

Painting: Secrets of the Masters
From Leonardo da Vinci to Bob Ross

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Summer Session I/II 5 credits

For various reasons, painters, over the centuries, have kept secret many of their methods and techniques in painting. This course is designed for art students and others who are interested in discovering and employing the hidden aspects of painting that give quality, mystery and mastery to the finished work.

Through demonstrations, readings and studio work students are introduced to compositional strategies that underlie Renaissance paintings, procedures for suggesting verisimilitude and atmosphere used by the Dutch Masters, provocations of inspiration used by Surrealists, and the technical secrets of abstract and representational techniques. These “secrets” have mathematical, material, and psychological dimensions.

These strategies and techniques will be used to amplify the possibilities of painting for each student. These strategies and techniques will be applied to the trajectory of the individual painting style of each student.

Each class will begin with a short lecture or discussion.

This is, however, **fundamentally a studio class** and focuses on students applying the secrets to the work they will be doing in class and the work they will do as homework.

Each class will be dedicated to independent studio work by each student.

The textbook for this class is Salvador Dali's *Fifty Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*. The theories of David Hockney concerning the use of pre-photographic lenses in painting will be discussed, as will Charles Bouleau's *The Painter's Secret Geometry*, and James Elkin's insights about painting as alchemy in *What Painting Is*. Videos of artists painting, such as Bob Ross's instructional demonstration-lectures will be viewed, analyzed and critiqued. The professor will discuss and demonstrate techniques weekly, will critique student paintings individually and in small groups of five or six. Small critiques are available in the studio and run concurrently with studio work. Students will complete twelve to fifteen paintings during the course of this class.

Materials: painting materials: paint, brushes, palettes, rags, canvases or other supports, etc. paints can be either acrylic or high quality water soluble oils.

Text: *Fifty Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, Salvador Dali

Additional:

The Painter's Secret Geometry, Charles Bouleau

What Painting Is, James Elkins

Secret Knowledge, David Hockney

Week 1

Lectures, demonstrations and creative work in week one focus on color and brushwork; transfer processes; introduction to geometry in painting.

Mon Introduction. Overview. Presentation, demonstration and discussion: The painter's secret geometry.

Wed Introductory full class critique; Studio work incorporating secret geometry

Fri – Studio work continues with small critiques

Homework: studio work and reading Dali's *Fifty Secrets*

Week 2

Lectures, demonstrations and creative work in week two focus on compositional principles including geometric lattices, various forms and techniques of perspective and the deployment of foreground, middle ground, and background in a painting in order to suggest space.

Mon – Presentation, discussion and demonstration: Assorted Dali secrets; followed by studio work: creation of a complex composition from initial design to completion.

Wed – Studio work incorporating Dali's secrets

Fri. – Studio work continues

Homework: studio work and reading Dali's *Fifty Secrets*

Week 3

Lectures, demonstrations and creative work in week three focus on classical underpainting, overpainting, glazing layering, as well as alternative approaches for creating space.

Mon - Substance, space and texture: The Dutch Masters.
Studio work incorporating Dutch Masters

Wed – Bob Ross. Studio work: painting with Bob Ross.

Fri - Studio work incorporating Dutch Masters

Homework: studio work and reading Dali's *Fifty Secrets*

Week 4

Lectures, demonstrations and creative work in week four focus on studio practices and constructing a style.

Mon - Surrealist and abstract technical and procedural secrets:
Dali, Da Vinci, Ernst, Magritte, Duchamp, Klee, Kline, De Kooning

Wed – Studio work incorporating surrealist and/or abstract secrets

Fri Studio work incorporating surrealist and/or abstract secrets

Homework: studio work, reading Dali's *Fifty Secrets*, composing an analysis of the stylistic components of one's own work

Week 5

Discussions in week five focus on Dali's conception of the artist in relation to the reading, as well as the concepts of other historical and contemporary painters.

Mon – Overview, discussion of Dali, Hockney and Elkins; studio work

Wed – Final full class critique Studio work

Fri – Studio work and individual meetings

