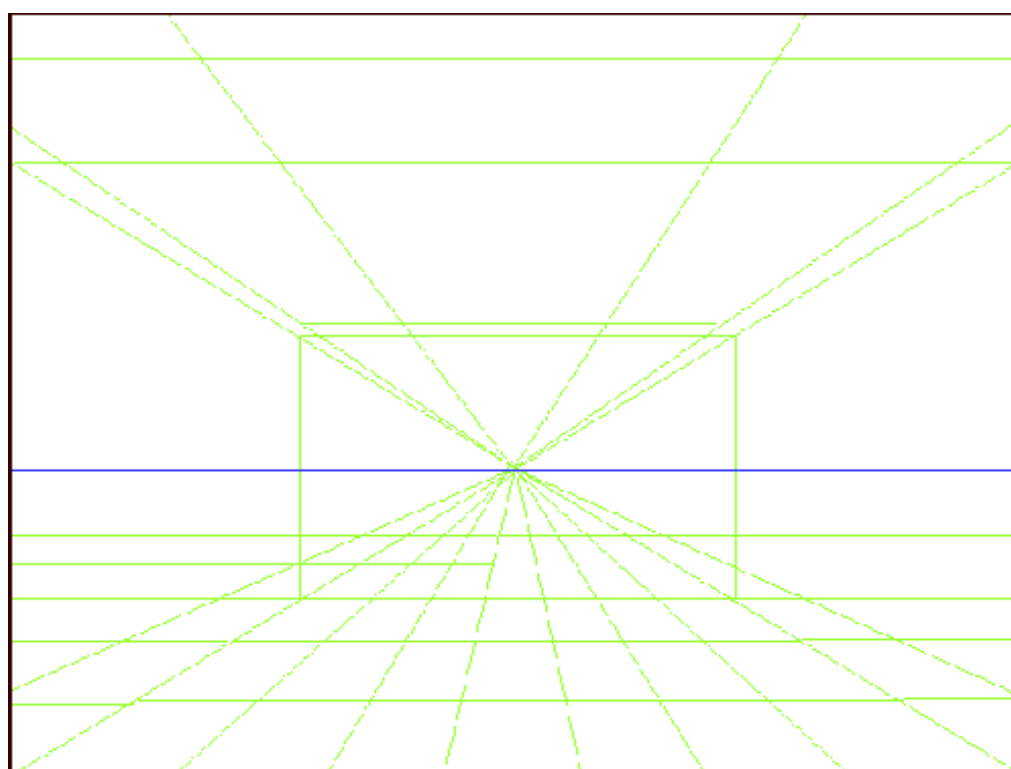
[GO TO ... veils of atmosphere](#)

.....or back to main [lesson list](#)

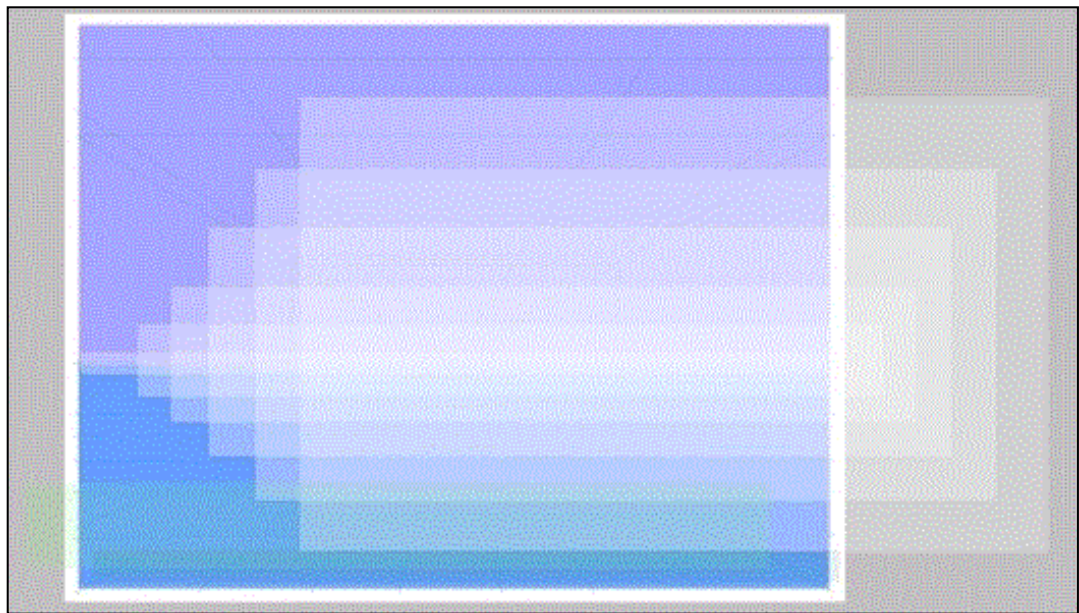


1-3 AERIAL PERSPECTIVE AND ATMOSPHERE

The best magicians will pull a rabbit out of the hat then the rabbit will become a balloon that floats into the air, the balloon will burst and pigeon will appear in its place, the pigeon will explode into a cloud of confetti and as it settles we find the magician has vanished.... You see great magic, like great art, has many levels - and they are usually subtle and seamless. That is why it will last. Whereas rabbits and hats may be for the children, works of Titian or Watteau might be for the adult. Like the magician's guild we don't need to promote magic or art, we need to practice it and do it better and better. To do this we must understand atmosphere!



We live in a world of atmosphere. The closer to the ground the thicker the veil. This mist of suspended particles interferes such that objects on the horizon seem fainter and have less color (saturation) than were they to be situated much nearer. Let us apply the 'atmosphere' to a (midday when the veil is white) view of the sea and see how it works.



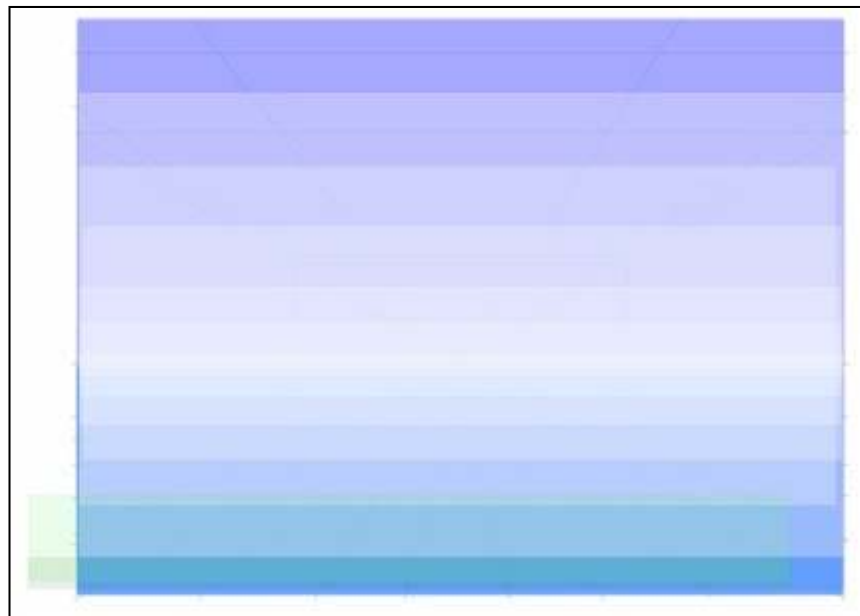
The horizon will appear the lightest (whitest)...
The sequence of events is thus ...

1.The whole scene is painted with a red/blue.(color at the top)

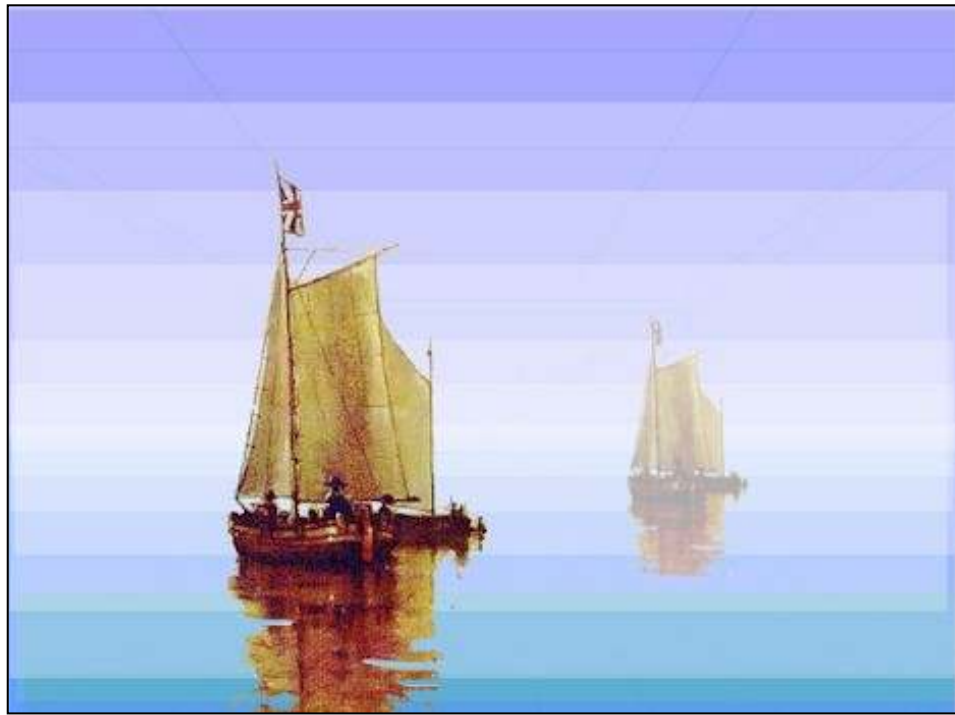
2.Beneath the horizon an additional marine (cerulean) blue is added.

Water usually appears a little (half value or more) darker than the sky.

3.Successive layers of mist are placed between the viewer and the scene - the greater the distance the more the layers.

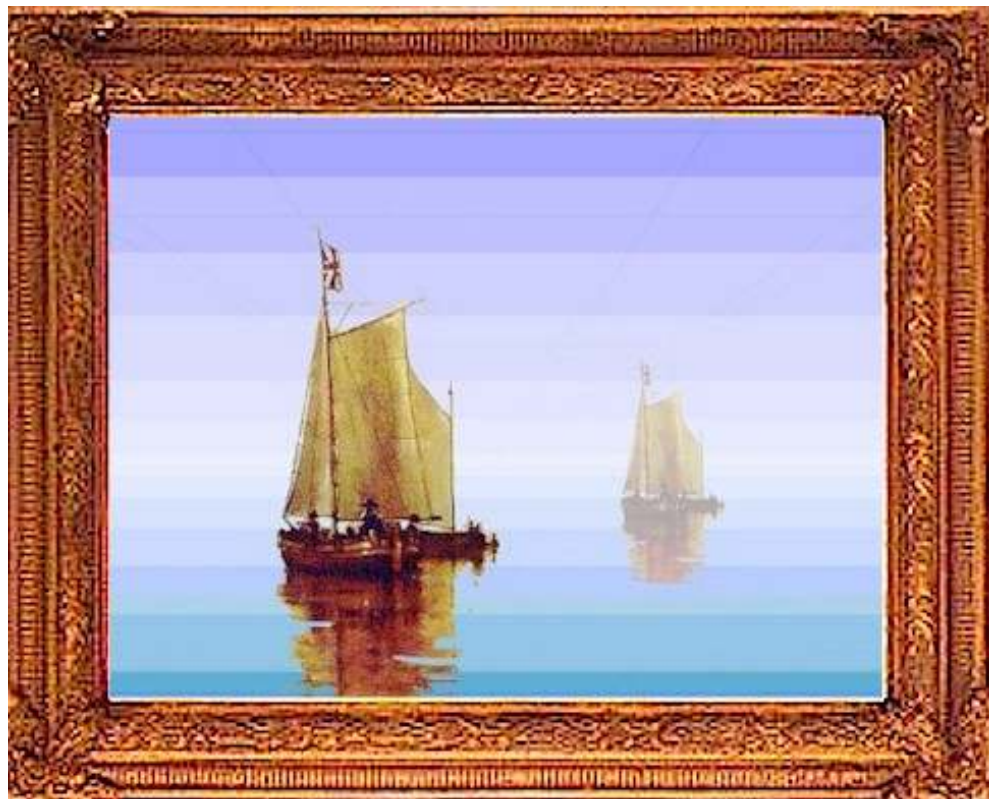


As the water shallows, yellow sand adds a veil of green. The veil of green is added to the bottom foreground.



Now we can add some boats. They are identical - only the second is minimized to allow for distance - and then placed behind four layers of atmosphere.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Using strips of cellophane (semi-transparent) paper and two small cut out 'images' construct an atmospheric 'collage' as I have done. Allow 40min.



But at dusk and dawn the sun sinks to the horizon and the atmosphere changes. What then?



[GO TO ... dusk and dawn](#)

.....or back to main [lesson list](#)

1-4 SUNRISE, SUNSET AND WAVES

When the sun is low its rays pass across the curved surface of the earth and encounter the thickest film of atmosphere than at any other point during the day .

The shorter light rays (the blue end of the spectrum) are almost entirely deflected by the heavier particles in the atmosphere whereas the reds and oranges (the longer wave lengths) are the ones that will reach the observer. Under certain conditions, like after a rainstorm, the sunsets can be bluer whereas after a fire they often become redder.

It all depends on the 'thickness' of the atmosphere.

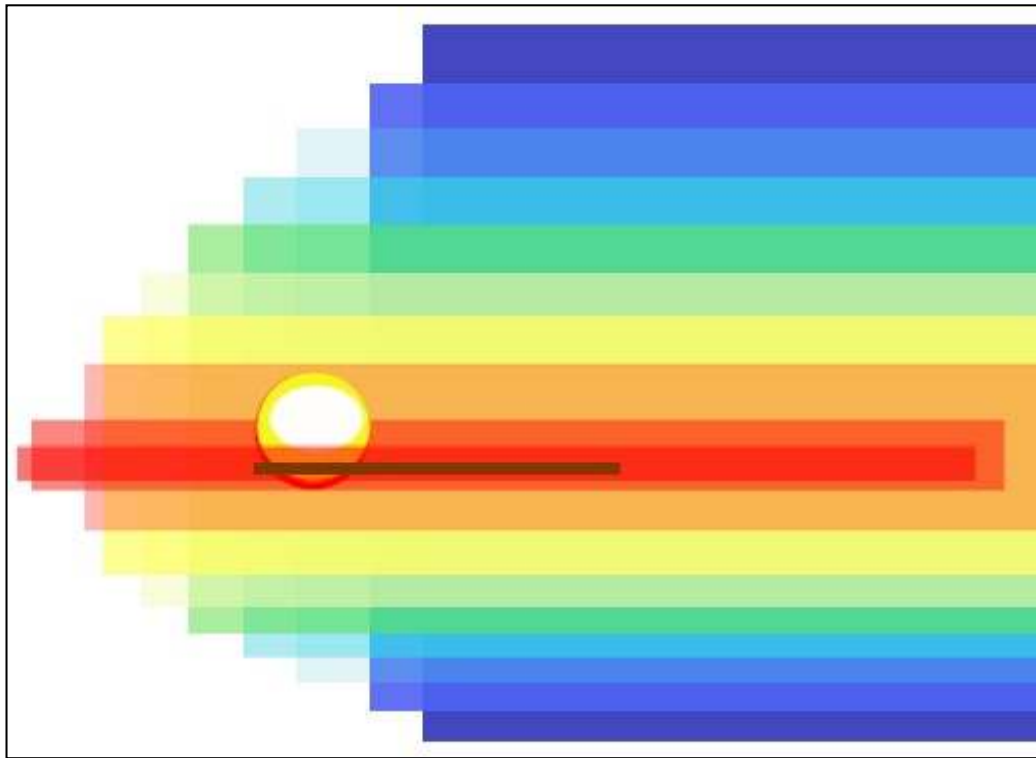


(A full view of this painting can be seen by pressing [here](#). It is also available as a quality giclee print.)

When the sun tries to penetrate the atmosphere, or clouds near the horizon, we notice that the thicker the mist (atmosphere) the deeper the red. Thinner mists will produce orange, then even thinner, golds and finally yellows. You can decide for your self why some sailors say red sunsets bode a fine day ahead?

The red light sometimes strikes the underside of the clouds directly overhead and turns them red, yellow and orange depending on the wave lengths of light that have managed to penetrate the soup of the earth's atmosphere.

Let us now apply these principles to painting...



The color gradient from blue to red matches exactly the sequence that occurs in the rainbow or light spectrum. Here the sun manages to blast through forming a halo of yellow and red. The dark strip represents a thick cloud and shows its effect.

To be completely brutal and simplistic see below... but you get the idea of the theory!

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Using strips of multi-colored cellophane (semi-transparent) paper and two small cut out 'images' construct an atmospheric 'collage' over a white background. Cut hole for sun. Allow 40min.

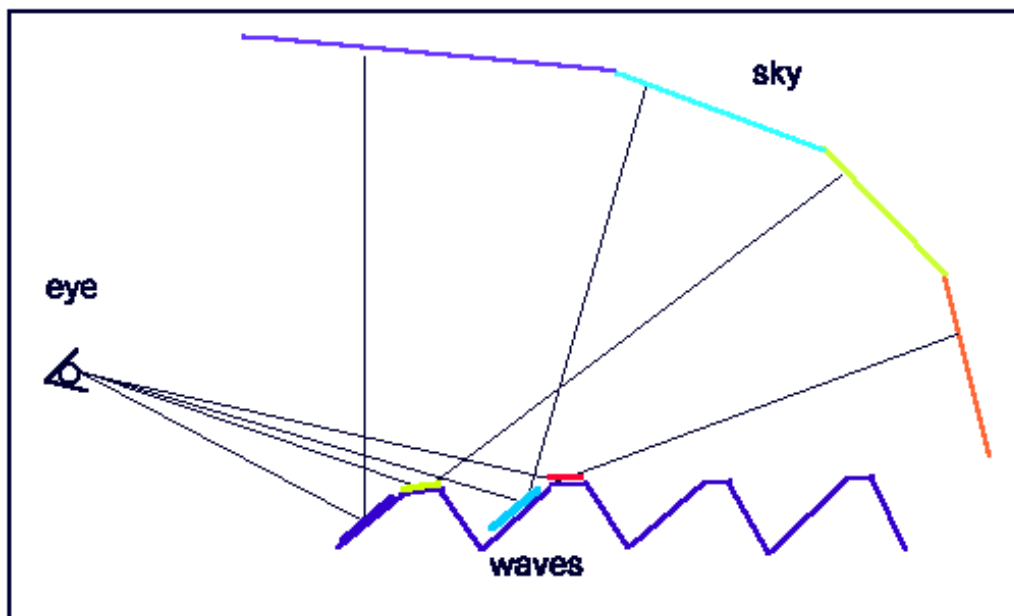


... its all so much easier (and subtle) using oil paint.



(A full view of this painting can be seen by pressing [here](#). It is also available as a quality giclee print.)

Note - when painting waves think of them as a series of semi-reflective mirrors.



STUDENT ACTIVITY: Copy the diagram above and find a suitable photograph that illustrates this phenomena. Also read lesson on 'waves' in the advanced section.



(A full view of this painting can be seen by pressing [here](#). It is also available as a quality giclee print.)

Sometimes the sea will become transparent and the sand begins to show through - in this painting of girls bathing the sand is an underlying yellow ochre..



From the information shown here you should be able to map all the colors of the sky although you don't see the sky itself.

**Next we examine what we see when
we look away from a sunset or sunrise**



[GO TO ... sunsets away from the sun](#)

...or back to main [lesson list](#)



1-5 A REVERSE SUNSET, NIGHT and CLOUDS



The sky of the reverse sunset or sunrise approximates the midday sky, but with less veils of atmosphere. The predominant light from the setting sun often gives the blue (cerulean) a slightly warmer yellowish feel on the horizon. The red-yellow light rays come from behind the viewer and strike clouds and solid objects bathing them in a warm orange glow that contrasts nicely against the cooler blue. The effect can be strikingly subtle.

In this example the polished floor reflects the blue of the distant sky as well as the highlights and darks of the foreground figures (thus establishing the polish). The sun also casts more shadows forward (the girls dress) that overlays the polish. This scene is completely imaginary but is nonetheless constructed using logic and first principles. It was made without stepping outside my imagination.

NIGHT

Without moonlight or clouds the night sky is theoretically black but a hint of star light gives us a blue violet feel. The moon behaves exactly as a small sun with the earth's atmosphere giving the moon at moon rise its distinctive yellow glow. As it ascends the moon becomes piercingly white. As with the sun it seems best to show its effect by way of clouds and reflections rather than a direct representation. Note the violet shadows on the distant buildings.



HORIZONS

Painting lines in seascapes that define the horizon.



You will note in the example above I have neglected to show exactly where the sea ends and the sky begins. We all know that if the day is clear and you are standing on a seashore you will see a definite line separating the sea from the sky ... unless you are atop a high mountain and looking out to sea. In the former instance you are looking only 7 miles to the horizon and in the latter maybe 100 miles or more. Obviously there is more atmosphere that gets in the way over 100 miles and therefore the separation line tends to disappear.

In my painting above ... and in many other of my seascapes ... I make the deliberate decision to allow the conceptual idea that you can see (see) forever to take precedence over nature. It is also less distracting. My advice is to consider if the horizon line helps or hinders your composition before making your decision.

CLOUDS



**Clouds, mists
and other
shadowy veils**

For Cities in the sky ...



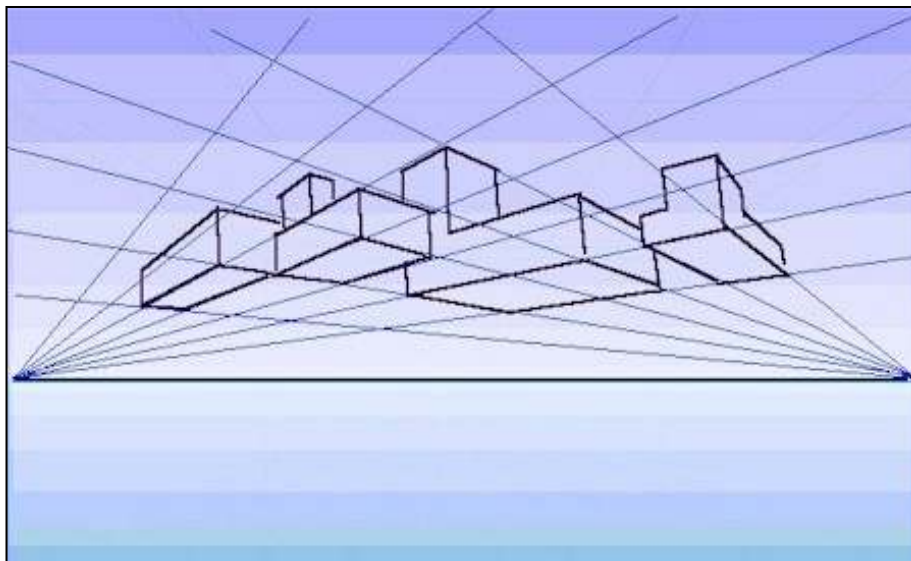
[GO TO ... how to paint clouds](#)

.....or back to main [lesson list](#)

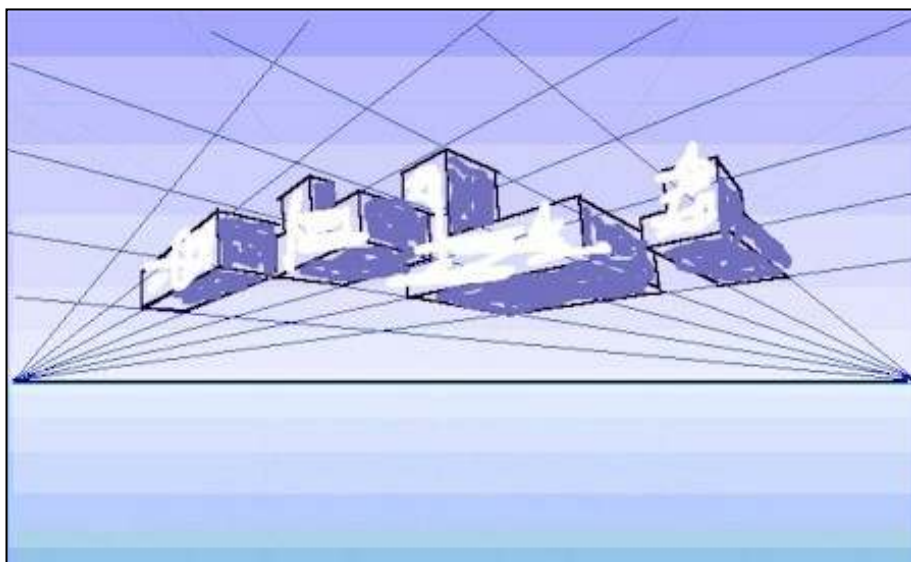


1-6 CITIES IN THE SKY - PAINTING CLOUDS

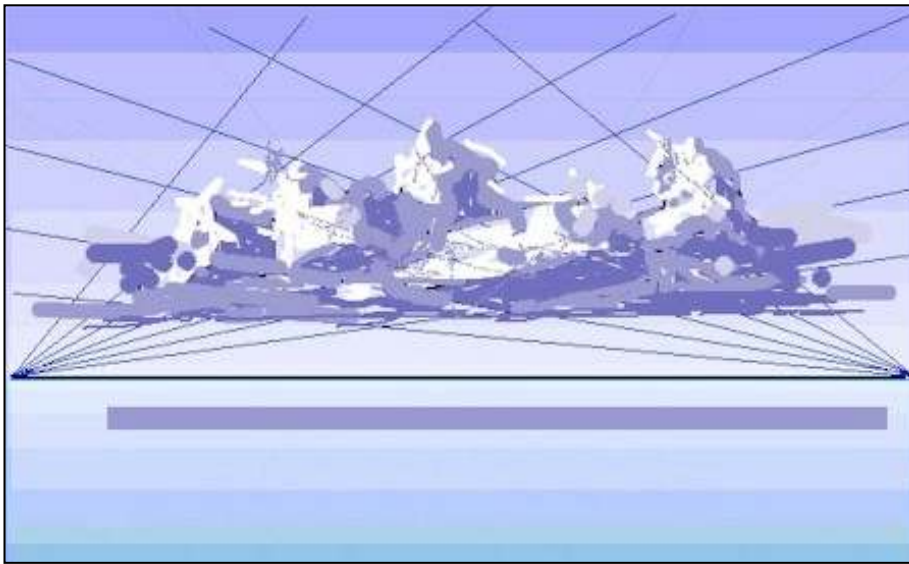
You can do this simple little exercise on a sheet of paper with some colored pencils. Later people will wonder why you keep looking up at the sky and most likely assume you are either idealistic or a deep thinker (both these roles being totally foreign to most painters).



Using simple perspective construct some blocks (lighter lines than above).
The light source will be front, top and left.
Then we do some simple shading ...



And a mid-tone and a cast shadow. When painting use colors from your existing sky.



Breaking it up ...



A little rubbing - easy with oils and a wet finger - but try and leave a few sharp edges here and there.

Crop and add a few more ground shadows. Remember that clouds always cast shadows on the ground if the sun is overhead.



Thus a simple background is made!



Other cloud shapes are just as easily done if you remember all clouds have shape, definition and perspective. Try and decide their shape first then just obey the rules of shading as if they were solid objects. You can easily make them misty or wispy later.

Note the cloud perspective in my 'Portsmouth 1792' painting below.



(A full view of this painting can be seen by pressing [here](#). It is also available as a quality giclee print.)

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Change the seascape underneath the clouds into a landscape taking care to place the shadows. Allow 40min for all.

NEXT ... SOME THINGS ABOUT COLOR

2-1 SO WHAT EXACTLY IS COLOR?

All colors can be defined using three simple indexes; hue, saturation and value.

1. Their color name as in red, blue, green or yellow. This is called their ' hue '.

Here are some examples of hues:

	Cadmium red
	Crimson
	Ceruleum blue
	Ultramarine blue
	Lemon yellow
	Yellow ochre

Most people just know them as red, yellow or blue. Do not be confused by trade names such as 'Rocking chair red' or 'Hooker's canary yellow.'

Try and remember the names of the common artists colors like those above but try and keep it simple. In the art supply shop ask for a color chart.

2. A colors strength or intensity. How blue is that blue or how red is that red? This is called their '**saturation**' and can be high or low.

Still it is a misleading term. 'Midnight, and the artist Giorgione was still in the bar and totally saturated.' In this sense saturation most likley meant 'a lot of wine was absorbed' (Giorgione died young after wounds received fighting).

When a particular chemical absorbs all the wavelengths of light from the spectrum except one, say red (which it reflects in total and which you see), then that red would be at its highest level of **saturation** If however, a little of the red light was absorbed, then the resulting **saturation** would be less (a duller red).

In a previous lesson I explained how short wave-length (blue) light was intercepted by the earth's atmosphere at sunset. The saturation of the perceived red would depend on how many of the long wave-lengths penetrated the mist. In that instance the greater the number the higher would be the red **saturation** index

Computers allow you to select a color and increase or decrease its saturation. Below are some examples:

INDEX 0-240

080 120 200 240

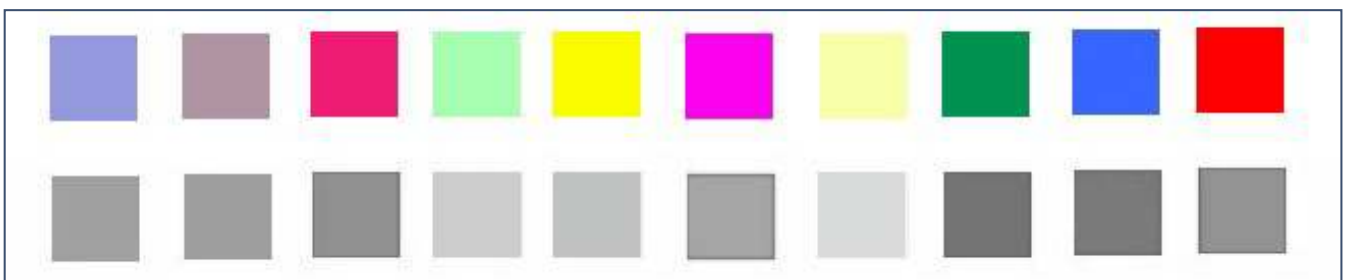


3. A color's brightness or darkness.

The blackest are numbered (1) and the whitest or lightest (10). This is called their 'value' and is measured on a grey scale from 1-10

Of all the indexes this is probably the most significant to a painter. Before anything else, the values in a painting must be correct.

It has long been known that colors (including grey itself) of equal value can be combined for a pleasing effect, but it is the perfect pitch of the highlights or darks that caress the eye. The master artists of times past studied values before anything else, and their skill of estimating the exact value of a color to within 1:40 of the scale was not unusual. I find it often helps to squint the eyes to decide on a value.



Squint at some colors with their grey scale(value) equivalents above and watch them merge.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: On your computer all colors have values of between 1 and 100. It can be found on the 'HSV' color index where the 'V' stands for value. Find all the 'values' of the hues in the table above using your computer. Allow 40min for all.

OPPOSITES

A note on complementary colors. I often call these 'opposite' colors as they lodge exactly opposite each other on the color wheel (green and red or yellow and purple). When mixed together they produce a grey. When placed side by side, in spots or short brush strokes, they give an impressionistic effect of grey at a distance and of vibrating color up close.

A juxtaposition of large even areas of 'opposite' colors is most uncomfortable to the eye. This fetish has gained some popularity with certain two dimensional artists.

Next ... Colors of the mind and muddy waters.



[GO TO ... colors of the mind](#)

... or [lesson list](#)

2-2 COLORS OF THE MIND

There no reasonable excuse to ignore the basic elements of applying paint to a surface. The technology regarding the materials to be used are scientific and discoverable. The visual components of the human mind are a little more complex but with a little understanding they reveal themselves. They may be either instinctive (genetic) or environmental (deterministic) - but whatever they are they not necessarily universal.

A few examples that have survived for thousands of years with a 'western or European' significance:

Color; **red - hot - danger - blood -aggressive. blue - ice - cold - distant, green - fields - calm - healing etc.** - but remember, red can also mean good luck(Chinese) and green is the color of rotten meat.

