

LINE

Direct vs. Indirect Painting

Direct Painting Method (also known as alla prima) – The artist applies their paint to the canvas “wet on wet”, creating a textured surface with broken or unmixed color (side by side). Impressionistic painting is executed in this manner.

Pros: Single step process, therefore faster results; easier to recognize errors making corrections quick and easy; makes use of texture and direct mixing qualities oil pigments; uses a limited or full range palette.

Cons: Initially more difficult to learn because it requires good perceptual skills.

Indirect Painting Method (also known as glazing) – The artist applies paint “wet on dry” in thin layers allowing each successive layer to dry, creating a smooth surface with blended color. Old Masters style painting is executed in this manner.

Pros: Initially easier to learn because perceptual skills are not as critical; makes use of transparent qualities of oil pigments; uses a limited palette.

Cons: Multi-step process, therefore it can take much longer than direct painting; errors may not be visible in early stages of painting making corrections more difficult.

Rendering Methods

Grid Transfer

Subject is placed on canvas by dividing both the canvas and the reference into squares of the same proportions, and copying what is in each square onto the canvas resulting in a fairly accurate rendering.

Pros: Ruler and pencil are all that is required (and a bit of math); no size limitations; anyone can do it without well-developed perceptual skills and have decent results; does develop recognition of positive/negative shapes (but in a limited/isolated manner).

Cons: Slow; difficult method for life subjects; limits development of overall perceptual skills.

Projector Transfer

Subject is placed on canvas by projecting the reference onto canvas resulting in a completely accurate rendering.

Pros: Fast; accurate.

Cons: Specialized (prism) projector required; image cannot exceed dimensions of projector; cannot be used for life subjects; limits development of overall perceptual skills.

Drawing

Subject is placed on canvas directly by artist observation (perceptual skills) resulting in a rendering that increases in accuracy the more one practices their skills.

Pros: Pencil is all that is required; fast (when well-practised); can be used with life or photo reference; begins process of understanding the infrastructure of the subject that leads to a stronger painting; dramatically increases overall perceptual skills each time this method is used.

Cons: Requires commitment to learning and practice.

Drawing – The Infrastructure of Painting

Every representational painting has the underlying structure of a drawing. There are various methods to place this underlying structure on your canvas, but learning the skill of drawing is best.

Learning to Render with Accuracy of Line (to draw well)

- is the first step in seeing perceptually rather than conceptually
- is easier to do than trying to build your perceptual skills by painting (learning perceptual skills by painting is very difficult because you are simultaneously processing multiple elements at one time... this is why professional artists are taught strong line skills before ever touching a paint brush)
- is the best method to initially understand and familiarize yourself with your subject
- is the basis for forming essential line/shape relationships (rather than getting caught in the detail trap)
- is the easiest/quickest path to improving your painting skills

Intuitive Gesture (a.k.a. professional drawing)

Gesturing – Also referred to as *intuitive gesture*, is a **QUICK** and all-encompassing overview of the wholeness of a form and the form's relative position in space. It is energetic, flexible, non-linear, non-specific, intuitive, and most importantly... constantly open to adjustment.

Keys to Successful Gesturing:

- Execute quickly
- View as all-encompassing overview of forms and their relationship in space
- Adjust constantly as above relationships appear
- Keep it light, airy (not hard or crisp)
- Let go of detail

Drawing – Sighting and Measuring for Accuracy

Sighting and Measuring – Once you have established an accurate gesture drawing you can use any one of the following techniques to establish the interior contours of your subject. Sighting and measuring is about forms/lines in relationship to one another. If forms/lines are incorrectly established, it will affect the entire outcome of your drawing.

Sighting and Measuring Techniques (using contour):

- X/Y axis or Mondrian grid
- Clock Tool and/or Mechanical Transfer (measuring angles)
- Comparative Measuring (proportion/scale measuring)
- Positive and Negative Shapes (form relationships)

Keys to Successful Sighting and Measuring:

- Start a “main line” and make this your “key” for comparison purposes
- View as a jigsaw puzzle of interlocking abstract forms
- Adjust constantly as relationships appear
- Keep it light, airy (not hard or crisp)
- Work from large areas to small areas
- Step back often to keep your vision fresh