

MESSAGE FROM ERIC

- JULY -

Eric,

You have stated the importance of constructing a painting with a visually pleasing design; that is, one with an interesting shape construction and simplified value structure. My question is: how do I know when I have achieved that?

- Jean in Washington

Jean,

that is a very good question that I spent much time considering. It may seem that my answer just doesn't give enough guidance, and that I am speaking in broad generalities, yet I still feel it is the best answer. Otherwise, we are relegated to innumerable "rules" which can be successfully violated by an artist with modest talent. Even though "rules" may be based on an element of truth, they are to be held very loosely.



I think painting is much like cooking: it would be unwise to dump all the spices into every prepared dish; yet we do that when we paint by the "spice rack of rules" that bruise the creative process. What an awful way to paint!

What is the better way? I think if you can think in broad generalities you will progress faster and also have more fun. Think in terms of grouping and forming simplified value patterns that are easy to read from a distance (not in a "rule" of how much real estate each value should cover), shapes that are puzzle pieces and not geometric shapes; avoid tangents and repetitive shapes of the same size, and employ fresh color. Catch the viewer's eye at a distance, carry it throughout the picture plane, and bring it to an area of dominance. This is not exhaustive, but it gives you the idea to think in big terms.

I think the quickest and most efficient way of seeing these important relationships in your painting is to associate yourself with someone who paints well and is able to point out strengths and weaknesses in terms of these broad concepts. This is how I learned at the Academy. In time, your sense of design will strengthen, without having to adhere to time consuming and frivolous rules.

So many times I have read about another "rule", only to step away and be glad to have enough knowledge not take it too seriously; sometimes I feel I could never make my paintings adhere to such a "rule".

Painting is not easy, but the most important concepts are easy to understand.

I believe it was Derain who said, "The problem with art is there is too much information." I agree wholeheartedly!

Keep your brush wet!



ERIC

AWS Gold Medal of Honor

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