

“Painting by Design - A toolbox for thoughtful artists “

Presented by Troy Weidenheimer

Ideal for Intermediate level artists, but valuable for all

1. Design Strategies

Throughout This three-part workshop we'll focus on key “design strategies” successful realist and semi-abstract painters consistently use in interpreting scenes. Their intent is to create fine-art, to move beyond a literal illustration. We'll study numerous classic and modern masterworks clearly based on these principles. Each participant will be encouraged to find and begin employing his or her own favorite set of design strategies.

- **Strategy 1: Compositional Framework**

In a still-life, we're free to arrange the scene so the elements organize along one of many composition frameworks, or scaffolds, i.e. “ Triangular, “Oval”, “L-shaped”, “Cruciform”, etc.

In a real or photographed outdoor scene, we rearrange elements in our painting as needed to establish a more unified and artistic whole.

- **Strategy 2: Value\Color\Shape Dominance**

We create a stronger, more coherent painting by altering values, colors and shapes to achieve a predominance of either:

- Light or Dark values. **L** or **D**
- Warm or Cool colors. **W** or **C**
- **Flowing** (organic - curvy) or **Angular** (Geometric) shapes and lines. **F** or **A**
- One approach: We design our painting around a cruciform composition, done in mostly DARK values, mostly WARM colors, and mostly FLOWING shapes. - a **D / W / F** dominance pattern..
- If the dominant attribute, is DARK, then the subdominant attribute is LIGHT. So we may design a painting that is mostly dark with some light accents, or mostly light with dark accents..
- Viewer's eyes are immediately drawn to the subdominant attribute, making this a powerful compositional device in directing attention to a center- of- interest.

CRITIQUE: We discuss design strategy strengths and weaknesses in student paintings shown on-screen (Digital images submitted prior to workshop)

PAINTING EXERCISE: Students either reinterpret an earlier work using better-considered design strategies, or begin fresh.

2. Working from existing images

- Recognizing images with lighting, composition, or camera-caused perspective distortions, i.e. building walls tilted inward, faces looming out of proportions, etc..
- How to shoot better painting-reference photos.
- Ways to improve composition problems, and improve value/color/shape relationships as you design a painting based on a less- than- ideal photo.

CRITIQUE: Discussing the suitability of student-submitted painting-reference photos.(Digital images submitted prior to workshop)

PAINTING EXERCISE: I help each student (on request) find their his/her personal favorite composition and value/color/shape strategy, and begin a new, or reinterpret an earlier, painting in that style..

3. Painting Realistic Trees & Clouds

During these hands-on sessions we tackle what even experienced artists often consider the “Terrible Two” of landscape painting. The structural complexity and subtleties of light and shade of trees and cloud formations pose many challenges.

Our goal is to move beyond the flat “lollipop” trees and “mashed potatoes” clouds, too often seen in amateur work, toward painting truly natural-looking, three-dimensional trees and cloudscapes.

We’ll work on painting the structure of bare-branched trees in winter, and leafed- out in colorful spring and fall foliage.

Then, we’ll consider and practice using some special techniques for capturing the fat, fluffy, sun-lit look of formations of cumulus clouds in summer skies.