

THEMED WATERCOLOR

TAUGHT BY ELLEN FOUNTAIN

OVERVIEW

These classes are designed to be "stand alone" - meaning that there is no carry over from one class to the next, and class time is primarily for you to work on your painting with input and assistance from me, and a short review/sharing of the work done at the end of each class period. Depending on your painting techniques, size of work, preliminary planning etc., you may or may not complete your painting during the three-hour class, and that's perfectly OK.

I will take a few minutes at the beginning of each class to show examples of art, both historical and contemporary, that I feel illustrate the theme for the day's work. These examples may give you additional ideas and/or directions for future work around the same theme.

Please bring to class any reference materials you need in order to work on the day's theme, along with your painting supplies.

There are thirteen themes with an assignment for each theme.

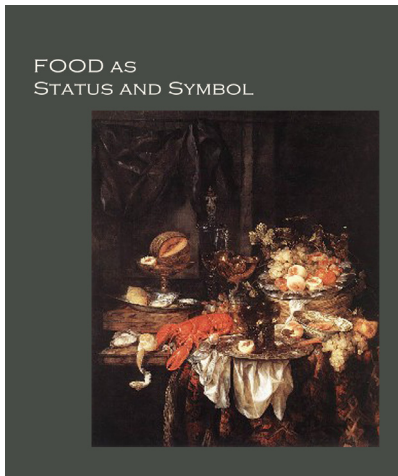
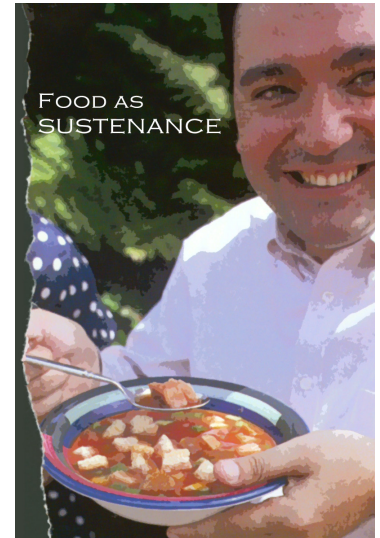


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Assignment: Create a still life with food as the subject. While your painting will (or should) always consider the formal elements, form organization is guided by your concept or idea about the painting. In other words, the content comes first. What are you trying to say and what is the most effective way to say it? When we use food as subject matter in art, we have many choices about the context in which the food will appear. Among those are:

SUSTINANCE

Food is a basic need of living things. We must eat to survive. And yet, this most basic function of food is rarely the subject in art (i.e. people and other living creatures depicted eating). Is it because the act itself is messy and/or unattractive? Is it because at some subconscious level, we know that eating involves the death of something else (plant or animal)?



STATUS AND SYMBOL

Beyond basic survival level eating needs, food presents an opportunity to impress (I'm rich, therefore I can eat anything I want, no matter how costly or hard to get), and to symbolize religious (the weakness of the flesh) or moral/lifestyle (veganism) dogma. Dutch Renaissance still life paintings of food are particularly good examples of this. Is there possibility for contemporary social commentary about food in our culture?

SOCIAL INTERACTION

We don't just eat to survive. Eating is a social thing too - a chance for people to get together for comfort and comradeship over a glass of wine or chips and dip. We mark births, marriages, crops brought in, graduations, new jobs and homes, and a host of other things with a sharing of food—simple fare or fancy dinners.

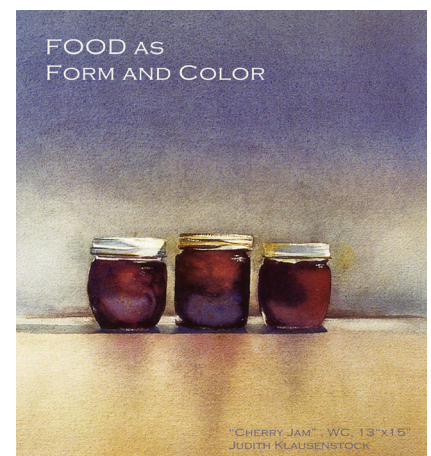


NARRATIVE

One of the least explored areas in art that uses food as subject matter, this avenue offers the artist the opportunity to "tell a tale" with food.

FORM AND COLOR (AND OTHER ART ELEMENTS)

This is perhaps the most common contemporary approach to using food in art — where the food serves as a vehicle for the formal aspects of art: color, form, texture, line, movement, direction, shape, etc. In this approach, the artist is not interested in the food per se, but more in the formal design possibilities it presents.