Shape; round => O feminine - comfortable, rectangular = /M L- male - abrupt - unfriendly etc.

Lines; parallel //- calm - regular, Intersecting X- conflict - abrupt etc

Pattern; like order and habit is decorative, comforting and attractive to the young. Chaos has another effect but can be useful in solving problems and lateral thinking. More of shape, line and pattern later....

I often refer to colors as either primary secondary or muddy. If we mix a red with a yellow and add some blue we will get a grey. The percentage of the mix will determine its **hue** and **saturation**. The addition of white will affect its **value**. There are millions of muddy possibilities, but, if the grey tends toward red it is often referred to as a warm grey. Alternatively a cold grey tends towards blue.



In my demonstration painting above of the 'trout fisherman', grey forms almost 90% of the picture. When you view a new painting try and establish its percentage of grey and you may be surprised of

how little saturated color there is. Here, to mix the greys, I used the cheaper opaque earth colors - light red, yellow ochre and a tincture of cobalt blue. Right on the horizon I used a little crimson. The man's jacket is a cadmium red. No other hues were used!

Contrasting a primary color in a sea of subtle greys is one of the most powerful tools an artist can use. Constable once remarked of a JMW Turner painting of a red buoy in a large grey sea, 'a coal has jumped from the fire and set it alight,' he said in amazement.

However, another Turner painting (below) is of an entirely different cast.



This is a violent and emotional picture and shows slaves being tossed overboard before an approaching hurricane. All the principles of perspective are in place with the addition of a couple of new ones.

1. When mist or cloud is placed in front of dark clouds and lit from the side they become bluish/violet (as shown in the left of this painting). The juxtaposition allows the artist to show great depth.

2. To quote JMW Turner, 'white can be used to for equal effect to come forward or recede.'

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Color and food have a close association and presentation of dishes is considered a main element in training to be a chef. Cut out five presentations from a magazine and paste them in your book in your order of preference (good to bad). Briefly explain your reasons beside each example.

OK now you understand something about perspective and color. 'But what should I paint and why?' you ask.

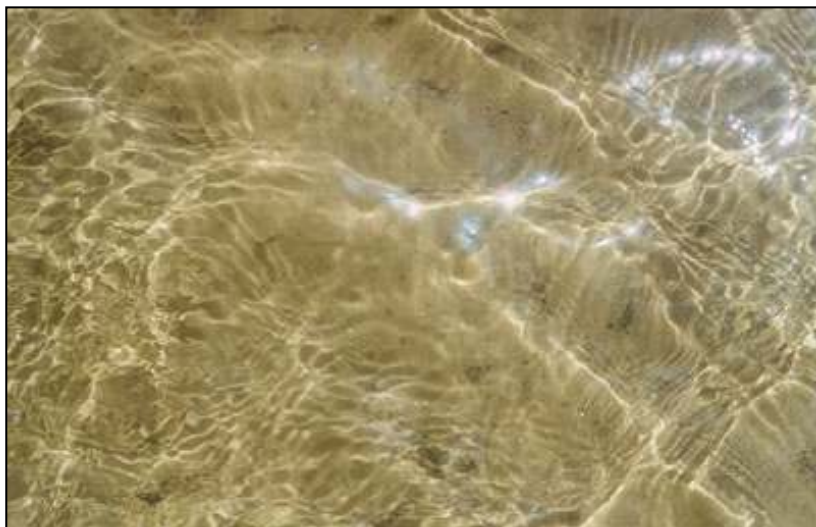


[GO TO ... looking harder](#)

...or [lesson list](#)

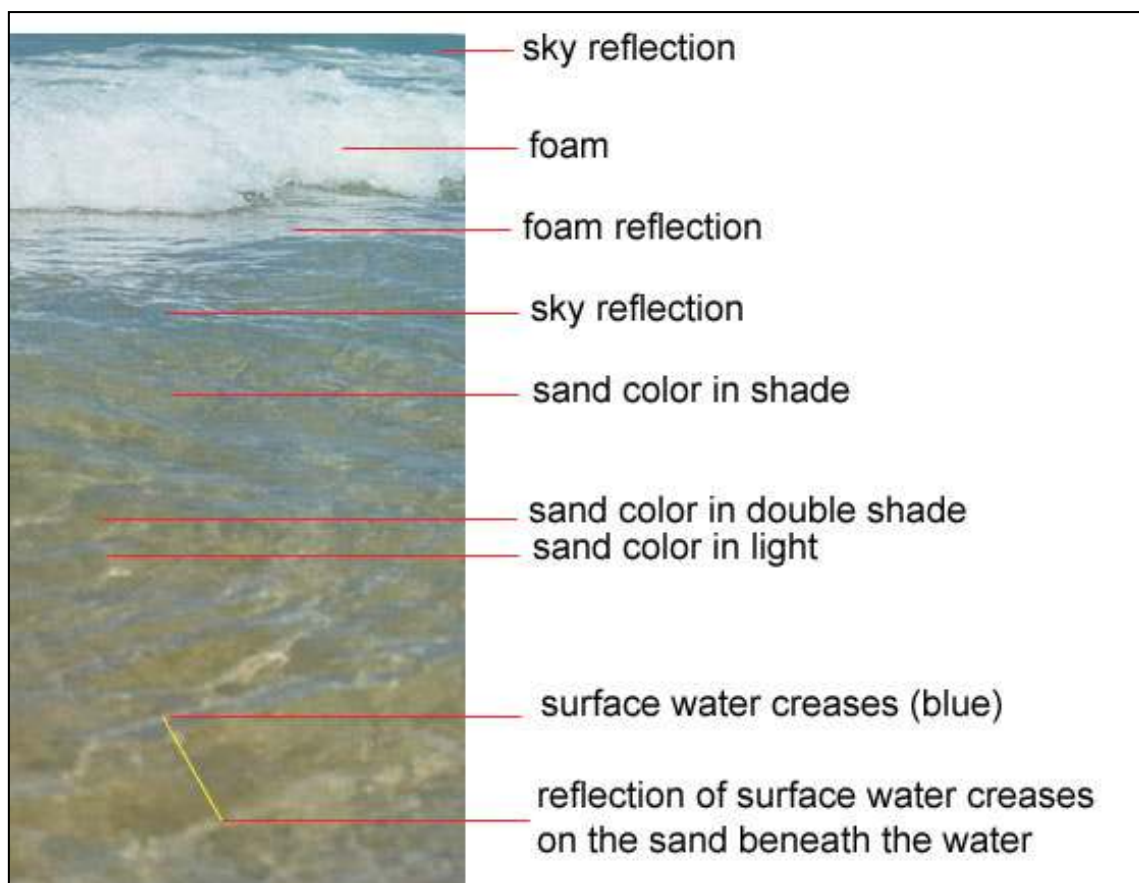
PAINTING LITTLE WAVES

Remember the first lesson on the importance of really looking at things and studying them? Well this lesson is a reminder of that and will also give you an understanding of how a painter must analyze the smallest things so as to best understand how to paint them in the biggest way. Nothing is more important than understanding this. You might think the figures I put into the following painting are the key. Not so, it is the study of the wave that makes this painting unique.

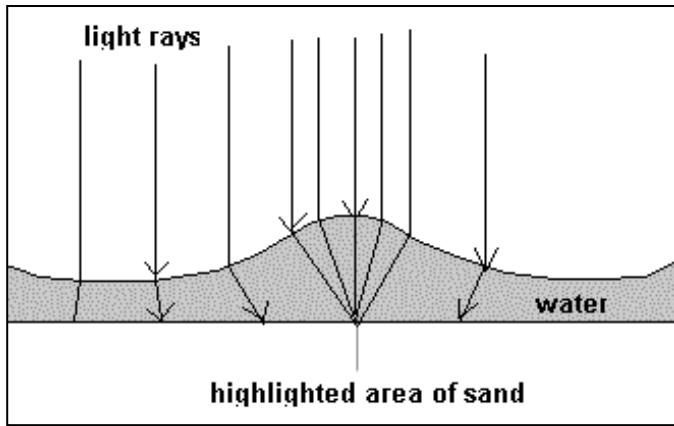


Have you ever wondered how those bright lines on the shallow end of a swimming pool come into being - or when you wade in shallow waters, on a sunny day, how the patterns rippling across the sand are made? Well so did I. So I took myself to the seaside on a sunny day and looked and looked (all in the nature of an artist's everyday grind).

Right is a photograph I took so you will can see what I mean. Below is another with an analysis of the reflected light that operates on the surface as the eye is raised.

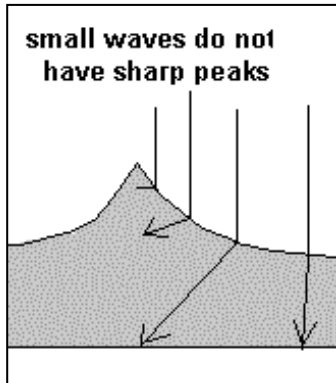


Note the yellow line that shows how the little blue wave top is parallel to the pattern in the sand.



So, how do these bright lines form on the sand? Well they form because the top of the wave is not sharp, but curved like a lens and like a lens, it focuses the light like a lens(see diagram opposite).

Were the wave 'peaked' the difference might occur as shown in the second diagram.



OK, so now we know that small waves are usually rounded. The more scientifically minded might say the were flattened by gravity or that water finds its own level.

Whatever the case I want you to consider the information in the photograph below and understand how the total structure of sand, wave, light and reflected light works and how we might transpose that to any painting we might do of a wave.



Let's not waste too much time on the beach (why not!) but get back to the studio and see what we can make

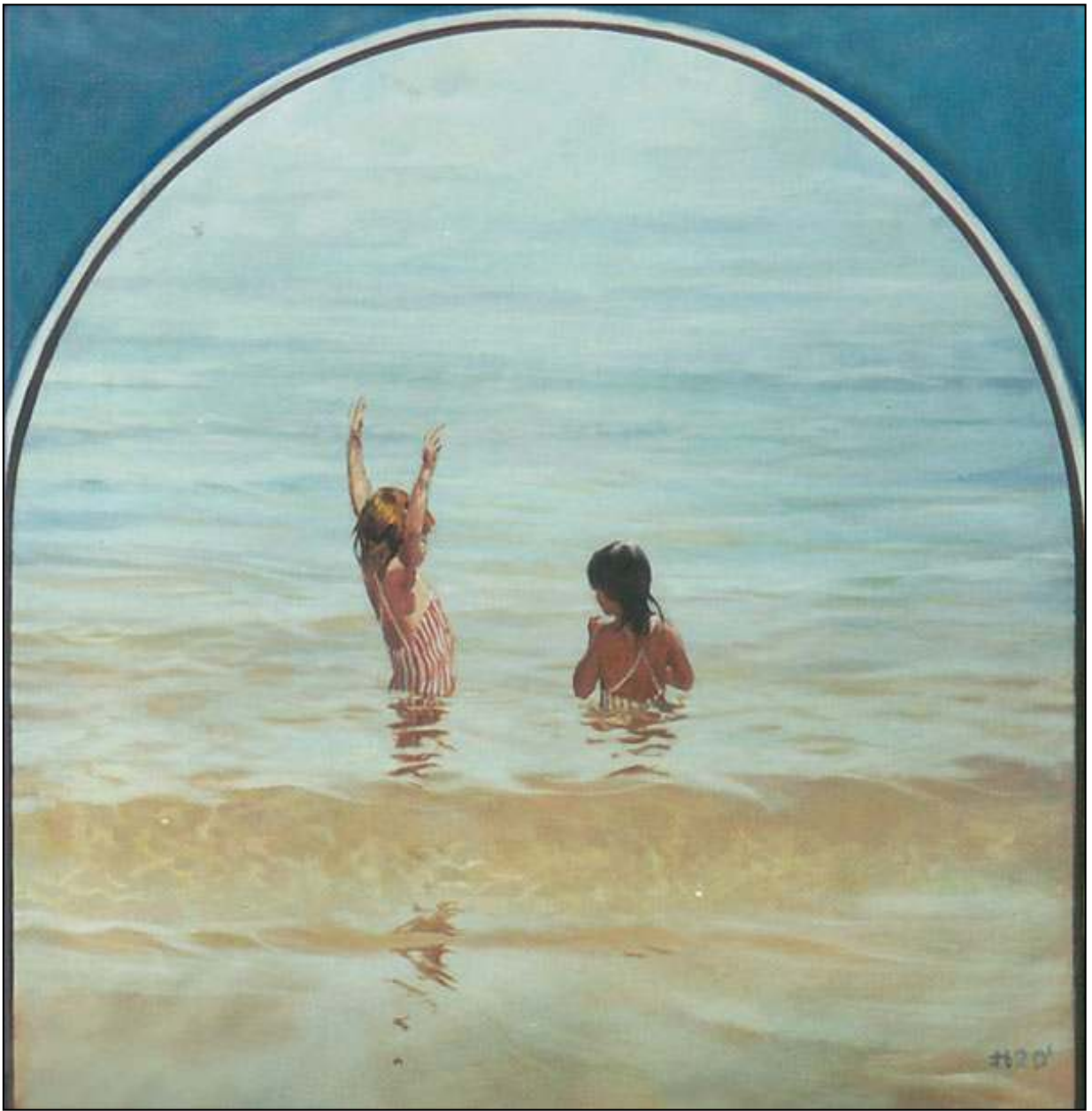
PAINTING LITTLE WAVES No.2

In the detail of the wave shown opposite you may be convinced you are looking through the wave ... but this is mere illusion. My steps in painting were as follows:

- 1) Paint the whole canvas a thinned mix of dirty sand colored raw sienna mixed with a little raw umber and white. Adjust for a approx value 5 or 6. Let dry to the touch.
- 2) With a nice runny flake or lead white with a little ultramarine and cobalt blue and using flowing figure eight horizontal hand movements create the wave tops.
- 3) Add some white to the raw sienna/umber mix and paint the pattern into the verticle wave surface making sure that the lighter more intense pattern is in the shallower wave's forward edge as I have shown.

NOTE: Don't begin the painting until you see the finished article and understand all the steps ... particularly that to make something look as if it were behind something else does **not** necessarily mean painting it that way - as in the sand 'beneath' the wave.





You should now understand the absolute simplicity of the whole scene; though there are a few points to be noted from looking at the painting above.

- 1) The reflected light on the top of the waves gets lighter as it goes back (the angle of incidence with the horizon decreases. In other words the tops of the closer waves are slightly darker in value as they reflect a higher part of the sky.
- 2) The waves get smaller as they recede.
- 3) The almost vertical fronts of the little waves get darker and bluer as the water deepens. In other words the sand color disappears.

Every problem can be solved by a careful study of the photographs shown on the previous page or by another visit to the beach ... which is never a bad idea anyway!



The figures are from sketches I made and I added the swimming costumes and altered there colors and to give a more satisfactory color scheme. (A full view of this painting can be seen by pressing [here](#). It is also available as a quality giclee print.)

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Make your own study (drawing) of some simple natural event or thing such as a clump of grass, part of a grape vine, a fish pond, a pile of autumn leaves or a neglected corner of the garden. Allow 40min. Later you might decide to base a major painting on your particular study?

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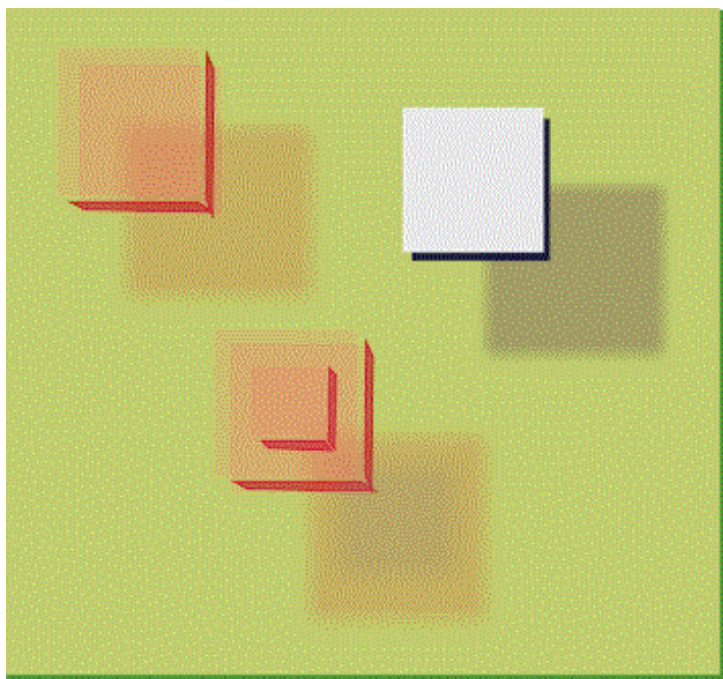
3-3 SHADOW AND TRANSPARENCY

Let us recall our lesson on sunset and sunrise and remember the effect of atmosphere on light rays. Remember how the motes in the sky or mist intercepted the long blue rays and let the red through?

Now we will treat that 'mist' as a piece of glass or plastic; a solid yet semi-transparent medium.

In the first example below the reddish pigment particles suspended in the glass are sparsely arranged. As with the earth's atmosphere at sunset the pigment particles in the glass absorb the blue-green light rays ... and this has a dual effect. (Fig 1.)

1. It reflects the red light rays back to the observer making the glass appear red.
2. It allows some of the red rays through to strike the surface behind. Here, that surface (green), absorbs some of the red rays. This tends to slightly neutralize the color. If the green was stronger the shadow would become grey.



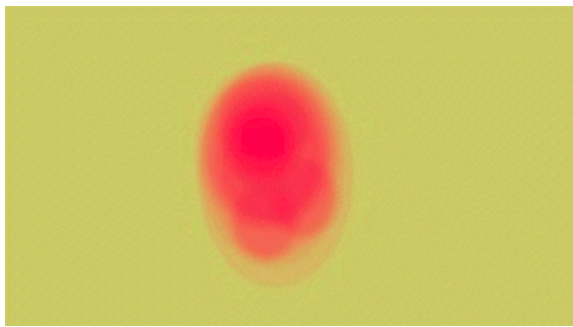
The solid object in Fig.2 blocks out all the light rays and casts a theoretical neutral shadow. Most painters find it useful to paint a warm shadow if the light source is cold and a bluish shadow of the source is warm. In this example the greenish background and reflected side light prevent an altogether neutral effect.

In the third example thicker glass is added to the center. This has the effect of both blocking the light and un-saturating the red. (see previous lesson on saturated color)

The principle regarding transparency is useful when painting with semi-transparent dark paint as the value and depth of the darks can be increased. As opposed to opaque darks, transparent dark allows light to penetrate the surface before reflecting back off what is underneath. This has the effect of filtering out light rays on the way in as well as on the way out thus allowing less of the light rays to escape and for our eyes to read richer, more interesting darks.

Application ...

THE SEMI-TRANSPARENT RED RUBY RING



1. Create an oval and smear with shades of red allowing a transparency around the edges. You could do this with a semi-transparent crimson red like alizarin.

The rest is pure fiction and applied logic ...

a) Light source (top left) determines the position of the shadow as well as the position of the reflected light on the stone.



b) The highlight on the stone tells us much. As it is sharply focused we know the stone is smooth and shiny (very reflective). Here it is a window - reflected twice (the second time gives the stone greater transparency). By its position we also know the window is the main light source for the object and a line drawn from the observer to the highlight would reflect at an angle and pass out the window. This tells us that the object's surface is at an angle (round) and that the window is high left. This information should tally with the position of the shadow.

c) The horizontal bands on the ring band define its texture and roundness. The elliptical shadow reinforces this assumption.

Here again this object is not drawn from anything real. It is a pure construction using logic and remembered observation.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Find examples of gold, silver, chrome and copper and describe them in terms of reflectiveness, edge and color (light hue and dark hue).



[GO TO ... lighting it up](#)

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4-1 HOW BACKLIGHT WORKS ITS MAGIC

1. BACKLIGHT

The simplest, most textural, color friendly, quickest, easiest to apply and most romantic of all light is backlight. It also disguises flaws in the original painting. Visions of swings, bonnets, long grass and afternoon light are the stuff of backlight paintings. The temptation to overuse backlight, is, to some artists overwhelming. So always use **less** than you think is appropriate.

1. Usually applying the backlight highlights is the last step on finishing the painting. It is applied with thick pure paint (impasto). A dark cool-grey hat can quickly become a brilliant blue. A red shirt can glow with warmth and ripples of water can begin to sparkle with reflections.

2. In most cases backlight only creates an edge of light so be careful to make use of it to also define the **texture** of the object.

Fig 1



Fig 2

Fig 3





In this example I have restricted myself to the use of backlight in one small area, Fig 2 and 3. As you can see my original painting was in shades of grey so the opportunities for applying backlight everywhere are manifold. Restraint is needed.

Backlighting, as you see in Fig 3 and 4 is a simple tracing procedure using a high value and high saturated color. I did this in this example with my computer tools - which is equivalent to using a cannon to shoot a mouse. Paint is much more delicate.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Find some good examples of back lit pictures (magazines are full of them). Pick one and over paint (pencil or paint) the backlight edges. Comment on the differences it makes to the picture that results.



[GO TO ... side light and turning points](#)
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4-2 THE LIGHT PAINTERS DESIRE

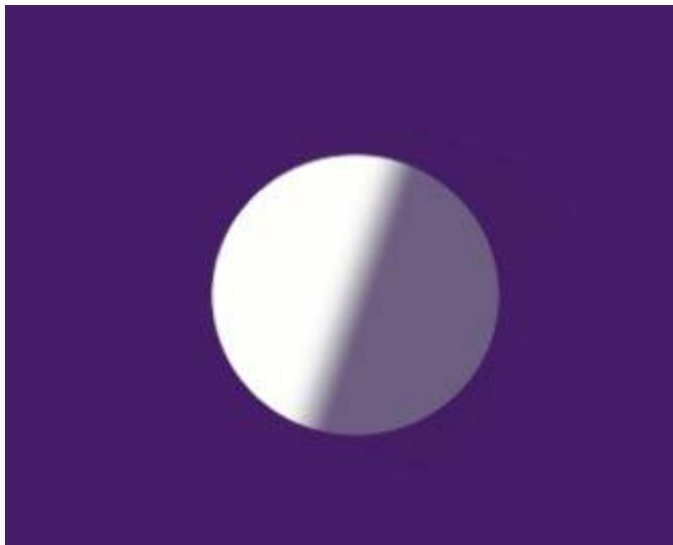
2. SIDELIGHT TOPLIGHT AND REFLECTED LIGHT

We know solid objects will block out light so why aren't their shadows black?



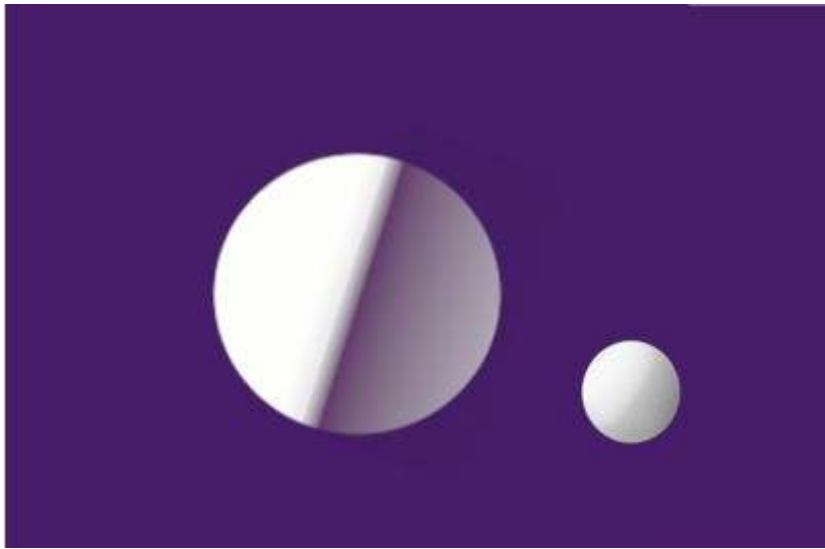
We know that every surface that absorbs one hue reflects the hues it does not absorb. The reflected hue is its 'named hue'. White surfaces then reflect the whole spectrum. We live in situations surrounded by many reflective surfaces. They can be red, blue or yellow, polished, shiny or not and light rays will continue to bounce around until like they find the appropriate surface to snap them up. Until they do however they are 'reflected' light and provide that illusive secondary source that lets us look into dark corners.

To demonstrate this let us take a trip to the stars.



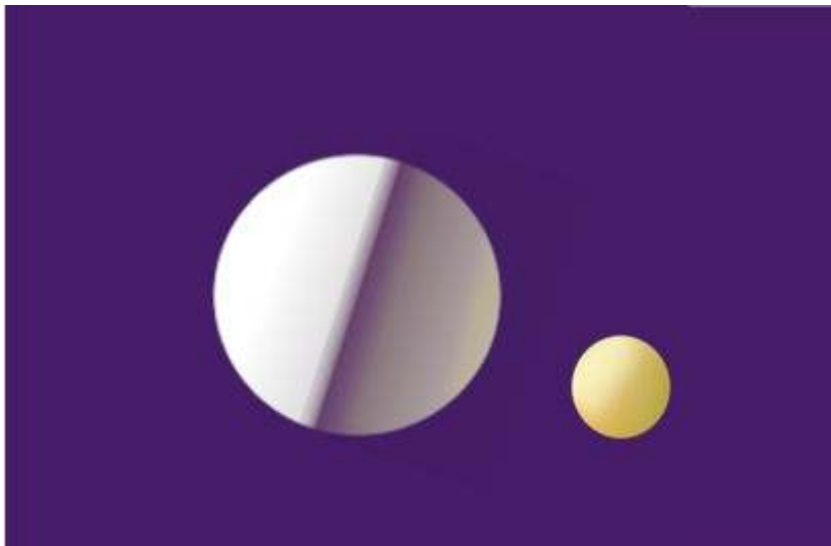
Here we see a sphere or planet much like the earth. It is half in shade and half lit by a sun. The value of the shadow is constant even though the edge at the 'equator' appears darker. That is only an optical illusion because of its proximity to the white hemisphere. Also due to stray light rays the shadow is a 'value' lighter than the background though it is the same 'hue'.

Now we give the planet a small moon which also reflects a certain amount of light from the sun ...



Note the effect of the reflected light as well as the 'apparent' deepening of the 'turning point' or equatorial band.

If we give the moon a local hue (yellow) we can see its subtle effect on the main sphere. Much the same thing happens between the moon and the earth.



The impressionists concentrated on illuminating shadows such as in the haystacks of Monet and the flesh tones of Renoir. Meanwhile Vermeer was the master of side and reflected light. Vermeer created layer on layer of magic and delicate secondary light (see lesson on 'girl with the pearl earring').

Note: when you are painting your next portrait, or examining another, try to identify the local color, the reflected color, the shadow color and the turning point. A face is not much different from a sphere when struck by secondary light.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Using a white jug, cup, or some other bland object and other colorful pieces set up your own secondary light effect. Try and use more objects to get a third light or tertiary effect. Make some colored sketches to show you understand the theory then find some master portrait that uses the secondary light effect to best advantage. Allow 40min.



[GO TO ... front light or artists light](#)
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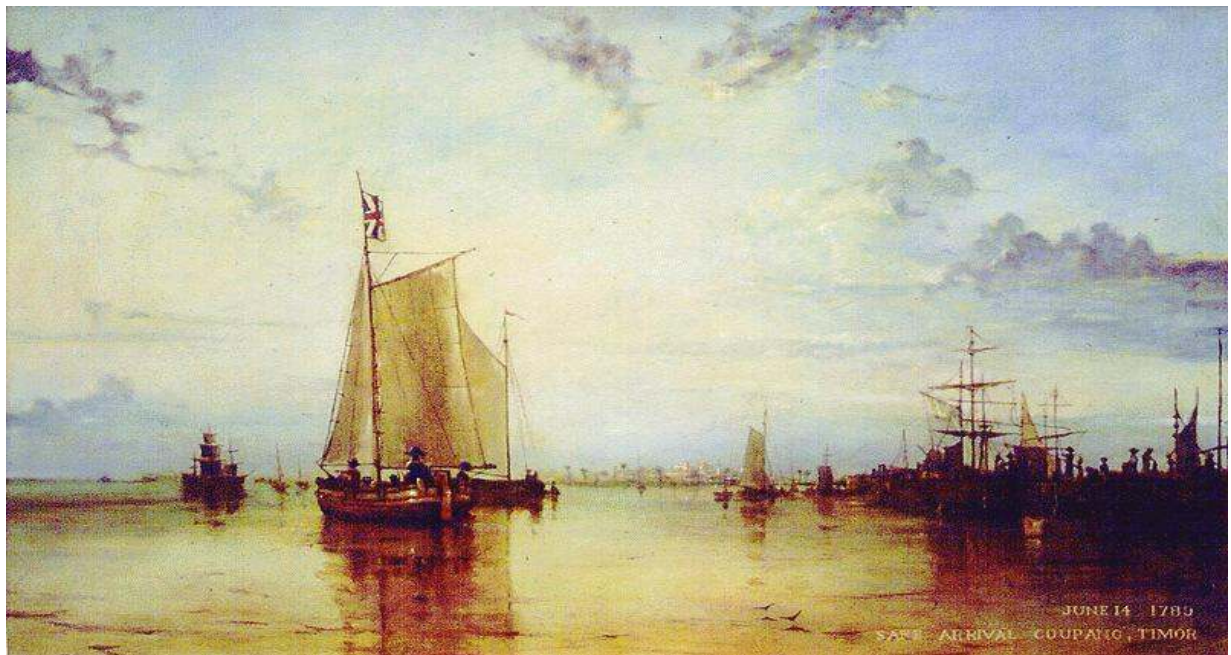
4-3 HOW LIGHT WORKS ITS MAGIC

3. FRONT, PICTORIAL AND AMBIGUOUS LIGHT

1. Front Light - the favorite of photographers, two dimensional artists, children and colorists where emphasis is on color and texture over form and value. Front light can eliminate the need for shading and shadows (which is a pity for they are a great joy and keep many artists from wandering aimlessly about the streets in the dead of night). Front light is also excellent for use in portraits of unremarkable people. Holbein's front light portrait of a Dutch princess eventually caused the schism that resulted in the formation of the Church of England. Like good putty front light can cover-up many faults.

USING THE JMW TURNER FRONTLIGHT PAINTING TECHNIQUE: (From my 'Arrive Timor' (60" by 36") painting from the Bounty series)

1. On a prepared canvas begin with a thin glaze (stand oil/spirit medium) of yellow with touches of red and blue. (blue suggesting the distance, yellow the middle ground and red the foreground). These thin 'washes' serve as a beginning - the overall plan for solving the problems the subject presents.
2. After drying make light compositional drawing with chalk.
3. Lay in the large masses boldly with impasto white/color mixtures and allow to dry.
4. Draw/paint in the forms in greater detail with a light brown (burnt sienna).



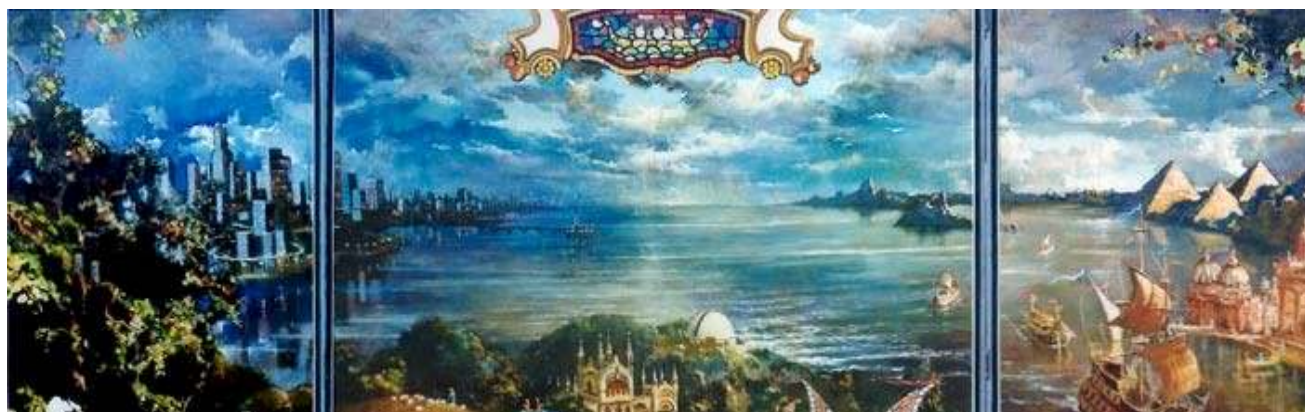
5. Begin to add colour using glazes and scumbles. Do not fear adding white to the glazes as this can create a broken light effect. Build thin layers of colour on top of each other maintaining a luminous transparency to the canvas and the textured white below. (note - can be wiped)
6. Apply accents and details including dark local colours as well as impasto white highlights strategically placed to give the effect of glimmering light.
7. Finish the painting in the frame touching up with fresh varnish and using thin brushes to drive paint into the cracks etc and other areas.

