

Figure Painting

Art 132

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An introductory message from the Instructor, Noah Buchanan:

Hello Figure Painting Students! This is an online, asynchronous course. This means that there is no scheduled class meeting time – Rather, students will work through the course material at their own pace with the understanding that all course assignments will be completed by the final day of Summer Session II, August 28. That said, it is recommended that students keep up with the assignments from week to week as they are scheduled during the 5-week period. In this course, the most valuable learning will happen when you post progress on your projects in progress, then check back to read feedback from me, and then apply that feedback to your work. If you wait until the very end of the course to post all of your work, you will miss the opportunity to have the back and forth written interactions with the instructor; you will learn less, you will gain less skill in painting. If you are able to receive feedback on your course projects, and apply that feedback to your work in a timely manner, then you will see your skill level in painting growing.

Students will utilize Canvas to post progress of their assignments, receive feedback from me, and ask questions. I will be responding to questions, sending feedback/responding to posted class work on Mondays and Wednesdays during the hours of 9-12 and 1:30 – 4:30; this is stated so that students can expect when to receive replies/feedback, however, students should feel free to do coursework (painting, preparing materials, viewing video lectures/demonstrations) at any time of day/night throughout each week. Students are certainly welcome to post their work on canvas at any time. During the aforementioned days/times, I will also make available “office hours” meetings on Zoom, which are intended to help when students have specific and complicated questions pertaining to painting technique and materials – as we often do! These Zoom meetings may have more than one student present if several people are asking the same question.

The major emphasis of this course will be on technical, classical and representational painting skills, and understanding the figure as shape, value, temperature and color. You will be required to follow specific instructions. This course does not allow for innovation or autonomy on the part of the student.

Students will learn the classical practice of painting the nude figure using traditional oil painting techniques. During the 5-week course, Students will study the traditions of both Direct Painting and Indirect Painting.

The beginning of the course will require a painted study in Grisaille (black and white oil paint) of fruit subject matter, so that we can focus on the topic of Value.

In weeks 2 and 3 we will move on to the topics of the Limited Color Palette, in which we will make studies copied from the painter Lucien Freud, and The Full Color Palette, in which we will explore the tradition of The Color Study, or “Poster Studies”, from your choice of work by several contemporary figure painters.

Finally, The 4th and 5th weeks of the course will focus on a long pose with our own studio model through the process of creating a linear drawing, transferring the drawing onto a canvas, creating an underpainting using historical practices, and executing the painting using the process of overpainting with a full-color palette, and finishing with traditional *Glazes*. Our model will pose for a video recording, which you will be given online access to through YouTube as well as DropBox. Additionally, you will be supplied with higher definition reference photographs of details of the pose. The painting will be made from your observation of both the video and photographs, and you will be guided by my demonstration of the very same painting.

Topics for discussion during the course: Shape, Value, Color, Temperature, Paint Handling, Color Mixing, *Alla Prima* Painting, and historical Underpainting techniques which constitute the larger tradition of *Indirect Painting*. Students will learn from recorded video lectures/demonstrations posted on Canvas, from the practice of painting itself, and from written comments responding to student works in progress.

Grading Policy: Grading will be based on the completion and quality of assignments/projects, as well as **Participation** in the course.

Final Grade = 50% Completion of Class Projects; **50% Participation**.

“Participation”: Posting (frequently) images of your works in progress on *Canvas* Discussion groups in a timely manner (during the week that we are working on each respective project), If it becomes apparent that you are holding all of your work for a last minute turn-in, your participation grade will suffer greatly. Participation also means having all of the necessary materials needed for the course. If it becomes evident that you are attempting to work through this course without the materials listed below, the Participation factor of your grade will be affected.

Materials for Class (Materials Kit Available at Lenz Arts)

1. Long Handle Brushes: (no short handle brushes) Brushes should be clean, and free of dried, crusted paint. If your brushes are like this, you will need new ones. **You will need to clean your brushes in soap and warm water at the end of each painting day. Do not allow paint to dry in your brushes.**

Sable or Synthetic Sable brushes only. Real sable brushes are expensive but the synthetics, called “synthetic sable” are affordable and they perform well for a limited time, The most affordable brushes I’ve ever encountered (and which are also great quality) are called *Simply Simmons* – synthetic sable brushes. They have white handles and black ferrules.