GRAND OPENINGS: WINDOWS AND DOORS

Assignment: Create a painting that focuses on a window or door. Before you start, ask yourself: What is a door? What is a window? Think both literally and figuratively about the answer. Functionally, windows and doors serve to allow in light and air, and to allow ingress/egress. But we don't always have to deal with the functional and literal in art! What else can/does a window or door symbolize?

If you want to use windows or doors as subject matter, *the way you present them* and the *type of window or door* you choose to paint cues the viewer as to what you want to say (the content of your painting).

These simple subjects can portray:

Antiquity

Nostalgia

Decay

Urban or Rural

Sense of Place (window boxes, wrought iron, shutters, etc. typical of a certain locale)

Time of Day

Isolation or Loneliness

Voyeurism

Welcome or Farewell

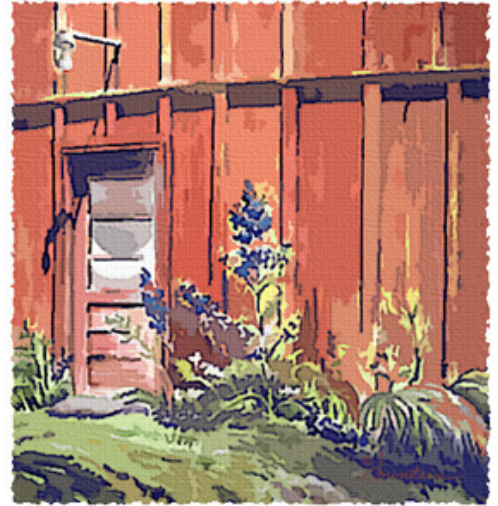
and more things I haven't thought of!

When composing your painting, decide if the window or door is the subject, or if it plays a supporting role. If it is the subject, zoom in and be sure to eliminate or subdue any competitive elements. If you are dealing with a literal window or door, its form is geometrical - you might want to think about adding some organic elements as a contrast to that geometry, or reinforce the theme by using other geometric shapes (either as a pattern or as a basic structure in your composition).



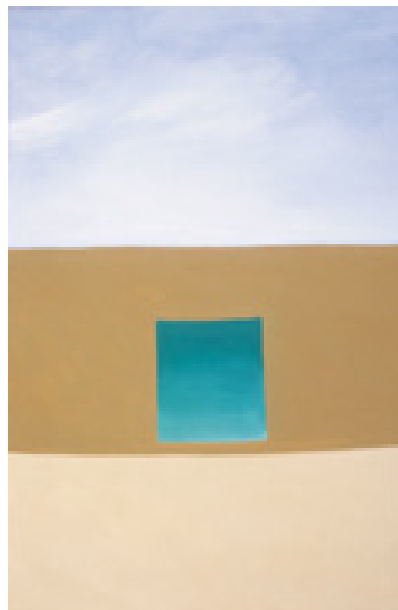
Adobe Window, watercolor by John Orsatti

This old window and the decaying plastered adobe wall makes a definite statement about antiquity, both in terms of subject matter and in the artist's choice of colors. Although the window is placed in the center of the composition, he gets away with this by balancing it with the shapes created by the plaster and adobe blocks on each side. So that it isn't isolated, the color of the tiny bit of grass at the bottom is repeated in what we can see through the window and through the ceiling beams - all that are left of the roof.



Barn Doorway, 22"x22", watercolor by Ellen Fountain

I did this watercolor of Sondra Freckelton's barn in upstate New York during a workshop there. I liked the blue violet color of the larkspur against the red of the barn, but the old door, the light fixture and its cast shadow were the reason I wanted to paint this. Keeping the value contrast highest in the door kept the focus there.



Green Patio Door, oil on canvas, 1955, by Georgia O'Keeffe
Albright-Knox Gallery, NY

O'Keeffe was a master at reducing her subject matter down to the simplest, strongest shapes and forms. Beginning in 1946, O'Keeffe painted this doorway at her Abiquiu home over thirty times under different lighting conditions and from different viewpoints.

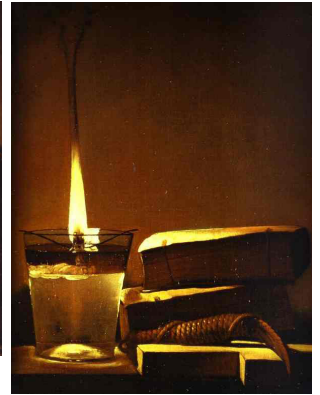
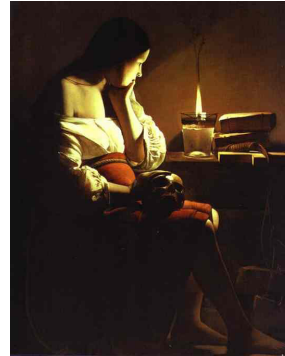
Her paintings always feel HUGE to me, even though many are actually small works. This one is just 30x20 inches.

