

PAINTING: POWERS OF OBSERVATION

KEN KEWLEY — Notes on Color and Composition

*These notes run parallel to my own work; they are a work in progress.
Look for revisions and a part two. — Ken Kewley*

Love of color makes a colorist. This passion gives one an unlimited vocabulary. Color is used to create steps to direct the eye around the painting parallel to the vision of the artist. Along the way, like a songwriter, rhyming words that may or may not rhyme, we invent color relationships to get at the surprising juxtapositions that are found in nature. Color, one of those things that matter in painting, is an abstraction. It would be very hard to consciously compose a thousand colors. It is more easily done with a few.

One color needs to be found to stand in for several colors. Each color needs to be chosen in consideration of the whole. Color does not become itself until the whole work is completed. A painting that in its early stages resembled a poem, as it gets filled in, cluttered with color that changes or dilutes what was there, loses its poetry. If a painting isn't working, often it is not because something is missing but that there is something that is not needed and therefore harmful.

A colorist loves colors as a writer loves words. It is the love that comes through when the mind gets out of the way. Don't think too much. Trust your instincts. We all have the colors needed to make beautiful paintings. I try not to worry about what I do not know, what I have been unable to teach myself. My inabilities serve me better than my abilities. Art is not something that is learnt and then practiced, it is a form of communication and one is always trying to say something clearer. The mind messes up love and it messes up painting.

Start as if putting down the one thing that will finish the work. Put down the one color shape that excites you the most, let that color lead you to your next, when you put down the first it will call to mind another, put that one down. It is the visual equivalent of saying the first word that comes to mind on hearing another. You are relating colors. Comparing colors. Finding relationships that excite you. With each color you are relating everything to the whole, attempting to complete the whole. You are emphasizing what interests you and minimizing others, leaving out altogether what distracts.

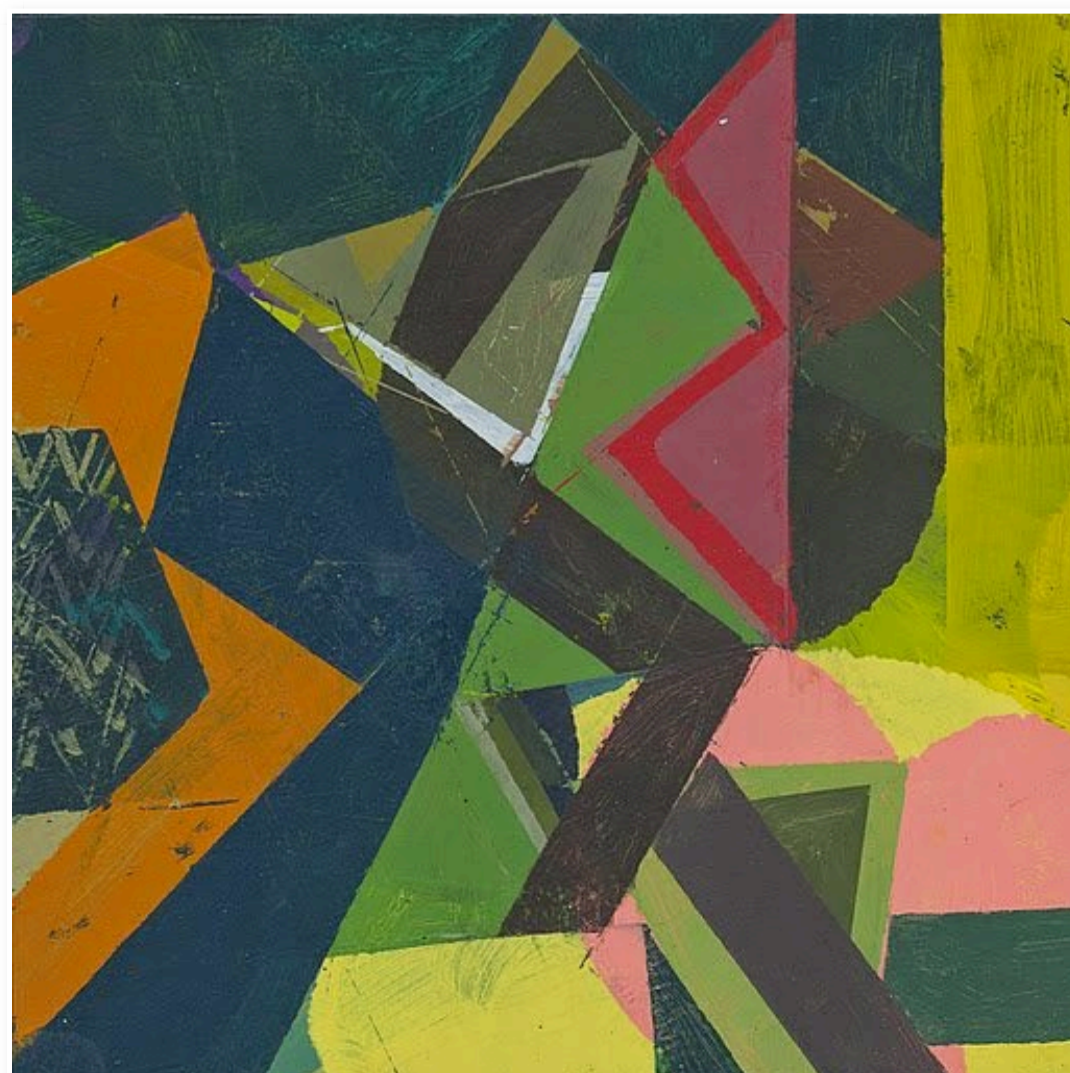
I tend to like paintings where the abstraction is strong. By this I mean that the paint, the colors and shapes, are distinct, like strong actors in a play. Going towards abstraction does not mean going away from representation, from realism. It is more like describing something real by other means than illustration. It is like describing an apple with your hands, forming the shape in the air with your hands, by enclosing an imaginary object with two hands. You do not try to make your hand look like an apple. Paint takes over the role of the hands and does not hide the fact that it is paint. Painting is talking with the hands made permanent.

When color and shapes are emphasized it is the artist that is directing the viewer.

"Look at this and then look at that and see how this relates to that," the artist is saying, "this is what I want you to see."

In painting you never do exactly what you set out to do. Something else happens. Do not make a picture of something. Make something. It is not the something, it is the looking. Painting is looking slowed down.

When painting the model, treat each part (do not name the parts) as something separate and then compose the parts into a whole, into a composition. Use as few shapes as possible, do not think human. You are making a



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▼ [January \(53\)](#)

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[Fluidity in Focus](#)

[INSIDE AND OUT](#)

[My palette: E.M. Saniga](#)

[Palettes: Limited + Expanded — Ilya Gifter](#)

[Cezanne's Doubt](#)

[Stuart Shils on Color and his Palette](#)

[Sangram Majumdar — Color and Paint](#)

[KEN KEWLEY — Notes on Color and Composition](#)

[Painters and Their Palettes](#)

[Painters' Palettes in Photos](#)

[Catherine Murphy Interview](#)

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[Small is Big essay](#)

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painting. Keep the foreignness of the parts and use them to make up the whole. I love the human figure, I do not negate it, but I trust that this love will come through in the process, through my love of painting. Combine love of nature and love of painting.

No color theory. Only love of color. Have all your colors ready at hand. Not a lot, as little as it takes to mix a range of colors that pleases you. When painting the model do not think flesh color. When painting grass do not think green. This will take nothing away from your love of the human body or the landscape.

Painting over previous works promotes the desire to cover quickly what is underneath. It is also a very satisfying surface to work on. Getting rid of old work this way is also freeing. The old peeking through will not distract if the new is strong enough to carry the viewer's attention. What would distract is covered up and what is useful can remain. You unconsciously save what is useful. Again talking with hands, if you are describing an apple and beyond a murder is taking place, this would distract, you would need to add a little violence to your gesture.

As you paint you are always replacing one painting with another.

