

INITIAL INFORMATION:

KEY TAKEAWAYS: Become more aware of how to strategize better before and during the painting process; understand edges better, especially when painting rocks; how to layer more effectively; simplify the process & problem solving.

ARTWORK: These are wrapped canvas prints from Pictorem (both for sale). The larger piece is to scale 36x24; the original falls painting is 14x17.

The originals of these paintings will be in the Governor's Art Show, Loveland Museum, 4/25-6/6.

<https://governorsartshow.org>

MATERIALS

- Pastels: Terry Ludwig Rocks & Shadow Set, Iridescent (Ludwig, Sennelier, Townsend), Girault, Richeson soft rolled, Blue Earth
- Substrate: (The following is for information but not recommended) Demo will be on a gesso board with transparent Fine Pumice Gel by Golden, and some acrylic paint applied; the original large rock painting is on Uart black, and the smaller piece is on the new PastelGrain, charcoal color.

TOPICS:

STRATEGY

- Reference Photo:
 - When you are out taking pictures, slow down - look for a focal point, make sure the grid is on, take at least 4 photos with the focal spot in the 4 intersecting points of the grid
 - Look at the photos in black & white (mono not noir); are there a good variety of values and do they lead you through the photo (or can you at least work with them). If the values are flat (e.g., you can barely see the different shapes), good luck.
 - Experiment with enhancing the colors, shadows, etc.
- Procreate: This is a good app for testing other colors, both on a photo as well as on your painting as you progress. Can add shapes, too. Easy tutorials on YouTube. One-time fee 12.99.
- Substrate: What paper/board to use and why (black, or what color, sanded, suede, etc.)
- Underpainting: Is it a good idea; if so where on the paper and what medium (pastel, watercolor, etc.)
- Sequence: Strategy on what to paint first AND why
- Color Palette: Are the colors on the reference photo just what you want to follow or do you need to enhance, use a color scheme. Choose your pastels (or the main ones)
- Take photos as you progress: look at them in black & white or with a red view finder; how are the values, etc...there are "self-critiques" out there you can use (I have a couple for my students).

EDGES in PAINTING

Edges are a major part of the design of your painting. They can lead the viewer from one area to another or off the page. A Hard edge draws your attention. A Soft edge releases your attention

- Hard Edges: Sharp, abrupt, and clear boundaries between two shapes or colors. These are often used for focal points, high contrast areas, or to bring objects forward, such as a sharp shadow edge or a crisp, distinct foreground object. Be cautious about TOO MANY hard edges – looks too harsh, stiff.
- Soft Edges: Gradual or smooth transitions where colors merge gently. Used to represent rounded forms (like a cheekbone), atmospheric effects (mist, clouds), or objects further away from the viewer (recede into space). Be cautious again of too many (unless you are striving for a foggy, blurry affect).

- Lost Edges: Edges so soft they are almost indistinguishable, where an object's value merges into the background. They provide a "rest" for the eye, adding mystery and atmosphere by allowing the form to appear and disappear.
- Firm Edges: A middle-ground edge that is clear but not as razor-sharp as a hard edge. It is firmer than a soft edge, often used for subtle definition, such as the edge of a human face in moderate light.
- Broken Edges (this is from Alain Picard): Created by an intentional break at the edge of two contrasting shapes, allowing a sense of air to pass through. They can be created by breaking the edge during the painting process with a brush or by applying marks that break the edges of your shapes. They create openness, energy and spontaneity in the piece.

Hue, Value & Intensity are all involved in edges.
As always, it's a balancing act. (Don't overdue and trip...)

ROCKS:

- Pastels: I prefer square pastels even if painting rounded rocks (like in a stream); it makes it easier to NOT paint potato shapes
- Layering is critical to create texture & depth, typically starting with dark (in shadows) and then adding warmer and finally highlights (when they exist). Avoid blending with your fingers or other tools. AND be cautious of too many layers and creating muddy colors.
- Strokes: frequently across and down – be a rock! REALLY look at that rock and movement in the image, then your mark making/strokes should follow that.
- Substrate: I prefer sanded (allows more layers)
- Add detail: I learned a tip from Albert Handell – use a Prismacolor NuPastel (bottle Green #298, in some of the sets) for some of the cracks and fissures in rocks.

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AND - I have classes in my home studio every other week, \$45/3 hrs or private class \$75/3 hrs
Currently there are 2 openings in the Saturday class, 2-5pm (4/18, 5/2, etc.), and 1 opening on Monday, 1-4pm (4/21, 5/4, etc.)

REFERENCES & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION:

Look at how other artists paint rocks and in other mediums, too:



Skip Whitcomb



Albert Handell

What Creates Edges?

We see edges every time there is a change in:

Object: Marks the transition from one object to another. For example, if you place a coffee mug in front of you, edges will mark the transition from the mug to the surrounding desk or wall.

Plane: Marks the transition from one plane or face of an object to another face. For example, from the side of a box to the top of a box; or from the side of a cliff to the top of a cliff.

Color: Marks the transition from one color to another. For example, the shadow cast on an object creates an edge that separates light and dark. This type of edge is interesting because it does not physically exist; we cannot touch an edge created mainly by a change in color. This means in painting, we are dealing with many more edges than what is physically there. So, it is important that we understand how to use them!