IT'S ELEMENTAL: FIRE, WATER, EARTH AND SKY

These basic elements have deep roots in our psyches as humans - they've enabled us to live, literally. As is true of all living things, we need both air and water. The earth has served to shelter us and given us minerals to use for everything from spacecraft to jewelry to the paints we use to create paintings.

So, if we are dealing with one or more of these elements as our theme, how do we treat it? The element or elements will take center stage as our main subject, and everything else will take a supporting role.

Fire: This may be anything from the flame of a candle illuminating a face to a fire in a fireplace with a cat or dog asleep on the hearth, to a forest fire, to the fire of the sun itself. It could be the *feeling* of fire rather than a literal interpretation, and your color choices would be more critical if you went that route.



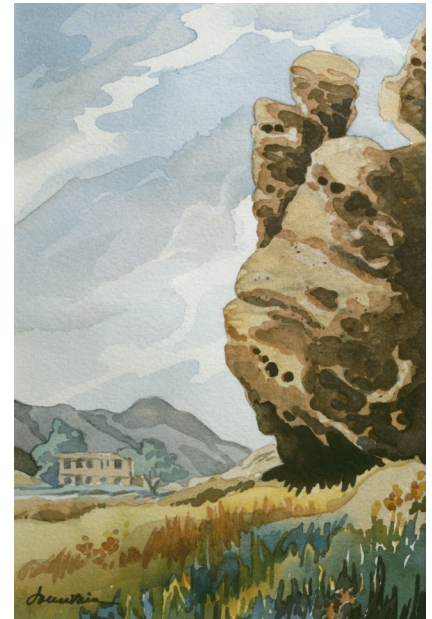
Georges de la Tour, *Magdalene Repenting*, O/C, c. 1635, with detail of candle flame.



Ellen Fountain, *"Falling Water"*, mixed media (wc with collage), 7x10 inches

Water: This could be water in a glass, or a waterfall, or a painting of the ocean. Whatever your choice, make the water the point - and be very selective about what else you include unless you want to detract from the idea of water.

Earth: From the tiniest grain of sand to the majesty of mountains, earth is everywhere, and you have a huge range of choices about what you want to paint. Arrange your subject so that the earth is the focal point.



Ken Caryl Ranch/Bradford House Ruins, Colorado
WC by Ellen Fountain, 15" x 11"

Sky (Air): The concept of painting air isn't an easy one unless we think about it in terms of skies, but you could certainly include wind. How else could you paint the theme of air?



"Cloud Study - Mexican Hat Dance"
Ellen Fountain, WC, 4x6 inches

NIGHT MOODS: PAINTING THE DARK SIDE

The landscape by moonlight, twilight scenes, urban streets at night, a still life lit by a candle - what these all have in common are a **low-key palette** (most colors at 50% or darker on the value scale) and **extreme contrasts** between the overall darker value colors and the "highlights" - moonlight, urban neon signs, lit windows, or the afterglow of the setting sun.



Sharon Mazcko, "Sleepless" wc, 22x30

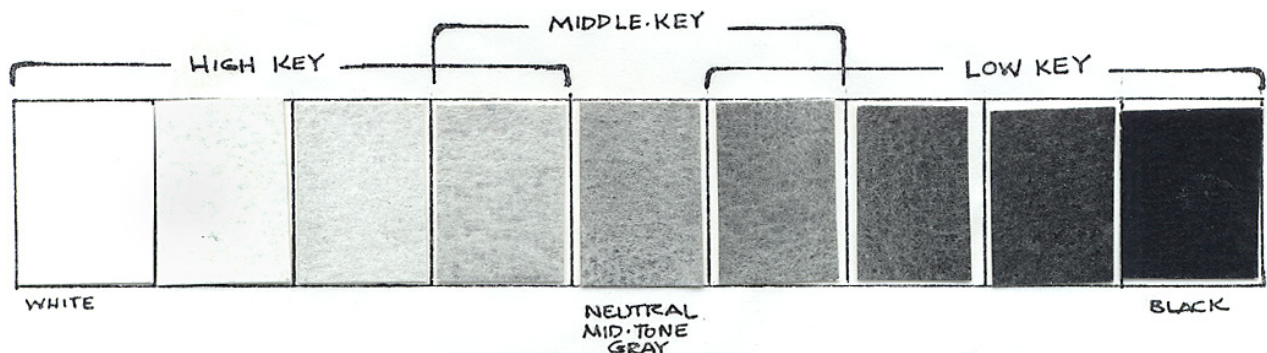
Choosing a palette or group of colors that will help you create such scenes is critical. Because you want rich darks that depend on saturated washes, choose transparent thaloses or quinacridones that are inherently darker in value, but that don't contain any sediment that would create muddy or chalky darks when the wash is saturated with pigment.