Brush shapes: 1. Rounds: Please have a small, medium and large size in “Round”. (approx. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 – depending on the brand)

2. Flats: Please have a medium and large size in “Flat” (approx. 8 and 10)

3. Cheap Hardware Store brushes: 4”, 2” and 1” wide. Hogs hair.

Palette Knife: See examples shown in the video link on materials for proper shape. Knife should have a “trowel” shape, and a pointed tip, no round tips, preferably with a wood handle. Please no all-plastic palette knives.

2. Oil Paint:

The list below is created with student economy in mind. For affordable oil paint in decent quality, check out “Richeson” Oil Paints. “Rembrandt” Oil Paint is also of good quality, and not too pricey; while another good quality/affordable recommendation further still is Daler-Rowney. I recommend avoiding “Winton” oil paints. If you already have similar oil colors, feel free to use them.

Titanium White
Yellow Ochre
Burnt Sienna
Venetian Red (or Indian Red)
Raw Umber
Black (any)
Cadmium Yellow Medium (Cheaper substitute: Winsor Yellow or Hansa Yellow. Avoid "Cadmium Yellow Hue").
Cadmium Red Light (Cheaper substitutes Windsor Red, or Scarlet Lake. Avoid "Cadmium Red Hue").
Alizarin Crimson
Ultramarine Blue

3. Medium (what an artist adds to their paint to adjust it's fluidity/stiffness, and/or drying time, and/or transparency, and/or overall performance):

These mediums are selected for simplicity so that no mixture of oil/solvents are required; these can be used right out of the jar.

-*Neo Meglip* (Gamblin). Neo Meglip has no odor, but dries more slowly, but still much faster than using regular oil based mediums. Buy a small jar.

OR

-*Liquin* (Winsor and Newton). Liquin has a stronger odor, but it dries very quickly, which can be helpful. Buy a small jar.

**If you have sensitivities to odors/fumes from the mediums listed above, then simply paint with Walnut Oil (totally non-toxic and non-odor/fume), but expect slow drying times.*

4. Palette:

Recommended: Gray paper palette (disposable).

Please Do Not Use: Small palettes, or white palettes.

Recommended: Small/tiny binder clips to keep palette paper from curling up. (yes, the edges curl up after a few hours of use).

If a wood palette is purchased, it must be properly treated and sealed before the course begins. Do not squirt wet oil paint onto a raw wood palette.

5. Support materials:

FOUR 8" x 10" stretched canvases, **or** wooden panels, **or** MDF, **or** mattboards. (Size is approximate, but not smaller than 8" x 10")

ONE 18" x 24" stretched canvas.

6. Misc. (but important):

Small bottle of "Liquitex" Acrylic Gesso.

Brush Soap: *Old Master's Brush Cleaner* (small container)

Paper Shop Towels: Blue (or sometimes white) paper shop towels from hardware store, cut up into quarter sheets.

Sand paper (can be old sand paper, 100 or 120 grit recommended.)

7. Drawing Materials:

Several sheets of 18" x 24" drawing paper.

Graphite pencils.

Kneaded eraser.

Measuring sticks (These can be wooden cooking skewers or knitting needles, etc).

Vine Charcoal (Medium grade. No "hard" or "soft" vine charcoal.)

Stabilo "Aquarellable - All" Pencil, Black #8046

Single Edge Razor blades for sharpening (please no exacto blades, which become dull immediately).

Schedule:

Week 1:

1: Introduction, Discussion of Materials

-How to Gesso

-How to apply a Ground

-How to clean brushes, clean up.

2: Plane and Value.

3. Alla Prima Painting

4: Grisaille Oil Painting:

-Value Scale mixture

-Light and Shadow

Project 1, Part 1: Grisaille Fruit Still Life, Aspects of Light and Shadow Labeled. (See full project description below)

Support Needed for project 1: 8" x 10" Mattboard, wooden panel, or stretched canvas. Primed and Toned with a Grey Ground.

Week 2:

1: Limited Palette: The Dead Palette.

