Course Description

COMPOSITION – Foundations of Good Design

is a 4 day workshop that will show you how to begin your creative design and painting process by starting with an understanding of the basics of composition. This base of ‘rules’ should be in any artist’s toolbox – whether you choose to use them or not.

We will cover the building blocks of good composition: unity, harmony, focal points, balance, rhythm, value, color and proportion/the golden rectangle. Most important will be:

1. Framing

what’s important to your idea,

2. Shifting elements for better balance, and,

3. What to edit for your strongest composition -- before you paint.

First, we’ll explore (via a PowerPoint slideshow) both historical and contemporary paintings whose very strong compositional elements can inform your compositional choices.

Next, I will show you what I go through developing my design ideas with my paintings and drawing.

Then we’ll look at examples from your own paintings and/or research examples to

discuss what works and what could be stronger before you start your painting.

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Please print out all the documents emailed to you. You can take notes on these, too.

Class Itinerary

*Monday:*

1. Compositional Examples & Discussion (PowerPoint slideshow)

2. VIDEO: Van Gogh’s Ugliest Masterpiece by Nerdwriter – ( Evan Puschak, author)

3. Emotive Collage - Compositional Design Exercise with Paper Cut-Outs

(\* Paper cut-outs: Refer to Photo #1 below. Make a bunch of paper shapes

(1”- 4”) in all colors – squares, triangles, long rectangles, lines, etc... Just cut up some junk mail or an old magazine...nothing special, just a bunch of colored paper shapes.

(\* Get some clear tape to affix them to the white paper.) Photo #1:

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*Tuesday:*

1. Composition Review - Tim’s paintings and compositional process examples

2. Your completed painting examples discussion and review. We will be working with

your own research images investigating balance, value and composition (formalistic issues only).

Before class:

\* Email Tim two examples of your own paintings that need some compositional help

\* Email Tim your photo research that you’d like to develop into your next painting.

3. Developing a Value Pattern Sketch: Using your research photo at 8.” X 11”.

Need trace paper and soft pencil.

4. Gridding Up: How to enlarge a research photo for a pencil drawing onto your

15x22” or 22x30” Arches ROUGH or COLD PRESS watercolor paper (either 140 lb. or 300 lb. paper).

5. Tim demonstrates Grisaille underpainting (value composition)

6. Begin your Grisaille underpainting.

*Wednesday:* Painting Day

1. Continuation of your grisaille underpainting, demonstration of

spatter, drip and bloom;

and further deconstruction techniques.

*Thursday:* Painting Day

1. Restore and repaint, introduction of local color and greater value.

2. Discussion of ‘counter-points.

3. Demonstration of other deconstruction techniques

4. Finish painting

Note: If you have any questions about this information, please email me:

Tim.Saternow@gmail.com

Please Note: Tim will have a limited number of archival digital prints and books of his

paintings for sale at the end of the workshop.

Your RESEARCH PHOTOGRAPHS:

I tend to paint NYC urban landscapes and older houses.

But any city, town, industrial area, travel shots of foreign cities, or farms scenes are great.

Research should be mostly of architectural subjects. Be aware of too many trees.

Also be aware of photos that look GREAT as a photo (sunsets, night scenes, lots of

reflections, ‘photo effects’ like blurring, burn-outs, etc.).

Ask yourself: Where can I take this research with paint that goes beyond this amazing

photograph? How can I make this a much more exciting painting then a photo?

Please remember: We are not here to duplicate photographs

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All your research photographs

must be printed on paper (5x8” or 8x10”),

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One in color

AND

one in black and white (this can be a photocopy of the color photo).

You may also have larger copies.

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DO NOT only have this photo on your phone or iPad. This drives me crazy.

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Find an image you like. It's a drag to spend hours on something that doesn’t excite you or that doesn’t connect with you.

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Find an image with a strong composition. Foreground, middle ground, and background is important.

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There should be a strong sense of light direction (sunlight & shadow) -- good

highlights and shadow areas. Hint: The shadow shape and light shapes are the most

important aspect of your composition – not the details. If you are unsure, look at your

research with your eyes squinted. This will take out the details and show you're the broad shadow and light shapes. If you don’t see these shapes, then your research does not have a very good VALUE RANGE (or Value Pattern).

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Do not choose an image that is overly complex, or a street scene with too many windows, or delicate line work.

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Not too much sky – 20% or less is good.

Note: If you plan to submit your painting to ANY art show, your research image must be your own photograph. If you are not planning on submitting, then go search the web for a photo, but be aware that someone holds the copyright to that image.

SUPPLY & MATERIAL LIST

( I have noted BLICK art supplies, but any similar product is fine.)

COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION DAYS:

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You may want to have a

notebook or pad to take your own notes during this week.

Artist’s Color Wheel

(from Create-A-Color)

Standard Version

Item #: 04915-1093

https://www.dickblick.com/items/artists-color-wheel-standard-version-9-14/

Guerrilla Painter View Finder

Item #: 52847-1002

https://www.dickblick.com/products/guerrilla-painter-composition-view-finder/

PAINTING DAYS:

Paper: Arches Watercolor paper: 30x22” Rough or Cold-pressed (140 lb. or 300lb)

https://www.dickblick.com/products/arches-natural-white-watercolor-paper/?fromSearch=

%2Fsearch%2F%3Fq%3Darches%2520watercolor%2520paper

Brushes:

Range of good Flats

\* (1’’, ½”, ¼”) – I almost exclusively use flat brushes.

https://www.dickblick.com/products/dynasty-finest-golden-synthetic-flat-brushes/

Range of good Rounds

\* (3/0, #1, #2, #4, #6)

https://www.dickblick.com/products/dynasty-finest-golden-synthetic-round-brushes/

2” ‘chip brush’

(“white china” bristle paint brush -very cheap at any hardware store)

https://www.homedepot.com/p/2-in-Flat-Chip-Brush-1500-2/100626098?MERCH=REC-\_-searchViewed-\_-NA-\_-100626098-\_-N

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