A color's VALUE is its relative lightness or darkness.

Each color in its pure, fully saturated state corresponds to a step on the black to white value scale. In watercolor, a nine-step value scale including black and white paper is more than adequate for most paintings. For night scenes, you need to use more values on the darker end of the value scale, what are called low-key values.



John Salminen, "Times Square Windows" wc, 25x35



Low Key Paintings: Using Mostly Dark Values

In transparent watercolor painting, making a darker value of a hue isn't as straightforward as making a lighter value, when all you have to do is add water. A darker value requires you add a pigment to the hue that is inherently darker in value, but that won't shift the initial color's hue too greatly. In other words, if you want a dark red, you need to add something to your red that will make it darker without making it some other color - like purple. For many colors (red, most blues, purple, some greens) you can successfully darken them with their complement (opposite) or with black. Be aware that adding black "deadens" any hue.

However, with yellows, orange reds and oranges, adding black is not an option, because it turns them green. For these colors, try adding a darker hue in the same color family - to darken yellow, try adding burnt umber or a purple. You'll have to experiment, and be aware that you'll be hard pressed to create any yellow that is towards the black end of the value scale.



Naomi Brotherton, "Sunset" watercolor, 22x30

NIGHT MOODS: PAINTING THE DARK SIDE

In addition to making dark values of the colors you choose, you will also need to lower the intensity of the hues you use in lit areas (i.e. light falling on a wall or street). Depending on the light SOURCE you will need to shift your lights so that they are biased toward blue (moonlight), yellow (incandescent light), or green (tungsten light). When starting a moonlight painting, I will often tone the entire sheet with a light wash of thalo blue and let that completely dry before continuing with the painting. If there are warm yellow windows, I will protect those areas with liquid mask before putting down the blue wash, or paint around them if they're large enough shapes. The painting at right is an example of this.



Ellen Fountain — *Bisbee Nights*,
Fabricscape Series, 22" x 30", watercolor,
private collection

Below are some color mixes that make good darks when saturated. Remember that these mixtures will lose about half their intensity (get duller) and a quarter of their value (get lighter) when the wash dries, so use plenty of pigment, and if unsure, paint a test patch and let it dry before you paint a large area.

① ② ③ ARE VARIOUS PROPORTIONS OF
SCARLET LAKE + THALO BLUE (WINSOR BLUE)

①



②



③



④ SCARLET LAKE + WINSOR (THALO) BLUE + LEMON YELLOW

④



⑤ PERM. ALIZARIN + THALO GREEN



⑥ PERM. ALIZARIN + THALO GREEN



Assignment: Paint a night scene, remembering to focus on a low-key palette, and strong light/dark contrasts.

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

...and we'll have fun, fun, fun 'till our Mommy takes our paintbox away... seriously (well, maybe not), games can be the jumping off point, or even the whole point of your painting! What can you do with games? Some ideas:

- (1) use the "stuff" of games (boards, game pieces, cards, dice, etc) as part of a still life, landscape or portrait
- (2) play with your toys (or your kids' or grandkids') - use them as still life, in a landscape or in a more surreal way
- (3) paint people *playing* games (cards, badminton, chess, bowling, etc.)
- (4) capture the *feeling* of playing a game (this for the abstractionists among you)

Using games as subject matter immediately adds a narrative quality to your work - we all played games as children, and knew or created the "rules" for these games. What does playing games teach us? What do games have in common with painting? With life? Can the game(s) you choose to paint suggest how to structure or design your painting?

Assignment:

Choose one of the four approaches listed above, and play away on your own game painting.



On a Clear Day, You Can See the Clear Cuts,
watercolor, 22x15 image, Ellen Fountain,
private collection



Globe, watercolor, 30x30 image,
Scott Moore, private collection



Hopscotch, watercolor with wax resist, 22x18 image,
Ellen Fountain

ENCLOSURES

Enclosure defined:

- artifact consisting of a space that has been enclosed for some purpose (a box or a corral, for example).
- the act of enclosing something inside something else (put things in a bag)
- a naturally enclosed space (a cave, natural amphitheatre, nest, etc.)
- something (usually a supporting document) that is enclosed in an envelope with a covering letter



Ken Hansen, "Bags and Oranges", watercolor
15" x 22"



Sharon Maczko, "Mind At Play #10"
watercolor, 30" x 40"

Using a box or some other container in which you place objects (like Ken Hansen does in the painting above) is perhaps the most common approach to the theme of enclosure. How could you take the idea to the next level? Historically, Magritte used a surrealistic approach to enclose a green apple in a room - either a very small room or a very large apple, but the sense of being enclosed is definite. Sharon Maczko has used a cardboard box and spectacular lighting in her watercolor. What else (or who) is inside the box?