THEORY : In fact this method of painting I used copys Turner but most likely had its beginnings with Rembrant. It gains its effect by glazing over dried impasto to other textures. Rembrant devised a method employing two whites; one for impasto and one for smoother passages. The impasto white was faster drying, probably made so by the addition of egg and ground glass, into the formulation. It was very lean, and

consisted mostly of white lead with a minimum of binder (a variation on Step 1 above). He began applying it more and more heavily (Step 3 above) as the first stage of a two (or more) stage operation which was finished with transparent glazes and wiping, to create fantastic special effects, the most extreme example of which is the man's glowing, golden sleeve in the painting referred to as "The Jewish Bride," in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. The brilliance of this effect cannot be gotten in any other way.

By wiping the glazes off as soon as they were applied, Rembrandt and later JMW Turner were able to create a bas relief effect of remarkable three dimensionality as the glaze remained in the nooks and crannies (Step 5-6 above). By glazing again, this time with transparent yellows and/or browns, instead of Ivory Black gave the textures a rich, golden glow (Step 7 above).

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Look up some paint manufacturers or go to your art supplier and find answers to these questions. Name three oils that can be used in oil paint manufacture. What is stand oil? How is sun-dried oil made? Name a non-drying oil. What is a varnish? What is a resin? What is a medium? Which is the most transparent white of those commercially available today? What medium is used for acrylic paints?



APPLIED PICTORIAL AND AMBIGUOUS LIGHT

In the painting above 'Allegory for a time capsule - (detail)' I constructed a sky spanning morning, noon and night. The possibilities of broken light on the ground are immense, but still, within in their particular areas, the scenes must be light consistent. The transition areas, as always, pose the greatest difficulty. Here I used the frame divisions to create artificial boundaries but the changes of pallet (colors) and angled light made the true difference. Note the pyramids are lit from the right, the Venetian castle from above and the skyscrapers from the left.



[GO TO ... Cascading light](#)

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4-4 CASCADING LIGHT AND SHADE

CHIAROSCURO - creating depth with light against dark and dark against light.

By forming a sky of scattered clouds a marvellous opportunity presents itself on the ground. The artist can use light to highlight certain areas he and darken others. The artist becomes like the person controlling the lights on a stage production. In the example below I use the bands of light to draw and direct the eye and all is done by utilising the dramatic effects of light against dark and dark against light. Note how the painting seems to cascade backwards.

This is how it is done - detail from the center panel of my tryptic...



Most of the problems in developing a painting concern VALUES - contrasts on the grey scale. Remember hue(color) has nothing to do with value. Forget the color here and try and estimate the grey value. In the foreground the huge red dress is dark against the blue carpet, then the white tablecloth is the highest value against the dress.



Fig 1 The four figures to the right are bathed in sunlight. The two on the left are in semi-shade. The light slants across the table.

I want to highlight the body language of the people involved so I will use high dramatic contrast(chiaroscuro). I will allow deep shadow to creep across behind the right hand four. (Fig 2)To create the reverse effect behind the other



Fig 1



Fig 2

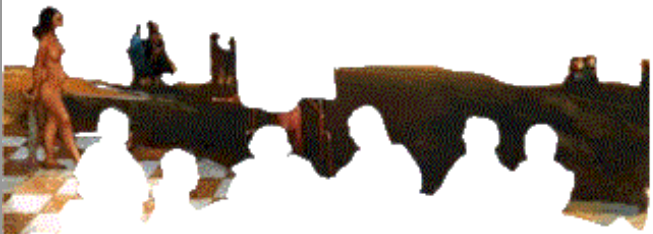


Fig 3

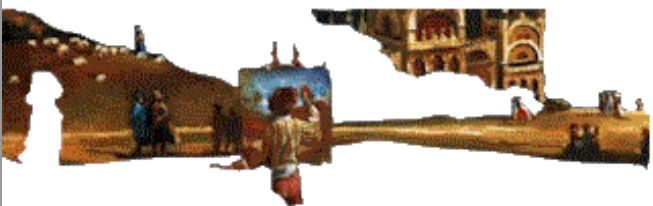


Fig 4



Fig 5

two figures I will use the light slanting across the table to create the higher values on the tiles behind. The woman feeding the child and the man in the red coat (dark against light) are the reverse of the four others who are light against dark. I will use a white bonnet for the woman feeding the child as it will help define here head position.

Fig 3 Here then is this secondary layer with the nude added. Notice how I have already set up some dark forms that I will use against the next band of light.

Fig 4&5 I include an artist in this next band of highlights -and since he is painting a picture I can use the picture in two ways. a) high (light blue)value to define the artist's head and dark to define his shoulders. b) I also place the easel against a darker passage for my next line of shadows thereby adding extra depth.

Remember to use the principles explained in the lessons on 'Veils of Atmosphere' and 'Perspective.'

I have also used the chiaroscuro to zigzag the viewer's eye away.



Just decide where your bands of light and shade are going to flow and place your forms. Alternatively you can make your drawing of the forms then apply the light - or like me use a little of both and if something doesn't work keep experimenting. Don't change the color just alter the values!

Note: **Chiaroscuro** is also a powerful visual weapon so don't overuse it - you could end up with climaxes (maximum value differences) all over the canvas - and that won't work.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Rembrant was thought to use the 'Italian chiaroscuro method' to increase drama in his paintings when he thought it necessary. Nominate the areas on his 'Night Watch' that maximise contrast and explain why, in the design sense, they are where they are. Allow 40min.



[GO TO ... proportion and observation](#)

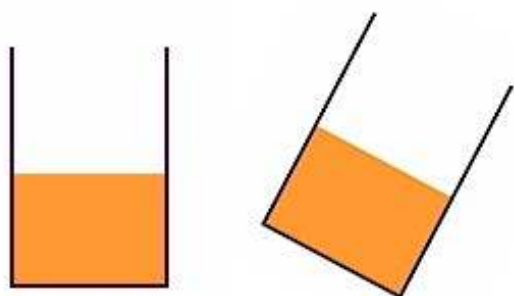
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5-1 DRAWING PROPORTION AND OBSERVATION

Observation and genesis of the line and of freehand drawing

Long before an infant understands that milk finds its own level he or she learns to up-end the bottle to feed. When, a little later, the child is asked to draw the level of a liquid in a tilted glass the result is often ...

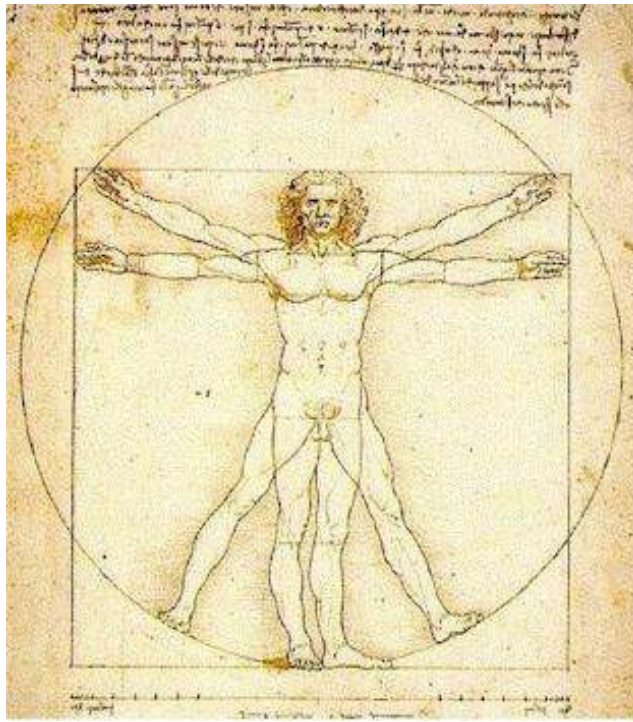


By observation or logic the instant a child realizes liquid finds its own level he or she has learnt a principle that will help it to survive and to understand the world. My point here is that descriptive drawing is scientific, logical and the result of observation. There are no short-cuts. An understanding of the nature and structure of the world must be learnt from looking. This is a process most folk find enjoyable for the discovery of hidden structures and patterns is necessary for any painter. It also justifies my spending much of my life in the sunshine.



When nine or ten years old I often thought famous people had small heads as the portraits of them seemed to me to show them as such. I thought it may have been a requirement of fame (sometimes I still do). Anyway like many other children I would often draw adults with huge heads and small stick-like bodies. I suppose after a few hundred grotesque heads were stuck in my pram it was completely understandable!

So children observe the things most familiar and important to them and often draw them larger and in greater detail than the things less critical - hence the large heads. It is no wonder then that during adolescence we find the human body observed and drawn in far greater detail and with less emphasis on the head. Librarians can often map a progressive interest in certain art books with well thumbed anatomical studies being in high demand during late adolescence (I wonder why?)



A few artists have deliberately portrayed the human body with tiny heads. It is often referred to as the 'heroic' style of portraiture.

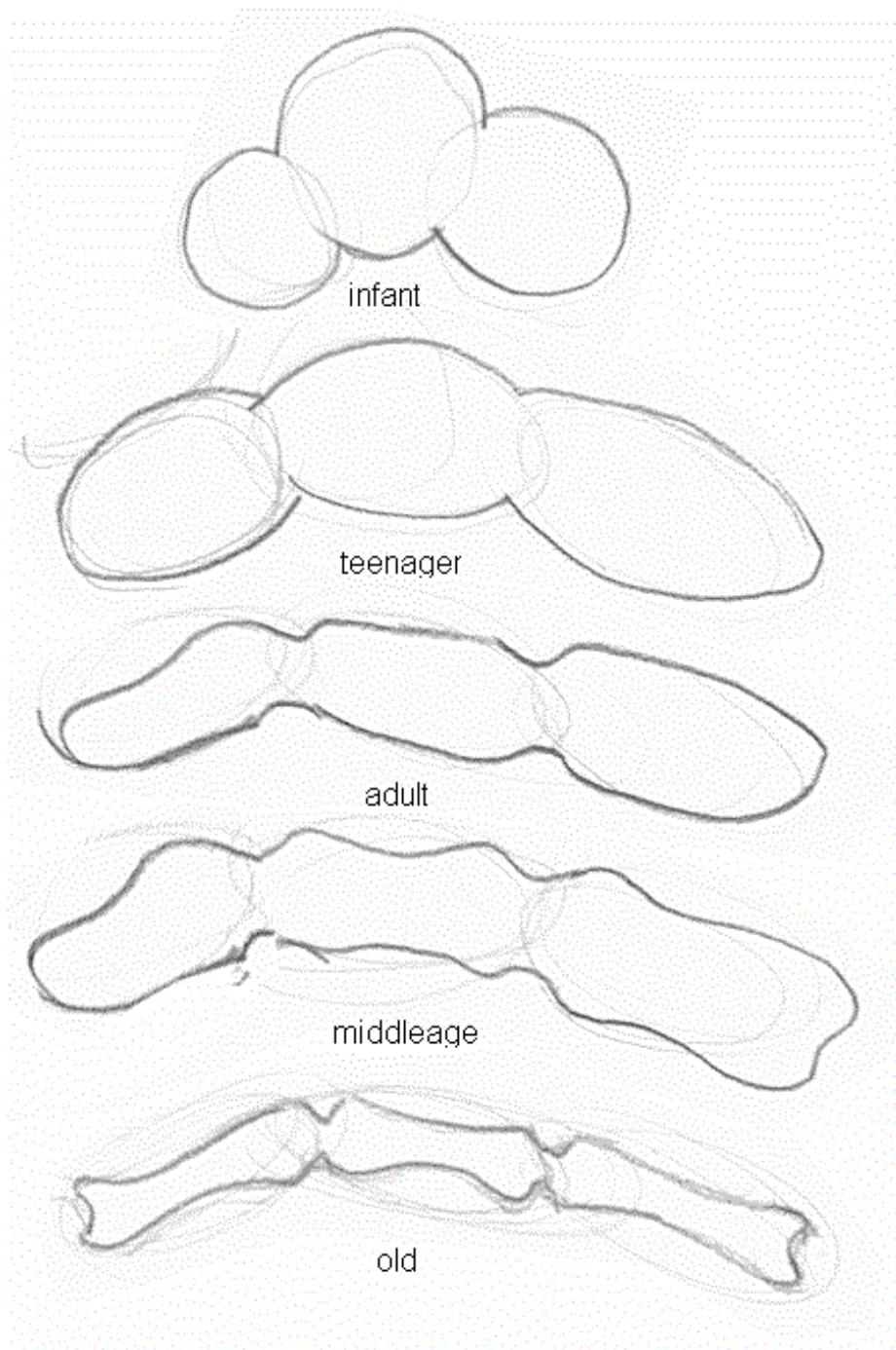


But by knowing the average proportion of the head to the body we can make a deliberate decision on how we decide to portray an individual. To that purpose we may make a decision as to their character and portray it accordingly. We must always remember there are other prejudicial elements we can use like color, line and form. The stuff of nightmares when you are trying to get it right sometimes.

My point here is that the rules that govern drawing are a tool kit to be used to disassemble and reassemble until the artist is satisfied the mood (portrait) or shape (object) is satisfactorily captured.

STUDENT ACTIVITY :In the lesson on perspective you learnt how to draw a cube. The other important solids are the cylinder, cone and the sphere. Use the perspective grid and practice these - also practice adding shading and shadows.

HOW A LINE CAN AGE



From the moment a baby opens its eyes it begins keying-in shapes, with one of the first being the human face and body. Then it learns to recognise various other shapes in order of their importance. The child also learns to judge how far or how close is a particular object by judging their relationship to each other.



Notice how the shapes and curves of male adult lines are repeated in the hand, arm and torso of Adam.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Find your own examples of such lines and paste them (or copy their references) into your work book.



[GO TO ... Lines and what they mean](#)

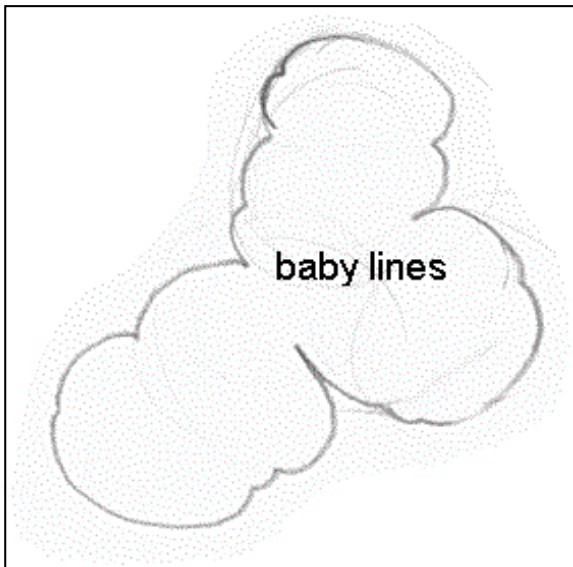
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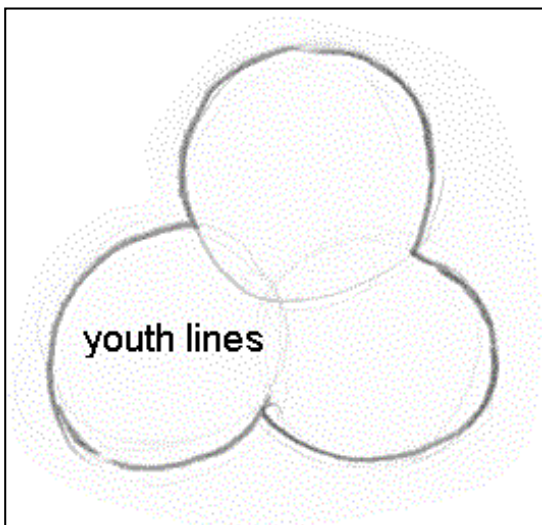
DRAWING - SO WHAT'S IN A LINE?

Lines that define the shape of the human body are those we most notice.

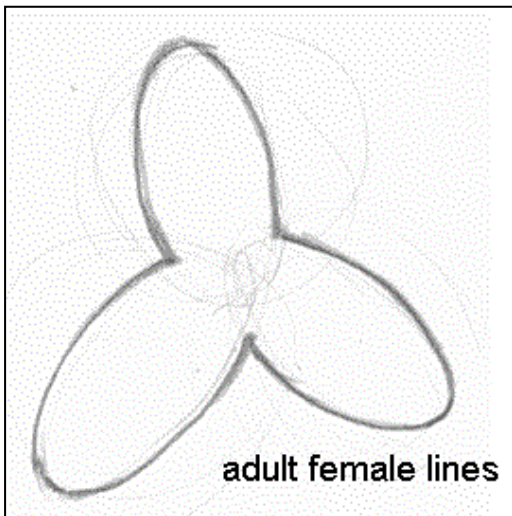
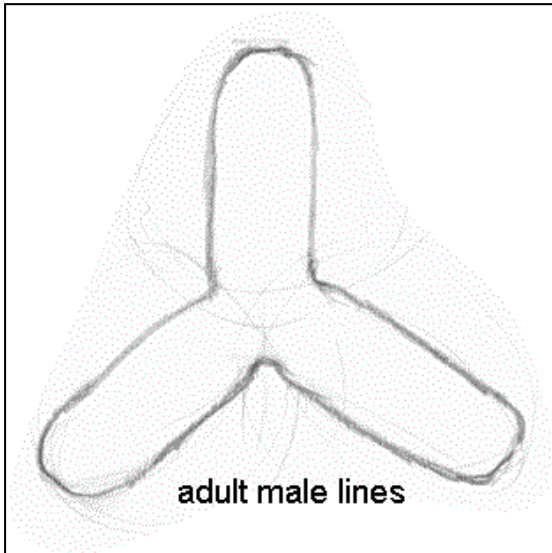
The human body is our yard-stick. To decide how big or far away something is we can have someone stand beside it. We quickly learn to recognize the human form, above all else, as our pre-eminent shape, then we may look for details, male, female, child, adult or aged. We have a great commonality of experience when differentiating the subtleties of the human body, and so it is with drawing. There are many lines or edges in nature but our understanding of them evolves from our first understanding of the lines that define the human body.



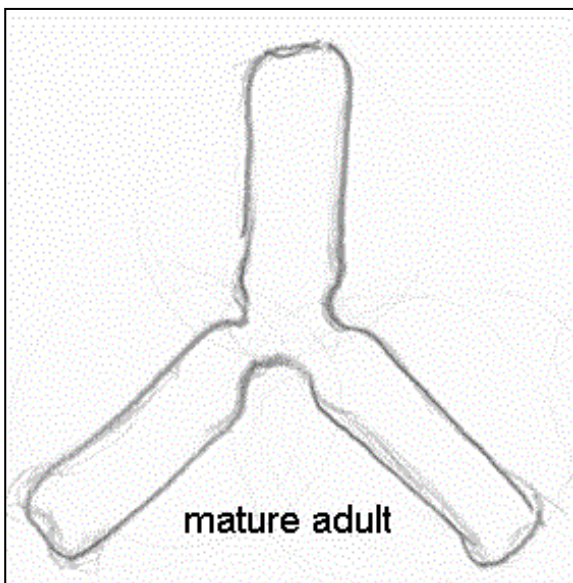
Note the little multiple bulbous shapes and lines and how these indicate the soft almost cellular nature of the flesh. The multiple folds and lateral creases typify this in both the face and body.



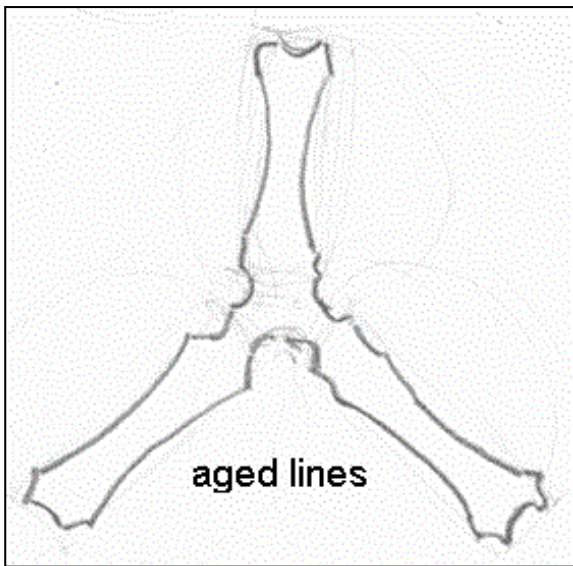
In my portrait of Tom Ellison (above) the fully rounded shapes begin to appear as fat and muscle combine. Of course the 'adolescent' can change shape quite 'sharply', almost overnight, and their spurts of uneven growth can give them some unusual, if momentary forms. I remember being quite worried myself, once or twice.



OK, this is fairly obvious, even if a little more subtle than the generalized shapes. The male has muscle defined with less fat therefore a little 'flat' on the 'tops' of the muscle. There is no hint yet of the concave lines that will begin to appear later. The female shape in the above example has almost a 'male' line on the tilted upper left hip though it is more of a skeletal or joint definition than flesh. I will say more about that later.



As fat disappears and muscle shrinks so the previously convex edges become slightly concave and the gaps at the joints become more prominent. It is more important for artists to study the skeletal structure when painting or drawing mature or older humans or animals.



Next, and a rarity in portraiture and full body paintings, is the aged body's description as an edge. This is the most unflattering and not one portrait painters or photographers would push you aside to witness. It must be noted however, fashion photographers, fashion houses, et al, who are intent on finding models that bear a close resemblance to perambulating coat hangers are not adverse to this anorexia look. They however, use it more for purposes of ambiguity and decadent fascination, and that I will explain later on.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Make your own series of four drawings of some part of the human anatomy that ages. Teachers should be careful not to discourage the more outrageous selections, but once started the pupil should be made to finish (or explain why not). Allow 40min.



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DRAWING - THE MANY USES OF A LINE

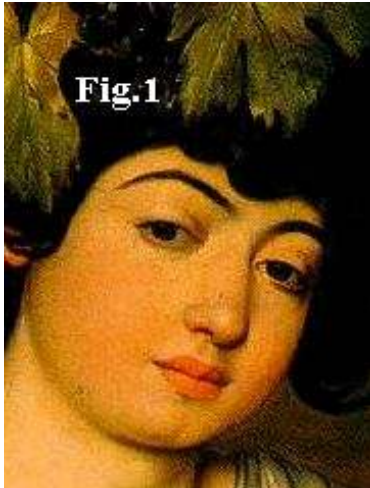


Fig.1 Here is a fine example of using rounded female forms to make a youthful face. Full cheeks and rouge lips!



Fig. 2 Great delicacy is displayed in the grip and in the form of these young fingers.



Fig. 3 The powerful masculine shoulder and arm are defined by the flattened ovals of muscle.

If we combine all these we should get an ambiguous picture, neither male or female, youthful or mature but with elements of them all.

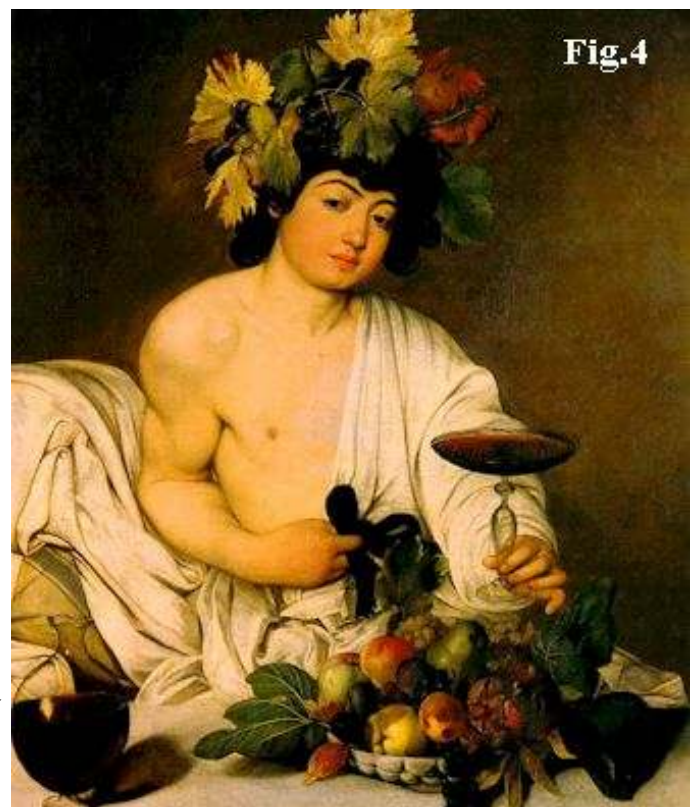
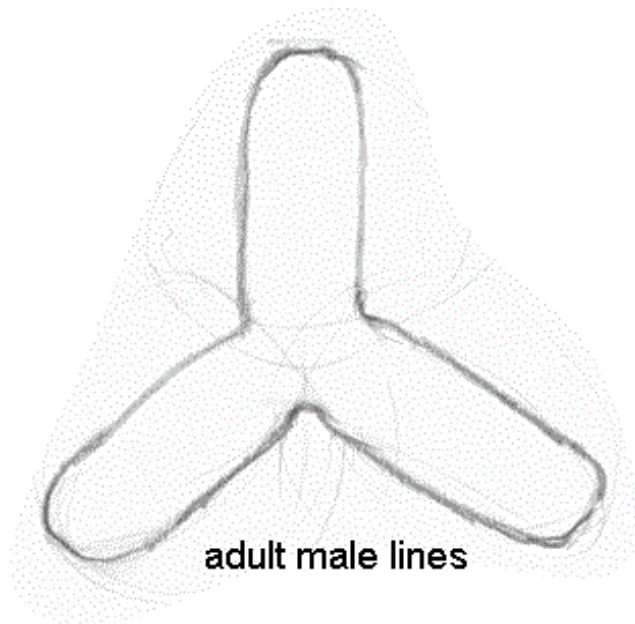
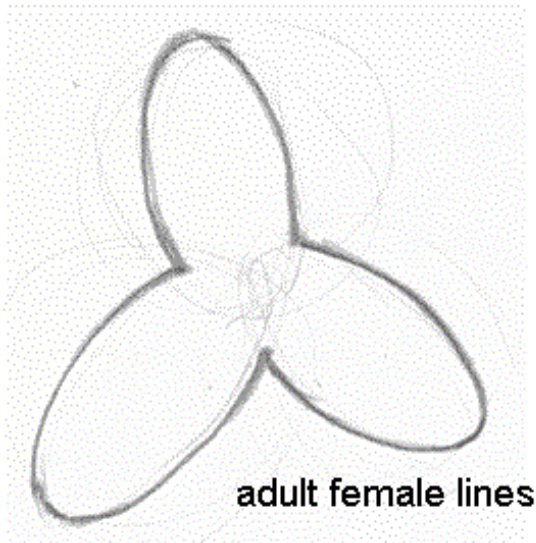


Fig.4 Such was the intention of Carravaggio in his famous painting of Bacchus. He provides us with a feast of ambiguities and it is an excellent example of how minor variations of form can be altered for effect.

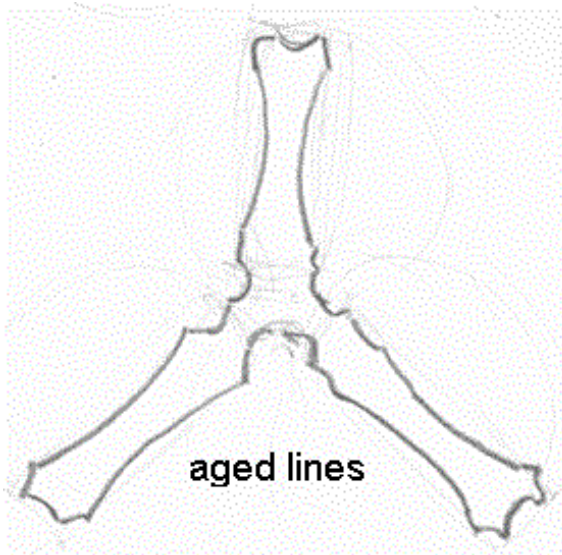
AMBIGUOUS OR DECADENT LINES

What if we alter a form that is female, by virtue of long hair, stockings, high-heeled shoes and by adding 'male'

body lines? Remembering our defined lines ... say we flatten the muscles, make the joints a little more angular (aged). What will this do to the 'look'? Perhaps something like the work of this famous painter



By now you are aware of why I call these lines ambiguous lines, but why decadent? The artist's intention is clear as these are lines in the process of decay and deterioration. But more to the artist's intent they are a mixture of a dual sexuality. This facility, a painter or drawer can employ, to alter the nature of a form by the deliberate use of line or form is a powerful (and sometimes cruel) tool indeed. You will note the alteration of the left forearm so the muscles are flattened from their usual rounded feminine form. The employment of such devices probably tells us more about the painter than the sitter and that is not very professional.



TRANSPOSING LINES TO LANDSCAPE

Vincent VanGough was a master at transposing line to landscape, and there is no ambivalence his line. He used clear purposeful lines in all his landscapes - even in areas without lines, like the sky. He often used line also as a pattern, and without form. Some of his pictures use the aged line and others the youthful. You can judge by the landscapes below. First look at the youthful lines in the 'Wheat Field and Cypress Pines' ...



... then look at the aged olive trees. He also loved to paint old, twisted grape vines.



Did VanGough do this deliberately?... I don't know but my hope is he did. Some might ask does it matter? If you think that you should not be reading this.



My final point here is that understanding the power of line, in drawing, is yet another spanner in the painter's tool kit used to dissemble and reassemble. Like every powerful device it should be used with humanity and sensitivity. Communicating using line, and form, is as potent as communicating with words, only more universal. The painting above is merely composed of consistent adult female lines where even the reverse curve of the nose gives the impression it is convex!. I must say I prefer this to the 'ambivalent' example.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Make an outline drawing of Modigliani's nude shown above.



[GO TO ... Pattern and texture](#)
...or back to main [lesson list](#)



5-2 TEXTURE AND PATTERN

Texture: texture is one of the three main elements of a picture - the others being design and shape. Of course there are many subdivisions that include color, light and shade etc.



1. The 'feathery' red hat is an example of Vermeer suggesting texture by means of 'working the edge'. This is probably the simplest method of creating a texture impression.

2. The polished ebony lions head is deliberately unfocused to bring it forward. Solid dots within a milky halo are the method used here to suggest polished highlights.

3. The blue silken sash below is made thin and silky by 'hard edge' differentials between the light and dark blue. The edges of the softer folds in the cape are not as harsh. I could have simply worked the edges to make it a fur coat.



Look, think discover the logic then apply it. This topic will be addressed in more detail later in the lesson on turning points and in the advanced lessons section on painting silk, satin, fur, linen, etc.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Collect five more examples of 'edge texture' from magazines or from the internet.

Pattern



This is an excellent detail from a painting of an artist who identifies and repeats a simple shape. I count more than ten repetitions of the sickle moon shape.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Download and print the picture and identify the ten repetitions.



The particular artist (?) was perceptive enough to realize the particular element had a significance both as a descriptive shape regarding his subjects and as a religious and tribal icon (as it does to many other groups).

5-3 DESIGN

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS (and get to the theory later)

Let us assume we are faced with the situation where the following picture must be cropped to fit a particular frame. How should it be done?



Fig 1



Fig 2



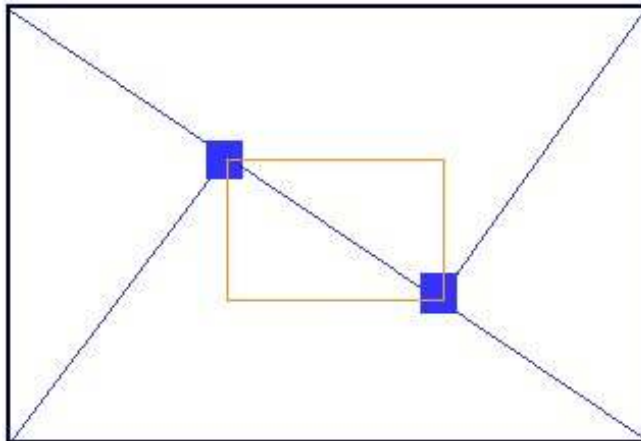
Fig 3

You probably have quite definite ideas about your preferred option ... and if I said I preferred No.2 you may decide I should seek serious counselling or some other form of professional help.

