

MESSAGE FROM ERIC

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A CONSERVATION OF VALUES

We artists love to show form, or volume of an object, because it gives the viewer a sense of realism. However, in order to do this, we need to show a change in value for a three dimensional look- as the form turns away from the light, it gets darker.

But the problem is that with each change in value, there is also a new shape made (values determine the boundaries of shapes) and too many shapes in a painting will destroy it's solidity. The painting needs to catch the viewers' eyes from a distance, and the way to do that is to simplify the shape construction.

So here is the rub: the artist wishes to show volume, but how to do it without a change in value? There are two ways I know of:

Focus on the outside edge of the shape to carry the character of the object, and minimize the details within the shape. A flat mass of trees with a careful consideration of what the edge looks like, along with the proper value of the tree mass, will usually suffice. The outline of a cube with a flat value will probably do enough to tell the viewer that it is a cube.

The second way to show form, or volume without a value shift, is by utilizing a color shift. Cool colors recede, so a form can be show to turn simply by making a shift to a cooler color. I believe one artist told me that the artist can make a form turn up to 40 degrees just simply by shifting to a cooler color. I see this utilized more in figure painting- many times to make a thigh turn or a nose to appear in shadow- but it works for landscapes and all other subject matter as well.

It wasn't until the era of Modern Art- Impressionists and Post- Impressionists, Nabis, and Fauve painters - that this concept of limited value shifts for a stronger visual appeal was capitalized. (It is funny that Modern Art is now actually considered a traditional era of classical painting. It was a very good time- the best- when concepts of design were articulated and woven in with the classical painting of their forefathers).

My painting process, in order to conserve my values, is that I generally start in large flat patterns - I focus on getting the large shapes right - and reserve the detail, which usually entails showing form, until the end; and this is reserved for the Area of Dominance. The contrast can be very effective and give eye-catching power to the Area of Dominance.

Keep your brush wet!

ERIC



AWS Gold Medal of Honor