If you consider the definitions above, how could you present your subject matter in a new way? What would you add or subtract, exaggerate or distort? Would your composition focus more on the formal aspects or on idea/content/narrative?

ASSIGNMENT:

Create a painting that focuses on the idea of enclosure. Choose one of the definitions above.

Do some small sketches to work out your composition first, then choose one to develop further and use it to work up your painting. Remember to focus on the idea/feeling/meaning of *enclosure*.



René Magritte (1811-1967), *La chambre d'écoute I (The Listening Room I)*, 1953, O/C, 31½x39¾ inches. Collection William N. Copley, NY

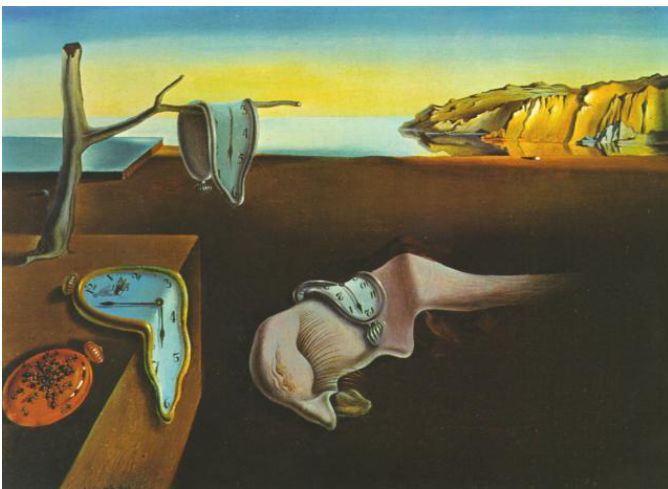
TICK TOCK: IT'S ABOUT TIME

When we think about using time as our theme, there are many different possibilities. You might choose the most common object we associate with time - a clock or watch - and let that be your subject. But there are other ways to suggest time that aren't so literal.

The Surrealists put a lot of stock in dream imagery. Dali's *Persistence of Memory* is about time, but "warped" so to speak - in his world, time is elastic, fitting around whatever object it encounters.



The Artist's Table, Robert Sakson, WC, 22 x 35 inches



The Persistence of Memory, Salvador Dali, 1931, O/C, 9.5 x 13 inches

Marcel Duchamp painted *Nude Descending a Staircase No.2* in 1912 - and it caused quite an uproar when it was exhibited in the 1913 Armory Show in New York. This piece shows his interest in the 4th dimension (time) and contains elements of both cubism (fracturing of form) and futurism (dynamic movement).

If you're not interested in the more surreal, conceptual or abstracted ideas about time, how else could you present it

as a subject? Look back at the Dutch Renaissance "vanitas" still lifes, where time was represented by symbols like burning candles, decaying or half-eaten food, hour glasses with sand running down and other common objects.

Or take a cue from the motion picture, whose "movement" through time is actually the result of many, many individual cells or frames, taken milliseconds apart. In her painting, *Eight Days with Amaryllis*, artist Stephanie Carleton slows down this effect to one "frame" per day to show us an amaryllis from the time the bud first begins to open until it is in full flower.



Nude Descending a Staircase No.2, Marcel Duchamp, 1912, O/C, 58x35 inches



*Eight Days with Amaryllis, Watercolor Diptych, 30" x 11" each piece
Stephanie Carleton*

"We are weighed down, every moment, by the conception and the sensation of time. And there are but two means of escaping and forgetting this nightmare; pleasure and work. Pleasure consumes us. Work strengthens us. Let us choose."

— Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) French Poet

_What's the difference between the way different disciplines consider time? Does time mean the same thing when we discuss historical time, geological time, cosmic time?

_How do we organize time? Do we have a sense of beginning and end or do we simply live in the midst of time?

_How do we think about notions of timelessness? Of eternity?

_How does memory-its tricks and powers-affect our sense of time?

_How do we tell time? What impact do technological changes have on our concepts of time?