Painting is building something out of abstract material. A house may be built of wood or brick. The material itself does not resemble a house. The human figure in painting is made up of abstract shapes and colors. Take away the face from many a Corot or Courbet portrait and you would be left with an abstract painting.

Painting is a language. As thoughts are made up of words, the subject of a painting is made up of shapes and colors.

Quick sketches can be just as finished as paintings. A painting worked on a year could be unfinished while another is finished in minutes. Limits make things, otherwise impossible, possible. To revive dead paintings reshape by large actions.

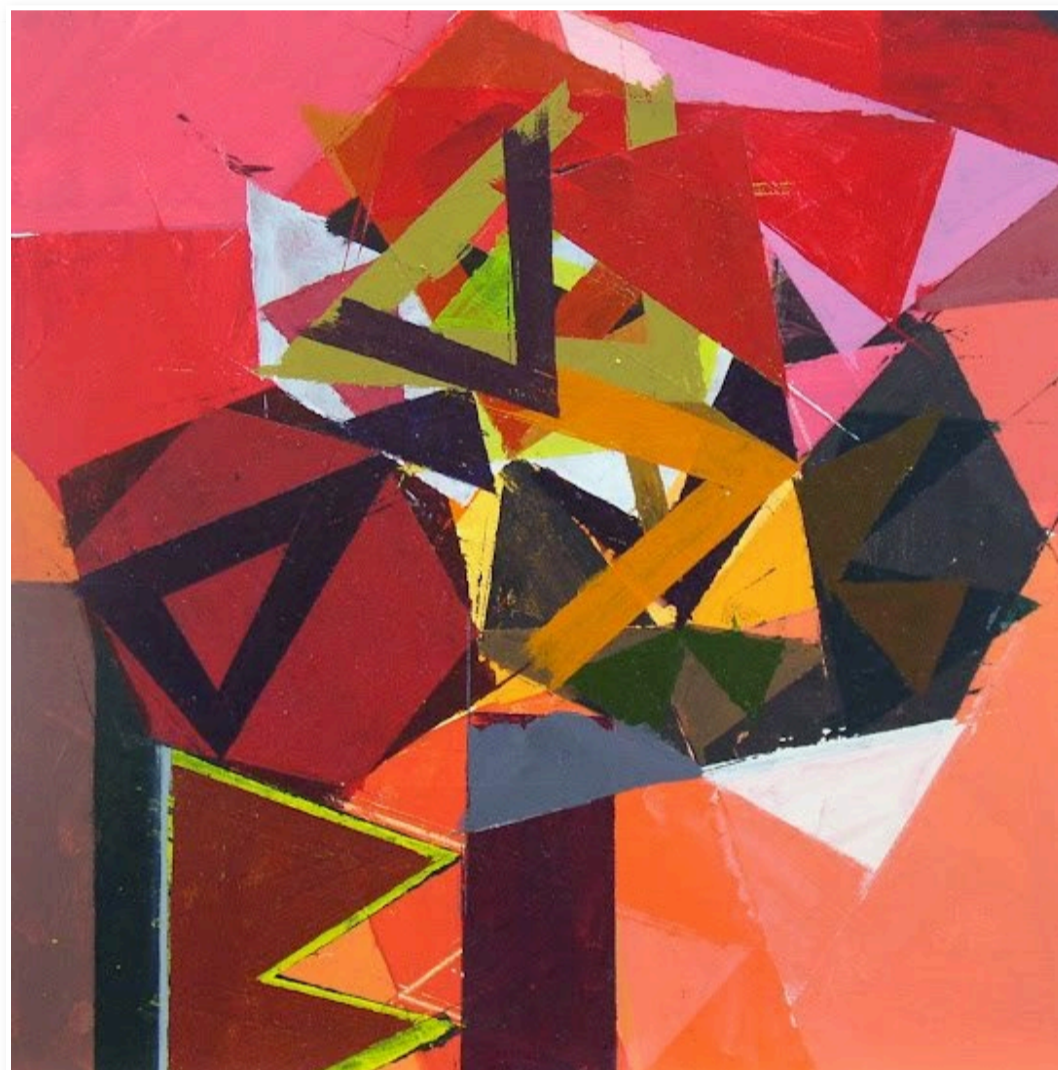
Knowing how to paint may not be good. This is not heart surgery. It is better when things have to be figured out each time. Getting lost is not dangerous in painting.

Paint large areas quickly and unconsciously. Never consciously paint them. Nuance is what happens when the focus is on the whole.

Emphasis is invention. Look to nature and the unconscious mess of the palette for direction.

The need to find shapes is a need to exaggerate and gives freedom to invent.

Compose by values. Colors are more exciting when chosen for their relationship to one another than for imitating the color of nature. Paintings are not finished, they are stopped.



When you stop a painting, draw a quick sketch of it, a few lines, to see ways to simplify the next work. Do not work too hard, but work all the time.

We make sense of our surroundings by ordering in the mind, by painting a picture in our mind. Painting is therefore very natural. Good painting is natural. Bad painting is unnatural and must be learnt.

When working from life you take a fragment of the world then attempt to make it whole by making sense of the loose ends left when it was torn from the world.

If you cannot find the right color, find an equivalent, colors that have a similar relationship. Colors and values need to be kept in reserve for where they are needed. Be aware of the lightest and darkest part of a painting. Black and white can be used as extremes. Pure color can also be used as extremes. As forces. Try working in near darkness to see the extremes, to see the simple masses. Look at your work in subdued light to check contrast.

Some colors must play larger roles just as some actors play larger roles in the theatre. Keep these colors for those roles. A too similar color elsewhere may confuse like a supporting actor who looks too much like the leading actor.

Choose colors instinctively and they will be the right colors. Relax and any discord will show itself. While working on a collage, when searching for the right color from a box of hundreds of painted colors pieces I find if I relax, stop thinking, the right color comes into focus. When colors relate, drawing is taking place. Painting runs parallel to music with discords and concordances and chords.

Spend time painting paper for use in collage. Without rinsing brush, mix colors, towards and away from pure colors and from light to dark and back and forth.

Make abstract drawings, paintings and collages. Without subject matter one can concentrate on finding a composition. One does not need to fear chaos or losing one's way in art, there is always a way out and often

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ways that one would never have found without having been lost.

In drawing from the model, with each pose try having the model only move slightly, as if one continuous motion is broken up into parts, something a kin to animation. A model who moves a little is not a bad thing. It means the model is alive and that in itself is exciting. Also one should always be reconsidering the whole and willing to redraw the whole.

Translating a painting into a collage calls for new rules; a divergence from the original by having to limit colors, shapes, and details.

There is sometimes a place for straight out of the tube colors. At other times they are a bit like a naked person in public. One sometimes needs to dress properly to fit in. Sometimes the one object or color in the motif that attracts is the one thing that distracts from the whole. In this case, if it is going to be saved, a support needs to be built to anchor the color within the whole.

The inconvenient truth of the motif. Things that prove hard to compose within your field of vision. Do not spend too much of your painting life trying to make room for things better gotten rid of.

The painting is the result of the process of painting. Do not anticipate this. Give up control to let things happen in painting. It is true that pigments when mixed act differently than rays of light, but let us agree that yellow and blue makes something that resembles green. The same goes for yellow and red making orange and red and blue making purple. The truth is that it doesn't matter what color they make but only that you are aware of what colors they tend to make. Be aware of how little it takes to change a color. Start with a very little dab of the color to be added in and then only use a fraction of that to begin with.

When painting from life, before you use any color for a particular object, compare the color of the object to any similarly colored object in the motif. Ask yourself which is more intense, lighter or darker, etc. Reserve the most intense, darkest or lightest, to where they are really needed. Think about the relative difference between colors. Most colors are without names. Most colors are adjusted and fine tuned to fit into the composition. The secret to painting needs to be discovered everyday. Secrets only work for a little while. Through work new ones are found. Having painted awhile there is more to unlearn than to learn.