But most paintings do have accents or points of natural interest. Sometimes these are the areas of maximum contrast (lightest against darkest), other times it is a color accent (hue), or in a narrative painting, it could be an area of high dramatic intent - or it may even be a combination of all three. There can, of course, be dominant, secondary and many other minor accents. The question is: where to place them within a defined space so they look right?

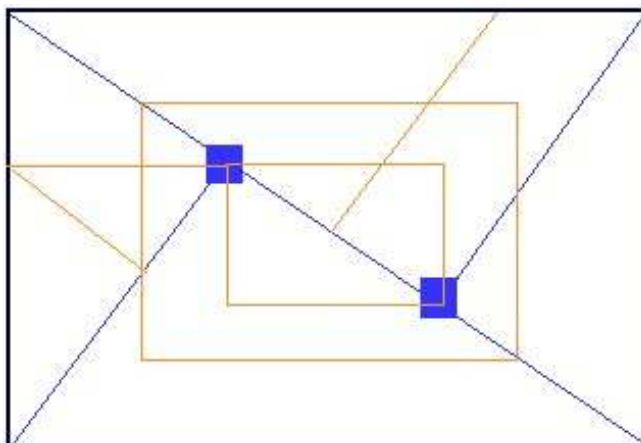
Without explaining the complexities of physics, calculus or harmonic proportion (all of which I forgot as soon as I gave up my promising career as a rocket scientist - I ran out of chalk). Still, I have found the following method a helpful starting point for the humble painter.

1. For primary accents - corners of the center rectangle.



Try and counterpoint a dominant accent with a two secondary or some minor accents (mostly outside the rectangle).

Remember, everything is a balance with the relationship of all the parts to each other as they are to be sympathetic to the whole. Extra accents could lie on the corners of the second rectangle as shown below.



Remember the diagonals are powerful lines in any composition (below).



Later you will see where spirals and curves can also assist in forming the basis of compositions.

An example- one of my most difficult design tasks was to construct a painting to form the frontpiece of my tryptic (a three paneled painting). I was faced with a square to be split down the middle - upon which I wanted to place a single portrait. The problem was I did not want the figure to look as if it were cut in two by an axe.



1. The diagonal forms the main element of the composition.
2. The triangle forces a relief to the diagonal and is the principal construct of the figure.
3. The green and red circles are counterpoint highlights equidistant about the split just like you would balance weights on a seesaw (fulcrum).



With enough counterpoints we can almost create pattern ...

STUDENT ACTIVITY: download or cut and paste into your book a famous painting of your choice. Analyse, showing diagonals and counterpoints and explaining elements that bring the painting into 'balance'. Time:40min.



[GO TO ... the 'golden mean'](#)

.....or [lesson list](#)



DESIGN 2

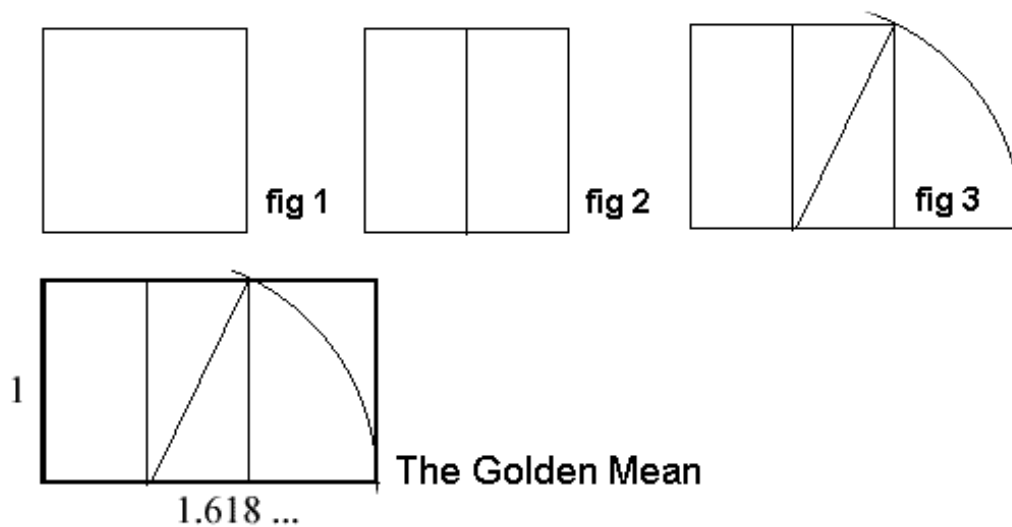
THE GOLDEN MEAN or GOLDEN SECTION

The 'Golden Mean' is merely a mathematical ratio usually discerned by the painter as the ratio of the larger side of a rectangle as it relates to the shorter. Derived by the ancient Greeks it can be constructed geometrically or expressed as a simple ratio, namely 1:1.618... Like "pi", the number 1.618... is an irrational number. Both the ancient Greeks and the ancient Egyptians used the Golden Mean when designing their buildings and monuments. The builders of Paestum used the Golden Mean in their temples. Artists as diverse as Leonardo da Vinci and George Seurat used the ratio when constructing their paintings.

In classical architecture it was thought this particular ratio was the most pleasing to the eye and its extrapolation into a spiral could be found replicated in nature in such diverse things as pine cones and sea shells or the curve of a fern.

I see no particular theological significance in the golden mean, nor do I slavishly design my paintings or canvases to follow its geometry.

Well that noted then how is this 'golden mean' found using a ruler and a compass?



Quite simply.

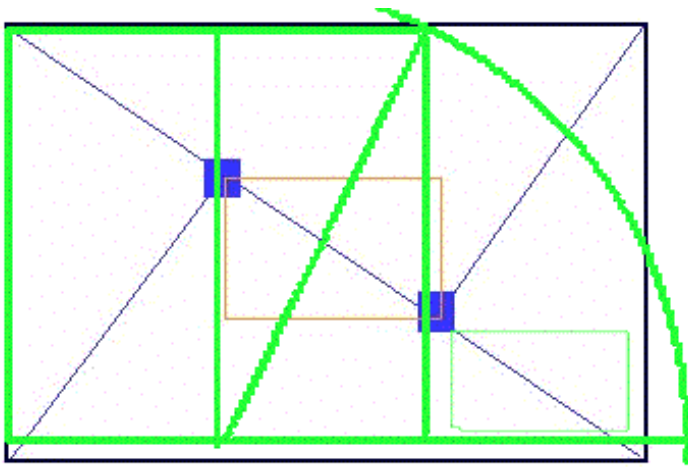
In Fig 1 we draw a square.

In Fig 2 we divide it into two.

Fig 3 and we use our compass to transfer the diagonal to the base line.

Then we form the rectangle that for artists represents the 'golden mean'.

Ok now we know what the 'golden mean' is what do we do with it? How do we employ it to assist our painting? Well, the most obvious is to buy your canvases in the proportion 1:1.618 (or thereabouts). Other than that you will understand why, in the previous lesson, I used my particular diagonal method to define my painting accents and if you look at the diagram below you will see where I superimpose the golden mean over the diagonals. It is almost an identical result. Otherwise one method could be described as robust while the other more precise.



The unfinished painting below is constructed by the 'golden mean'. How, you may ask, since it is a square?



(A full view of this painting can be seen by pressing [here](#). It is also available as a quality giclee print.)

To find out how I designed this particular painting format, using the golden mean, you will need to go to the [advanced golden mean](#) section of these lessons as the particular details may cause the odd frown or need for some to visit our site refreshment area (open 24 hours). Anyway it does not mention the 'Golden Triangle' (really an isosceles triangle with base angles of 72 degrees and not an unspecified area in SE Asia), and its not for the instinctive painter. It is however, important for those who seek to understand order before they experiment with chaos.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Repeat and copy my diagrams. Label them.



[GO TO ... ideas and styles](#)

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6-1 DEFINITIONS

Before you start painting you must decide on your object in learning to paint. There are many styles and methods of applying paint to a surface but there are three main reasons for doing so. After you have looked at these reasons and the examples I have provided you should be able to follow your purpose and utilize the tools of drawing, color, texture and design to your best advantage. The categories are not definitive as many paintings encompass more than a single element - nor is any objective better or worse than any other.

None should ever gain from a painting any dividend in excess of what the artist invests - and if he or she does it is a fool's profit. Sadly so many twentieth century artists hold their public in the same regard a con man would a victim. Even Picasso and Dali made some unfortunate comments in this regard. If we train our senses sufficiently they can evolve to the extent they are able to discern great subtlety. Just as a wine taster or gourmet train theirs so can a visual artist and it is truly a joy.' ...

The categories are :



Fig 2



Fig 3

1. Decoration - I want to paint because I love to decorate.

Fig 1.(above) Here color and proportion are made pleasing to the senses.

Fig 2 Impressionist decoration.

Fig 3 The use of an accent (bright red in a sea of grey) for an eye catching wall decoration

I would have you paint decoration for the appreciation of decoration, paint subtlety for the appreciation of subtlety and paint messages for those looking to pictures for meaning. Why deny people their decoration, why deny the high church their subtlety, why deny the communicators their messages? There is no good reason—still, I would have the artist be all, at the same time. But if you find you cannot, just rejoice in the diversity and do not judge one better than the other.



Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6

2. Fine Art - I want to paint to understand and enjoy visual ideas.

Here I will quote a respected food and wine judge, 'In summary less is more. The flavours and fragrances we most enjoy are the ones we only just perceive. More than that, they make us sick. Rose scent is a good example.'

Fig 4 One of the greatest paintings of all time - sublimely subtle. The viewer knows exactly how the artist felt towards the subject. (note the lips slightly apart - a rarity in northern renaissance portraiture)

Fig 5 The mystery, subtlety and the innovation in this painting makes your hair stand on end.

Fig 6 The use of light and landscape in an allegory about painting.



Fig 7



Fig 8

3. Message - I want to paint because I have a message to communicate.

Fig 7. (above) Never has design, contrast and color been so forcefully used in the cause of humanity. A rare feat: no action photograph could ever compete.

Fig 8 There is little decoration or subtlety in this painting titled 'Executions at Portsmouth'.

The examples are selected to best illustrate their category by single-mindedly ignoring the other two(ie. in the decorative category the artist has made no attempt at description nor is there any message to be had. In the second category decoration and message are absent whereas the message in the third category swamps everything else.) To show I am unbiased the last example in each category is one of my own paintings.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Make you own list of five paintings nominating their categories. Note - some might have more than one category and if so you must name them.

6-2 ANALYSIS OF 'GIRL WITH A PEARL EARING'

What is realism?

The real world, you say? Now that is novel. Perhaps unique. Why would an artist be interested in reality? Of what use is that to the galleries and museums? People don't want an exhibition of the truth. They don't want to see the intestines of a cow nailed to a wall. They never do, and they never did. They want magic and illusion. Magic to make them wonder, and illusion to transport them elsewhere. They want to see pictures that make them laugh and cry they want to see good and evil narratives of honour, and of misfortune, cunning, grand landscapes of history or intimate portraits of seamstresses and blacksmiths. They want the artist to use all the skill, all the tricks, the smoke the mirrors, all the alchemy and all the the magic of painting to make them believe. They would sweep realism from the wall and stamp it beneath their feet like a cockroach. Realism has an ugly face, you see. No you don't want realism and neither do they. Realism is a poisoned dagger in a dead hand, it is the stuff of body fluids and blackened lungs. No folk want beauty, they want the spectral magic of an angels wings - or to see the dragon twist at the end of St George's lance - and they want to believe!

However the painter's job is not easy. It has a long and ancient apprenticeship and it requires courage and skill. It is to provide the stuff of illusion, the ideals realized. Payment is usually small in coin but large substance when we see the wonder on the face of the child ... or some adult who makes mentions of the image made that dwells in that special place in the mind where people live.

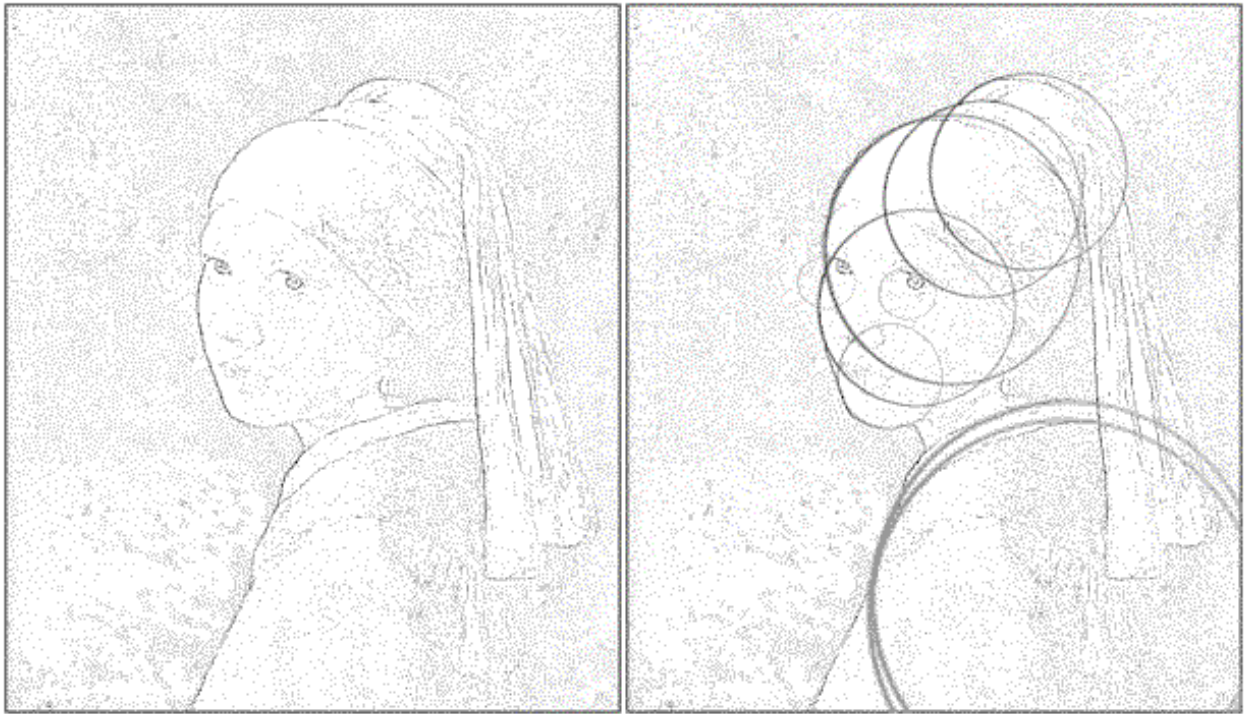
COLOR



Note the extremely limited pallet.- a light red, a cobalt blue and a yellow ochre. The rest are gradations and mixtures.

Also note the values on the grey scale range from 1-10

PATTERN AND REPETITION



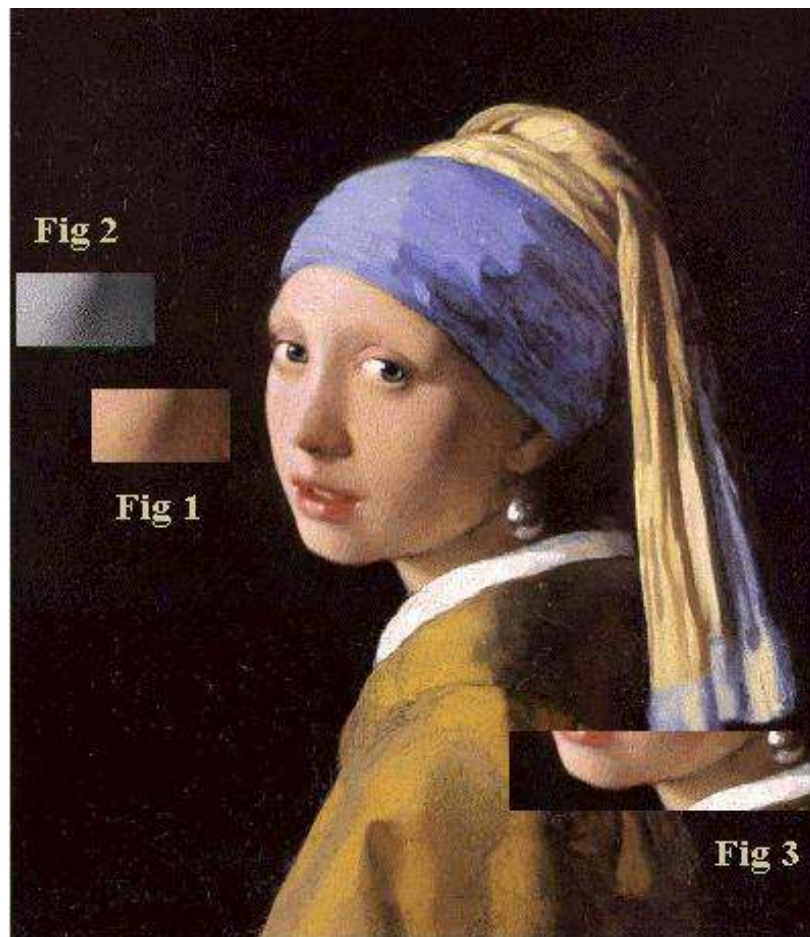
DESIGN



Some of the most effective designs are the simplest. The head is centrally positioned. The horizontal line of the eyes is 'golden' approx 3:5 up the canvas. The two vertical straight lines provide the 'discord' to the circular patterns.

TEXTURE

The hard edges of the pearl (which I think is really a silver ball) eyes, and face make them all equally smooth and spherical. Here again we encounter repetition. The eyes and the pearl, because they are more reflective, have sharper and more defined highlights. The 'pearl' also shows an extra luminosity by its secondary reflection of the white of girls collar (Fig 3)



TURNING POINT (Fig 1 and Fig 2)

The transition area from light to shadow is the key to this picture. The transition color between the flesh tones is the background color (Fig 1). The transition values from left to right in Fig 2 are 8-6-4-2-4. The background value ranges between 1-2

EXAGGERATIONS

The reflection of the collar on the girl's jaw shows the artist's skill but does it really exist to the extent shown here? What is the color inside the girl's mouth? Here it is highlighted for effect. These elements show the artist's deliberate and personal touch.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Pick a painting you like and analyse it by design, texture, pallet and repetition.



[GO TO ... depth of field](#)

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6-3 DEPTH OF FIELD

The human eye, like the camera, has a limited depth of field. In other words we focus on one level and the objects in front or behind are often blurred. When Deigo Velazquez painted Las Meninas he, along with many artists (pre-photography), painted everything in focus. This was part of the magic of painting as the viewers perception was thereby expanded - rather like a hologram. Today wide angle lens may produce something similar but unless you intend to spend hours in a darkroom it is an all or nothing solution.

There are good lessons to be learned here and this painting by Deigo Velazquez will serve us well as it has a defined foreground, middle ground and background. Let's experiment then ...



First I will separate the fore, middle and back grounds then utilise three focal depths and observe the results.
The essential question I ask is one of choice - what do you like most?



The foreground in focus.



The background in focus (the artist's preferred model?)



The middle ground in focus.- note the exciting change of emphasis.



Ahh... you say - and why not! But don't you find the blurring unsettling? The artist would have.

This particular painting is huge and designed as a feast or as a complete visual experience. I am merely toying with the work and I hereby apologise to the master for doing so. Today we may find no magic in multi-focused paintings but the lessons in design and emphasis are worth considering. The example in the abstract lesson is essentially a similar manipulation. Note: the artist painted so well that the dwarfed figure in the foreground has recently been diagnosed as a victim of congenital syphilis.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: There is a painting to be made by focusing on the girl directly behind the dog as her head and body in this composition is located on a diagonal and in a premier design position. Find a copy of this painting and try it (see lesson on design and proportion for hints).



[GO TO ... abstract](#)
...or back to main [lesson list](#)

6-4 ABSTRACT AND TEXTURE PAINTING

Many confuse abstract painting with modern painting or modern 'art' and wars and battles rage in the 'art' world over definitions of what is 'art'.

We are concerned here only with painting.



In truth, an abstract design is one that has no pattern and an abstract painting is one that has no form.

The painting above is not a photograph but its realism is undeniable. It has form but no pattern (repetition).



In a previous lesson I stated 'the human mind does not like to be overloaded with detail, particularly in a painting. It revels in its ability to complete the picture itself. And it must be allowed the latitude (hazy bits) to do this. The degree you allow this will say something about your estimation of your proposed audience. My rule is to always assume they are smarter than you, in other words leave plenty of for the imagination.'

This idea of involving the imagination was the genesis of most post 1850 art movements and experimentations. In the more extreme any cognisant feature became a disadvantage.

When contemplating painting an abstract picture or one with symbolic meaning try and recall no one will gain a dividend from the finished work in excess of your input. So no cheap shots for, to rob your audience is to rob yourself.

Sharpness and smudge the layered effect.



Here I have taken a section from an action painting and blurred it before overlaying it with thin, sharp-edged black and white lines and shapes. This 'depth of field' photographic effect is relatively modern as (excepting Vermeer and a few others) the artists of the past insisted on bringing everything into focus. It must be said their clients often demanded this.

TEXTURE PAINTING

The worth of an artist was once determined by his or her ability to disguise brushstrokes and produce 'magic' surfaces and textures. A few - Rembrandt and Titian in their later years - decided paint had a tactile quality itself and sometimes layered the paint to produce a separate effect. Rather like Rodin often left parts of his marble sculptures 'in the rough' to emphasise their other qualities. Mostly they used white as that pigment was the cheapest. It was also the slowest to dry and could be safely applied over the successive layers of dry thin darks.



This use of excessive body in paint took off with the development of cheap mass produced paint in the early and mid-eighteen hundreds. One of the first exponents of this 'impasto' method was Turner and his use of white. Turner would often sculpt some landscape element in heavy impasto, wait for it to dry then coat and wipe with successive transparent glazes. The depressions and cracks would fill and the highlights would realise their sculptured effect. Also the glaze over the white would make it glow - even more so if even more glaze and white was later applied.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: The ultimate weapon in this texture effect is the pallet knife. If you would like to experiment with this you will get remarkable effects by treating your canvas like a mud heap and shovelling paint around with the knife. Create loose forms if you like. Stop just before the colors completely disappear into a mass of grey mud. Now take some pure color and with the knife gently fold it into the mixture - blending in some areas and in others leaving a few of the edges sharp. Be liberal with your paint but just use a small surface ... Allow 40min.

Then there is the dragged dry brush or scumble effect, mainly in the distant sky (dry the oil out of the paint on blotting paper if you need to).



Or the slick oily in the bottom half of my rose painting (adding more oil or medium to your paint).



Experimenting with paint and texture will provide wonderful moments but try not to make this and end in itself. Great paintings have a magic that transcend the sum total of their parts.



[GO TO ... order and chaos](#)

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6-5 RELATIONSHIPS, CHAOS AND DISORDER

Relationships

We don't just paint 'things' we construct visual relationships. Now approach a topic of which, in art (relationships) I have some knowledge. Obviously in life it is otherwise - single and thrice divorced. Back to safer ground and painting; every element in a painting can only be considered in its relationship with the other parts. Below in my portrait of Fletcher Christian the parts that draw the eye are usually the areas of maximum contrast.



This portrait has three competing areas of contrast, the forehead the background and the hands. They create a triangle and their relationship is crucial. I am still unsure as to whether the distant light is too bright in relation to the other highlights. Should I dim it and draw the eye more to Christian's face? These are judgements of **relationships**. Above I have used three computer devices to analyse the design.

... AND USING CHAOS

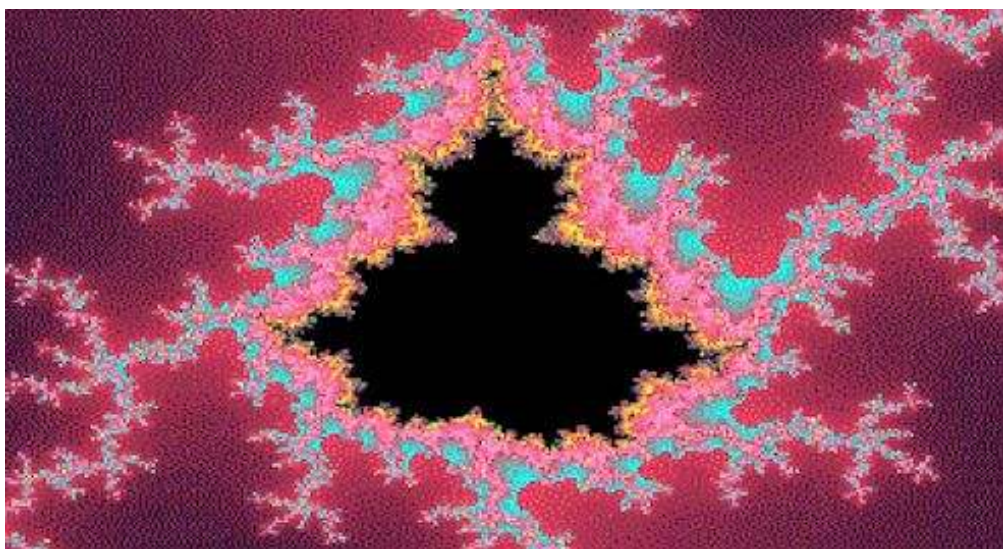
I view it like this:

Let us imagine our life as a room and the room has a partition. On one side of the partition is a continually moving, changing world of disorder and chaos. It is populated by all the creatures of the imagination - and more than a few not invited. It is a world of the surreal, of dreams and nightmares, of anti-logic and senselessness. On the other side of our partition we have order, logic and regular forms. The world of the

pyramids, spheres and cubes - the world of habit, pattern and order.

Some people are not comfortable until the partition is forced almost completely to one end of the room (90% order 10% chaos) while others can live in a 50/50 situation. Some will rejoice in the high chaos while others believe it is a factor of age, gender, right and left brain, or potty-training. Some even go so far as to refer to it as the Jeckle and Hyde, Don Quixote or madness syndrome.

I believe we must live with both sides of our existence and recognize the importance of each. We need chaos to think laterally, to be inventive, to associate disparate ideas and concepts. That is the life blood of the creative idea. This is not to underestimate the value of pattern, order and habit. They are the very tools that allow meaning to be drawn from disorder - the foundation blocks of moral and civilized thought and the flame that draws the fluttering moth.



You will note how, up till now, my lessons have dwelt in the rules and order side of the room in an attempt to understand the chaos all about us. For some this may have moved the partition a little to the side of order. Never mind! Just think of what you have learnt so far as your small toolbox with which you can use to disassemble, reassemble and to analyse whatever your imagination demands. And remember, chaos need not be feared, used properly it can be used to pick the problem lock.

Experiments in color, design, form and texture are the basis of most of the art movements in the last 150 years. Whether they were abstract expressionism, impressionism, surrealism or post-modernism they are all attempts at dissembling and re-assembling, of moving into chaos to hopefully discover some new meaning. We should all similarly experiment especially when we find order stifling creativity ... or the present art administration becoming institutionalized and self-absorbed.

A study of fractals is useful when allowing the mind passage between order and chaos.



[GO TO ... practical painting - paint in oils](#)

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6-6 BASIC OIL PAINTING



Painting in oils - what you need to know about the paint.

You can liken making paintings with oil paints as making mud pies with different color mud or plaster

Why?

Oil paint usually has 'thickness' so it can be shovelled, spread, pushed, trowelled, brushed and scraped - just like plaster or mud. It can be flattened or piled up ... and much more.

It has all these qualities if mixed correctly. Furthermore it can be made to be spread as thin as gossamer or as thick as clay.

All this depends on just two things:

- a) The thinness or thickness of the paint, called its **viscosity**
- b) The implement you decide to use to push it around - knife, brush, stick, trowel.

So what sort of mud or paint will we make, how dry or how runny?

Oil paint is made up of three main elements.

1. **Pigment** a powder made from ground rock or earth or root anything dry that is intense in color.
2. **Oil** (medium)
3. **A drier** of some sort as oil sometimes takes too long (a thinner)



You can try this:

Go to the kitchen and get a little powdered saffron, powdered red food or cocoa and add a little oil (sunflower, poppy, walnut, safflower, it doesn't really matter which) and mix it up with a knife or spoon. You have now produced a genuine oil paint (and unlike many others, one you could eat it without harm). Find some zinc cream (used as a sunscreen) in the bathroom cabinet and now you have a white oil paint - now some black boot polish and you have a decent black oil paint.

If it is a little thick or hard to mix you may add a little turpentine, thinners or petrol which will obviously cause it to mix easier and dry faster.

Note: it is usually the chemical pigment or the thinners that causes the **extremely poisonous** nature of most commercial oil paints (lead, cadmium and arsenic are old culprits). If the powder you use is unusually strong you might be tempted to add a **filler** to bolster up the mixture. This could be chalk or ground marble or some other neutral powder. Student oil paints usually have more filler than Artists' brands. Filler is cheaper than pigment so you get what you pay for!



OK, so now what do we do with our mixture? If we had two lumps of 'mixture' (paint) say a red and a yellow and made them very oily and put them side by side on a flat surface they would gradually spread out and merge and take ages to get dry. So more oil will help paint to blend and merge as oil is also the **lubricant** for the pigment and helps it slide around on the canvas.

How can we reverse this and stiffen up the paint?

We could add more pigment or filler, or we could get rid of some of that excess oil.

How do we remove the oil? By putting the mixture on blotting or absorbent paper and waiting. The paper will absorb the oil and a little of the pigment. Obviously to make it more runny we could add more oil and to dry faster and spread thinner we could add turpentine, thinners or petrol.

Get the general idea!



One more thing - we can also add other things that are mixable with oil like certain **resins** and **varnishes** which will make the mixture sticky and shine and maybe dry in a layer like a clear plastic sheet. This might allow what is underneath to shine through. And when we add a little strong pigment to this sheet we can maybe make what is called a '**glaze**'. Then again we could add some egg yolk for a 'matt' type finish.

What now?

Like a potter you have now made you clay, only in your case it is called paint. Instead of water you have added oil and some pigment and, instead of a wheel, you will be putting your mixture on a flat vertical surface, although you will mix it on a bench or pallet. There is no rush with your paint though - it is oil based and will mostly take a long time to dry and this you know you can control adding oil or white spirits.

One main point before you apply your paint; if you first apply a thick layer of paint to your canvas it will take ages to dry because the oil will have to dry out. If you have ever watched oil dry out you could probably also hear you own hair growing. When thick paint dries it shrinks and sometimes cracks. So if your first layer of paint is very thick and you add a thin layers on top of it before it is **totally** dry it will crack all the layers applied thereafter - and as it continues to dry the cracks will get bigger - especially if the color on top is darker.

Painters prevent this by painting the thick slow drying layers last and usually begin with thin fast drying paint - as their background.

'**Thick over thin and light over dark**' is an old painters saying.

If we don't want to wait we can paint what is called '**wet in wet**'. That means putting wet layers of paint on other wet layers all in the one session (or over the total time it takes the paint to dry). There can still be hours - or days until a 'skin' forms.

This is an important point as many painters would like to finish their painting quickly and are thereby forced to paint 'wet in wet'.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: See next lesson. Using some of the pigments, and oils I have mentioned make up a pallet of colors and paint a small picture. Allow 40min.