Websites:

Stephen Lawson: http://www.smponline.org/summer03/lawson/lawson_images.htm

Nelson-Atkins Museum "Tempus Fugit": <http://www.nelson-atkins.org/tempusfugit/>

Yahoo: http://dir.yahoo.com/Science/Measurements_and_Units/Time? ...and lots of links from here

HEARTS & FLOWERS: LOVE THEME

Love is one of the universal emotions, and has been a recurring theme in art for centuries - the mystery and the myth of romantic love was a subject explored over and over again. Some artists celebrated the ecstasy, and some the tragedy of love, like Klimt and Munch, for example. During the renaissance, mythological love between the gods was a common theme [see Botticelli]



The Kiss, coloured woodcut by Edvard Munch, 1902; in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Non-sexual love can also exist between animals, between animals and humans, and between family members. This tender, nurturing kind of love can make a special statement when you can capture it in a work of art. Some contemporary artists like Steve Hanks have produced a body of work about family relationships.

The trick with this theme has always been how to present love in a universal way without succumbing to a treatment that is overly sentimental or saccharine. Contemporary artists (thanks to Pop Art and other modern art movements) have opportunities for irony, sarcasm, skepticism,



The Kiss - Gustav Klimt, 1907-1908 Oil and gold leaf on canvas 180 × 180 cm Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna



Alessandro Botticelli. Venus and Mars. 1483. Tempera on panel. National Gallery, London, UK

whimsy and social comment not available to artists of earlier times.

Could you make a social comment about the "commercialization" of love (aka the Valentine's Day deluge of jewelry, candy and flower ads)? How else might you present the idea of love in a more contemporary way? How do we make connections now that is different than it used to be? How are relationships nurtured and maintained now?



Seeking New Relationships, WC, 22x15 inches, Ellen Fountain

FOOTLOOSE: LEGS AND FEET

This theme provides an opportunity for humor, social or political commentary, focus on form particularly the interplay between positive and negative shapes, focus on light, and in the process, offer the viewer something a little "out of the ordinary" to look at.

In addition to human feet and legs, consider animal feet, or furniture feet. Both offer additional possibilities.



Ali Cavanaugh
"Thoughts in Red and Yellow", watercolor on clayboard, 20x16



Liz Yarosz-Ash, "The Occupant", watercolor, 40x30 inches



What possibilities for social comment does this collection of shoes for bound feet offer?



In Rufus Coes painting of beach chairs, focusing just on the legs of the chairs changes the focus and feeling of the painting. Now we are more aware of the negative and positive shapes instead of "chairs".



BIRDS OF A FEATHER: FLIGHT OR FLYING THINGS

Assignment: flight. Whether you choose to focus on things that fly or flight itself, you have a wealth of choices when it comes to not only subject matter, but also how you choose to treat that subject matter. You can take a traditional approach or a contemporary one that uses severe cropping and heightened color. You can paint your subject representationally or abstract it.



What does flight represent? You might focus on that meaning instead of a more specific object.

Besides birds and some insects, what else flies in reality?

If we aren't dealing with reality, what flies in our imagination can include anything including ourselves (remember Icarus?)



Top: Tropical Wings, watercolor by Lucy Arnold. Layering butterfly over butterfly and painting them all intensely gives this painting a decidedly contemporary feel.

Above: Geese in Flight, watercolor, ca. 1899, by Frank Benson. A very traditional watercolor showcases these birds in flight.



Above: Over Vitebsk, gouache on paper by Marc Chagall

Below: P-47 and friends, watercolor by Patrick Clark, image 15x22 inches, private collection

Below: Bats at Night, mixed media by Rick Wheeler



Art is the most highly evolved manifestation of the science of signs. Were it to stagnate in that respect, it would forfeit its claim upon us; and it is because the Surrealists did not allow it to stagnate in the 1920s and early '30s that people today go along with visual acrobatics that would have been way beyond their capacity before that time.

*Surrealism taught us, for instance, that the step-by-step narrative systems of the 19th century were not the only ones. It taught us that surprise may be the beginning of wisdom. It taught us to deal simultaneously with pieces of information that zero in on us at differing levels and in differing guises. It taught us that what "doesn't make sense" may sometimes make the best sense of all. It taught us to watch out in everyday life for the poetic and mysterious connections for which one or two men of genius had noted the prototypes. It taught us, finally, that **there is no pattern of life so pedestrian that it cannot be transformed by poetic principle, nor any combination of objects so pointless that a valid connection cannot be made between them.** (Picasso made this last point once and for all [in 1943] when he made a most lifelike head of a bull from the saddle seat and the handlebars of a bicycle.)*



Surrealism...is present [today] in design, in film, in advertising, in humor, in dress — in the form of a general acceptance of incongruities which would once have been dismissed as meaningless nonsense.

— John Russell, *Art Critic*, *The New York Times*
from *The Meanings of Modern Art Series*
1975, *The Museum of Modern Art*
Volume 7, *The Dominion of the Dream*

RIP OFFS: APPROPRIATING FROM THE MASTERS

Appropriating from other sources is something that's been going on in the art world nearly from the beginning. No one works in a vacuum. We are influenced by our surroundings, by current events, and let's face it, by what other people are doing or by what is considered to be the newest thing. But, and it's a HUGE but, appropriating does not mean copying. So, how does one "appropriate"?