Factors which influence Edges:

Other Factors Which Influence the Edges We See

Earlier in this post, I discussed how edges are created by a change in object, plane or color. The following factors influence how we see those edges:

Light: A strong, direct light source tends to make edges appear harder or sharper. On the other hand, a weak, diffused light source tends to soften the edges we see.

Atmosphere/Environment: You will see harder edges under the clear, midday sun than on a foggy morning (like the painting below by Claude Monet).

Movement: When an object is moving fast, the edges we see are softened.

Focus: We struggle to see hard edges on objects which are out of our focus.

Handling Edges in a Landscape Painting**Richard McKinley**

The handling of the edges within a landscape painting can be subconsciously intimidating to an artist, which can have a subsequent effect on how product is applied. When the elements that make up the subject matter of a scene are visually recognized, we intellectually understand that they are separated from one another—that there is space between them, even though they may overlap; unless, of course, they are composed of flat objects next to, or on top of, each other, like pieces of paper.

Landscape Painting Advice

When color is applied to a painting surface to represent this separation between objects, the artist's hand will often automatically slow down as it approaches an edge and then follow the shape.

Conversely, painters often overstate objects by retaining extremely harsh edge separations, allowing no appearance of gradation to occur. This "edge intimidation" can produce an outlined appearance, making the perception of depth within a representational painting awkward.

The Use of Line

The human desire to communicate has brought about language and ultimately symbolic marks that represent words. When these marks are properly arranged, they communicate the intentions of the author. Drawing shares a similar notion. The artist's use of line to symbolize a shape is his or her calligraphy. It's amazing how a few marks on a surface can be identifiable to a viewer. It's important, though, for the representational painter to remember that value (the representation of light and dark) and color are also present in every scene. Line is a useful tool and one that can be accentuated for stylistic purposes, but it is the one thing we use as artists that does not exist in nature. Even a power line, draped between two poles, will appear and disappear, depending on what it is next to. It is the contrast of surrounding shapes that creates the appearance of things. A useful exercise to practice this is to focus on the negative spaces (shapes) surrounding things. This breaks the obsession with identifying things and ultimately produces a more realistic portrayal of the scene.

Make It, Break It: Childhood coloring books may have been delightful to play with but they also instilled a notion that we have to stay within the lines. Breaking free from this impulse is hard. If we go

outside of the lines, we may lose what it is. One way I have overcome this is to nurture the need for control by very accurately drawing the subject matter onto my painting surface. Once I have, I let go of it by smearing pastel or wet mixed-media across the drawing. This serendipitous underpainting sets the stage for the bits and pieces of additional pastel. It is the old painting mantra: Make it, break it, and then make it again.

Stop Being So Edgy: Once we become aware of edge intimidation, it seems that it should be relatively easy to overcome. But knowing it happens and attempting to alter how our hand responds when painting doesn't always arrest the situation. In actuality, edge intimidation is so deeply ingrained, it is one of the hardest obstacles for painters to overcome. By focusing in the beginning of a landscape painting on the negative spaces, instead of outlines, and allowing elements to smear together instead of being harshly outlined, you will break free of your edgy habits. Maybe an old painting dog can learn new tricks!

Abstract Shapes / Seeing the Bits and Pieces of Shadow, Color and Light

Richard McKinley

When learning to paint the landscape, it's common to encounter "Subject Matter Intimidation." This is the belief that there's only a certain way to paint different things such as rocks, clouds, trees, etc. While these objects are very different in their physical makeup, what we ultimately do with pigment when representing them on a surface is very similar.

Painting Rocks / Painting Clouds. I know what you're thinking: "Richard, rocks are not clouds. There must be a different method used to paint them." And I agree, rocks are not clouds, but what we see is not a physical rock made up of compacted minerals or moisture compressed into a cloud either. What we see is light reflected off a surface, which produces contrasting shapes, values and colors that—when configured by the human mind—represent those physical objects. It's how sight works. Understanding this phenomenon and embracing it is paramount to painting well.

Painting Texture: When to Play It Up / When to Play It Down. Within pastel painting, there are numerous application techniques that may prove helpful in representing the textural makeup of individual objects. For example, skies are smoother than grasses, and trees are rougher than snow. We may blend and smooth the pastel for the sky and utilize the edge of a pastel stick for the grasses. If the textural differences of these objects is overly indicated though, making these elements appear disconnected and isolated within the composition, the end result will look plastic and artificial. What is helpful is to accentuate texture in areas of direct light and play down the appearance of texture within shadow.

Seeing the Abstract Shapes. When we identify an object within a scene, we bring history and prejudice into play. We know that a pile of rocks is made up of many individual pieces having physically examined them in the past. This knowledge can greatly impede a successful portrayal of the rocks when this idea is left unchallenged. One method of challenging this prejudice is to observe the scene upside-down. When you turn your reference material upside-down, or glance into a mirror placed at your forehead and tilted so that the scene is upside-down, the abstract "bits and pieces" of shadow, light and color are not so easily associated to recognizable things. This makes it easier to see without prejudice. If there were a secret to painting well, beyond the truth of practice, it would be the ability to identify the abstract "bits and pieces" that make up a scene. The better able we are to identify them and place them judiciously into our paintings, the more we realize that rocks are really not that different from clouds; they just have a different arrangement of abstract "bits and pieces." We are capable of painting anything if we apply this rational.

How to Paint Rocks in Soft Pastel

Karen Margulis

<https://kemstudios.blogspot.com/2018/10/how-to-paint-rocks-in-pastel.html>