[GO TO ... OILS CONTINUED](#)



[... or lesson menu](#)

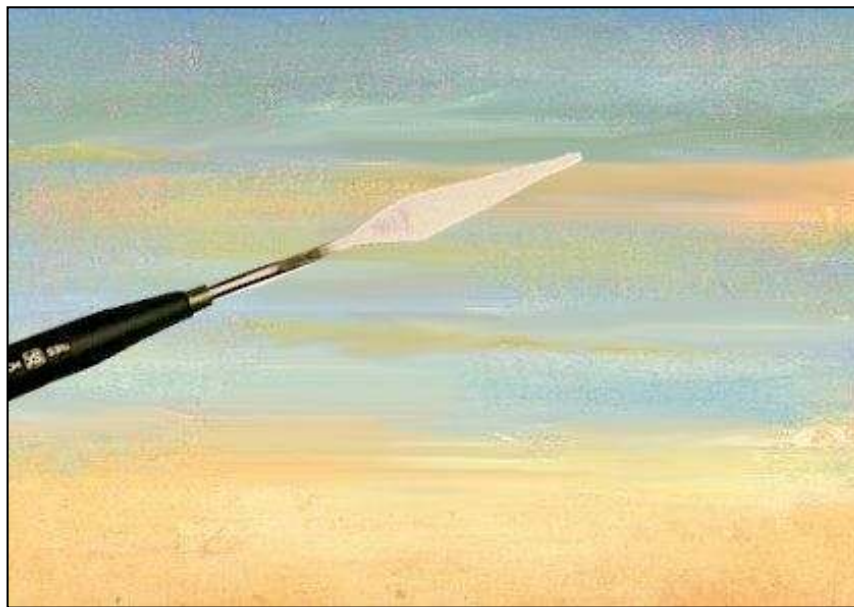
6-7 BRUSHES AND KNIVES AND WET IN WET

Here is a simple little (12"x 14") painting that anyone can do if they have a favourite figure they can plonk on a beach somewhere. I will show you how it is done then you will be able to see what happens when you paint thin over thick.

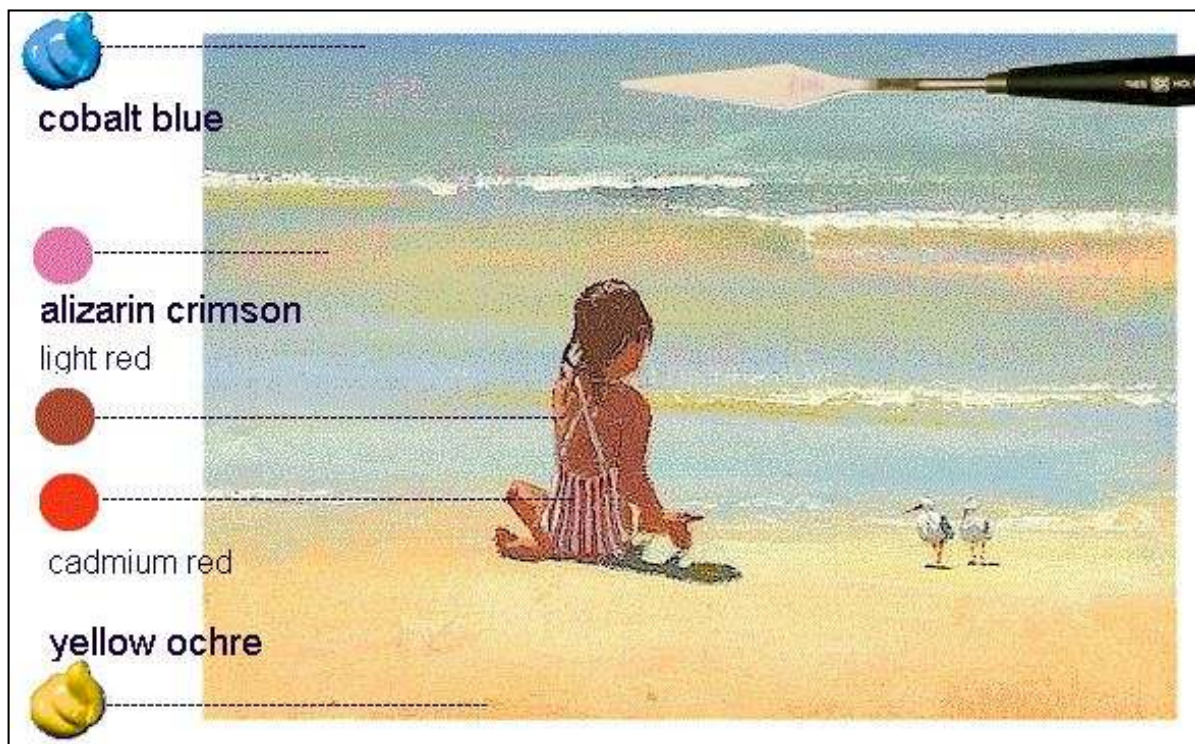
1. You will note a pinkish underpainting peeking through the waves. This is because I pre-painted the canvas with a mixture of light red and alizarin red with a little white to lift it up. At the time I painted this it was my usual background for seaside studies and I would prepare many such backgrounds all at once. When it was dry I went to step 2.



2. I squeezed out some Cobalt blue/flake white on the top half of the canvas and some yellow ochre on the bottom and using the flat of the pallet knife I sawed the paint back and forward across the canvas. Here and there I added more dollops of white to lighten them but just kept sawing back and forth with the knife. The secret is to blend, blend and when you think you have blended enough ... blend some more.



Obviously in some places where I mixed them a lot I made the green you can see, in other places the yellow dominated. I did this fairly haphazardly only lightening the effect towards the center of the painting. Where it gets thin the background comes through and gives us a beautiful mauve tint.

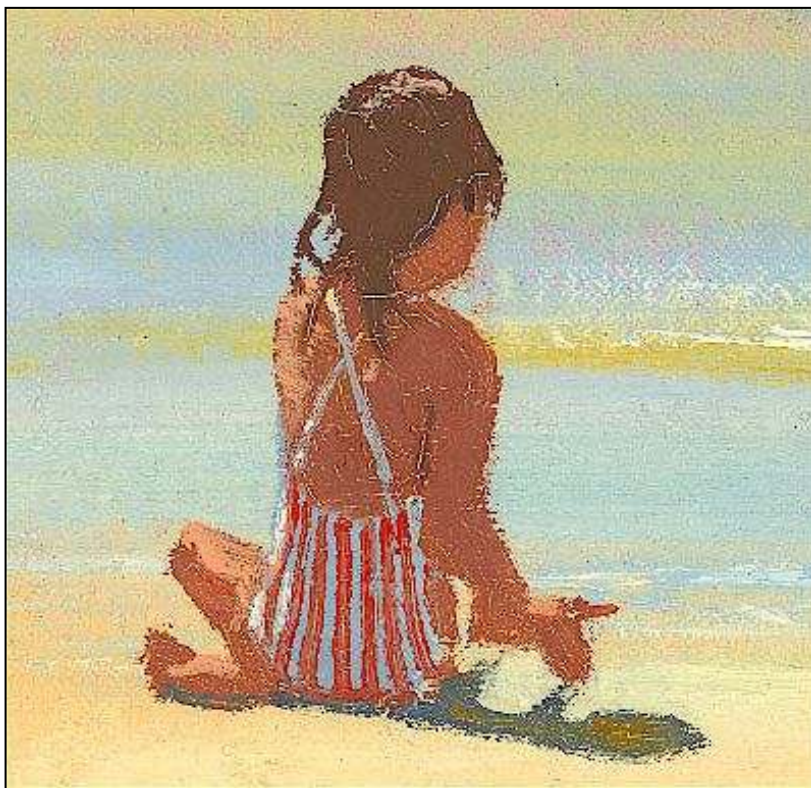


3. At this stage everything was fairly bland but I could begin to see shallow water and deeper water, sandbanks and dry sand, and a shore line. I just needed to define them. Up till now the paint was fairly thick in places and the only painting implement I had used was a knife. Next I loaded up the edge of the knife with white/tint of yellow ochre and dragged it across the canvas tilting it slightly and letting the white be dragged off to form the waves. (See below)

Note: I placed the waves just above the sandbanks and shallow water. Why? Because waves are formed as deep water meets shallow water. Where the sand meets the water it gets a little darker. Observing things like that is what painting is all about. I have probably spent a little too much time observing little things like that instead of



3. For some strange reason I sustained an interruption at this stage of this painting and it was a few days before I returned to it and plonked in the little girl and the seagulls. For this I used a brush and the darker colors you see. So what happened when the paint began to dry? (Below) Well the thin brushed on darks of the girl dried faster than the thicker lights of the background paint. The cracks thus formed allowed the whiter underpainting of the background to show through.



A few artistic points: Note how I painted a cool shadow but warmed up its center to give it a little vibrancy. You can do this with larger shadows. Also the costume colors and stripes I added purely for effect. The cadmium red needed to offset the greens in the water and the cool and warm whites for sparkle.

I have kept this picture to remind me of my stupidity in ignoring a basic principle. It also reminds me of the days I painted many similar paintings using this particular technique. Strangely enough they were quite popular in the colder climes.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Copy the painting above replacing the figure with one of your choice if you like. Allow 40min.

6-8 LIKELY TO SCUMBLE

As the judge remarked about my life. 'Its like paint ... parts are opaque, parts transparent, and parts somewhere in between, according to how much light is able to pass through the tiny particles of your credibility.'

But he was right about the paint. It can be opaque, transparent, and somewhere in between, according to how much light is able to pass through the tiny particles of pigment. Transparent pigments are like tiny colored crystals, whereas opaque pigments are like little colored (or white) rocks through which light does not pass. Example... Broken china or coal.(opaque) rubies, crushed colored glass.(transparent) Opaque paint reflects light directly from the surface; transparent paint allows light to penetrate beneath the surface,

Opaque paints (siennas, umbers, whites, ochres, and most earth colors generally) give a more convincing illusion of distance, especially when juxtaposed with a foreground which includes transparent passages for the darker darks.



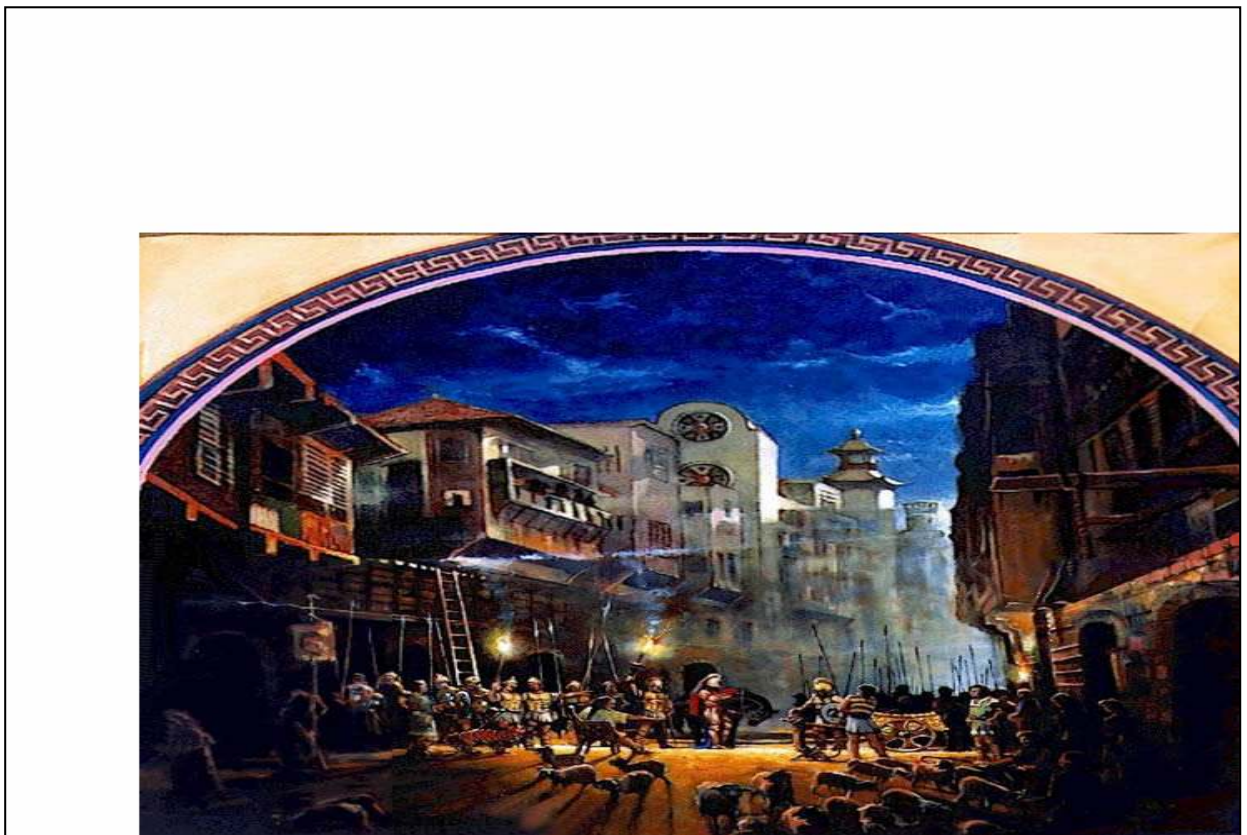
The student might think that in this painting (ABOVE) I used transparent paint for the sky and opaque paint for the foreground... the sea. The reverse is the case. I built up many passages of transparent glazes to create the depth of the foreground waves. The sky is done in a few earth color **scumbles** (great word - sounds like something left after a very high tide or an epithet used to describe the neighbour's children) anyway the 'scumbles' created the milky distance look I desired in the sky. With this understanding, it becomes apparent that transparent paint allows for the deepest darks, because the light does not bounce off the surface, but penetrates deeper before being reflected out to our eyes.

A scumble is a thin application of a paint whose basic nature is to be opaque but which is rendered semiopaque by the physical thinness of the application (scumble) or by the addition of a transparent medium. Its thinness allows the background paint to contribute to the painting. The optical effect of transparent paints or glazes is to retain clarity. The optical effect of opaque paints or glazes is to lose clarity. Scumbling is the method of applying thin layers of opaque paint.

How is it done? In the example right I had all but finished the painting but I wanted to put in some beams of sunlight. I used a dry bristle brush with very little paint and dragged it across a surface that was itself dry. The idea is not to mix (wet in wet) with the underlying paint but to separate the particles of pigment as if they were floating in the sky. This is scumbling.



White, thinned with a little medium is painted over a grey of mid-value to create the pallid blue unhealthy look I wanted in the woman's body here (see below).

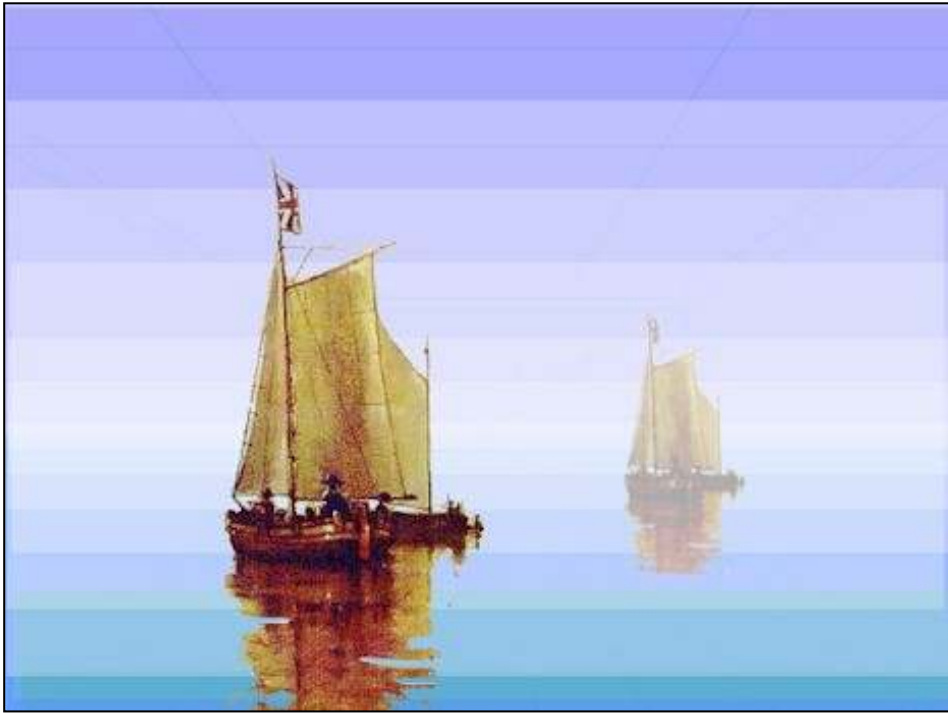


So the uses of scumbling are: To indicate atmospheric haze.
To give an illusion of greater textural softness in fabric.
To create the soft complexions of young women or children in portraiture.



For the the gauze cuffs and shirtfront in this portrait I used extra thin glazes of opaque white over darker passages underneath - until I got the value I wanted. I used a bristle brush as I wanted a cotton gauze; if I desired a silk then I would have most likely finished with a sable.

The effect on the illusion of atmospheric perspective (below). Transparent passages exhibit greater clarity, an optical sensation peculiar to nearby planes where the least amount of atmosphere is present between our eyes and the plane in question. More distant planes are viewed through more atmosphere, the density of which alters the colors and values to a greater extent the greater the distance involved, reducing clarity.



Example the boat we used in our lesson on aerial perspective.

Here we could use either of three methods to apply the opaque over-paint. We could charge up a large brush and work from the horizon outwards, the mixture thinning as we neared the top or bottom. Alternatively we could just apply it in thin controlled layers waiting for the underneath one to completely dry, trap it with a glaze and then apply the next scumble etc. The third method involves mixing the paint with a fast drying medium that would thin out the pigment particles and apply successive coats.



[GO TO ... Inspiration](#)

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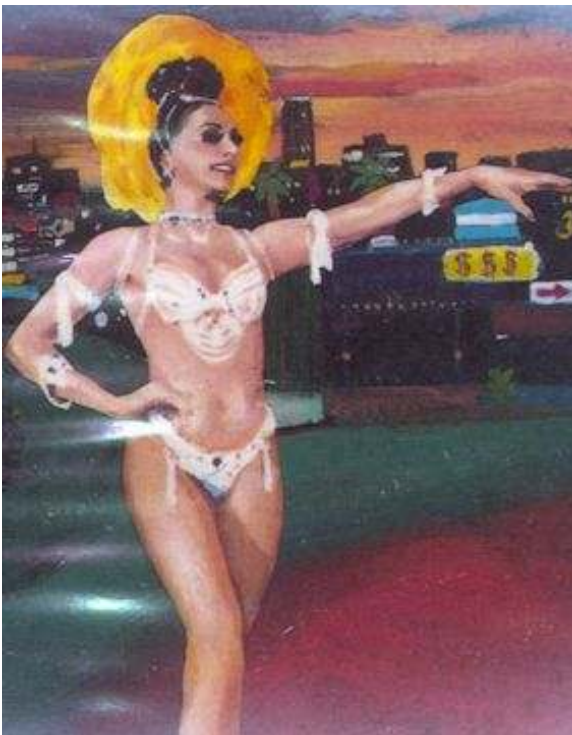
6-9 INSPIRATION OR HOW TO GET STARTED

Are you in and artistic Slump?

There are two problems here depending on whether you earn you living as an artist or you do it for enjoyment or other purposes. In the first instance hunger and finding shelter are great motivational tools. In the second you need to be obsessional, like knowing you hid a bottle of Jack Daniels around the house but can't remember exactly where ... and it's 3am ... if only you knew where to start to look?

I suffer both so I find I must plan ahead;

1. Always carry a pair of scissors and be prepared to mutilate any newspaper, magazine or publication that comes within cutting range, and if none do, you must actively give yourself time to seek them out (10 min per day minimum). Be a serial cutter and cut out anything that startles, frightens, causes you to pause, gives you a tightness in the loins or a warm wet feeling, sinks or raises your spirits or any other strong response. It could well be a line or a drawing a pattern or merely a color scheme. Caution ... don't be selective in what you look at- and try not to be distracted by reading any of the articles. Many excellent artists have some difficulty with reading anyway so that is rarely a big professional problem.
2. Put all these cut-outs in a folder.
3. When the folder holds 20 or 30 start a new one. Don't be distracted by trying to catalogue anything ... if you do, then you are probably a better accountant than an artist.
4. Try and forget about the pictures you have kept - but every now and then, as you relax at the bar, open a folder and look again. Not only will this make you incredibly popular it will enhance you artistic reputation.



Gradually certain pictures will begin to echo in your mind. They will haunt your existence like bad cholesterol counts and you will know you must do something about them.

Then, your artistic slump will vanish, just in time for your real torment to begin.

Now it becomes what, how, which combination, what is the essence of the feeling and how do I paint

(describe) it, how do I start? I had a folder here with great color schemes somewhere ... now which one was that....? How can I encapsulate the feeling, yet be subtle and convincing? What forms/ lines/textures/patterns/color/ can I apply?

But, just think; when it is all over - and if it all works out brilliantly, you can wildly celebrate, wake up hungover and start all over again.

Now where did I put that red folder with the picture of Englishman on safari in the pith helmet, the Las Vegas showgirl and that picture of the Florida swamp ... and the tree monkey ... actually this is the picture I am painting at the moment.



I reversed the explorer ...



My show girl needed a new face another headress and longer legs

OK, so now I have combined all the elements including a few others hidden in various places

Plus a monkey and an duck ... when you are on a roll don't even hesitate!



[Press for full view.](#)

Now for the fun part ... a name! (but I always had something in mind, you see, for one of my favourite paintings was Giorgione's 'The Tempest' - he died and neglected to name it, and for 400 years art historians have speculated as to the relationship between the two principal players!)

I toyed with 'Dr Livingstone decides to stay put and continue his African studies' or 'A sporting woman encounters a sporting man and looks away' ... but then, like Giorgione, I thought it best not to be too deep.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Make up and label three folders using your own headings then spend some time trying to fill them.

[GO TOPainting glow and light](#)



[... or menu](#)



6-10 PAINTING GLOW AND LIGHT

Glow is essentially a factor of **value** rather than color. How is this achieved? Paint a black canvas and let it dry. On your finger place a little white and with small circular smudging motion apply it somewhere to the canvas. It should now look like a milky smudge. Next take a pinpoint of paint on the end of your finger and touch it once in the middle of the smudge. The result is the essence of glow, total value differential as well as the milky area being a transmission area that will discomfort the eye sufficiently to avoid looking to the point of the light. That is the why we don't want to look directly at the sun. It is discomforting. For great glow or luminosity you must set out to discomfort the eye, that is the secret. To do that the transition (the halo) is the key.

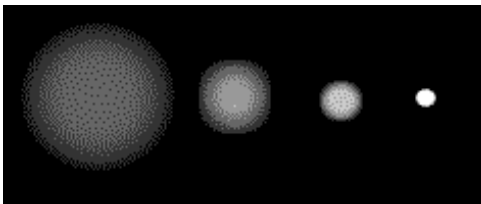


Fig 1. Here are a series of milky smudges

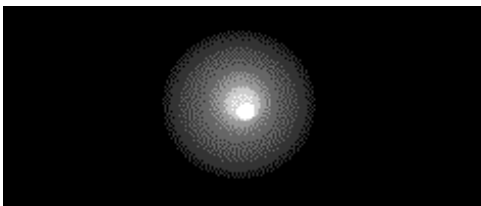


Fig 2. When we combine them we create our glow. Note how I have deliberately offset to white center in an effort to further disturb the eye.



Fig 3. Now I add a little color (any will do) some dark shapes between the spectator and the light and a halo. The halo and spike here are artificial - like the ones made by a camera lens reflection - it is not the same type of halo in the example below.



What discomforts the eye in painting is similar to what discomforts the ear in music. Music is a 'transition' experience in which time is a fixed element (beat). But the eye roves the painted surface in a manner hopefully

controlled by the painter. The painter may cleverly force a discomfort in much the same manner a jazz musician will use a discordant note to lay emphasis on a beautiful (intoxicating) chord. What discomforts the eye can be many things, adjacent compliments, illogical form, concave mirrors or, what I mentioned above, unfocused edges. (Rothko used fuzzy rectangles to try and induce a extra translucent brilliance to his plain color areas - it is an old formula).

Why a discomfort? Because the eye naturally avoids looking at bright objects so to paint one the discomfort must be artificially induced. Painting suns and moons was usually referred to as a 'brave exercise' and avoided by all but the most accomplished landscape artists (Turner was accomplished while VanGough experimented). We can never paint surfaces as light as natural light so we must use device and illusion to convince the eye what it is seeing is a light as it should be... that is the fun of illusion!

Painting glow without showing the light source.

Here the principles are the same with the darks superimposed over the lights.



Detail of morning glow from another painting I did for the 'Bounty' series.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Do the exercise proposed at the start of this lesson. Allow 20min.

[GO TO ... Pearly luminosity](#)

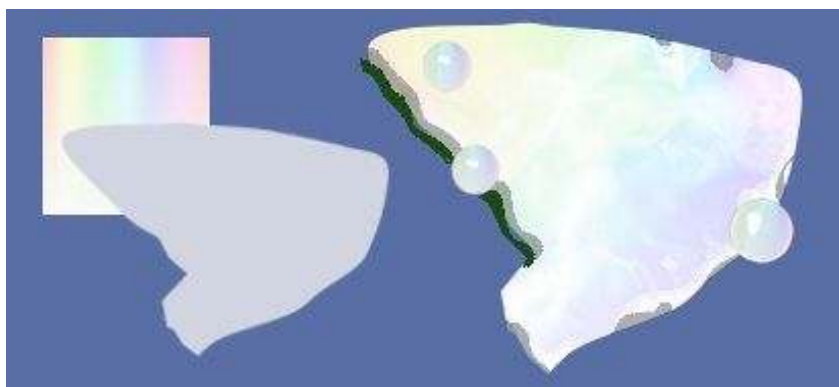


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6-11 PEARLY LUMINOSITY

There are two factors to consider here if your aim is to achieve that luminous pearly look that dominate certain landscapes and seascapes. First we must create the 'pearly' look then give it presence and dominance within a framework (painting). It is the nature of that presence that will make it look luminous.



So what makes a mother of pearl shell look pearly? If you look closely it is merely a high value grey-white infused with red, blue and yellow or 'rainbow hues' of equal and similar **values** (above). To apply this to a painting as I have done below to a sky by Gerome you will see what I mean by a pearly sky. Obviously its use here is unsatisfactory but the principle was one destined to be developed further by the impressionists.



The impressionists did this exercise using short brushstrokes laden with impasto paint which produced a shimmering effect from a distance. You will often notice when people view many impressionistic works in galleries their main concern is their viewing distance - they will usually move back and forth until comfortable. I find it good policy to wear stout shoes when visiting such galleries.



This painting by Monet is an excellent example of an artist employing equivalent value hues, dramatic contrasts, and uncomfortable undefined edges to achieve that shimmering light the impressionists so loved. It is important to differentiate the values in the foreground from the background. While the figure of the woman may seem to almost merge into the sky in fact she is considerably darker. Squint your eyes to better understand the contrast.

Luminosity is achieved by merely pushing the contrasts until the light dominates everything (below). Many artists spend their life trying to make their paintings glow ... mine probably glow most when I throw them on the fire...



... but I never quite give up! Anyway glow isn't everything.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Collect at least 5 examples of pictures you consider to have 'that glowing quality' and add them to your folder you created in the lesson titled 'Inspiration'. Allow 40min.



[GO TO ... painting portraits](#)

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6-12 PRACTICAL PORTRAITURE

A PAGE OF THEORY BEFORE THE PRACTICE



Painting a portrait is quite a personal thing. It demands that the artist make some sort of estimation or judgement. The painting opposite a 'detail' from my portrait of John Morgan.

After deciding on the client (if not the sitter), why the work is commissioned and what scope is the artist allowed - you then ask yourself:

1. What is the essential character of the sitter?
2. How does the sitter view his or her own presence in the world?
3. Is there a pose that seems natural and expressive of the sitter's personality.
4. Are there clothes, uniform, jewellery, favourite pet, room or setting that may contribute?
5. If asked to draw a caricature of the subject what features would best define the sitter?
6. Does the client have any favourite photographs of the sitter (this can be an excellent clue as to expectations - and also to eliminate the unwanted!)?
7. Next you must discuss size. Life size? Head and shoulders with or without hands? Three-quarter or full length? Vertical, semi-reclining or reclining?

After answering all these questions and getting some clear idea into your mind I usually ask if there us any role the sitter might like to play? What historic figure does he or she admire the most? The prospect of painting a man in a plain suit and tie or a woman in a business suit apalls me. Where is the joy in that? Portraiture can have elements of narrative, tools of trade, costume etc. Anything is possible. Painting a portrait of a carpenter(workshop, tools, apron), airline pilot(plane, sky, uniform) or architect(building, drawing board, blueprints) is obvious, but think of the possibilities for an insurance salesman, banker, used car dealer or school teacher. There lies the greater challenge - and the greater rewards. This is where portraiture can, and should, and does transcend photography. The sitter must also be encouraged to imagine ... and believe.

History teaches us a masterpiece makes the sitter famous. We refer to the Mona Lisa, Mrs Siddons or the bust of Madame Houdon often before we nominate the artist. Who were these people? Who was the Mona Lisa and what was her life? Make this point to your sitter or client as it is to future generations that the work will be presented, and it is to them the spirit and life and history of the sitter must be addressed.

Practical considerations:



Physical likeness - for me this is probably the most enjoyable - if you follow some simple rules and ask yourself and others the questions the cartoonist asks himself every day. Silently ask yourself (in the presence of the sitter) what are the most distinguishing characteristics. Then ask yourself the same question later in with the sitter absent. Try and remember some aspect of the person like thick eyebrows, wavy hair, big ears etc.. Also try and remember a mannerism like, a pose, smile or use of hands; finally return to the sitter and experiment with some sketches. If nothing happens don't despair just keep trying and make some more simple sketches to help you. If all this doesn't work start your painting regardless!

The eyes - I make it a point of detailing the eyes (above in the portrait of Fletcher Christian as a young man). The eyes are the gateway to the visual world both for the viewer and the sitter. They must be as fine and detailed as you can achieve (unless the sitter is shy and for some reason seems to avoid looking directly).

A few hints: widen the iris to give a more open and generous face. Add some flesh color to the whites and paint them as if they were pearls. They must appear round. Be subtle with the highlights. One eye is not the exact replica of the other. Make them a little different.

The hair - the hair usually separates the head from the background and should not be overworked. Only some small area showing some individual hair will suffice for an overall hairy effect.

The mouth - if the eyes are the visual gateway, the mouth could be said to be the emotional one - the enigmatic smile for instance. If the mouth does not obviously describe the sitters emotional disposition then the viewer is forced to look to the eyes. It is the trick of the Mona Lisa. Leonardo will not allow the viewers eye to settle. He keeps asking the question. Be careful with the little angles at the corners of the mouth - 45 degrees is the default.



The hands - adding the third element to the 'non-description' of the Mona Lisa are the hands - also in repose. No clue there either.

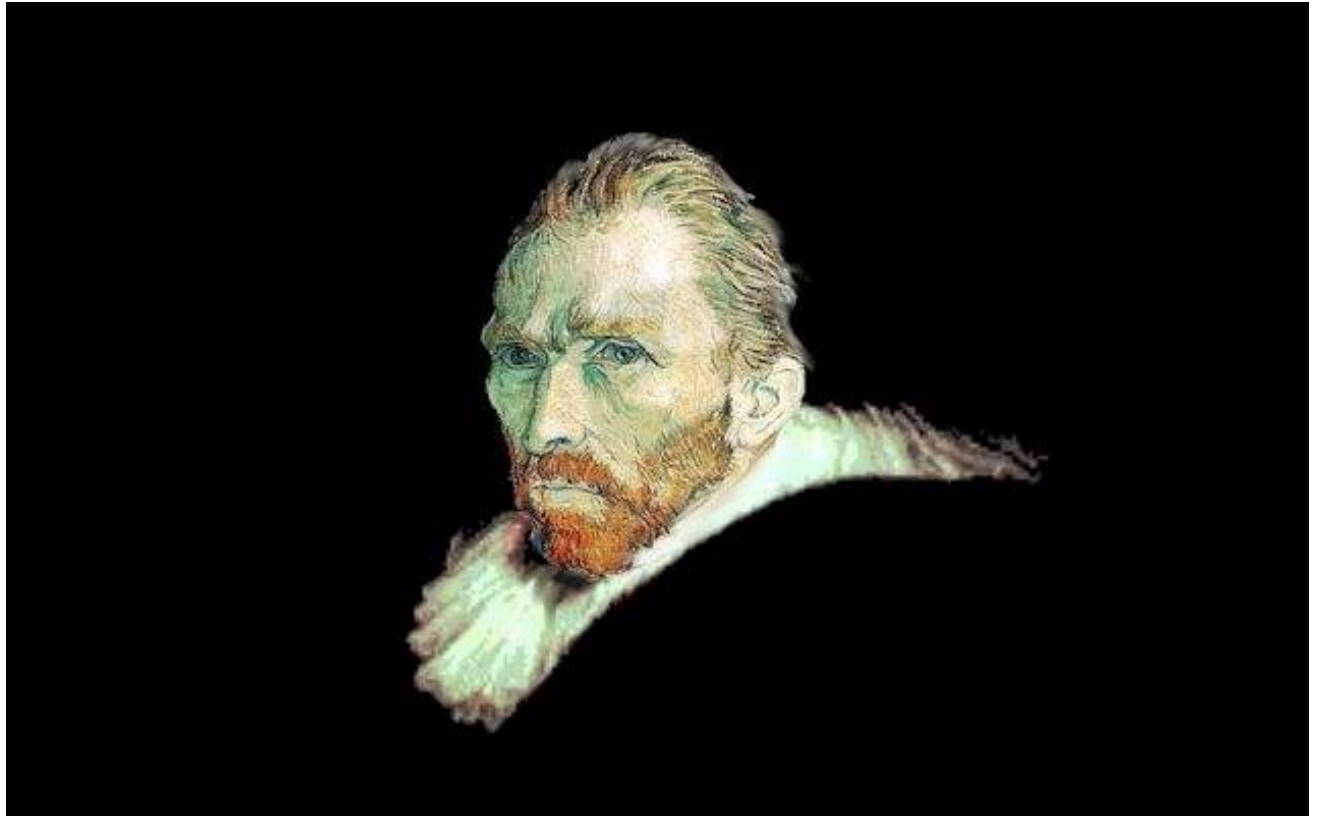


Note how, in creating substance, Leonardo does not define many edges - neither on the hands or the face.