(1) Use a photocopy, print, poster, or reproduction in a book of the artist's work as part of a still life setup.

(2) Use the composition of the original work, but change the objects/subject of the original to things that are important/meaningful to you.

(3) Use parts of an original work in a new context.

(4) Do a new painting "in the style of" another artist. This involves a study of the artist's work, so that you can imitate what makes his/her work so recognizable.

For example, I used the first approach in *Playing Around with Mr. M* (below), I used a book of Matisse's work, open to one of his paintings (*Music*), as part of a still life that included fabrics, ribbon, toys (plastic pigs), and penguins from my collection. The pigs "dance" to the music while the penguins watch and



listen along with the figures in the painting. This is a "copy" of the Matisse painting, but in a way that makes it obvious that it is a reproduction in a book, and as such, part of a new work.

I used the second approach in a painting that references a work by Miles G. Batt, Sr., an internationally known watercolorist. In his book when talking about parody, he said he hoped someone would think enough of his work someday to parody it, so I took the challenge, and did just that, in my painting called *Batt Raid, Tucson, Arizona, You Asked*

Magritte's comments on this painting:

I decided to paint the image of a locomotive. Starting from that possibility, the problem presented itself as follows: how to paint this image so that it would evoke mystery—that is, the mystery that has no meaning but that must not be confused with the 'non-sense' that madmen who are trying hard to be funny find so gratifying.

The image of a locomotive is IMMEDIATELY familiar - its mystery is not perceived. In order for its mystery to be evoked, another IMMEDIATELY familiar image without mystery - a dining room fireplace - was joined with the image of the locomotive. The power of thought is demonstrated by unveiling or evoking the mystery in things that seem familiar to us (out of error or habit).

The word 'idea' is not the most precise designation for what I thought when I united a locomotive and a fireplace. I didn't have an idea; I only thought of an IMAGE.

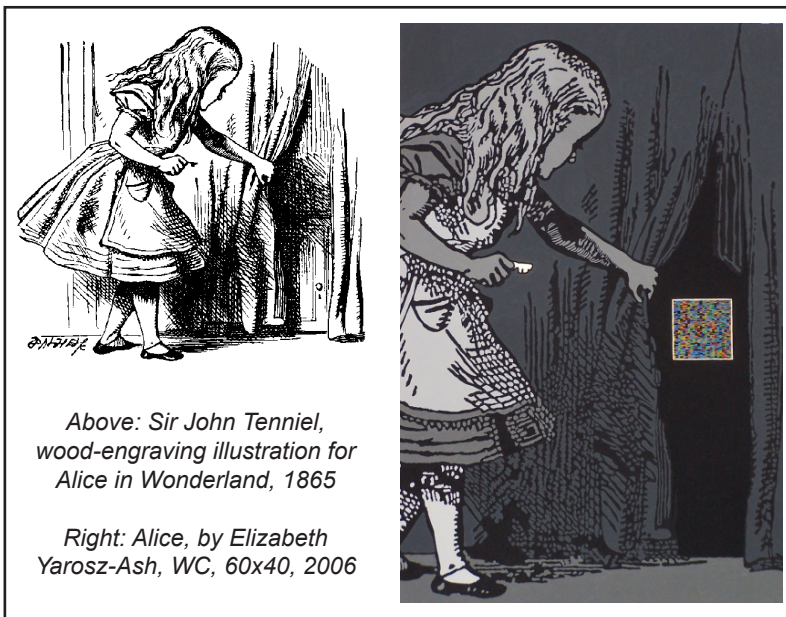


La durée Poignardé (Time Transfixed), O/C, 58x39 inches, 1953, Joseph Winterroothan Collection at the Art Institute of Chicago.

For It, Miles. (right)

I made a black and white photocopy of his painting, *Rock Music and Shrimpers*, and collaged it into the upper left corner of my watercolor/collage painting that "appropriates" his composition, but substitutes objects of my choosing for the ones he painted. The photocopy makes the source of my appropriation very clear, but this is definitely not a verbatim copy of Mr. Batt's painting.