Colors can be grouped together in different ways. By value, intensity, temperature, and by name. Some colors are warm and some are cool. Colors like yellow, orange and red associated with fire are considered warm and colors like green, blue and purple associated with water are considered cool. I do not spend much time thinking about this, especially trying to decide if they are advancing or going back into space. Just be aware of the relative difference. A bigger jump can be made between colors if a warm is opposed to a cool. Paint instinctively, not by rules. Adjust each color to best play their role. Group colors into larger masses that work with and against other masses. A group of similar darks opposed to a group of close value lights. There can be lights within the dark masses and darks within the light masses. These masses must form shapes that play their parts in making up a composition. Leading roles and supporting roles as in a play, a balance of unbalanced elements, controlled chaos.

Look at your palette after a bout of painting. There will be colors next to colors that you would never have consciously placed next to each other, but this is what happens in nature. The unconscious is closer to nature. It is what makes nature so visually exciting. Our viewpoint is always shifting and creating thrilling juxtapositions.

Instinctively adjust color. Make a color stronger by removing a color elsewhere. Become aware of a color when a similar color is added elsewhere. Instinctively you will know when this requires removing one of the colors.

From the beginning relate colors to find order within disorder. Push colors toward an unpleasant result to test extremes and to find ways to contain them within the whole. A composition of unpleasant, even jarring, color relationships can be very exciting.

You speak. Some will listen, others will not. You cannot choose who will and who will not. Do not concern yourself, do not adjust to please. Let those you please find you. Good things come when one no longer cares about pleasing anyone else.

The observable world and painting are two separate things. Your love of the visual world naturally comes through in your work. If you try too hard it will show up in the work as an unpleasant element. I do not like to see artists suffering. Do not let your work show. It only looks like work when it calls attention to itself, when it does not work as part of the whole.

The most uninteresting life is made up of amazing details, amazing subtleties.

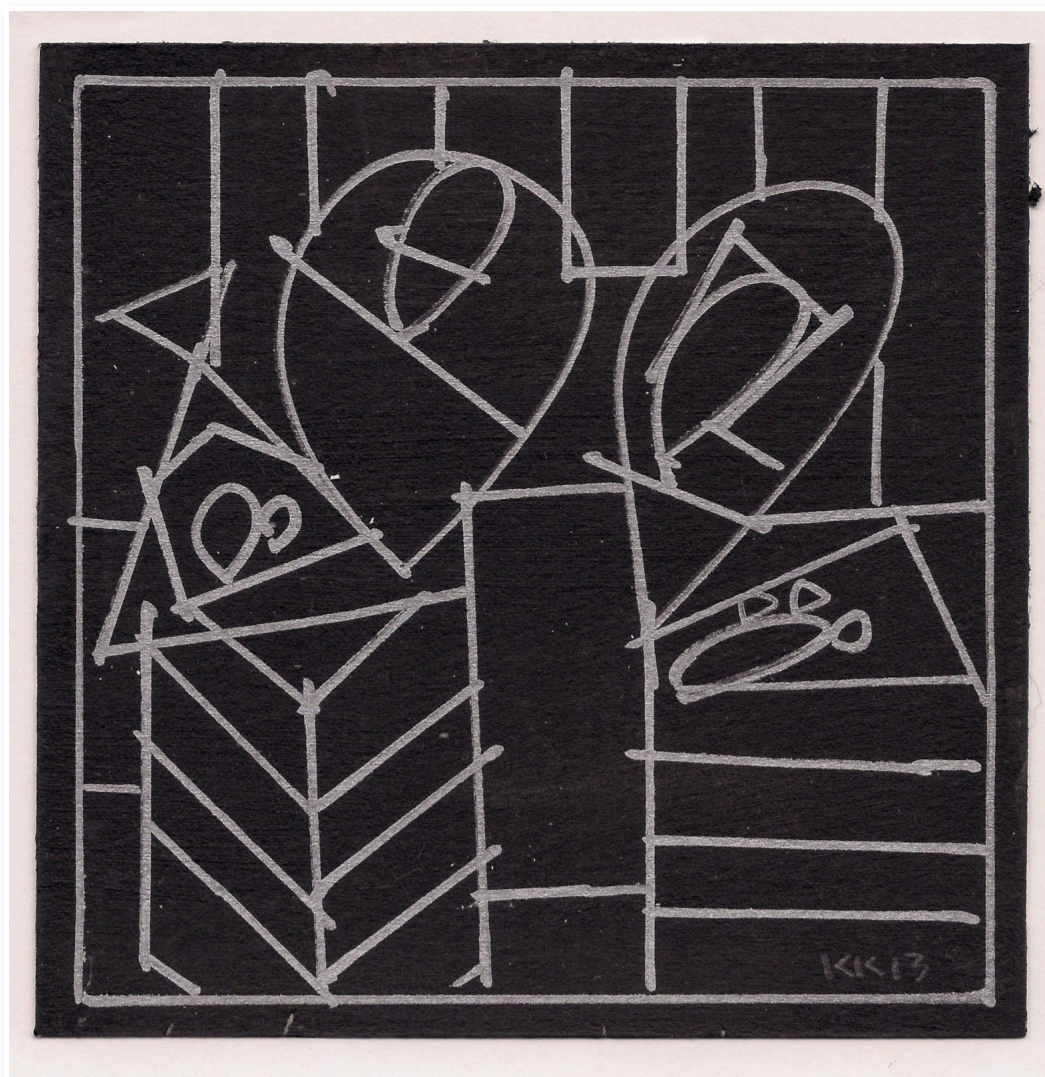
Give up the desire to be there when it happens. Do not think about it that much. Get away from the self. What is created is the real thing. The rest is the world. What is a picture of the world? Nothing. The closer one tries for correctness usually the further one moves away from it. Three elements in the right relationship get much closer to feeling real. When enough is enough do not do more. What makes a figure painting real is not correct anatomy. It is a few things relating.

If you have a circle in your mind you will not make a square. If you try to draw the perfect circle you fail and the result is your own circle.

Many things are invented when one tries to repeat the past and fails.

The same lessons need to be learnt over and over. Describe forms by drawing enclosing lines at the same time. Do not spend too much time on one side of a form. It is hard to describe something with one hand.

Describe form with at least two colors in painting. It is placing forms in space by defining limits. A third color to describe the journey between these. Every color needs to correspond to another to build form.



The live model is capable of an infinite number of abstract forms that do not read quickly as human. Setting up a still life is like sculpting. Colors and forms are forces. Painting is using these forces. Illustration is relying on descriptive details.

Painting can surpass nature by the nature of composing into a visual poetry. Think music; composed sounds.

My daughter's elementary school art room has a wall of windows. From the projects they do in this room there is nothing that shows that they ever look out the window. The art teacher according to what I hear from my daughter has never said, "Look out the window and draw." What they do are projects. Project implies an already known result. It is something like a safety net. It removes some of the excitement or the chance of what the teacher might think is failure, but this is not a trapeze. The freedom to look and draw does not put the child in danger. Looking and drawing does not kill creativity, teachers do. It begins with the first word spoken in reaction to the child's work. What if the teacher, or parent, responded by drawing? Painting is a language that is easier learnt when young. Artists dealing with ideas (conceptual artists) who use paint to illustrate ideas (jokes) are illustrators more than painters. Using paint does not make one a painter. Paint can do so much more. The life of a painter is a life of exploring.

Get back to the joy of painting and trust that all you need to know is within you.

Look at no color without looking at another. Every color needs to relate to every other color. Keep in the mind the colors most nameable. Keep the number of these small; yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, green, white and black. Be aware of going towards or away from these. OK, one minute color theory; draw a circle and evenly place those colors around the circle, often called a wheel. On my color wheel, white goes between green and yellow, black between red and purple. Colors on the opposite side of the circle are opposite colors; yellow and purple, orange and blue, red and green, white and black. To quickly get away from a color mix it with the opposite color. Think value more than color, light to dark. Yellow being light. Purple dark. Think in this wide range. Travel between these two extremes. Instead of always cleaning the brush transform whatever is on the brush towards a nameable color by adding that color or the color that when mixed brings one closer to that color or away from that color by mixing that color's opposite. At the same time be aware if you are going darker or lighter. To go lighter and keep the color add white, to go lighter while changing colors add whichever color is lighter and takes you closer to the desired color. To make a bigger jump between colors, as you go lighter or darker mix in a color that goes away from the adjacent nameable color. Keep away from just adding white or black to make more surprising color. Do not think too much. With some basic colors you can get an unlimited amount of exciting



colors when they are mixed and juxtaposed. Do not try to match exactly the colors of nature. This takes your eye off the larger picture.