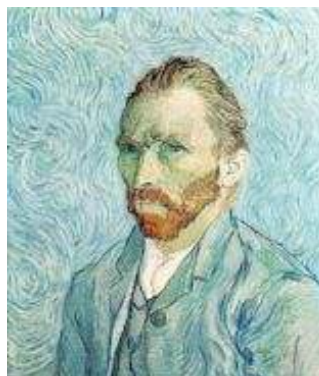
The costume - sometimes I paint the costume before the hands, face and anything else. Then I save up my joy for later when detailing the folds, jewellery adornments etc. That part is relaxing and doesn't require the absolute concentration needed for flesh.

The background - here you can tell your story or make your narrative. For best practical results try and echo all the colors you have used for the flesh tones and costume in the background - just echoes in hue not value. Use value to make the narrative. See lesson on turning points.

A cautionary tale for the discerning student about two Dutch artists and what was fashion!



Two brilliant dutch artists born 300 years apart - one whose work was appreciated and the other shunned, one who lived in luxury and the courts of kings while the other lived in poverty, one whose art provided happiness and security while the others' sent him mad. Who would say one was a better artist? Here I have combined two famous portraits to make the one. I wonder, had they changed places, how then would they have painted?



DRAWING WITH PAINT AND THE INSIDE OUT AND OUTSIDE IN TECHNIQUES

Inside out:

When painting a head and shoulders portrait I usually establish the rough proportions of the sitter by way of freehand line. I plan the future positions of the areas of maximum contrast and interest. Next I paint the eyes mouth and nose. In other words I work from inside the overall shapes. As I reach the boundaries I find they often suggest themselves. Some I might like to edge or define while others I let fade away. In general it is appropriate to paint inside out if the figure inhabits more than 50% of the canvas and outside in if it is less.

Outside in - in painting a 'genre' picture or mural (small figures in a large painting) I carefully draw the shapes and figures and fill them in rather like (cartooning) painting an ancient fresco. My drawing in such circumstances must establish a rhythm and place (reality).

STUDENT ACTIVITY: As I used the Mona Lisa to discuss the relationship between hands, mouth and eyes the student should find another example and do the same. Also find the derivation of the word 'cartoon'. Allow 40min.



[GO TO ... Painting hair](#)

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7-1 PRACTICAL APPLICATION - PAINTING HAIR

Subject: Driving me hairy

John,

Was writing the other day about women's hair. This one (attached) is giving me problems trying to make realistic ... thanks.

My reply; You are not having trouble with hair, you are just overdoing its rendering. In a painting hair is not drawn, it is colored! First decide the general color (try and add a repeat of some deep facial coloring) then block it in as if it were just another part of the face. Add a few individual hairs (not too many) as they fall across the forehead, or as the light highlights them. Let the rest suggest themselves. The mind of a sentient needs only the minimum of clues as too many becomes boring. Any study of Rembrant (in particular his self-portrait 1629) will sufficiently demonstrate the proper balance.

The facial moulding in the picture you sent me is excellent!

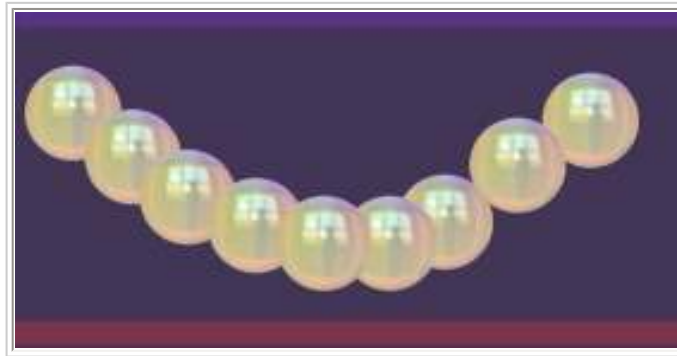
Block in the hair as if it were part of the face - not hair! In general try and create a dark side and a light side of the face with a definite turning point (see lesson on analysis - Vemeer), and don't be afraid to alter things to create a feeling in the finished product.



This problem goes to the heart of painting and is better discussed with reference to the lesson called 'The Pearl'. We all know what hair feels like, its texture, its color, its breaking strain, and its usefulness in keeping the sun off our head. We can love it or hate it. We spit it out with disgust when it invades our mouth and admire its lustre and beauty when it cascades the bare shoulders of a beautiful woman. All this has everything, and nothing, to do with painting hair. As I keep pointing out the concept of something must be married with its scientific reality before you can truly paint it.

Before we open our tool box of painting techniques and deal with the problem of the hair let us recall the pearl as it provides us with an example that explains the rules a painter uses to render convincing existence.

Are the pearls real?

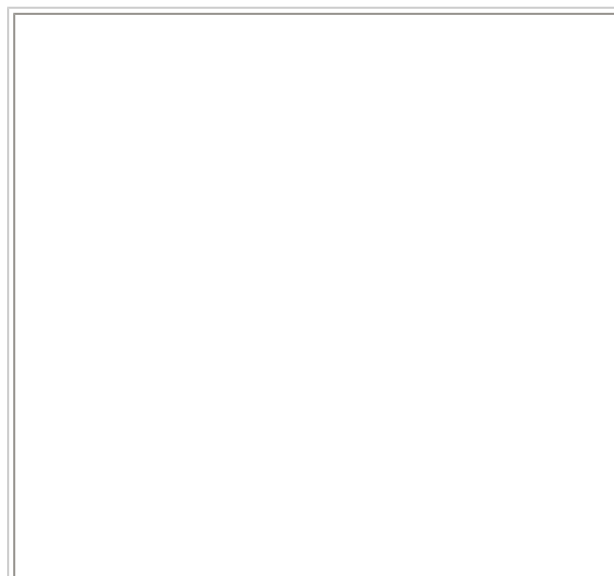


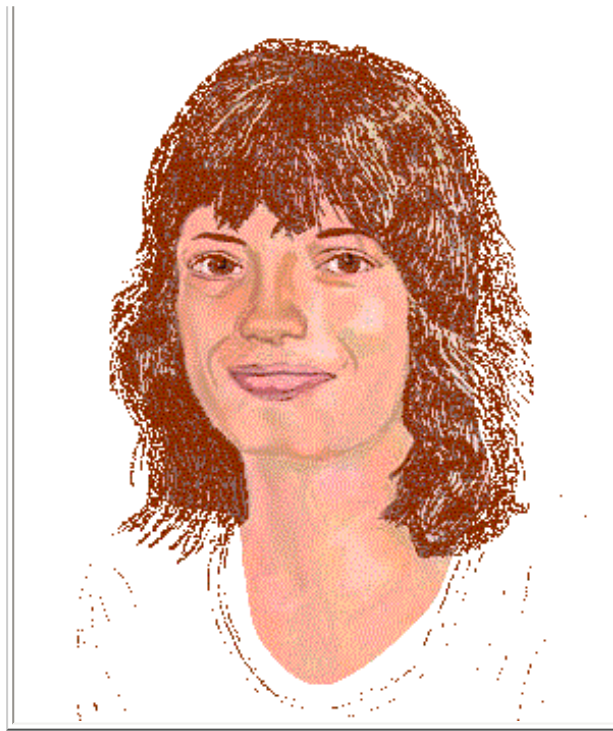
Things only exist as they relate to other things. Without light (place the pearl in a dark room) the pearls will cease to exist. The question is - without light does everything cease to exist? Does an ant need to be a mathematician to know it walks on six legs? If it can only count to five does it mean it must walk with a limp? For the painter the answer is yes. Like Einstein's famous equation light is everything to the artist, the great unifying constant.

In the lesson on the pearl, by beginning with the room, the window, the table, and the observer I first created an environment (for variation I selected objects with both curves and straight lines). It is always useful to create the environment first. - either in the imagination or by physical positioning. Since it is semi-reflective the manner the pearl interacts with this environment becomes the 'reality' of the pearl. The painter lives his or her life by investigating relationships between objects under the influence of light. The painter's job is the discovery of the general rules and their employment in creating an imagined reality - that is the joy for the boundaries are endless. But the mortal truth you ask? Who wants the truth? Let us sweep that off the table and crush it like a bug! Dangerous stuff eh? No wonder artists sometimes lose their grip in reality!

Mmm ... so to paint the hair we must create its environment?

There are really only four elements in this picture. The face, hair, background and the light. Unfortunately the face is front lit which restricts any opportunity for secondary light effects or a nicely modulated turning point. First I will slightly smooth the facial contours as they will otherwise compete too much with the hair and background.





Next I create a background echoing all the colors in the face and the darks in the hair. Now you can see the problem. As soon as the background was applied (Fig 4) the hair, although nicely rendered, becomes a foreign object ... and excessively light.



It is not major problem however.

Let us separate the hair and apply a screen tint of a warm dark. Say value 2 at 50% for the more mechanically minded. With paint I would simply use a alizarin - raw umber glaze. Note how the texture is not lost. Saves work later. Next is the favourite part - soften the edges and lose some of the texture.



Explanation: the human mind does not like to be overloaded with too much detail, particularly in painting. It revels in its ability to complete the picture without help, and it must be allowed the (hazy bits) to do this. The degree you allow this says something about your estimation of your proposed audience. My rule is to always assume they are smarter than you, in other words leave plenty of for the imagination.



Fade in fade out...

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Find two examples of paintings where detail is overdone and two more where it is insufficient - in your opinion! Allow 40min.



[GO TO ... skin colors](#)

.....or back to main [lesson list](#)



7-2 SKIN COLORS OR FLESH TONES

I wrote this lesson in response to a number of letters - to quote but one;

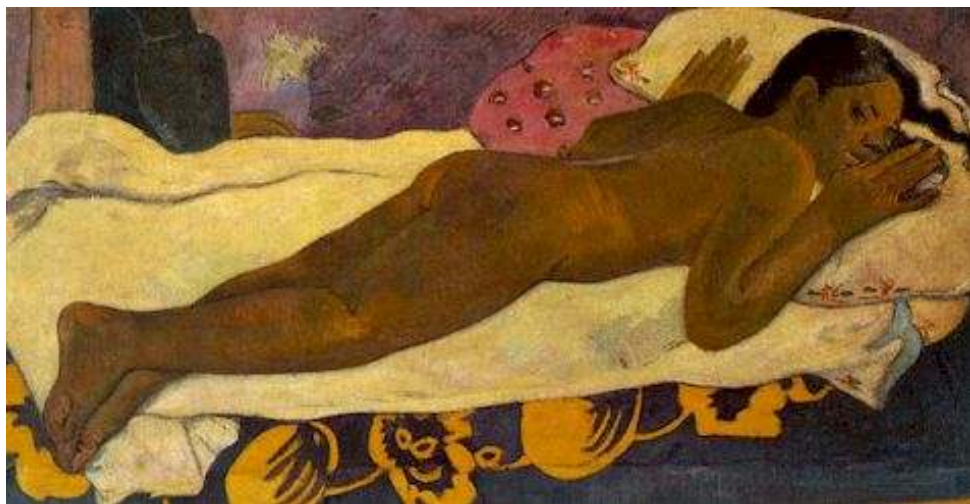
'Some people have difficulty mixing what are called "skin colours." I have seen portraits where no flesh tones were used at all (somewhat like the dutch painter example in your lesson). How do you actually decide what values and hues you will use for a certain person's skin tones? Do you think "cool" and "warm" colours? Do you decide the hue based on the shadowed colours or the colours in the light, or perhaps you use some other method?'

My Reply; The meat of a cooked crab is a delicacy but the environment of the crab itself, and its food, are quite too revolting to contemplate ... which brings me to the skin color or flesh tones of the pale-skinned European and the pallet most suitable for their rendition.

My guide is this: 'find the nearest color matches to the bodily fluids, add the hues of arterial and congealed blood, and the blue of a good deep bruise, line them up carefully and you will have a pallet suitable for the finest of skins'.

Without being too specific yellow ochre, raw and burnt umber, light red, rose madder, cobalt blue and white seem to work well enough. Sometimes a transparent yellow and naples yellow can also be useful. Strangely, this pallet also seems sufficient for African and Asian skin colors.

Painting skin color, throughout history, has been more an exercise in fashion rather than anything else. Today the brown suntanned flesh is attractive to the northern races while the pallid sun-shy color seems desirable among darker skinned people. This may derive as much from envy or our fashion industry as from anything else. For sexual allure the rounded shapes that denote health and vitality are probably far more powerful than the hue - and if they come in pairs even more so.



I learned a lot by trying to paint people of various races, and by discerning the similarities as well as the differences. The first thing I learned was that there is no such thing as a formula for skin color. Skin has texture and this can alter if it is wet or dry, male or female, old or young. Skin, glistening under an oily sweat - as say with a 'black' body-builder - could create a totally different look than the skin of a 'white' Scottish damsel reclining under an umbrella in a summer country garden. How do we discriminate? Texture is a product of edge definition and sharpness of the reflected light (see lesson on texture).

Whereas the body-builder may create forms like polished ebony the skin on the damsel may well be bone colored - but we know they both have the same flesh; the same muscle and tissue structure underneath!

We often use warm and cool tones when painting flesh. The artist's general rule is warm light - cool shadows and cool light - warm shadows. This is an artificial rule often used by professionals to give vibrancy to a painting. Note the cool bluish greys in the facial shadows below.



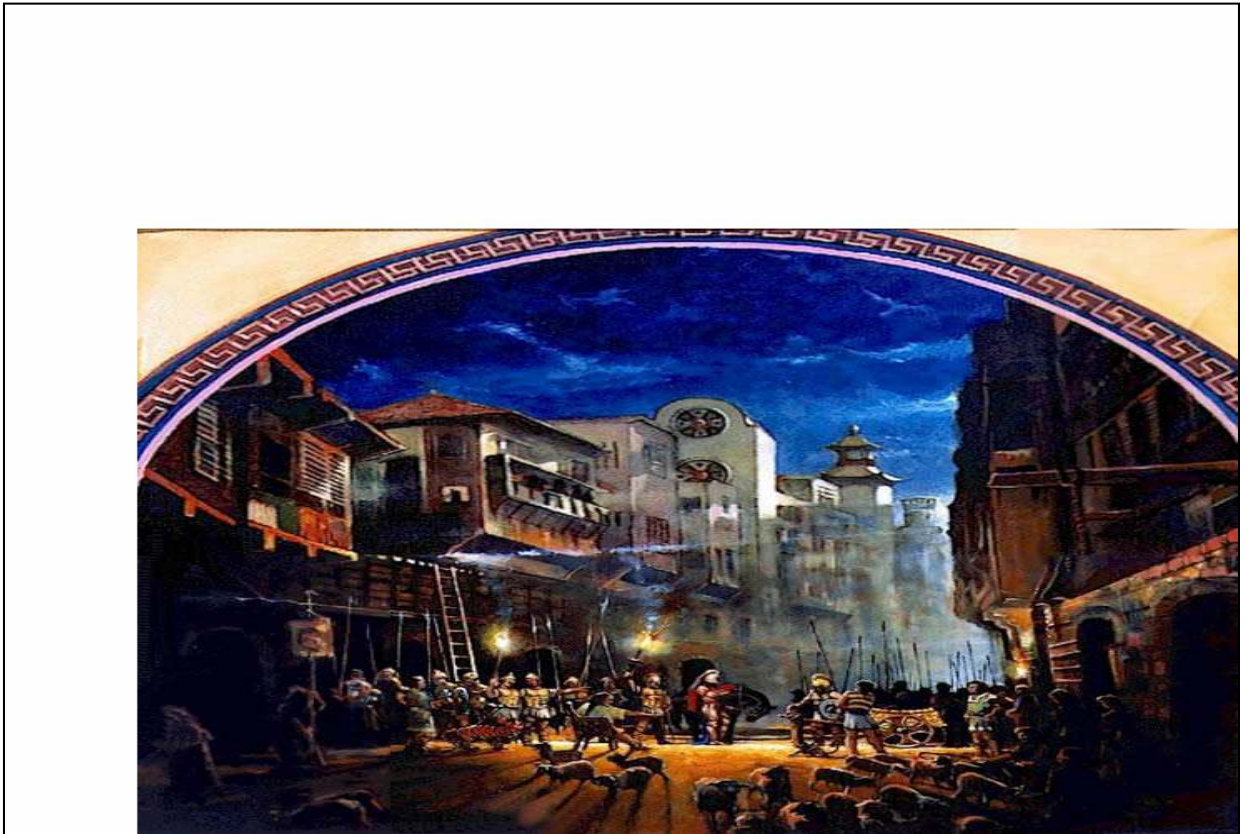
Goya

OK, let's get specific for the anglo-saxon or white european. Forgetting the light source rose madder was the color the masters used for the cheeks of their feminine subjects. Yellow ochre, the siennas and the umbers were the base and ultramarine was usually the blue. The rest is just modulated tone. These were all mostly all inexpensive pigments. Today rose madder is often replaced by a colorfast alternative. This same formula can be applied to the darker skinned - but with the absence of most of the red hues - a little blue added to the highlights will also assist.

Blood is red. Hold your hand before a powerful light and what do you see? You see a deep glowing cadmium red. A bruise is blue. It is the rupture of blood vessels that turn the captured un-oxygenated blood blue. Both effects are beneath the epidermis which in pale skin is more transparent in the European than in the African. Technically the red 'blush' of the cheeks or elsewhere is the red of oxygenated blood under a semi-transparent layer of skin (epidermis). Very rarely does the artist have an opportunity to use this effect. I did once. I painted a picture where the hand of the subject was directly in the way of the sun. I made the outline white, the secondary outline a bright red and quietly darkened the center (much like a sunset). It created a powerful effect and became the focal point of the painting. So much so I was enticed to forget about everything else. Dear oh dear! One for me and not the client. I must admit the client liked it also and kept it - and I agreed! Professional stupidity in many ways but at the time I needed the money.



The blue of the bruise should not be so powerful as to denote the bruise but rather the shadow shadow of flesh. The same blue you might use for the jaw of a close-shaved jaw. This is the warm and cold. With an alabaster skin tone the hint of the grey-blue is sufficient to make the shadow. See Boucher and other French artists of the 1700's.



Above is an example of my deliberate abandonment of any warm flesh tints. The addicted girl is raised from the mire As a student I was once given white, payne's grey, raw umber and burnt sienna and told to paint a cup and saucer on a white table cloth. Since then flesh colors became less of a problem. Anyone familiar with make-up (scumbling for artists) should have no problems.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Television has come to make most people believe flesh color is more red/orange that it really is. Why is that? Explain in 200 words.



[GO TO ... painting John Morgan and Grandson](#)

....or back to main [lesson list](#)



6-12 PRACTICAL PORTRAITURE 4

THE PORTRAIT OF JOHN MORGAN AND GRANDSON



John Morgan and his wife Robyn own and operate a large earthmoving and road-making company. John has always been a 'hands on' manager and is often happiest working alongside his men and is attired accordingly. His grandson Sam takes after his Grandfather, whom he follows around whenever he can. He tries to do all those things his grandfather does and is a born mimic in this regard. So much so John bought Sam a battery and gear operated little four-wheeled vehicle of his own. The three-year-old Sam is remarkable in his ability to maneuver his little vehicle 'just like his grandfather'. Needless to say a firm bond exists between the two.

After assembling all my sketches, color notes and photographs of the subjects I set about thinking of how exactly I was going to fit both into the one painting. I finally decided on an arrangement that would combine them by their similar facial expressions that leave no doubt as to their closeness. They are posed to look out of the picture as if challenging the world to view them in their space as they would view the world.



You will note the huge difference in skin-tone between the weather-beaten and tanned John, and the milky fairness of Sam. His skin is very pale, his eyes blue and hair fair. Nevertheless I used the same palette for both.

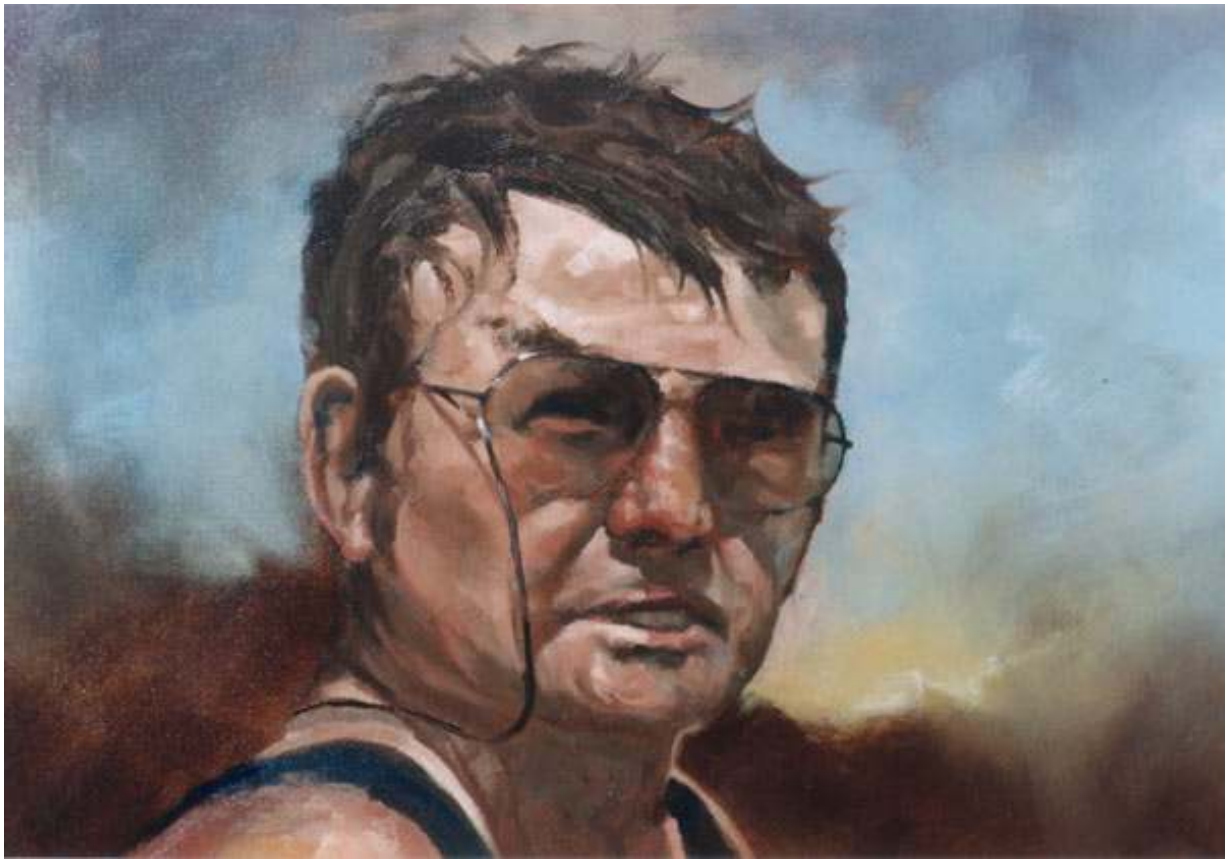
I began the painting with an imprimatura of raw umber which I allowed to dry. I then drew in my figures using charcoal. Next I worked the deepest shadows with a thin mix of raw umber and cobalt blue with a little light red where I wanted a little temperature variation.

Working up with a slightly thicker mixture I started blocking-in the semi-tones. This is the stage that should take the longest and the painter taking great care to get all the values correct. Keep working them towards the light by adding a higher value color as well as introducing as many interesting tonal variations you can.

Now I can work and blend my shadow planes with a thicker mix of light red, naples yellow and raw sienna being careful not to bring the highlights up too soon. As I am doing all this I will usually wipe excess paint from my brush on the canvas around the figures.

When I am satisfied with my shapes and planes I will begin to detail some of the features, mouth, eyes, nose and hair with a small brush and a 'long' easy flowing mixture of paint.

Now I will add the highlights to the face glasses and hair. John lost an eye in his 20's therefore the slight difference in the eyes.



Finally I add the simplest of all backgrounds, an atmospheric mix of light and darks composed entirely of all the colors I have already used. This also generally cleans up my palette nicely.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Print out a copy of the painting and nominate all the shifts in value by placing a number from 1 to 10 on the specific areas. Refer back to the lesson on colors if you are in doubt as to what is meant by color 'values'.



[GO TO ... Classical portraiture](#)
....or back to main [lesson list](#)



6-13 PRACTICAL PORTRAITURE 5

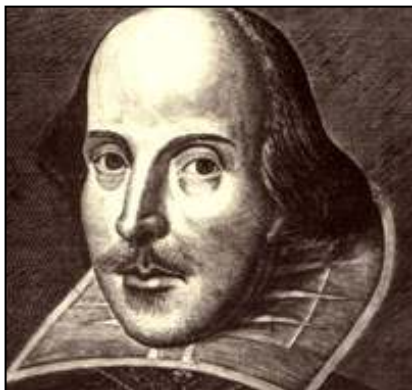
THE PORTRAIT WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- This is the account of the production of a portrait of William Shakespeare using an anatomical drawing of his skull, the Chandos portrait and Droeshout etching, and thereby forensically constructing a portrait of the man himself.

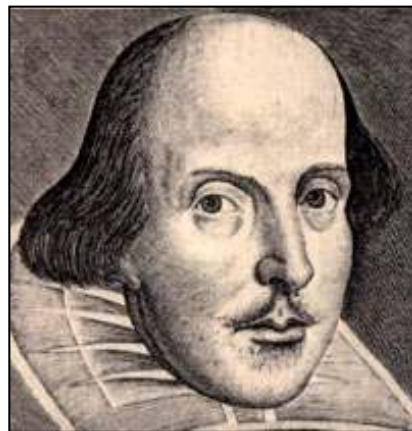
Shakespeare's headstone reads:

*'Good friend for Jesus sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones
and cursed be he that moves my bones.'*

First of all we shall look at what other background material exists.



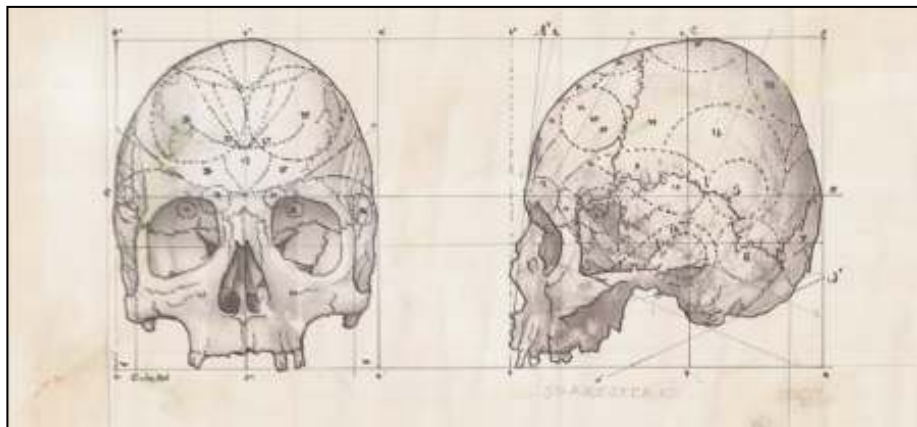
Martin Droeshout's engraving
of Shakespeare.
From a copy of the First Folio.



Martin Droeshout's engraving
of Shakespeare reversed.



The portrait above is the so called
"Chandos Portrait" of
Shakespeare

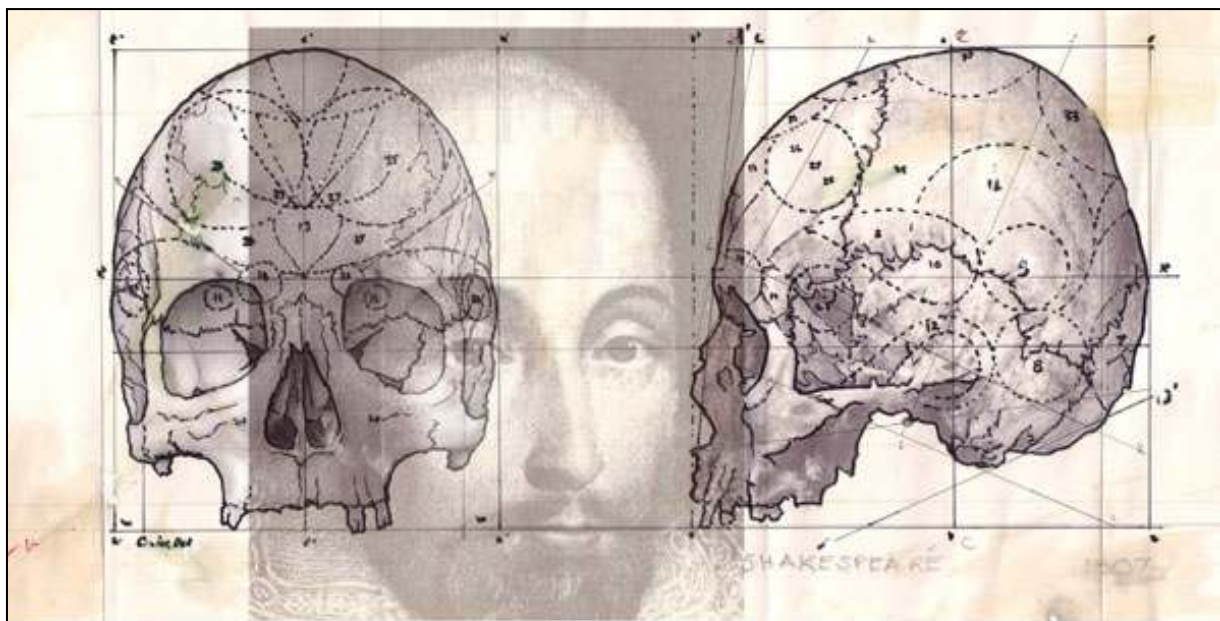


A phrenological drawing of Shakespeare's skull dated 1807 and thought to be attributed to the French natural scientist Georges Curvier when a follower of the Viennese physician and phrenologist Franz-Joseph Gall.