-How to integrate and extend a limited palette.

2. Temperature in Painting.

Project 1, Part 2: Color Pass over the Grisaille using The Dead Palette.

3. The Limited Color Palette

-Extending the Limited Palette.

Project 2: Limited Color Palette Figure Painting: Lucien Freud Copy.

Support Needed for project 2: 8" x 10" Mattboard, wooden panel, or stretched canvas. Primed and Toned with an Umber Ground.

Week 3:

1. Lecture/Demonstration: "Value, Temperature, Hue, Chroma".

2. "The Color/Poster Study"

Project 3: Make a full color/poster study of a work by Jenny Saville, Ann Gale, Ewan Uglow, Lennart Anderson, Colleen Barry, or Dan Thompson. (please research all artists before making a choice).

Support Needed for project 3: 8" x 10" Mattboard, wooden panel, or stretched canvas. Primed and Toned with a "Double Ground" of Earth Red and Grey (see example in demo video).

3. **Indirect Painting.**

-Tonal Ground

-Underpainting Techniques:

-Imprimatura

-Velatura

Project 4: Copying from the masters: practicing the Imprimatura and Velatura techniques. (Select from Ribera, Caravaggio, or Rembrandt)
Support Needed for project 4: 8" x 10" Mattboard, wooden panel, or stretched canvas. Primed and Toned with a "Double Ground" of Earth Red and Grey (see example in demo video).

Week 4:

1. Preparatory drawing for Long Pose.
2. Demonstration: transferring the drawing onto the canvas.
3. Imprimatura of the long pose
4. Velatura of the long pose

Project 4: Long Pose Development

Week 5

1. Working Glaze
2. Full Color Form Pass
3. Finishing Glazes

Project 4 Continued: Long Pose Developed and Completed.

Studio Model Etiquette

Unlike in a traditional course which meets in a studio, there are really no Studio Model Etiquette concerns for an online course except one major rule:

-Do not share photographs, videos, or links to videos, of our models posing for our class. Our models are hard-working, professional contractors who are paid for their services. If photographs, videos, or links to videos of their poses are shared, and then used by other artists (of any kind), then their services are not being fairly compensated. Please keep any photographs and/or video footage of models posing for our class completely private to students enrolled in our course only.

Assignments/Projects Descriptions

Project 1, Part 1: *Grisaille Fruit Still Life*

(Required: see Demo Video before starting. The following prompt is meant as a simplified guide to the Demo Videos, but is not adequate as a replacement for the videos.) Set up a simple still life setting using 2 – 3 pieces of fruit and/or vegetable. Light the still life arrangement with a single light source, make sure the light is not contaminated with secondary light sources (like an open window, screen light, or a stray lamp, etc). Using an 8" x 10" primed and toned support (these layers must be fully dry), make a preliminary drawing of your fruit still life set up, blocking-in the drawing with Vine Charcoal and then reinforcing the drawing with a Stabilo *All* pencil. Follow the process shown in the demo video in which you paint the still life using Raw Umber for the shadow mass and then use Black and White for the painting of the light mass; try to avoid using any black and white in the shadow areas. Make sure to save this still life set up (do not move the objects or let them be discarded) for the next project.

Project 1, Part 2: *Color Pass over the Grisaille using The Dead Palette*

(Required: see Demo Video before starting. The following prompt is meant as a simplified guide to the Demo Videos, but is not adequate as a replacement for the videos.) This project is to be painted on top of the previous project, which must be fully dry to the touch before starting. First, lay out the Dead Palette, and integrate the 4 original colors of the Dead Palette with each other to extend the palette as much as possible, be sure to use your palette knife to make these mixtures (example: Yellow Ochre and Black will make an olive green). Next, "Oil Out" (using your painting Medium) the Grisaille Still Life painting; and immediately after doing so - be sure to lightly wipe down the painting with a rag to remove excess oil (which helps avoid dripping/weeping paint). Begin to make a "Form Pass" over the light mass areas of the fruit/vegetables in your still life set-up. Remember that the Dead Palette will ultimately fail to capture the specific hues and chroma of the colors you see, but you will be able to accurately achieve accurate Values and Temperatures, which are ultimately the real keys to success in painting.