Paint instinctively. Stop at the thought of stopping.

Use a straight edge to make an unconscious line appear conscious. Nature is beautiful because it is not self-conscious. The beauty of things comes greatly from never having become accustomed to that thing, that relationship. It is what keeps things always fresh, always surprising, it is that the mind has never been able to completely name the thing.

Painting is very simple. Anyone can fill an area with paint but to relate everything in a complex journey without resulting in chaos takes a lifetime to master.

Paint itself is beautiful. It is a wonder how someone can make something ugly with it.

It is amazing how unpleasant paint can become, just as some sound can be painful. This is again usually the result of too much conscious thinking.

Overlapping is a large tool. Overlapping colors hold down other colors. They become steps, little and big, into and out of space.

Consider everything equally then use them unequally. Bring up the shapes in the background and deal with them. Make them strong, distinct shapes. These will support other shapes clustered together to form the main subject.

Observe nature well and at the same time push the colors and shapes to emphasize what you love about the things you are painting. Push the abstraction to the point where you will lose something of the naturalness but will gain control over every part and where it will then be possible to adjust things further. Leave out the details for a time. The danger of details are that they can be use to tie everything together and to finish the painting too quickly. In the beginning try to limit the number of shapes you are working with. At this stage you are making an abstract painting using the elements in front of you. Working from life the idea is to go towards a stronger abstraction without going away from reality. The more exciting the abstraction the more exciting the painting and it then follows that the whole will be closer to the excitement of reality. The important part is translating the painting into a pure painting language, into an abstraction, strengthening that abstraction, without losing touch with the observable world.



When painting from life strengthen your sense of the abstraction to be better equipped not to be overwhelmed by the subject.

When painting abstractly try to come across forms and colors naturally, instinctively put down one color next to another, as if you were discovering them by walking through a landscape looking for a subject to paint. By the time you find something you would like to paint, you have already painted it, and having done these abstract paintings you're more likely to find these things in the landscape.

Remember everything in the work plays a part. Unlike a play the lights cannot be adjusted from moment to moment.

Unlike literature things do not unfold. Everything can be viewed at once but the artist can guide the viewer by emphasis, relating shapes and by making steps that direct the eye this way and that. Every part needs to be abstracted in order for it to be adjustable. Everything strong and then placed under control. Try something other than muting. While speaking you

would not say clearly what you want to say and mumble the rest. Remove from the work what is not important.



In an abstract work there is a better chance that each color shape is fully considered. Some shapes will combine to make a larger, more dominant, more complex shape. In a figurative work an abstract shape may be taken in by the eye before the subject is recognized. It might be an important part of the subject but likely not the entire subject.

The subject cannot be separated entirely from the whole. This abstract shape must be interesting in itself. In a

figurative work if that prominent shape is not interesting abstractly that is a problem. A prominent shape might make up a part of the model's clothing and start the journey to explore the other forms that make up the model with all this anchored by the shapes that make up the space around the model.

Take a painting done from life and do a collage after it. While doing this make several quick drawings of the painting. Let these be like quick notes. A few lines, just enough where if you were drawing from several different paintings you would be able to tell which drawing is of which painting but no more than that. The blank canvas is one shape with four edges. The first mark transforms this shape and makes things more complex. In collage you are cutting the forms that make up the edges of the work and therefore you are more likely to be aware of them.

Attraction to a subject needs to be of the entire space that holds the subject, not just the subject. It cannot be one object. Just as one must treat the painting as a whole one needs to be attracted to the whole. Make sure there is a painting there. Sometimes there is no painting there. The relationships together will determine the skin of the work, its overall color/light/atmosphere. The artist may not be aware of this until afterwards and when seeing the work again after some time has passed and viewing it in a different environment and in a different light. It is very hard for the artist to judge the work with a wet brush in hand and a remembrance of all the stages the work has gone through. The painting must be seen away from where it was made. The teacher coming upon the student's work still before the motif can only wonder how the student saw what he painted. Away from the motif the artist should never defend the painting by saying, that was the way it was. If it was that way and it is not working then it should have been reinvented.

When working on paper with acrylic or collage, to get some distance from what you have done, take a piece of mat board larger than your work and place the work on it, cover with a piece of Plexiglas, framing your work. This helps to get past the remembrance of the process to see the results.

Pick three spots where a plane of color moves through the painting. Take for example a wall behind and between objects on a table. Let us say that the wall turns. Pick out one spot on the wall and compare it to a second spot, some distance from the first, on the same wall, two spots on the same plane and then a third spot on the wall that has turned, which is a different plane.

The first two spots will likely be in a closer range and the third spot where the wall has turned will be more of a jump in value. This will depend greatly on the lighting. If the painting demands it you will need to adjust the lights or invent what is necessary to create the turn. In painting a house or any cube shape, the light needs to strike one side more than the other or you will not have the illusion of going around the corner but instead the form will be flattened out. You cannot make something out of nothing and you cannot just go out and copy the landscape. Perception and invention must work together. On the radio I heard Stephen Sondheim talking about his lyrics and was surprised that he uses a rhyming dictionary, but then it makes sense, like the artist who has things before him to choose from to use to construct his invention.

Painting is like I am locked out and I am trying every door, looking through windows, trying to find a way in.

I could not have figured out yesterday what is clear today. What I do today is not what I would have done yesterday because I had not figured it out yet. Slowness has its rewards. Slow looking, working quickly, day after day.

Look at paintings that give permission to go where you are cautious.

There are many abstract painters who claim that their work is derived from life and many figurative painters who claim to be abstract. Of course they are both right.

To sit among the frescoes of Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena and paint abstractly is not a contradiction.

Painting as a Language (More Notes).

Just as all languages are made up of basic building blocks, painting language is made up of abstract elements such as color and form. If there is a lettered sign depicted in a painting it is the abstract shapes and colors of that sign that must communicate and not the words themselves. It is the structuring of lines and shapes along with color, form and texture that adds up to meaning, and not a collection of descriptive details, such as in illustration. We break down what we see in nature into these abstract elements and use them to build form and to compose this into a unity that makes up a painting.

Stay away from mimicking the landscape, instead break down the landscape into elements that can be adjusted like words in a poem or notes in music into something greater than the mere depiction of visual facts. Use abstraction in the service of representation and representation in the service of abstraction. This language is used to explore the full potential of the art of painting.

The final goal is to use this deeper understanding of the language of painting to retain all the excitement that one gets from nature, and that is so often lost in the process of trying to put down everything one sees.

A straight edge is also a line. The rectangular paper or canvas has four 90 degree angles and two sets of parallel lines as borders. A perfectly vertical line within this would be parallel to the edges right and left and a perfectly horizontal line would be parallel to the edges above and below. A balance is retained with these lines. When a line deviates from either of these there is an unbalance that needs to be held by other lines. As more lines are added at some point it moves beyond what the mind can take in and it can only be gotten at by instinct. Here we move into the realm of art. Art is breaking down the world into abstract elements and then adjusting these until the mind recognizes something, but cannot name it, and can only communicate it to another mind by showing it this thing called art.

When even very similar shapes are applied one after another the inevitable overlapping will result in surprising

shapes and newly mixed colors applied instinctively will make for surprising juxtapositions of color as in nature itself. It is due to the infinite ways that nature juxtaposes itself, that makes the world so surprising and thrilling to the mind; that is, the mind that does not explain away every new thing. This must be retained in the work of art, that something, beyond what the mind can comprehend. Instinct alone can do this. When the conscious and the unconscious work together.