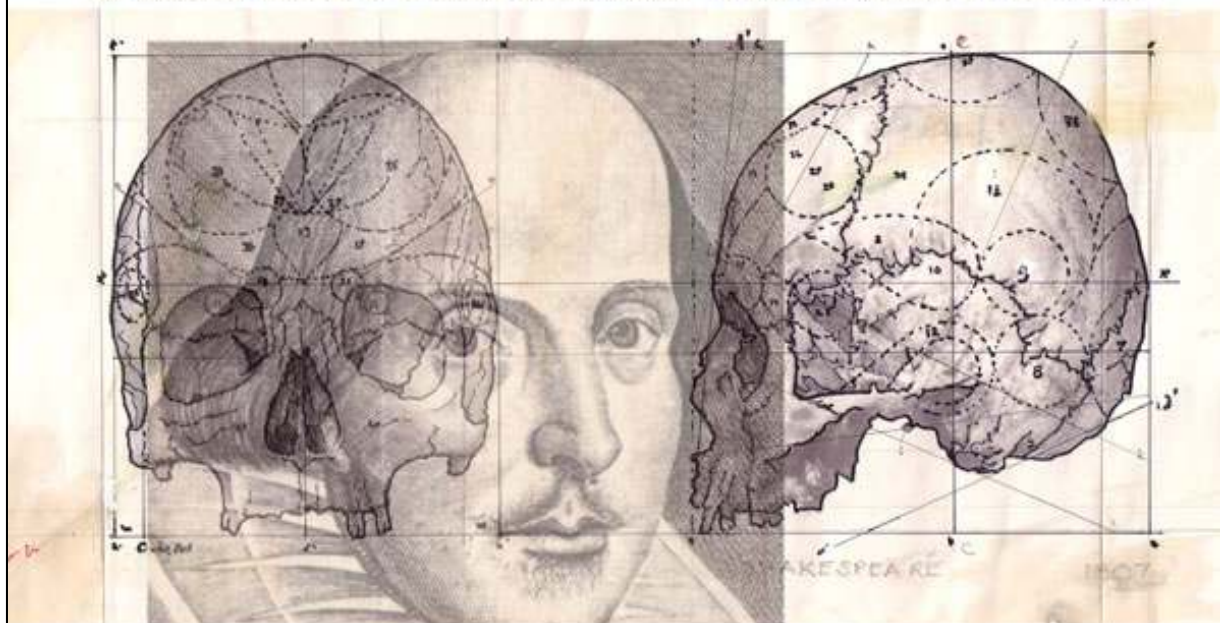
Though the original skull, from whence the drawing was taken, is yet undiscovered it is thought to part of the collection taken to America by another follower of Gall, Johann Kaspar Spurzheim. There is some evidence that an infamous 'resurrection man' (transported to New Holland) was responsible for obtaining the skull for the business man and amateur natural scientist James Deville who either took it, or had it sent, to Paris and the 'Institut de France' where it finally came into the possession of Spurzheim.

Although there is some evidence that it was part of the possessions of Napoleon Bonaparte's when finally exiled and hence made it's way to Chile and then the USA this cannot be substantiated.

Below is a 'proof' in the form of a series of comparisons between the historical drawings and the skull. Please note the congruence of the eyes, nose and upper teeth with the skull.

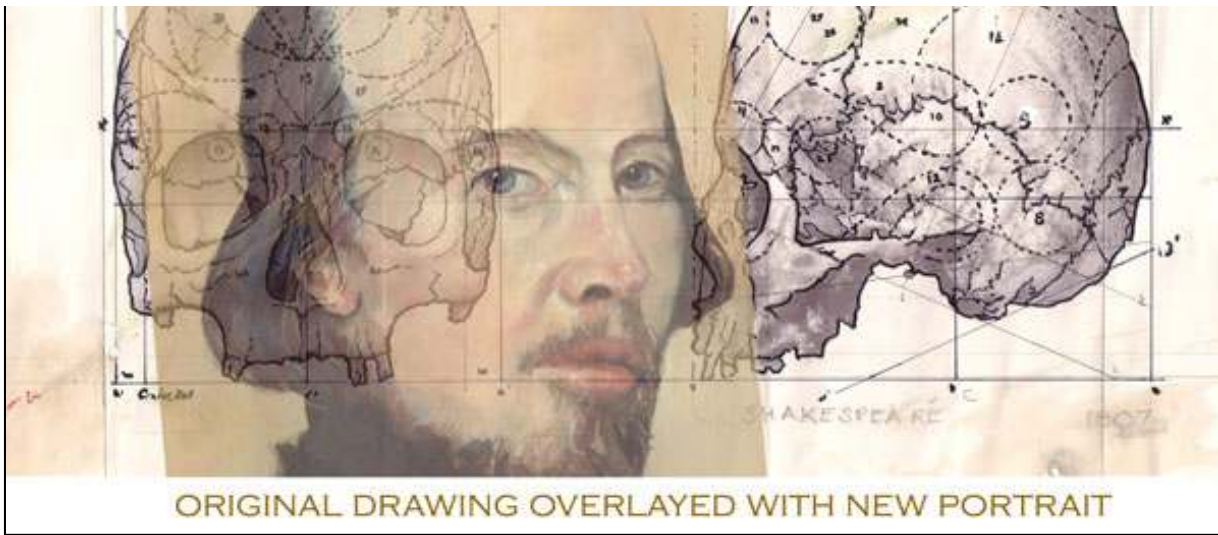


SHAKESPEARE'S SKULL OVERLAID WITH CHANDOS PORTRAIT



ORIGINAL DRAWING OVERLAYED WITH DROESHOUT ENGRAVING

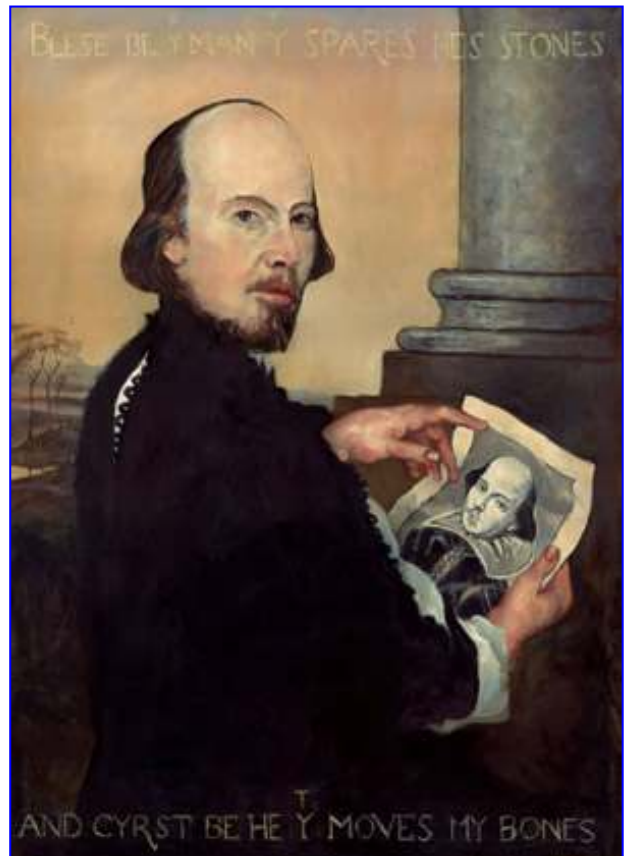




Notes on method of painting:

- The canvas was first primed and then a imprimatura (thin paint coat) of a dull olive green was applied.
- When dry a charcoal sketch was made.
- A grey painting using raw umber was applied to define the darks and lights. Some blue was added into the shadows to give added coolness and depth.
- A pallet of light red, yellow ochre and cobalt blue used to work the painting up.
- Scumbles of opaque naples yellow and tiny amounts of cadmium and vermillion were used to define the highlights. Much blending with small hogshair brushes gave the smooth finish.
- Some of the background mix was applied to define small underskin features such as veins and other imperfections.
- A background of the same pallet was applied as the painting progressed until a 'distance' view was necessary and then the small landscape was formed, also using the same pallet.

PRESS EITHER IMAGE BELOW FOR DETAIL OR FULL VIEW



7-3 THE ALEXANDER PAINTING

Unhand me good reason and pour me another scotch ... quickly! I stand before a blank canvas, brush loaded color mixed ... and mind blank. What to paint? Can't think of a thing. Suddenly a lateral thought (just a little water - don't fill it up ... and no ice. Thank you!) . Why not a painting on lateral thought? Who had the first lateral thought? Adam? Never! No Alexander the Great maybe with the cutting of the Gordian knot? Has that been painted? No you say! Well lets go. Get me the book on Alexander.

Mmm 'The Gordian Knot' Three sayings used by pompous orators for hundreds of years as classical figures of speech are "as rich as Croesus", "I came, I saw, I conquered", and "to cut the Gordian Knot". All three had their original home in Türkiye. (Is that how they spelled it?) The first applied to a Lydian King; the second was said by Julius Caesar after a battle in Asia Minor, 47 B.C., in which he defeated Pharnaces II, King of Pontus; the last refers to a legend of ancient Phrygia. The city of Gordium, now called Gordion and is about a hundred miles west of Ankara. It was the capital of ancient Phrygia. One of its rules was a peasant named Gordius, who gave his name to the city after fulfilling an oracle of Zeus. Though I spent some time in the dusty cradle of man ... the middle east, still, I am going to have to do some research here. A street in some ancient city in Persia - one hundred miles west of Ankara? What would it look like?

THE STORY

The father of gods had ordained that when it came time for the people to select a king, they must choose the first person to ride up to the temple of Zeus in a wagon. Gordius innocently fulfilled the oracle and was made king. (The system might be an improvement over a methods of election held today. Certainly it would eliminate political campaigns). In any event, Gordius seems to have done very well. One of his first acts was to dedicate his wagon to Zeus and to place it near the temple, the yoke tied to the pole by an intricate knot of cornel bark. (Ah.. good, waggon pole and knot- can paint that) Another oracle declared that anyone who succeeded in untying the knot would be the conqueror of all Asia. The knot stayed tied until the arrival of Alexander. Then, as everybody knows, he cheated on the oracle by cutting the knot with his sword instead of untying it. Zeus honored his initiative by making the prophecy come true. Note to myself: don't show the cutting. Just the knot the sword the post and the waggon. Any of that scotch left? Damn I was just getting started

Next day ... how I paint does count. What I paint maybe important. When I traversed the long corridors of my school (on the way to the headmaster's office) the paintings I passed had a remarkable effect on me. I could become a hero, a villain, or whatever. My imagination soared beyond the classroom, beyond the impending punishment and I remember it well. I remember barely a glance at the colorful Mondrian and the two two dimensional Picassos'. I saw only the Rubens, Titians and a Gerome that communicated to me something more of the human condition. Something to lift and sustain me. Now I look at Alexander my aim becomes to paint for the person in the same position as I was in that corridor - with the addition of a lateral thought. Whatever good that will do. Anyway I have started.... all these words. Ugh! Now I must make a start!

The canvas is 52" square and I have found a background I can manipulate.



Fig. 1



Fig 2

Fig. 1 was one I noticed in an old black and white encyclopedia and kept for just such a rainy day. It is a view of a street in Cairo 1890 ... but I think I can alter the architecture, adapt it ... it has the feel of antiquity.

Now for the central figure. I found this distant image in my files. (Fig. 2) Being a fan of English author David Gemmell I like the 'Dark Prince' notion of Alexander. Heroic, flawed, naked, helmeted and a battleground between the dark and the light, brutality and compassion, good and evil. With a few adjustments this figure will do nicely. The horse is good as well!

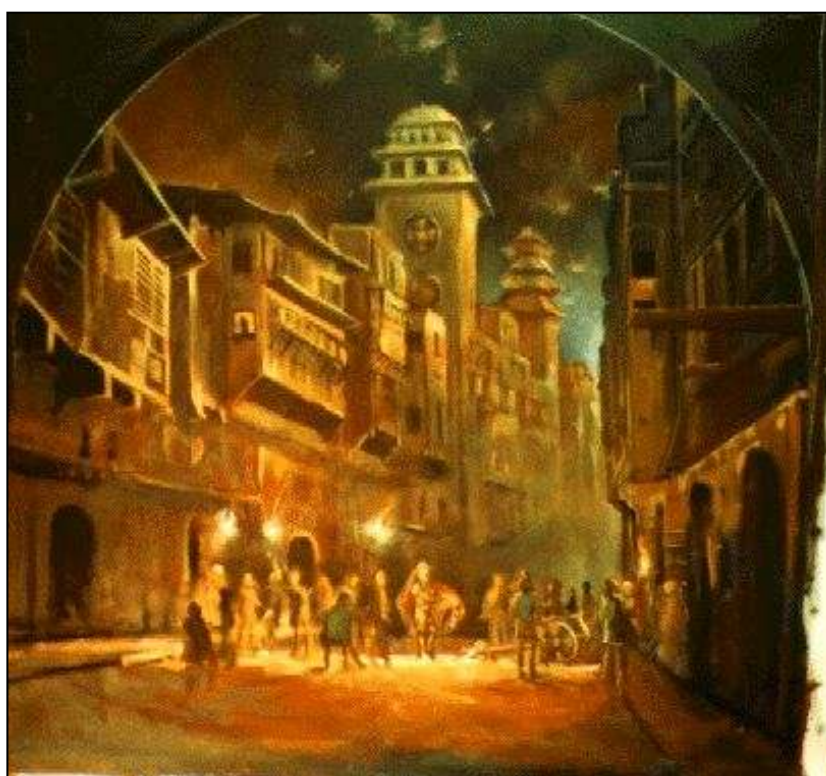


Fig. 3

Rough it in ... I need artificial light (torches). Composition ... simple square within a square. Disguise large square with an arch.



Fig. 4

Scattered groups of figures. Light from two major sources, sky and torches. The two must join somewhere ... solve that later ... or hope it will solve itself (ha ha ... quick another scotch ... just a small one then)

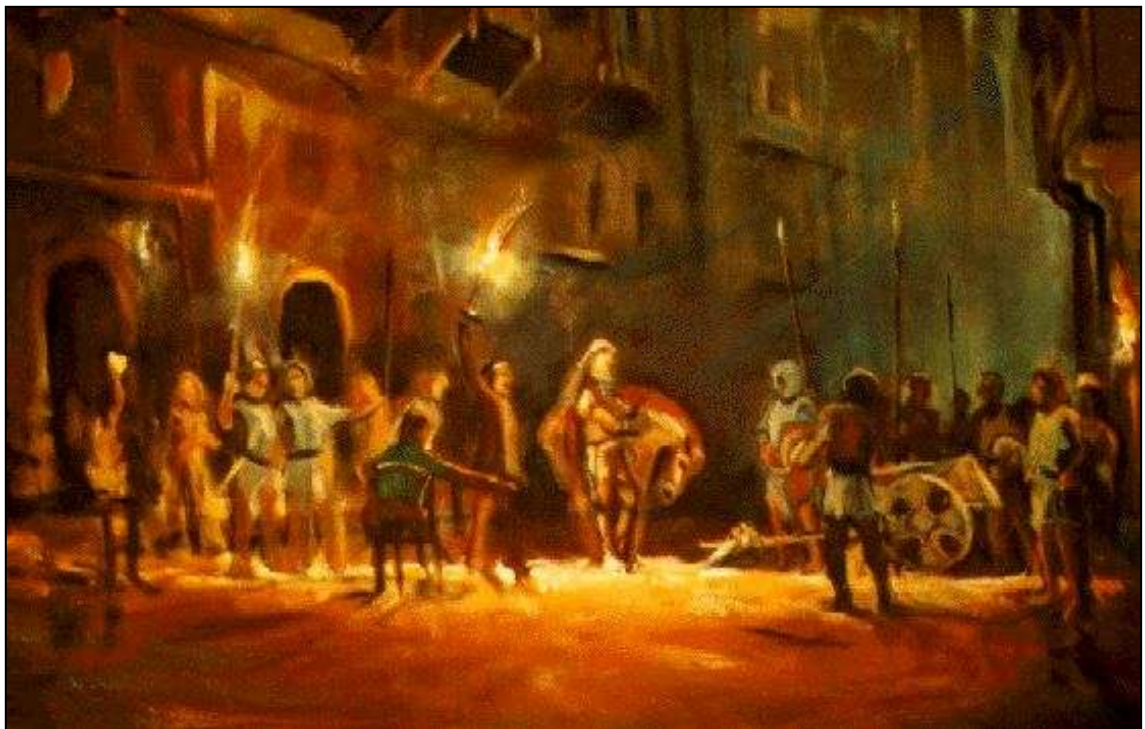


Fig. 5

More work on the figures ... tighten it up. Seemed to have fixed the main areas of interest. Light buildings - dark sky... and dark sky light buildings *try both. Alexander controlled naked aggression, good. Keep him separated and darken the area behind.



Fig. 6

Add more people spears, monkey, waggon, (research Greek armour) breastplates, short swords, tunics? Ah well. Still see problem joining sky and ground ... tomorrow then



[GO TO ... Alexander 2](#)

...or back to main [lesson list](#)



THE ALEXANDER PAINTING NO.2

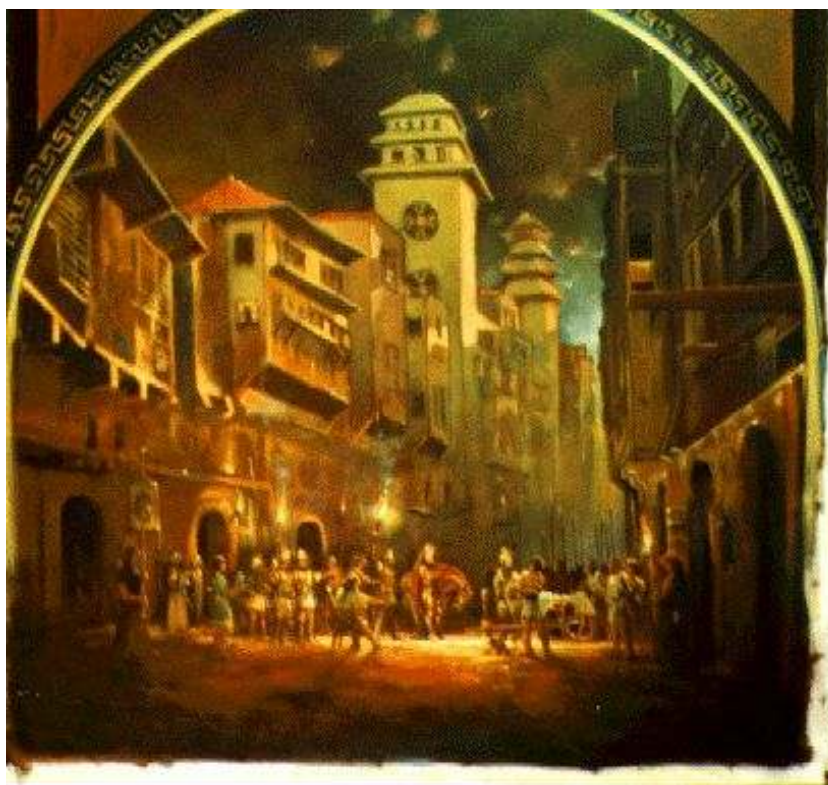
Let me take an overall look.

Things I don't like;

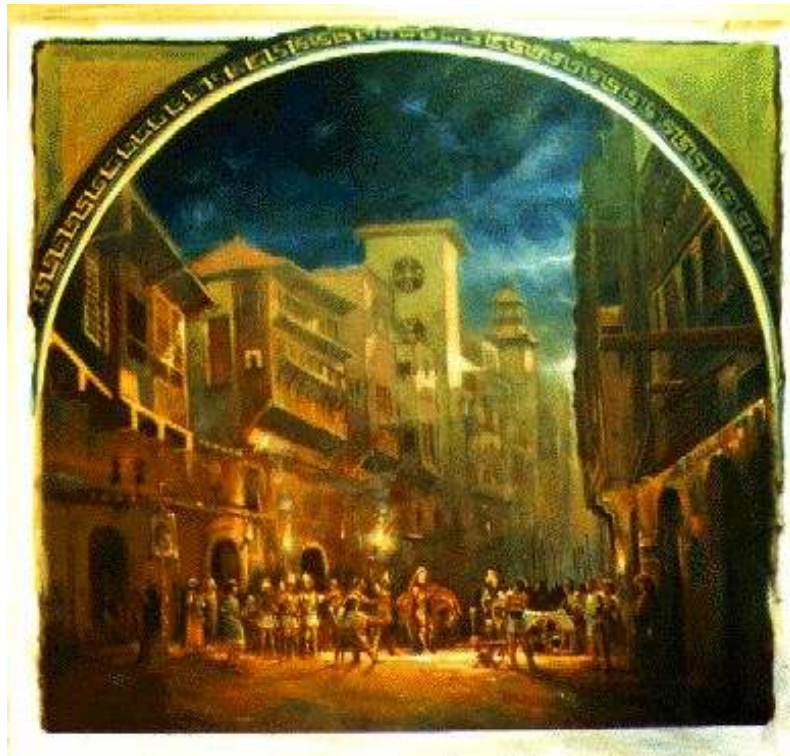
1. The tallest building looks phallic while the other one needs a more oriental cast (well we are a hundred miles west of Ankara). It also seems too high.

2. I need more perspective in the sky, more aerial direction, more light direction.

I'll try and fix those ...



Something like this perhaps?



The problem of linking the sky to the ground now arises. Perhaps I am trying too hard to complete the inside square of the composition? Does it need to be completed at all or is the dark vertical line on the right sufficient? We shall see.



I will also repeat the motif on the tower on the wagon wheel and the king's chair - thus creating a bit of repetition (pattern).

The street composition is a simple 'light against dark and dark against light'. On the right side I have dark forms and spears against a lightening blue-grey haze then, as we scan across street, the figures on the otherside become increasingly light until we create reverse - light figures against a dark background.

But I have that torch on the wall. You can see the problem; behind the two breast-plated soldiers to the left of the king the wall goes from dark to light for no apparent cause?

Perhaps I should remove the light and allow the dark to reach the first level ...

As I work on that problem I will begin to add some form and detail to the figures.



Must elevate the waggon shaft and detail the knot...

Also must think on what I want in the foreground?

I am almost past the 'chiaroscuro and design.' That is often the hard part. Soon I will be able to place and work the major figures and this will be a test because future problems will be mostly be a consequence of flaws that are already inbuilt. I know that if they persist I might have to do some radical alterations. Nothing is certain.



[GO TO ... Alexander part 3](#)

.....or back to main [lesson list](#)



THE ALEXANDER PAINTING NO.3

Let me take another look ...

Things I don't like;

The problem of linking the sky to the ground still persists ... if I don't solve this problem this painting is destined to oblivion! Radical measures ... take out some light and darken the wall.



Third light removed and area darkened to provide contrast with figures

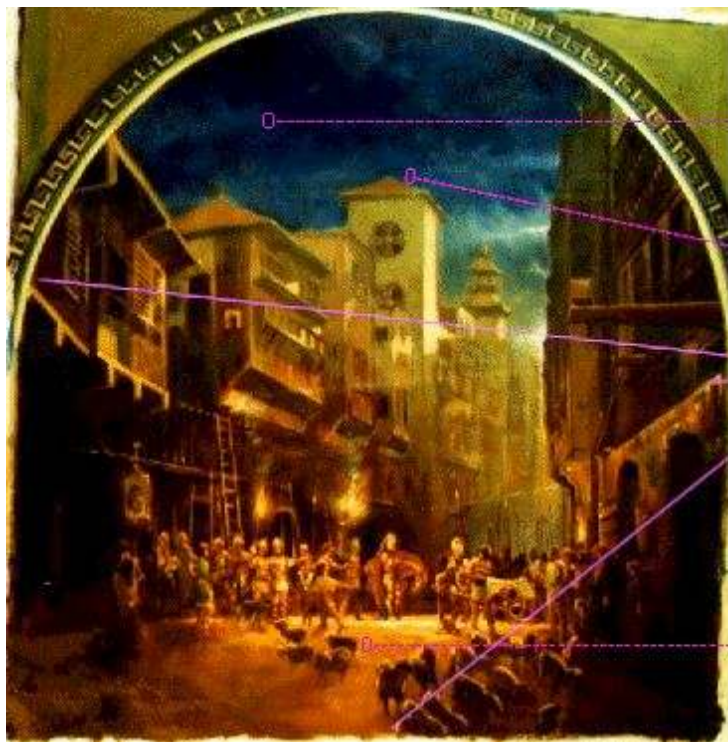
Ladder introduced to join middle ground to sky

Join middle ground to top middle ground above Mmmm ... how about a ladder(lateral thinking)? Then let's cheat a little and join left to right with a scumbled beam of slanting light.

And warm the sky with some ultramarine (later I shall make it glow with the addition of a glazed thalo)

In desperate need of some foreground entry points to lead the viewer's eye into the painting.

Here we reach another critical juncture; all or nothing? I decide on sheep - actually I always had sheep in mind as I wanted something low and running out toward the viewer. Place them dark in semi-shadow silhouette and see how they look?



ultramarine added
to sky

new roof

entry points

sheep added
to foreground

Entry and exit points: 1. Exit; the eye travels across the middle ground up the ladder across on the light and out through the sky.

2. Entry: a) Follow floor boards halfway up in the left - then go down ladder and into action.
b) Perspective edge-line half way up on right edge.

Problems: The dog is no good!

The woman on the right is too high!

Needs a few touches to give extra depth and curve to the street.



[GO TO ... Alexander part 4](#)

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THE ALEXANDER PAINTING NO.4

Let me take another look ...

I have done most of the essential housekeeping jobs.



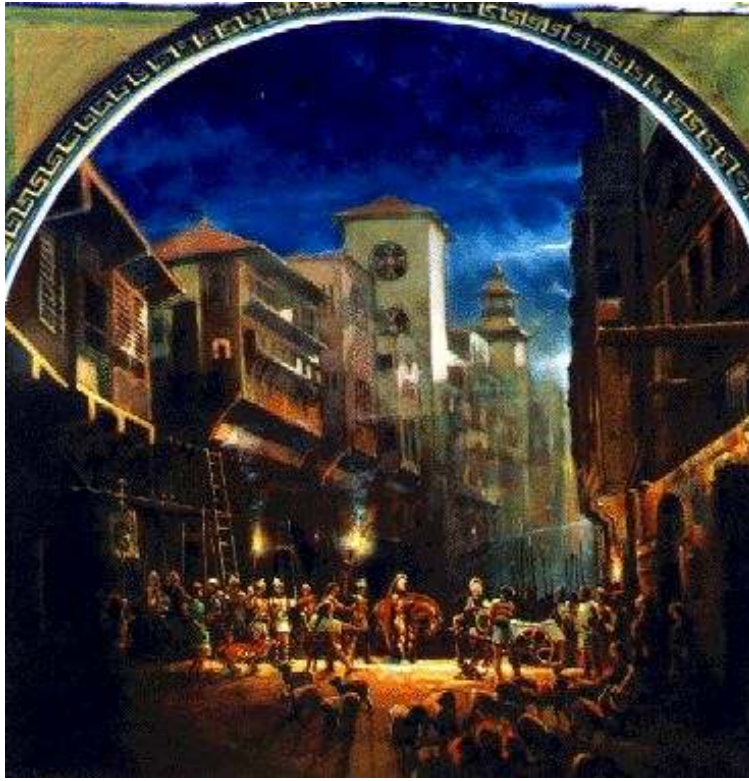
Overall things look a little dark but at the moment and that is a plus for me since the drama and ease of creating things from a dark background is much easier and enjoyable than working from too much light backwards.



I like the juxtaposition of tiger and sheep (above). The alert tiger gives the painting an element of the exotic and the dangerous that goes well with Alexander (the dark prince). The sheep and shepherd are also a reminder of ownership, territory and the basic needs of kings as well as a common men.



This painting to this stage is rather masculine and probably lacks any feminine counterpoint (the story of my life)? The ladder also needs a little strengthening ... and let me try a frame as I need to match the yellows and reds and get some idea of the finished article.



The canvas is 52" by 52"

At this juncture I find the picture is satisfactory from a design, spot color and narrative point of view. Therefore the hardest part, the most nail-biting, the most challenging the most dangerous, and the part where the most technical knowledge was applied is past.



[GO TO ... some detail etc.](#)

.....or back to main [lesson list](#)



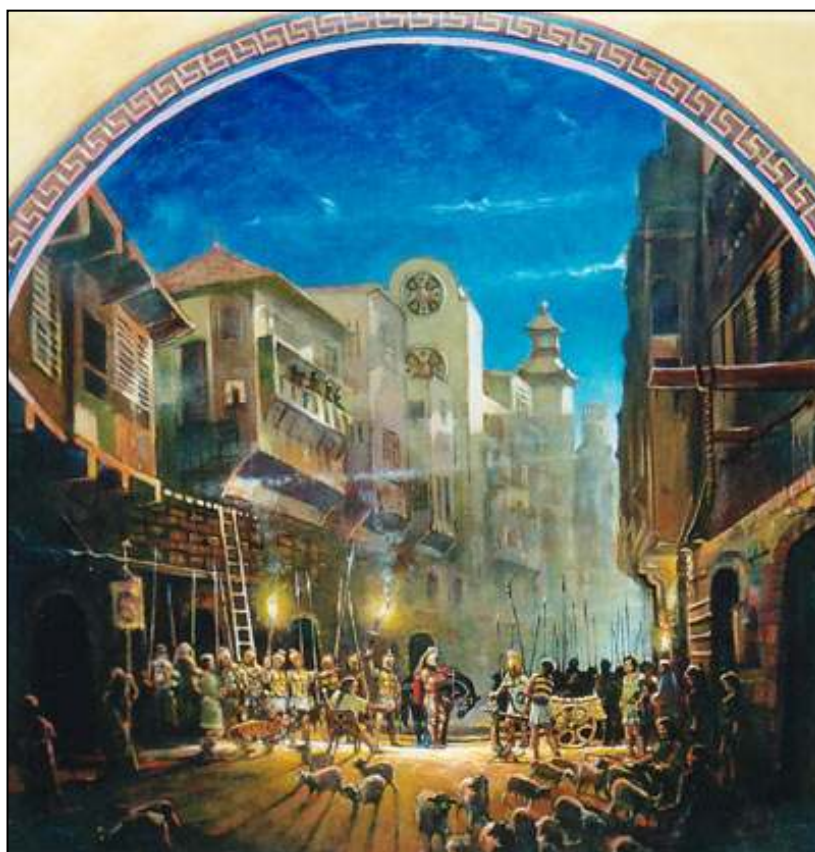
ALEXANDER 5

1. Further research has led me to paint Alexander's horse black. This color change forced me to lighten the area behind and introduce an arched darkened doorway. Why? As this is an area of maximum interest the 'light against dark and dark against light' assumes greater importance. The arch of my door 'frames' Alexander's head but is positioned so as not to interfere with the dark horse.

2. As I increased the amount of misty light behind the dark soldiers on the right I needed a balance on the left so I shifted the ground highlight from beneath Alexander's feet to the left of the King's chair.

3. Foreground logic. As figures, sheep or objects become more distant from the light source their highlights change from yellow to orange to red - as does the light source itself.

4. I have done some minor alterations in the skyline as I dropped the top border three inches. The profile of the tallest building is changed and reduced (yet again). The old -new, stone - timber and not quite vertical or strict nature of the architecture is retained. I have added a purple glaze to the topmost sky to unify the red with the foreground.



Note the color of the horse changes from brown to black.



I am now nearing the stage I call presentation. Glaze sky with thalo and begin to spend time detailing, edging etc. Remember this painting is not only about art, it is also a narrative about lateral thinking - and about communicating that idea. The construction of the painting is pitched to the exotic, to sentiments of heroes and villains.

'Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordian Knot of it he will unloose,
Familiar as his garter'Shakespear (Henry V, 1.i)



[GO TO ... finished painting](#)
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'Alexander and the Gordian knot'

*'If then such praise the Macedonian got
For having rudely cut the Gordian Knot'
.....Waller ...to the King*



Alexander was reputedly a strong, handsome commander with one eye dark as a black night and one blue as a burnished sky. He led his army on his faithful black stallion Bucephalo and was accompanied by the best military formation of the time, the Macedonian Phalanx which was armed with sarissas, the fearfully brutal five and half meter long spears.

