

Watercolor: Color and Value

6 weeks

Most watercolor painters eventually become either value painters (emphasizing contrasts of value from light to dark to describe form and space) or colorists (using contrasts of hue, temperature and chroma/intensity to describe form and space).

Depending on the other contrasts they tend to use in their work (line, shape, size, direction, etc.) artists eventually develop a recognizable style of painting.

Hans Hoffman is an example of a colorist, as is Milton Avery. The former works in abstraction and the latter in recognizable imagery, but both primarily use COLOR contrasts to structure their work. Most representational painters (Winslow Homer, Andrew Wyeth are two examples) generally rely more on VALUE to structure their paintings, because they are more concerned with representing the illusion of three-dimensional space, the appearance of actual objects and the effects of light.

In this class, we will cover:

Week 1: High Key Values (0 to 50%)

- Using water to lighten color values
- Using white paper effectively

Week 2: Low Key Values (50 to 100%)

- How to darken colors without black
- Mixing and painting with rich darks

Week 3: Working with a full value range

- How light effects color value
- Creating the illusion of sun, moonlight, artificial light

Week 4: Color Temperature (warm vs. cool)

- How it creates spacial effects
- Using temperature changes to model form

Week 5: Color Intensity (bright/saturated vs. dull/unsaturated)

- Mixing lively neutrals
- Using intensity for focus



"The Turtle Pound", WC over graphite, 14-15/16" x 21-3/8", by Winslow Homer, Brooklyn Museum



"Pink Meadow", Oil on Canvas. 50" x 60", by Milton Avery, The Phillips Collection

Week 6: Color Hue

- Local vs. arbitrary color
- Defining form with color only

I suggest doing your assignments on at least a quarter sheet (11" x 15") of 140 lb. watercolor paper. If you want to work larger or do more than the minimum exercises/assignments, you will need at least six full sheets (22" x 30") of paper. Large sheets may be cut or torn into half or quarters.