The painting does not and cannot fall from the mind onto the canvas. It involves instinctive adjusting of abstract elements, no matter if the outcome is an abstract or figurative work.

It is best when color and form are thought of as one. The beginning painter might draw and then color in. With collage, one cuts into the color directly, color and shape comes into existent simultaneously.

In describing a house with your hands one does not paint windows on the back of the hands or one does not worry about the fingers, how they are separate and create lines where they meet or about wrinkles or spots. None of these things distracts because the bigger form, in this case the hand, is strong enough and clear enough. Planes of color just like the hands can describe form by placing them in relationship to each other in space.



Moving through a painting in process is like dancing, instinctively reacting to the music and to the previous movements. You are creating rhythms that move through the work.

The landscape is the dictionary, not the poem. You would not copy out a text and expect something else. In painting an abstract painting, in not referring to your surroundings, you decide what and what not to put down, the choice is yours. Without the excitement derived from the model, still life or landscape how can you stay excited? The excitement must come from what you put down. This excitement may come and go. It begins with one mark followed by another. Maybe it will feel random at first, without direction, even uninspired. This is all right. When you take a car trip you begin by pulling out of your driveway and heading down familiar streets. It is when you leave your neighborhood and your town behind that you feel like your trip has begun.

It is when you start to see new vistas and the unexpected, when you lose your way, that it becomes something other than a trip to the store.

The paint must retain its force, it cannot completely morph into the thing painted. Naked people can disappear within an artistic pose. You do not want paint to disappear. If you are describing something with your hands you do not want them fading or blurring or blending.

There has to be a painting there. Do not spend your painting life painting polar bears in a snow storm unless you are in love.

The reason for Cezanne's distortions was because he was composing.

Setting up a still life is working abstractly. You are not likely concerned with making it look real, it is real, but more likely in putting colors and shapes together that excite you. The same as when positioning the model in a room or deciding where to stand in the landscape.

Treat transient things like shadows and dappled sunlight as solid things. As real as anything else. Find a shape for these things that will relate to all the other shapes in the painting.

When possible, treat details as patterns. A sandy beach could be represented as polka dots. A trellis, as a diamond pattern.

I was never quite sure how to represent a picket fence. Do I paint the individual planks and the landscape between or do I make it one solid plane of color? Now I ask myself, what does the painting need, stripes or no stripes?

Find adjacent objects with details that share a characteristic but a very different order. Emphasize the similarity and the difference at the same time. A landscape example could be grass and a wheel with spokes. Paint the grass and the spokes both with short straight lines, the grass irregularly, the tire evenly spaced around the hub. The color of the grass slightly different in color and value. Because they are both made up of the same short lines and because of the closeness in color and value they are related but because of the placement of the lines along with the slight different in color and value they remain grass and wheel.

There must be a variation in shapes and colors and a balance between geometric and/or organic shapes, something beyond pattern, no matter how beautiful, to make a picture. A balance that cannot immediately be explained but just the same is satisfying. A massing of unlike shapes that fit together into a larger shape, that separates itself from the surroundings but not enough to make itself unrelated to the rest. The rest has to be necessary. An object in itself is not enough, it must need its surroundings.

Use similar shapes that represent very different things. Like words that rhyme but have very different meanings.

The same with colors.

Exaggerate one relationship and downplay others. As in storytelling.

Do not look to see where the painting is going. As in golf if you lift your head while swinging to see where the ball is going you top the ball and it rolls a couple of feet.

After a while the straightedged strips used to make my paintings resemble beautiful landscapes. They are

landscapes done without any thought of making a landscape. Why is it necessary to make paintings so consciously?

Temporarily adding collage to the surface while painting makes it possible to adjust a fixed shape and to easily see what it looks like in different positions.

What if you were packing a suitcase and each thing you put in had to stay exactly where it was first placed? In painting everything needs to be moveable. Keeping things simple makes it easier to move things and if there are details and those details have been reduced to patterns then it should not be difficult to move the pattern elsewhere.

In a black and white line drawing the lines divide the paper into larger and smaller shapes, creating different degrees of light. In optics, colors are created with changes in degrees of light. In this way a sense of color is created in a black and white drawing.

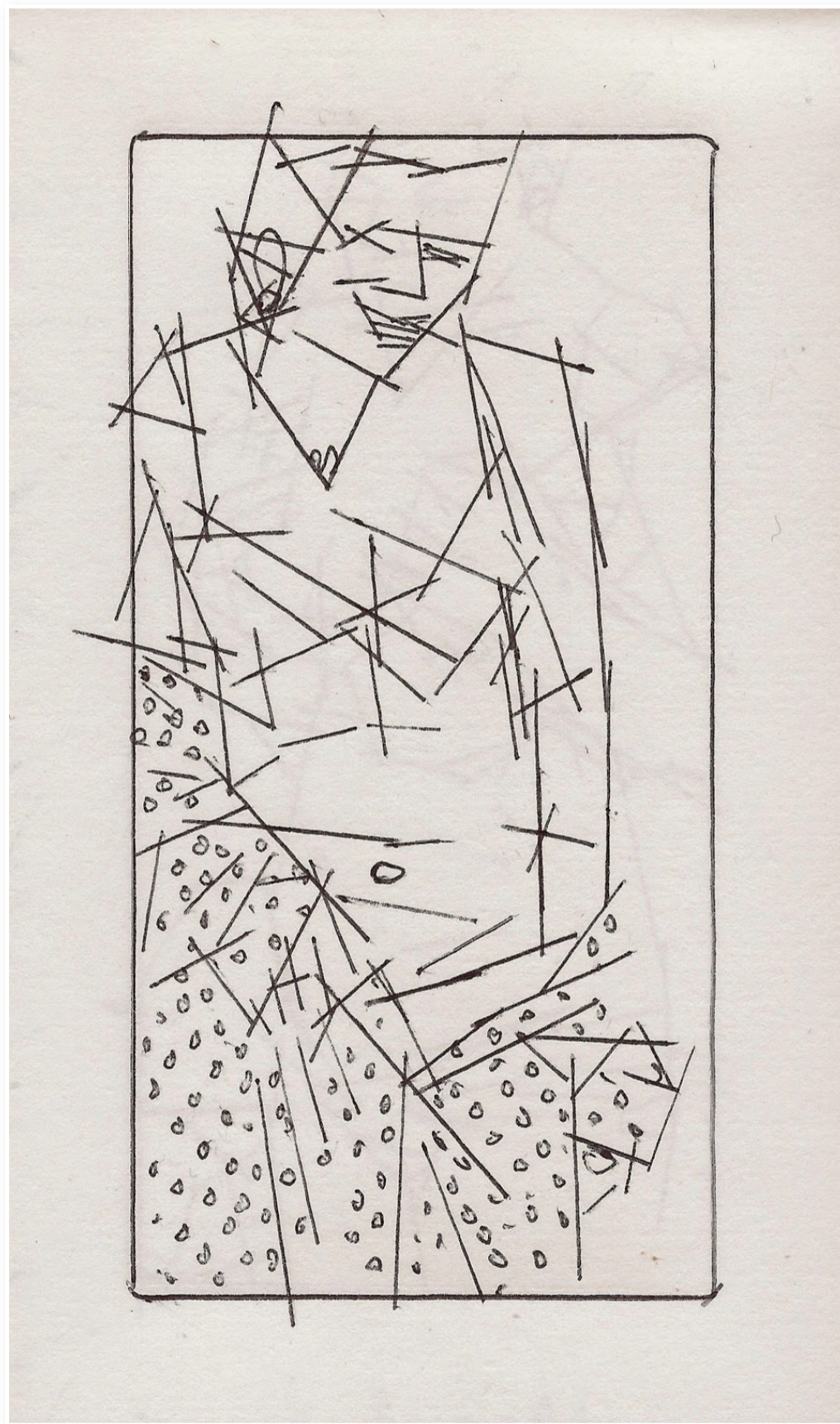
In using the same brush there will be residue of paint that will mix and alter the colors in unplanned ways.