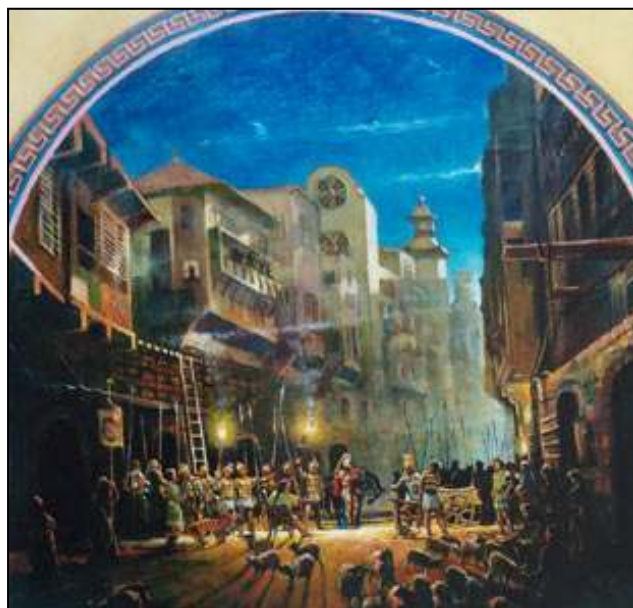


Parmenion, the general shown here on the left of Alexander, was also called the Lion of Macedon, and had acquired great popularity within the army. As King Phillip's (Alexander's father) general his reputation was of a general who had never lost a battle. During the siege of Tyre, the Persian king Darius sent a letter to pay ransom of 10,000 talents for his family and cede all his lands west of the Euphrates to Alexander. On that occasion Parmenion advised Alexander to accept. "I would accept, were I Alexander." Parmenio said ; "I too, were I Parmenio!" was Alexander's famous retort.

It would appear (depending on which newspaper you buy) Alexander was a little full of his own importance ... JH



I am now nearing the stage I call presentation. Remember this painting is not only about art, it is also a narrative about lateral thinking - and about communicating that idea. The construction of the painting is pitched to the exotic, to sentiments of heroes and villains.



(This painting is available as a quality giclee print [here](#).)

Some specific late alterations are examined below and relate to the final view (next page).

1. More detail in the sky line.

2. People on the balcony of one of the buildings.
3. Blocks of stone to give texture behind ladder.
4. Tackle rope hanging from right building.
5. Hands, faces, legs and feet re-adjusted and detailed a little more.
5. Sheep made to look more like sheep and less like large dogs.
6. More orange on the tiger. Here I introduced a new color not used in any other mix. This is a practice I would warn beginners against unless like here you need some counterpoint.
7. Redened up the foreground to allow the yellow middle distance to balance the blue of the sky - more drama.
8. Adjusted some overall values.
9. Had a shower, changed, found my wallet, switched out the light and raced down to the nearest bar. You don't want to know the rest ...

*'Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordian Knot of it he will unloose,
Familiar as his garter' ... Shakespear (HenryV, 1.i)*

Alexander III of Macedon died in his 33rd year. He had reigned for 12 years and eight months.

[NEW Information for new CD releases!](#)



[GO TO ... final view](#)

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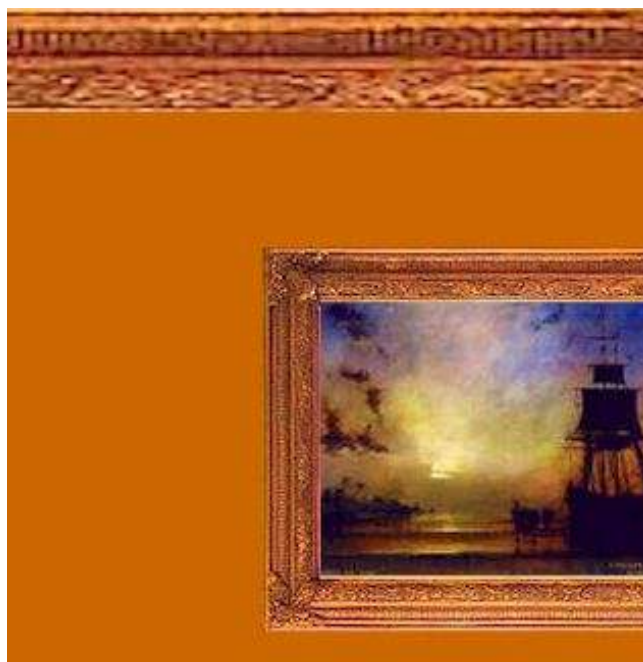
7-5 FRAMES AND OTHER DECORATIONS

Historical developments

It is useful to understand the evolution of the picture frame. Frames evolved from painted decorations of architraves and cornices that surrounded frescoes on walls and ceilings (as in the Sistine Chapel below), to actual plaster and timber mouldings used when oil paintings became transportable. Today frames have become 'stand alone' items of mass production.



From the early renaissance architectural fashion has often determined the design of frames. Popular architrave, cornice and skirting designs, often in miniature, formed the frame. If you desired to frame a Watteau painting, if you are lucky enough to possess one or one you painted yourself in the Rococco style, then you should check out the famous houses of the period noting all their architraves and cornices. The great decorators and designers of past eras were usually universally consistent in their style. This approach can be just as valid today so look to architraves and cornice when deciding what frame to use (see below).



I have sometimes taken to painting decorations or frames on the canvas to achieve a historical effect as in the following example below.



From an artists point of view this allows you to paint a frame before the framer gets his hands on it. Other artists throughout the centuries such as Rubens, Tieopolo and Raphael have done the same often using fruit, leaves vines etc. as decoration. Some might argue it is a tradition worth keeping if only to keep the apprentices active.

With the development of oil painting as a medium and canvas as its ground it became important to protect these new 'mobile' or moveable works of art. Obviously someone had the bright idea to make the frame perform all functions, protection, decoration and finally as part of some intended environment (room). All this has led to much confusion with a minefield of styles, frame mouldings and architecture to negotiate.



So a picture frame can have certain characteristics and many functions;

1. Protect the painting
2. Unify the painting with the architectural style of the room as in repetition of color style or other design elements.
3. Separate the painting from the wall.
4. Tunnel the attention to the painting so it will become the focal point of a room.- or do the reverse.

An artist may require the frame can echo all the qualities of the painting. Accents of similar texture, color, line or shape.

Echoes between painting and frame:

Just as parts of a painting can relate to each other in echoes of texture, color and form so can the relationship between the frame and the painting. This is a relationship the renaissance artists knew well. Some of these

relationships I demonstrate in the following example. More can be observed on the following page.



This traditional example (above) only works in isolation and miniature as most elements are fierce. However, texture of frame and breastplate, color values of frame, sky, armour and directional form match. The frame struggles to confine the painting and will only succeed if surrounded by a bland background. The frame is a color compliment of the painting while the gold still echoes the strong yellows.

We are now going to simplify things and examine three elements. The painting, the frame and the background.



[GO TO ... traditional configurations](#)

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PICTURE FRAMES

The classic tradition of museum display is that of the Uffizi - deep gold frames on a salmon red background wall. This is a formula often repeated for many renaissance paintings. It is also one I sometimes use in internet galleries - but mostly without the frames. For landscape paintings of high contrast and dark greens the salmon red works well particularly if separated by a neutral (off-white, black) or transit (gold) color.

This is a handy hint for painting as well as framing. When dealing with complementary or opposite colors red-green or blue-orange try and separate them with a transit or neutral color. Even modern minimalist paintings of clashing compliments are often framed to separate them from a colorful wall. Fierce aggressive paintings and color schemes are often impressive and eye catching - but difficult to live with. As with most art the understated is usually more powerful in the long run (less is more - again!) Below we examine three overall elements and their relationships - the wall, the frame and the painting.

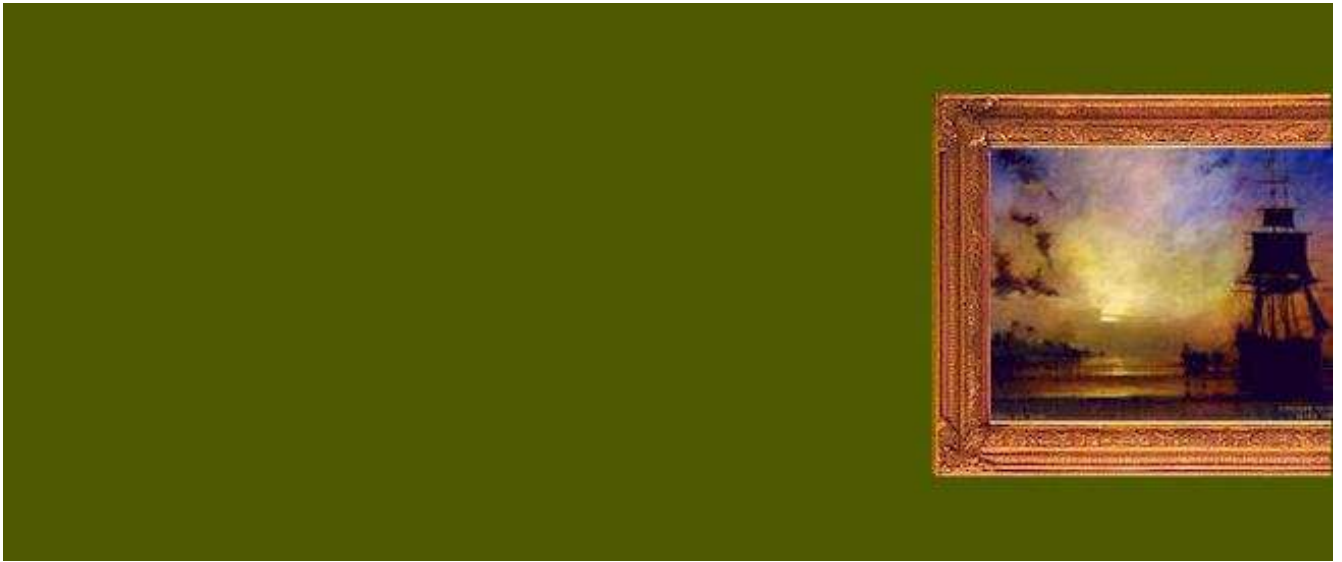


Example 1. Complementary red wall green painting. Frame echoes the painting in color(darks and green-gold) and swirling shapes.



Example 2. Complementary colors of wall and painting with transition light gold between. 1800's style rococo style frame matches swirling wave. The important feature here is the 'value' differences between the frame and the wall

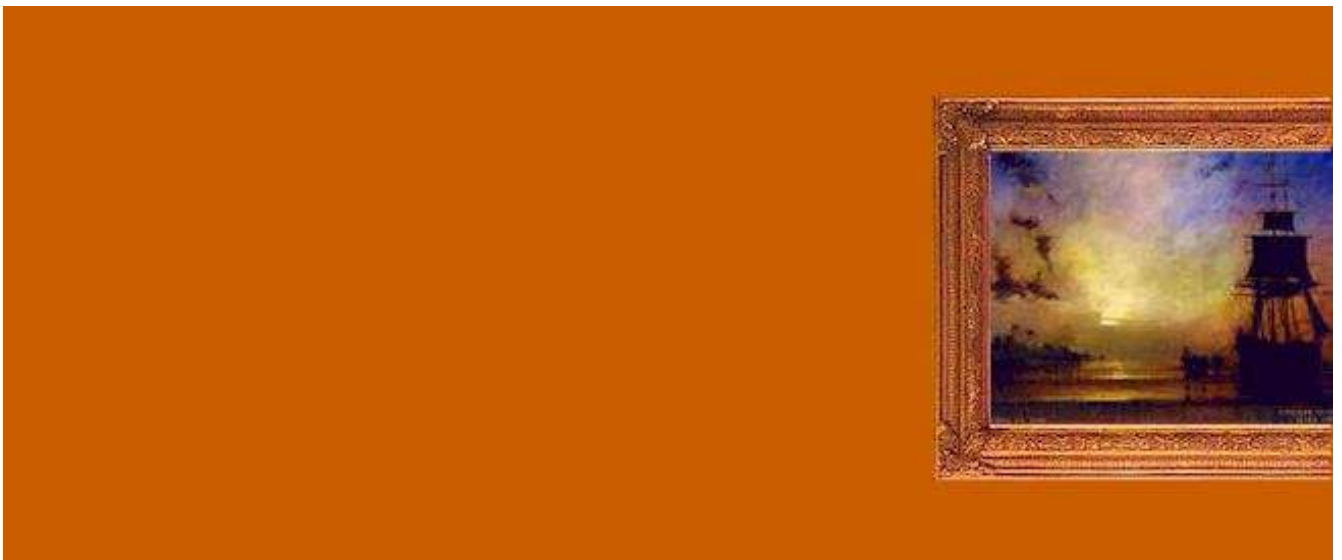
and the frame and the painting.



Example 3. Complementary again. Here the frame and the picture provide a unified package where the rust color of the painting is made even more dominant with the matched frame. This allows the wall green to work.



Example 4. Wall and painting colors are the same and the light gold frame is the complement. Echoes of light and dark from painting to frame.



MODERN FRAMES - ACCENTS AND ECHOES

When the print or painting itself is intended as a decorative item - fashion often dictates the frame. It is perilous in this instance to buy a finished item without checking its intended placement. All sorts of factors such as lighting, wall color, furniture etc. can have their unforeseen effects. In this section I shall concentrate on those principles of framing that confine themselves to the picture and the frame. The principles of modern framing are the same as principles of the past but often with more of a bold fashion statement.

Floating a painting: This is the relatively modern approach of physically separating the painting or print from the frame and/or the wall by the use of neutral or semi-neutral barriers such as mounts, slips or other such devices. The general rule here is to continually vary the widths of the divices and the distances between them.

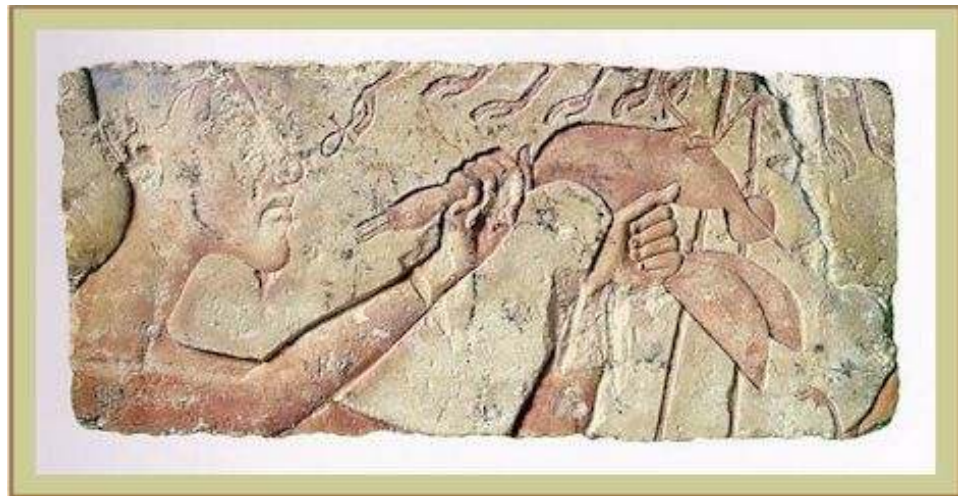


Texture echos: (also above)This is the repetition of a texture from painting to mount or frame.



Hue echo or tonal framing: (above) This is the name I give the practice of balancing hue values between painting, mounts, slips and frame.

Borders, lines and bevels: a strong border or dark line is not always necessary as the example below demonstrates.



Size of frame & minimalism: sometimes the simplest is the most effective. Here the print as well as the frame combine to give a three dimensional feel.



[GO TO ... making money from painting](#)

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General Print Catalogue

- A selection of the highest quality Giclee prints are examined by the artist for quality then approved or rejected. Only the approved prints are thus retained and personally signed. These artist edition 'giclee' prints are printed on both canvas and heavy duty watercolor paper and slightly extra postage charges might apply if delivery is outside the US or Europe. **As priced the cost includes postage.**

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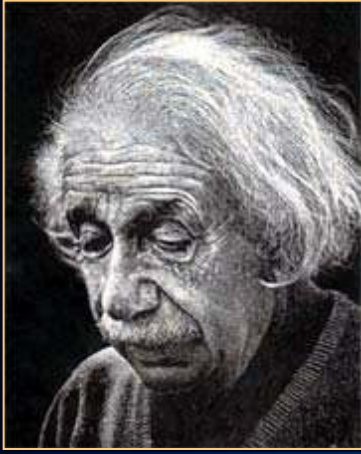
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THE MODERN ILLUSIONISTS

ADVANCED PAINTING - BEYOND FASHION

... BY JOHN HAGAN

Einstein etching shown (10"x12") by John Hagan (1975)

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OK, now you have learnt your craft and you want to paint paintings that you can sell either the original, or the copyright. This may help you buy your round of drinks at the local tavern and perhaps, at last, put a roof over the heads of your nearest and dearest. You might even have dreams of becoming a responsible member of the community, regain the respect of those outlaws and in-laws who have long since given up on you. How do you do this? Below are some of the methods I have employed that won't leave you feeling like an absolute 'quack'.

- FILLING THE GAPS OF HISTORY
- MAKING ORDINARY THINGS EXTRAORDINARY
- ILLUSTRATING FABLES AND LEGENDS
- RECONSTRUCTING LANDSCAPES OF TIMES PAST
- PAINTING PORTRAITS AND COMMISSIONS
- PAINTING FOR DECORATION

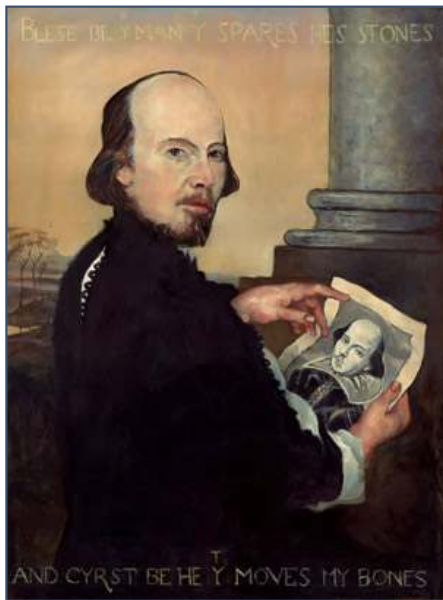
1. Filling the gaps of history

Don't let anyone tell you this is not a legitimate endeavor for a painter. Someone once spoke thus to me... 'How could you paint Shakespeare or Fletcher Christian,' they scoffed indignantly, 'did you ever meet them or see them? You can't just go around doing that! Anyway, they died hundreds of years ago.'

I replied, 'I don't expect Leonardo met the Virgin Mary, nor to my knowledge did Carravaggio meet John the Baptist, or was Michaelangelo ushered into the presence of God for painting purposes...! I also expect neither Rembrandt nor Rubens was present when Jesus was lowered from the cross'. And all these things happened over one thousand four hundred years before they were painted.'

In fact it is the artists duty and obligation to do exactly these type of paintings and make them believable. Thus will we enrich history for those coming after us.

First of all let's look at portraits of those folks who were not captured by photography or painters of their time. Perhaps most became notorious well after the event. Anyway here are two examples that have been used on book covers, magazines and in television documentaries from which I gained financially by my agent selling a limited copyright. The originals, of course, I usually retain and will will to my children.



William Shakespeare
who was never painted
in his lifetime



Fletcher Christian



Alexander and the Gordian Knot

These paintings have been copyrighted and used more than once in publications and documentaries and book covers. It shows that any artist still has great scope should he or she wish to properly research and produce a painting that is definitive in its portrayal of some event or person who presently lacks any adequate representation. What other 'gaps' might the 'journeyman' painter tackle? Here is a list off the top of my head:

Milton of paradise lost fame

The philosopher 'Gothe'

Chaucer

A real flesh portrait of Julius Caesar

Sir Francis Drake

John Paul Jones

Christopher Columbus

Sir Francis Drake

Stanley meeting Livingstone Plato

OK, so you can now see the possibilities should you want to research the subject matter, and have the technical skills to produce a painting that has both feeling, drama and definition. In my atelier my primary duty is usually to give students the skill so they can paint whatever style or method that might suit the period - or otherwise, should they determine something else is required. That is up to them and their reasoning. In this sort of work it is important for future copyright use that the artist refrain too much from 'stamping their personal style' on the work; instead making the painting identify with the time and place or the person and particular event. This sometimes needs much research - but the rewards are great should your portrait or work become the definitive one, as did my Fletcher Christian. You see it was well researched had the benefit of not looking like Mel Gibson, Marlon Brando or Erol Flynn!

Beware that, like the novelist or actor, you might become so attached to some period or person it could almost become obsessional - as I nearly did with my late 18 century era of sail and romanticism.

Finally you need to put these images where folk who need them can see them and this means originally on the web, and perhaps giving them away free (within defined parameters) to educational and other non-profit organizations that require them from time to time.



[GO TO ... Ordinary things](#)

OR ... back to [lesson list](#)



- FILLING THE GAPS OF HISTORY
- MAKING ORDINARY THINGS EXTRAORDINARY
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- PAINTING FOR DECORATION

2. Making ordinary things extraordinary

The idea here is to take something entirely common and paint it in such a way that viewers are forced to look or 'see' the thing in some other way. Just this morning I purchased a packet of beautiful chopsticks. My aim it to one day paint them in in conjunction with a fork or other eating implements. This might just question the process of getting food from dish to mouth.

Anyway painting simple things is also a major obligation of any artist for it promotes lateral thinking and wonder.

Such things might include:

- A footprint in the sand.
- A small wave on the beach with a shell.
- Cooked pasta.
- A map of the world.
- A mailbox.
- Beans and toast.

Look around, walk in the park, go to the seaside, there are thousands of suitable items. Below are a few examples of mine I have found that made successful and saleable paintings.



Pasta (36"x24")

Beans and toast (36"x24")



'Landscape'(100"x50") - I intend to follow up this 'world landscape' with another having the map reversed as if looking from inside out; out into the universe. The shapes thus should be vaguely familiar but the 'views' unusual.



[GO TO ... Fables and legends](#)

OR ... back to [lesson list](#)



- FILLING THE GAPS OF HISTORY
- MAKING ORDINARY THINGS EXTRAORDINARY
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3. Illustrating Fables and Legends

Painters have been doing this for ever - from cave painters to artists at the end of the 20th Century. Sadly there is little of it today but... this gives the versatile and patient painter an excellent chance to fill the gap!



To understand the importance of such paintings as Gerome's 'Police Verso', shown above, one only needs to understand that the whole visual feel and detail of the very successful 'Gladiators' movie was, according to the director Ridley Scott, based entirely around such 1890's work. It is a shame Gerome is not around to claim his legacy. Someone who was however is H R Giger whose paintings and drawings were the inspiration for Scott's 'Alien' movies. These works in turn related back to Goya and Blake's 19th century gothic works.

Others might include:

- Any Shakespearean theme
- St. George and the Dragon
- The Pied Piper
- The Homeric Epics
- The Old Man and the Sea.
- Any of the Myths of the Gods.

You should look toward your imagination and try and paint such paintings or perhaps marrying such legends (St. George) to modern events as allegories as I have done with 'Perils of a Chemical Life' below. It is good practice to be working on one or two of such paintings in the background to your usual commissioned or current

work.



Beauty and the Beast (48"x48")



Thor God of Thunder (48"x48")



'Perils of a Chemical Life'(48"x48") - This is a modern day allegory based on the St.George theme where the knight attempts to rescue the heroin stricken maiden who appears as both the serpent and the girl.

Even though this type of painting appears, a first glance, attractive to only a small market the painter should always remember the first rule of selling a painting: that is to produce a painting for the one person who cannot live without and not to paint for that 99 out of 100 people who will think it is OK. This happens regularly as galleries are often seduced to hang bland, mediocre works always attractive for the widest possible range of people. Serious collectors however always favor the definitive, unique work that has obvious craft and value. Should you need to appeal to wider audience this should be done with smaller works with affordable prices rather than quicker large paintings. Remember your small purchaser today will become your collector of tomorrow, so always have some smaller works priced accordingly at any showing.



[GO TO ... Landscapes](#)

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4. Reconstructing Historical Landscapes

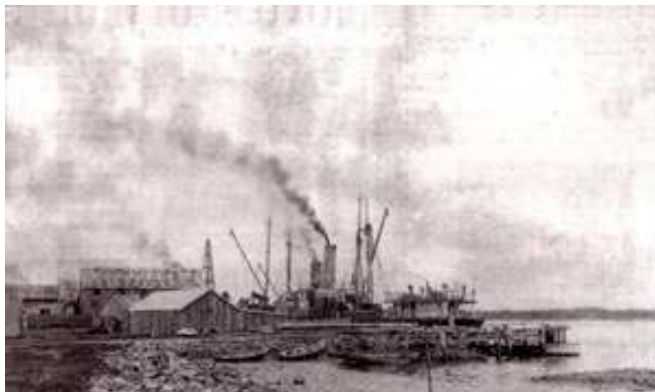
There is a growing opportunity for painters to make a living by painting historical landscapes using old postcards or photographs as reference material.

I recently experimented with this by taking three old faded, black and white postcards and reconstructing the landscape. They were subsequently scanned and printed and sold in the area they were painted. This could be done in any location should you possess the skill of an adequate landscape painter and a modicum of flair for color and drama.





This painting (24"x36") depicts a flood in a main street of a seaside town in 1892
Taken from the postcard immediately above.





This depicts a dry dock in the same town 1895. I applied a Turner-esque look to the scene.

These paintings were also made into postcards and small prints for which I receive a small income.



Again, the painter should not be so elitist as to spurn such work. Society has, and always will, treasure such efforts should they be atmospheric and definitive. With the right training a painter could always make a good living traveling up and down the coast, or around the country just producing such pieces of work. You might find the local Historical Societies are also interested in commissioning such work - they surely have a wealth of material you could use!



[GO TO ... Other Commissions](#)

OR ... back to [lesson list](#)

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- [MAKING ORDINARY THINGS EXTRAORDINARY](#)
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5. Commissions

Due to 50 years of the press showing works of 'art' being made by elephants with brushes held in their trunks, monkeys, guys riding over canvas with bikes, kindergarten children and anyone else with no talent and no training; it is increasingly difficult for any member of the public to believe a professional painter should receive a per hour remuneration that might be similar to what a plumber or an electrician might receive should they spend an equivalent time at a contracted task or job.

This has become the sad lot of painters so the point must be made forcefully and prima facie before any work is undertaken that you expect to be paid on a scale commensurate to your study, skill and experience; at least at a tradesman's hourly rates.

Here I will discuss just a few basic rules for graduated painters who intend to make a career out of commissions.

- Be professional. Make the client aware that your hourly rate should be adequate.
- Define the work: Make sure the size of the canvas, paint, the mounting and frame are all costed and defined. In a lot of instances it is appropriate for the client to agree to pay separately for the frame. This does not preclude a caveat by the artist on the type of frame to be used. I find it useful to make this provision at this stage.
- Take a deposit - at least 10%. More if you are including the frame and mention the cost of artist quality paints, particularly if you intend using any seriously expensive colors such as cobalt blue etc.
- Settle on a completion date with + or - variations for unforeseen circumstance. If it is a portrait this time should run concurrently with the sitting times and the sitters availability.
- Agree on the scene/portrait - general colors and style and if a portrait the mood and props. Don't rush this as it is most important. You should value a happy customer for it is from them you will get a plethora of new clients.
- Be careful the client understands that you will exercise your skills to the fullest but not all paintings turn out to the clients perfect satisfaction. In fact the client should be made aware there are certain risks involved that are separate to actual performance.
- If possible get your signature and your clients on a piece of paper!
- And never, ever, take on more commissions than you can handle. Portraits particularly, can become very demanding whereas commissioned landscapes are usually a joy - particularly in summer.
- Be professional.



[GO TO ... decorative paintings](#)

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- FILLING THE GAPS OF HISTORY
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6. Painting Decorative paintings

When everything else fails... So how do you do formula paintings, and what are the formulas that always sell? In the business we call these 'potboilers' and the problem is not in painting them it is disguising them sufficiently so they seem fresh and new, one off originals instead of formula paintings.

There are of course certain things that have universal appeal and I will show you two variations of them in this lesson. Understand however, this universality needs to be tweaked and adapted depending on the country or other demographics, like your target audience. It is a fact, for instance, that folk in the US and Europe will appreciate more colorful paintings than those living in South Africa or Australia who, no doubt due to an abundance of color and light and the absence of winter grays, appreciate that which they don't get to see a lot ... the more subdued hues.

Here is our first example ... a girl frolicking in a surf on a hot summers day and pelican investigates. A universal desire.



The secret of selling this type of painting is to make it decorative. In other words a fashion item as well as the remembrance of some pleasing experience. To do this I have deliberately made it a 'high key' painting. In other words it has mostly light airy colors - though I do make sure the areas of contrast are there and catch the eye.

So the secret here is mostly presentation. A decent frame matched to the painting in a decorative and unassuming manner (that way it will fit most homes). The painting is not designed to stop people in their tracks, but to create an atmosphere wherein folk are comfortable and relaxed.



To produce this type of painting (above) you will need a basic understanding of the elements of waves and reflections and atmosphere, but it is fairly rudimentary and is well addressed in the lessons so far. Then you will need a camera or sketch pad and a few summer days to sit around the beach ... of course that's the tough part!

Another formula that seems to have a universal appeal is the one with wrought iron fences, balustrades etc. and flowers. In my variation it is best if the wrought iron is painted white and the flowers are climbing roses or suchlike. An abundance of vegetation is also helpful. Again summer and high tones are well placed but make sure there are areas of deep contrast that draw the eye. If you add small children and romantic remembrances of childhood then extra appeal can be added and the clientele and focus groups will not doubt appreciate the effort.

And so in this scenario I have utilized in my 'beauty and the beast' work that you see below. I deliberately evoked the summer Mediterranean feel so as to counterpoint the horrible 'beast'. This of course would prevent otherwise good sales, but then again - is fame and fortune worth all that? In the marketplace this is a dollar each way painting. There could be someone out there who might like both elements.

Well, these paintings are but two variations on good and tested formulas that may make you a fortune if you need one. I have maybe ten other tried and successful 'themes'.



Seriously though folks, if you want to paint for fame and fortune, forget it. I have no personal fortune but I am usually welcomed wherever I go and I get countless invitations to address folk, talk and demonstrate my wares. I can never retire, my financial stability relies not on what I saved but what I may be capable of doing tomorrow. Otherwise I am quite happy with the paintings above. I am not raising the bar so you might be dissuaded from even trying some painting formula, rather you MUST do it to learn the basics. I am only warning you against complacency, repetition and false success.

So I no longer paint for the lowest common denominator, though when I was stuck in Brussels, with no money ...



[GO TO ... Advanced lessons](#)

OR ... back to [lesson list](#)

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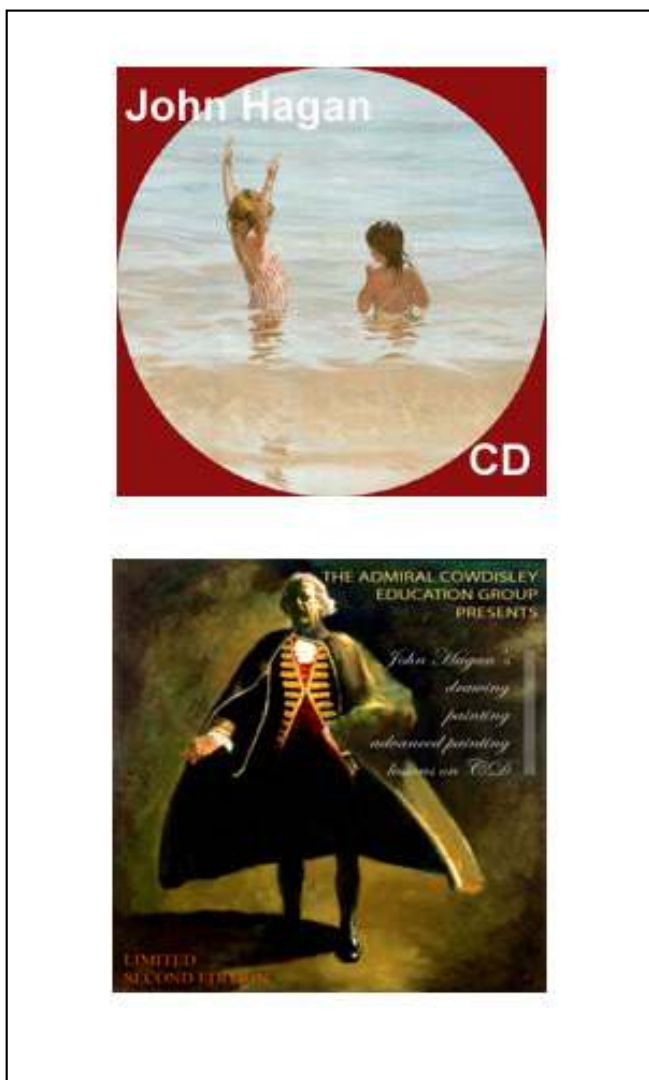
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