Project 2: Limited Color Palette Figure Painting: Lucien Freud Copy

(Required: see Demo Video before starting. The following prompt is meant as a simplified guide to the Demo Videos, but is not adequate as a replacement for the videos.)

Select a Lucien Freud painting from the images posted in the module for Project 2 on Canvas. Prime your 8" x 10" support (approximate size, but no smaller) with at least 2 coats of gesso, sanded. Then tone your surface with a wash of Raw Umber in a transparent manner (this is called the Ground). Once the Ground is dry, make a preliminary line drawing of the figure on your support with Vine Charcoal, and then correct, clean up, revise, solidify and improve the line drawing with a freshly sharpened Stabilo *All* Pencil. To paint the figure, lay out a Limited Color Palette with the following colors: White, Yellow Ochre, Venetian Red, Black (the Dead Palette) **but now add:** Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber and Cadmium Red Light. Try to extend the palette further by using your palette knife to cross-mix these colors and create new mixtures of paint to set out at the edge of your palette (Example: Mix Cadmium Red Light and Black together to make a earthy violet). In your thinking about painting decisions, remember to make decisions based on a hierarchy of the following concerns (listed in order of importance):

-Value (How light or dark is the tone relative to the tones around it and relative to the entire picture?)

Temperature (**Warm** = Reddish, Orange-ish, Yellowish; **Neutral** = Greenish, Purplish; **Cool** = Bluish, Grayish, Black).

Hue (What family of color does it belong to: Orange? Purple? Red? Etc.)

Chroma (How rich is the color strength? Or how dull is the color strength? "High Chroma"? "Low Chroma"?)

An example of using this logic to analyze our decision making in painting: if we were to analyze the color Burnt Sienna, right out of the tube, we'd say: It's Value is dark; It's temperature is very warm; It's hue is Orange; It's Chroma is very low (compared to full Orange).

Project 3: Full Color Poster Study of a work by Jenny Saville, Ann Gale, Ewan Uglow, Lennart Anderson, Colleen Barry, or Dan Thompson. (please research all artists before making a choice).

(Required: see Demo Video before starting. The following prompt is meant as a simplified guide to the Demo Videos, but is not adequate as a replacement for the videos.)

Research and select a painting from the artists listed above. Prime your support with at least 2 coats of gesso, sanded. Then tone your surface with a flat mid-tone value grey: the Ground. Once the Ground is fully dry lay out a full palette of color. Important: use the layout pattern shown in the demo video. Make a simple and broad drawing on your Ground surface using a brush and paint to draw with. Remember that this is a Color Study, also known as a Poster Study, so be sure to generalize information, simplify, focusing mainly on achieving the correct Values and Colors, but not concerning ourselves with accuracy of shapes and detail.

Project 4: Copying from the Old Masters: practicing the *Imprimatura* and *Velatura* techniques. (Select from Ribera, Caravaggio, or Rembrandt)

(Required: see Demo Video before starting. The following prompt is meant as a simplified guide to the Demo Videos, but is not adequate as a replacement for the videos).

Prime your support with at least 2 coats of gesso, sanded.

Then tone your surface with 2 layers of color: 1. Venetian Red + White (allow to dry). 2 White + Raw Umber + Black (mix to mid-tone/light Value grey). This process of using 2 color/temperature contrasting layers for a ground is called a "Double Ground". Once the second layer of the Ground is dry, make a preliminary line drawing of the figure on your support with Vine Charcoal, and then correct, clean up, revise, solidify and improve the line drawing with a freshly sharpened Stabilo *All* Pencil. When the Drawing is complete, you may begin the *Imprimatura* Layer using a mixture of Raw Umber and Burnt Sienna (See *Imprimatura* demonstrated thoroughly in demo video). When this layer is dry, you may proceed to the *Velatura* Layer (See *Velatura* demonstrated thoroughly in demo video.) For further clarity, please see the posted excerpts (on Canvas, in the module for Project 4) from my article in *International Artist Magazine*.

Project 5: Long Pose, Indirect Painting.

(Required: see Demo Video before starting. The following prompt is meant as a simplified guide to the Demo Videos, but is not adequate as a replacement for the videos).