When painting from life do not be afraid to expand or enlarge any shape to replace a less interesting one.

Think, it does not matter what is there, it is up to me. There is a tree in front of a house. From where you are standing it is just to the right of the house. If you were to move your easel to the right, the tree would be in front of the house, a little further and the tree would be to the left of the house. So what is real? Did the house move? Did the tree move? A sculptor would be a painter if he didn't move. Cubism allowed the painter to move around the object. To take several views and put them together into a composition. Do not make static paintings, that requires the viewer to stand where you stood. We are not making paintings for the church.

Look at the model as a sculptor would. From different directions and combine the views. The painter has that range to invent. He can be more like the sculptor who can walk around his model, more likely to see space and then create space in the work. If the above, the tree and the house, were photographed, in the succession of positions, and then were traced, there would be many possible shapes to choose from in making the composition. Pick the one that excites the most.

Things need to be broken down into elements that can be adjusted (compose) to avoid literal depiction that lack music (that swing). Music Before Words. Composition before representation. It is easier.



Confidence and determination. Forcefulness, unquestioning, using knowledge without searching for more, not conscious of needing more, complete, whole, the opposite of tentative, not saving anything, not holding anything back to be done later, when perhaps you think you might have the answers. A belief that you are right. Not being sure of how to paint something but forcing it to become that thing through pure will, pure determination.

Abstract and representation. Reality is more abstract than representational. The lazy mind is quick to put on a representational face onto this. Rendering is used to this means. This moves things away from reality. Composing the abstraction by other means than rendering retains the excitement of reality.

If you are painting with the subject in front of you, placing point by point, color shapes that correspond to nature, it will depend greatly on the composition of the subject, what kind of composition ends up on the canvas. The likelihood of a great composition is equal to the likelihood of coming across a bird singing Bach.

As in the school essay, one compares and contrasts. In working from life the mind categorizes the visual elements into light and dark, straight and curved, open and closed, big and small, rough and smooth, bright and dull, colors with names and their close and distant relations. There is excitement when things are trying to pull away from each other but are held together by forces among the elements. Unlike things pull away and similar things come together. Within the unlike things there are similar rhyming qualities and within the similar things,

things that contrast. Compare and contrast.

A person is made up of parts, some large, some small, different degrees of detail, a variety of textures and values and colors, and a variety of angles, planes that catch the light differently. There is an assumption of certain characteristics. On the other hand inhuman objects can appear to be human.

It has to do with how we relate, how the shapes that make us up relate to the shapes in the work. Does it feel like us, can we pick these things up, can we walk into it? By the same laws inhuman things can appear to be a figure, by themselves or in combinations with other things and seen from certain angles and from certain distances. Sometime a stick figure is enough to get across humanness. A tire mark on a curb can look like a bird. As a night watchman, making my rounds in the tunnels of the Met, there was a scud mark made by a cart hitting the wall that looked like an ancient cave drawing of a figure that excited me as much as any of the masterpieces above.

Braque and the kitchen sink theory. Dishes, milk left, a few Cheerios, carrot peelings, empty food container, drain, colored sponges, paper towels, all things piled in at random throughout the day with the edge of the sink as frame. A layering as in the landscape of unlike things held together by similar circumstances.

Work small to do more work. What it takes to do a large work is contained in that small work. Like a seed.

Projects are things like glueing pasta to a can and spray painting it gold. Avoid these things.

Represent an oval or circle in nature with one drawn quickly and freely, thinking oval, but without trying to follow nature exactly. Draw with the confidence that if you are thinking oval you will not draw a square. Confident shapes and lines lead to other confident lines. It is easier to react to something concrete. A concrete oval is like a stone that can be sculpted using straight lines.

The 360 degree drawing. Go outside and stand in one spot. Turn till you find an interesting subject. Sit and draw. Do another drawing beginning where the first stopped on the left or right side of the page. Then another taking up where the last one was cut off. You will find subjects that you would have overlooked.

Go back to your first motif. Taking that as your subject move your chair five feet to the right and draw. Then go ten feet back the way you had moved and draw the same cluster of things. It will be a different motif. The same objects making different shapes.

The 360 degree circle around the motif. Same as above but keep going around, drawing, observing like a sculptor would.

Take elements of the resulting drawings and combine into one composition. The cubist did this. They looked at the cube from both sides and drew both in the same painting or drawing.

Drawing transparent objects. When one sits and looks at two or more overlapping trees it is difficult because of the transparency of trees to tell where the edge of one stops and the next begin. By shifting your gaze right and left you change the relationship of the trees and edges or outlines that were not easily visible become clear.

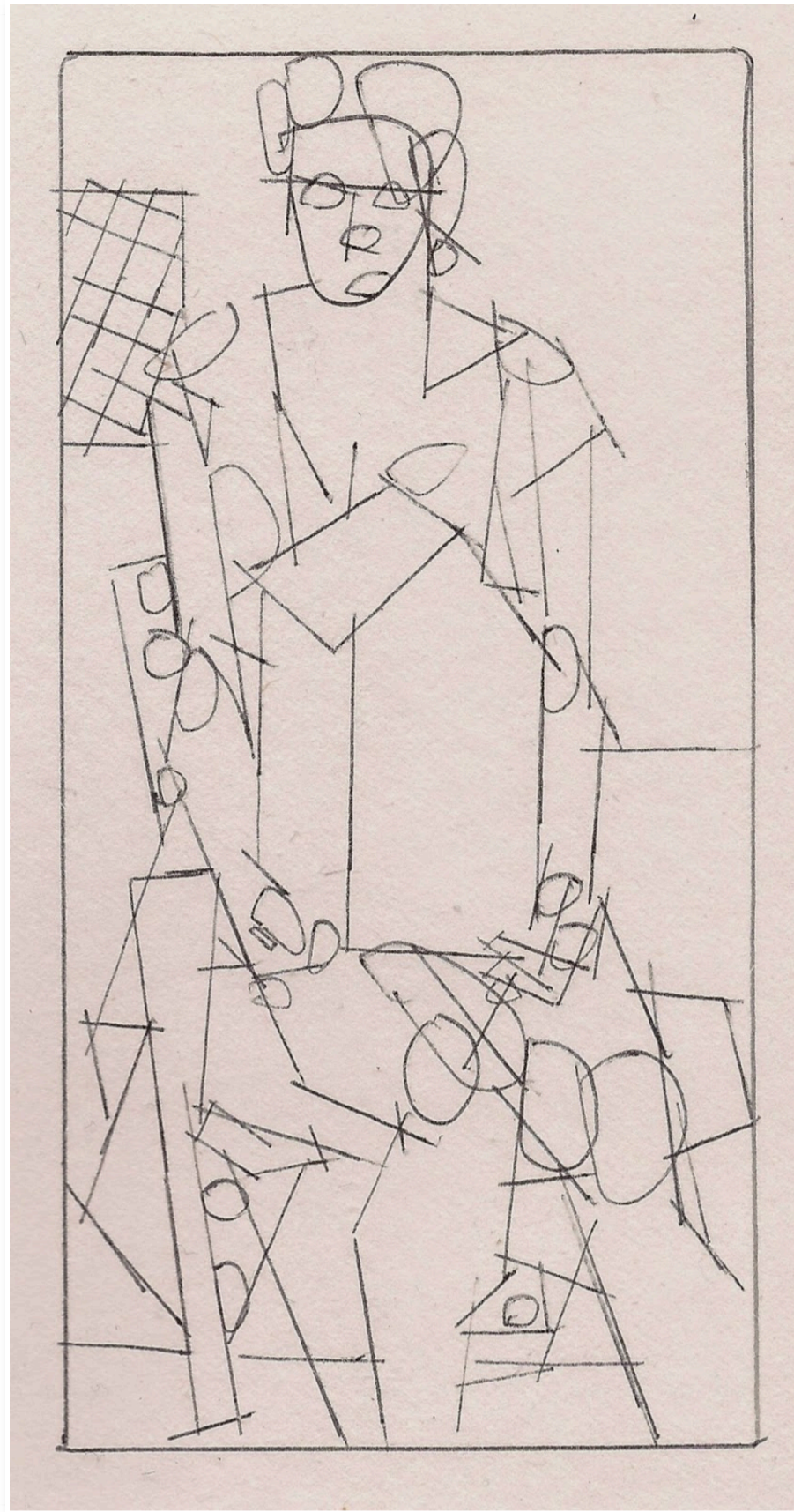
From the start, in front of the subject, find large shapes. Within these large shapes find smaller shapes. Now find shapes next to, or nearby, your large shapes that will together with your first large shapes make even larger shapes. Some of these shapes may when combined with smaller shapes within the original large shape become distinct shapes. So you may have a shape that may be partly in the prominent shape and partly in the supporting shape. This may itself become the prominent shape. There is often one prominent shape in the composition that the eye goes to first and then travels on from there. If you are painting a house and a tree you do not want somebody coming up to the painting and immediately seeing a house and a tree. You want to find a shape in the house, but not the whole house, and a shape in the tree, but not the whole tree, that together forms a larger more complex shape that the viewer sees first, before they see the house and tree. After that, more slowly, they will see, oh yes, this shape within the larger shape is part of a house and this is part of a tree. You are making the viewer read the painting, slowing down their looking.