Artist Elizabeth Yarosz-Ash uses appropriation in her current work to reference art of the past. She used the third method, taking part of an existing work, in this case part of an 1865 wood-engraving illustration by Sir John Tenniel for *Alice in Wonderland*, and incorporating it, with changes (her large 60x40 painting is painted in watercolor). She juxtaposes the Alice figure with a human genome pattern. When Alice



Above: Sir John Tenniel,
wood-engraving illustration for
Alice in Wonderland, 1865

Right: Alice, by Elizabeth
Yarosz-Ash, WC, 60x40, 2006

successfully, you need to analyze their work and determine what makes it unique and instantly recognizable as a Matisse, O'Keeffe, Lichtenstein, etc. In some cases, this will be based on a specific image or work (think Hokusai's giant wave) or in other instances, it will be based on how the artist stylistically presented whatever subject they painted (Lichtenstein's ben-day dots for example).

In Paul Giovanopoulos' painting (right), he's painted an apple "in the style of" sixteen different artists. Can you name some of the artists he is appropriating from?

Do your own "appropriation", using one of the four methods discussed above.



Batt-Raid, Ellen Fountain
Watercolor/collage, 29x21 inch image

unlocks this, what will be the result? Is this "playing God"?

The last way you can appropriate is to create a work "in the style of" another artist. To do this



Themed Still Life

Theme: Self-Portrait

“Everything is autobiographical and everything is a portrait”
— Lucien Freud

Whether or not you subscribe to Freud’s philosophy, his thought provides a direction for still life painting that can be both personal and private. With the careful selection of objects and their placement, the artist can reveal him or herself as much or as little as desired, depending on the degree to which he or she “explains” the symbolism of the objects chosen. This can also be an opportunity to create a literal self-portrait, by including one’s own image (in a mirror or photograph perhaps) as part of the still life arrangement.

In my painting, right, the theme of the still life deals with the things in my life that have been impacted by my pursuing a career in art - relationships, time to do other things, earnings over a lifetime, choosing not to have children, not always having the “sweeter” or “expensive things” in life. The art “muse” in this painting is represented by the vaguely disquieting anthropomorphic piece of driftwood, with medusa-like hair created by my paintbrushes placed strategically behind it).



*Sacrifices to the Muse by
Ellen Fountain, watercolor 23" x 22"*



This painting by Robert Sakson is also a self-portrait as shown by the clocks , watches and calendars he uses along with his paints. This may be a reference to “losing track of time” when you paint, or the amount of time one spends on a particular painting, or that time isn’t important to the artistic process.

*The Artist's Table, watercolor by
Robert Sakson, 15" x 22"*

*Bedroom Floor, watercolor by
Sharon Maczko, 19" x 16"*

Sharon's works are quite autobiographical in nature. Sometimes they are obvious (hearkening back to her childhood) and other times the symbolism is more personal and obscured to the viewer, although you always sense that there is much more to the painting than just a collection of objects.

See more of Sharon's work at:
<http://wdcgraphic.com/watercolor.htm>
and
http://www.stremmelgallery.com/artists/artist.html?artist_id=44



In *Matrices*, below, Ann Pierce uses pattern pieces (she sews) as a metaphor for growth, and the idea that you can take something flat and create something dimensional (with life).



*Matrices, watercolor by
Ann T. Pierce, 21" x 29"*

Themed Still Life

DAVIDA SCHULMAN
Artist's Statement

I have always thought of myself as an artist. The creative urge has always been with me even through the years when I was too busy raising a family to make art. When that task was nearly complete, I began to paint again and, after working in isolation for some time, I enrolled in graduate school for the challenge an artistic community provides. Making art has been my way of communicating something about the delights and the irritants in my life. Contributors to both have been my family, politics, religion, the art world, and the art-making process. If work stemming from my experience of pleasure and pain strikes a chord of recognition with the viewer then, I feel I've done my job as an artist. I've touched the on-looker and communicated something about who I am.

Some of my work focuses on issues of body image and gender role especially as it impacts older women. My self-portraits are part of an ongoing series made to convey something of who I am both physically and psychically. They function, in part, to counter the prevailing images of women in the media.

Some of my self-portraits include images of women made by male artists who are considered to be stars of art history. Some of my imagery also includes dolls. Whether devices for artistic expression or tools of women's socialization, such images are depictions of a singular type within a particular social/historical context.

Where am I placed in the art historical context as a woman who is an artist of a certain age and size who uses her own body for her own expressive goals? I am certainly no "fantasy babe". How does my physical appearance and our culture's attitudes to that appearance effect the viewer? Does my image mirror my society? Does society mirror me? What are the social values and meanings placed upon the female body by contemporary culture?

See more of Davida Schulman's work at: www.davida-art.com/watercolor_self.htm

ASSIGNMENT:

Create a still life that is also a self-portrait. It can include an image of yourself if you wish, but might also be a collection of objects that tell the viewer "who you are".



*Self Portrait with Paul & Vincent, watercolor
29" x 21", by Davida Schulman*