We are devoting 2 weeks of our course to this project.

1. The Preliminary Drawing. Begin this project by making the strongest drawing that you are capable of, while observing the video footage of our model in the pose (posted on Canvas in the module for Project 5). Use graphite pencils on white drawing paper, 18" x 24". Be Sure to fit the entire figure on the page, but at the same time do not make a tiny figure shrunken inside the dimensions of the paper. Remember to use plenty of backing paper (at least 10 sheets) behind your drawing for the best performance from your pencils. The drawing needn't be fully tonally rendered, but we do need to create an accurate line drawing of the pose that captures both the linear drawing of the form, as well as the linear map of the shadow shapes (the Terminators).

2. The Double Ground. Before transferring the drawing onto your 18" x 24" canvas, make sure that you have applied a Double Ground to the surface, and that each layer of the Double Ground is fully dry before proceeding. The Double Ground is described in the demo videos, as well as the description above for Project 4.

3. The Transfer. Transfer your drawing onto the canvas by applying Raw Umber paint directly to the back of the drawing paper upon which you have made your preliminary figure drawing. Immediately afterward, gently wipe down this layer of Raw Umber with a rag, to remove excessive amounts of paint and to remove brushstrokes with ridges.

Secure this drawing (Paint side down, against the canvas; Drawing side up, facing outward to you) onto your 18" x 24" canvas using 2 pieces of tape at the top of the drawing (this will allow you to flip the drawing up to check on the progress of the transfer).

Begin the actual transfer by re-tracing over the lines of your drawing using a ball-point pen. The pressure of doing this will create a very clean, Raw Umber line that is etched onto the surface of the Ground. Lift up the paper every few minutes (without disturbing the tape attachments) to check on the progress of how your transfer is going.

4. The Imprimatura Layer (Underpainting 1). It's recommended to allow this transferred line drawing to dry before working over it with the *Imprimatura*. If you allow it to dry, you'll have the option of working the *Imprimatura* in a subtractive manner on top of the transferred line drawing (as a "wipe-out"). If the transferred lines are still wet when you begin your *Imprimatura*, you'll have to develop the *Imprimatura* in an additive manner, where the dark tones are applied onto the painting using a brush. Either way, this stage is called the *Imprimatura* Layer.

5. The Velatura Layer (Underpainting 2). When the *Imprimatura* is dry, you can apply your *Velatura* Layer, using Titanium White Oil Paint. Remember that this is about getting the white to be transparent in behavior, so that we can see through it. Refrain from adding any white into the shadow shapes, even if you think you see light in the shadows, or even if the reflected light in a shadow is especially bright – do not add white into the shadows; the shadows should remain the dark earth tone wash of the previous layer (the *Imprimatura*), at least for now.

6. Full Color Form Pass. When the previous layer (the *Velatura* Layer) is dry, we can begin working on the Full Color Form Pass layer. This means that we'll be using full color now, and we will be finishing the work as we paint across the form. To start off, make a decision in selecting your first "Form Goal" – it might be the head, or the upper torso, or an arm, etc. This means that as you paint, you are going to "crawl" across the form you've chosen, correcting and improving the underpainting as you go, with the use of all colors on your palette. It's best if your first form goal contains an area of extremely bright values and very dark values, so that we can set the "key" of the painting, and see our full value range right from the start. (But see the next paragraph before beginning the Full Color Form Pass!)

7. Working Glazes. Working Glazes provide the necessary wetness to assist the The Full Color Form Pass, so the previous step begins with a Working Glaze. Yes, a Working Glaze means that we apply the glaze to the surface and then immediately begin painting into the wet

glaze, and any painting happening will now mix with the Working Glaze. To make a Working Glaze, select a color that is both transparent in nature, but also a color that you feel will help you achieve your color goals. Examples of this might mean that you want to create a predominantly cool effect over an area, and so you glaze (with very little color in the glaze) with black or blue. Or it might mean that you feel the over-arching hue of an area (let's imagine it's the arm) is very warm and reddish in hue, and so we decide to glaze with burnt sienna with a little alizarin crimson added. It's hard to make a bad decision when deciding on the working glaze.