Do not worry about correct anatomy. Proportions of the painting instead of the model. Find the shapes that connects the model and the room. Find the real through abstraction. Find the real through the artificial. The art in the artificial.

Discover the subject while painting. Invent before nature. Abstracted from life. Extracted from Life.

Translation of the painted mark into something akin to the musical note. These notes will stand for points in space, forces, that will not represent any part of the objects, be it model or chair, but the relationship of the two in relationship to all else. Separate, divorce from the body, painted notes, building blocks that will be used to build form. Far removed from rendering. To advance this separation construct a three dimensional assemblage or maquette from cardboard to work from to sever any lingering temptation to copy directly.

Model making. A small maquette of corrugated cardboard and masking tape painted with acrylic paint can be used to make small stage sets and figures after the model. Draw, collage and paint from these to get away from our conditioned image of reality. Closer to a poetic or painterly sense of things. As a way to make that jump to a tactile space or stage space. An artificial space that is no less real. To get at something real. Just as an interior or a landscape can be presented in the theater through sets that do not need to be reality create something parallel to evoke a sense of the real. Possibly closer to our individual notions of reality.



Work from the middle out with darks and lights like a sculptor's tool.

Work can benefit from a little loss of control. Delaying order.

Do not draw the features of the face too early. This tends to finish things while more adjusting could make a more exciting composition. Work parallel to nature, grow the work slowly, do not rush to the finish. This way at any stage the work is complete. Emphasizing something other than details. A rhythm within the work.

In art there is a balance. If in going towards the representational if one loses control over the abstraction, by rendering, one goes away from reality (reality as I know it) towards illustration which separates it from life and becomes a cheap reflection of the real thing. While art retains the unity of the world. There is reality and there is art. Art is an ordering of and a separating from life.

Matisse and the marble table: He would compare everything in the painting back to the color of the table. Similar to the plumb line; a medium to go away from and back towards.

Keep in your mind an idea of each color; green, blue, yellow, red, orange, purple, white or black. Color is always moving towards or away from a named color and heading towards another. Grays move towards or away from a color or if remaining neutral towards black or white.



At the same time keep in the mind the horizontal and the vertical. Also the square, the triangle, the circle. These are basic shapes, colors, directional lines that one knows, the mind senses, and senses when there is a deviation from them. Use these to compare. Staying in this zone of what is similar and what is different, and to what extent, prevents one from going off tract. When determining the right colors to represent two spots concern yourself less with the exact local color, instead find two colors that represents the difference between them. One lighter one darker. Brighter or duller. Warmer or cooler.

Compare abstractly one foot to the other foot, one hand to the other. Find the difference. Paint the difference.

Relate small forms back to large forms. Attract attention; what is taken in first, last, and in between.

Do not simply attach a form to a previous form. Instead relate it always to the whole, where it feels right within the four edges of the rectangle. Not guessing but trusting your instinct.

Take a painting and apply collage, paper painted with a color brighter, more intense than you think natural, like a spotlight in the theatre. You are highlighting your interest. Where you want the viewer to look. It is not a natural light, but more a theatrical light, an artificial light which is what art is.

In landscape painting try obscuring the horizon so not to fix the viewers position. A certain ambiguity. Things become abstract and the composition more interesting. Do the same with the still life by obscuring the tabletop.

Paint as if stuffing a pillow case with an ill shaped pillow. It may not look pretty but it fits.

Composing is exactly the same in writing, music and painting.

Avoid the surface of the thing being painted in order not to be distracted from the whole. Avoid following the form too closely as in rendering. Detaching paint (color) and the object (form) from the model to compose.

Marks should not be used to represent the object but instead as forces, almost as foreign objects, like hands used when talking, in describing but not attempting to mimic an object. Marks need to stand alone. Isolated and autonomous. Like beautiful words. Like beautiful, clear notes in music. To create steps, jumps, intervals between themselves. The need to jump from stone to stone to cross a river is more thrilling.

Far from illustration, closer to reality.

Separate the mark making from the body or object, away from coloring surfaces, filling in form. Back to talking with the hands. Keep the paint foreign to the thing being painted. Opposite of rendering. Paint becomes building blocks to construct form. Paint and flesh separated. Do not use a color called flesh.

Again, we are not painting things but the differences between things.

Find a shape, it could be an object or space (no such thing as negative space) between things. Find the difference between things and in between things.

The space between. Space meaning the difference.

One object being 3 and another 7, I paint 4. 3 being obscured by 4 and 4 being obscured by 7 and 7 being obscured by a number that describes the space between myself and 7 and at the same time all perfectly visible. Hidden but what is not hidden becomes a whole and represents some other part of the hidden. Abstraction that reveals the combination of objects, space and the limits of the edges.

The edge of one thing is also the edge of another thing.

With cardboard construct notes in three dimensions and translate them back into paint (in two dimensions).

Painting from a cardboard model that was painted with the same paint one is using to paint from it gives confidence in the ability to mix those colors.

Clarity of notes as in playing the viola, no matter if that note is a detail or a plane of color denoting a side of a form. Notes of color should be like clear, clean sound on a string instrument. Stay away from false notes, ones that squeak like chalk on a board or a cough at a concert.

In unlocking a door if you have a set of keys and you are trying to find the right one, there is a good chance that you will have trouble even with the correct one because of a lack of confidence.

Dare to jump, to let go.

Give one over to nature, like jumping into a raging river, without fear, or excepting fear, and be carried along.

Clouds, shadows, surface markings, a fleeting light can be used as boldly as anything else, make it definite. Everything can be an ingredient that can be chosen when needed.

Channel nature. You are nature. Leaves are beautiful because they surprise in their differences. One cannot get used to so many. Do not paint a picture of leaves. Paint in a way that is leaf like. Invent shapes and colors.

The idea that painting cannot be taught is wrong.

Style is not being taught. We are dealing with the underlying structure that style rest upon. Be it Renoir or Cubism. It is composing that is the basis for any style. Style should happen naturally and not be taught.

Remember if something is true the opposite can also be true. Before I cross a one way street I always look both ways.

Removing the crusty paint around the lid of my paint jars excites me as much as painting does. In the end, not as satisfying, but like cleaning, while I am doing it, I enjoy it. Painting leaves you with much more. The thrill of one color covering another. True with painting furniture as in painting pictures. Applying the second coat is a chore like mowing a lawn that does not really need it. Much more exciting when there is a bigger contrast between what has been mowed and what has not been mowed.

It is strange how long it takes to have an idea, how it comes so late in life, like adding chocolate chips to grilled cheese sandwiches. Why did it take me so long to think of this?

The best painters read novels. I think Goethe said that. It is always a shock to realize I am the one who will lead the workshop.

Squint your eye or whatever it takes to obscure identity of your painting to see only the abstraction. How strong is it? How exciting?

Imagine waking up and your landscape painting is the view out your bedroom window. Do you want to get up?

Start with your own painting and push this and remove that to emphasizes what is most important. There are no rules other than the artist instincts. Everyone has experienced their own world. It is not so much that one must have seen great paintings, though that helps. It helps one to see ones own world in an expanded way. It opens the eyes. The world is full of color, space, lines, forms, textures. All the ingredients that the basic book on art tells us make up a painting. Most of those books then lay out techniques that take one away from the world into the realm of illustration disguised as art. Like those computer applications that give photos the look of a painting.

When you find abstract shapes by connecting bits and pieces of abstraction from separate elements what you are doing is connecting things to other things and when you find similar abstraction in different elements you are rhyming as in poetry and song and thus connecting. Gathering things into a whole, creating a place to enter, supplying a path to move around within, and if something is a distraction you are removing it or finding a place for it where it helps hold things together and does not tear things apart.

In the end you worry about none of this, you do what you can do and because everybody has a unity and can find it by instinct through passion and honesty one can create something whole that will speak to oneself and therefore to others.

If nature could think it might be possible for it to make itself other than beautiful. Painting naturally is following instincts. Beauty comes from unity. This is possible in everyone when the instincts are followed. Your abilities reveal themselves in this process.

Painting is like climbing a tree, it does not get exciting until the way up and therefore the way down is obscured.

There are no wrong moves in the process. Something else can always be done. The next step must always come before the one that will follow and no matter how planned out, things tend to change. Teachers show young students a work of art and says this is perfect, this is a masterpiece, nothing can be added or taken away. This is wrong and only scares the student into not wanting to attempt anything of the sorts. The teacher is trying to impress. The teacher is saying I cannot do this and you cannot do this either. In truth anything can be done to this work. It is true that likely something else will need to be done after this first change, and then another, and



more still, until, totally altered, it regains unity. Work instinctively, do one thing after another, until your instincts tell you to stop. It is a trust in yourself.

The best things I have done, I have no idea how I did them. This is all right. One can enjoy them more when you are separated in this way from them.

I have said elsewhere that it is hard to describe something with one hand. Lately I have been exploring the use of one line to describe form. As in a child's stick figures. Not only children. It can be seen in early cave drawings and modern sculptures. A single line can be a leg or arm or even the torso. When working very small, drawing the entire figure, the most the fingers can be are lines. Even more minimal five fingers can be reduced to less than five. One hand gesture moving in space can create a powerful line.

If you say you can only draw a stick figure, draw a stick figure. If you cannot draw a straight line, use a straight edge. Say less, draw more. We expect everybody to speak with words. Drawing to communicate could be use much more. Without fear of drawing. A skill early lost due to fear. Much of it due to adults and their examples of what good drawing is and what is child's work.

There is a love of children's drawings as long as it does not go on too long. It is wonderful when somehow this fearless drawing continues into adulthood.

Everything equal. No figure and ground or foreground and background. Everything together. Everything made strong and then clustered together into a hierarchy of large masses leading to smaller, connecting back into larger making use in big and small ways everything.

From the beginning put things down as if it will complete everything. Do not let fear of messing up a beautiful passage scare you into stopping. Things will be lost. This is all right. In the end there will be a different beauty, even a greater beauty, a more mysterious beauty where the path to it has disappeared. If honest the path is made of personal instinct, that one person alone has made, that no one else can say is wrong.

Expand a shape into a more interesting shape or to make active a part of the work, rhyme one thing with another, push the difference to prevent similar things from dividing the interest.

Having the teacher allowed to draw on the student's work is important, better than words alone. Afterwards the student trying to save that part, or any part, makes their work harder and less likely to be successful. Packing the suitcase, everything adjustable.

The same as in my studio, the workshop is instinctive. It cannot be planned out, the next thing depends on the previous. A narrative in a dream is not preconceived (when would this preconceiving take place)? It invents itself as it goes along, but yet it may go along quite smoothly, even with surprising and absurd twist. Likewise in the workshop directions may change abruptly, things abandoned and new ways announced.

Working quickly is only a part of a slow continuous process.

Van Gogh's fields and Jackson Pollock paintings, there must be a composition, even a minimal one.

In being completely honest no one can find you out.

Relax and breathe.

Be guided by what comes before, going towards or away from this does not matter.

Let straight lines be guided by a curve or let straight lines dictate a curve.

Let traffic become a pattern and not jam.

It takes one detail added to a painting where the abstract is not taken into account to weaken the work.

Drawing up against a straight edge makes possible working precisely on a moving bus. Working with a blunt brush, is like talking with the hands but with gloves on, it keeps one concentrated on the big things. When they work one can go onto the small things. The big things will keep the small things in place.

Draw with charcoal from model, rub out, then apply black and white collage over this middle tone. White for things leaning white, black for things leaning black. In working with color do something similar pushing dark colors darker, light colors lighter. Invent colors to push differences. Find color shapes that work with other shapes as opposed to rendering thoughtlessly, copying what is there just because it is there. This is rendering, shading without thought of dark and light shapes or making a shape without thought of how shape fits into the total collection of shapes.

Rendering either of these ways would only produce a good composition if the motif is beautifully composed which is again about as rare as coming upon a bird singing Bach.

The thing to avoid is not exaggeration but under exaggeration. The mind rejects many beautiful things and too many paintings are muted pictures of the world.

Notes on brackets.

Bracketing (to hold or attach). How one thing is held by another and that held by still another. A cloth bracketing fruit, in turn bracketed by a table, bracketed by wall and floor. In a landscape a tree will bracket shapes within (clusters of branches and leaves) and be bracketed itself by other trees, houses, clouds, etc. Abstractly a dark bracketed by a light. A dark fruit bracketed by a light cloth. Pale flesh by dark clothes. Dark skin by a light color cloth. Pale skin by an even lighter cloth and dark skin by a darker cloth. In turn this bracketed against a lighter or

darker chair. It is not necessary to completely enclose or bracket something. The hands can hold something without totally enclosing the object. An object can be bracketed by a shape that on one side represents something in front and on the other side something behind. Looking at a Corot at the Met, an apron bracketed by dark grass beyond and on the other side the visible part of the skirt, even darker than the grass beyond. The grass and skirt still makes one shape that wraps around the apron but at the same time moves in depth from the back to the front. The grass bracketed on top by the sky and at the bottom by the apron which is not as light as the sky and in very different places in depth. A dark row of trees (darker than the skirt) stands out in high contrast to the light sky. A dark shadow, darker than the trees, behind the arm of the model, comes forward and brings with it the light in the sleeve. These are things that are bracketing objects in depth at the same time as they are bracketing flatly across the picture. Things are being pushed forward and backwards. It is important to be in control of these things. Fortunately the senses are taking care of this to an amazing degree when the mind is focused on the whole. A white undergarment, whiter than the sky, becomes the lightest thing in the picture. If pure white had been used in the sky, in a cloud, the white in the undergarment would have lost its power to take its place, to play its role. It is important to reserve colors and value for where they are needed. The same with the hair band, since the darkest black was not used in that shadow behind the model's arm it is still available to be used in the hairband. Beautifully contrasted against the sky.

We have areas of darks combining to form complex shapes and lights making up others. There can be lights within the dark clusters and darks within the light clusters. Clusters can be made up of clusters and in turn be part of larger clusters. All this divides up the rectangle (oval, etc.) in compelling ways. Jumps between colors and jumps between values, some large and some small.

(A Woman Reading. 1896/1870, oil on canvas, 21 3/8 x 14 3/4 inches, Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

The use of brackets two dimensionally to hold one or more things together. Dresses that open in the front that holds (or brackets) the body. In turn other objects (shapes), the back of an armchair or pillow, that holds the dress which holds the body. Upon a rug and all held by the room.

Things can be bracketed three dimensionally. A color shape in the foreground that due to similarities in color or shape, relates or connects to something in the background which holds an object. This object may be made up of two or more things trying to pull apart while at the same time preventing the brackets from coming together.

End of Part 1.



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