



artist daily
presents

OIL PAINTING TECHNIQUES

*How to Prep Your Oil
Art Canvas and Create
a Focal Point*

Plus: OIL PAINTING TIPS
FROM DAVID LEFFEL

Beginner Oil

How to prepare a canvas for an oil painting



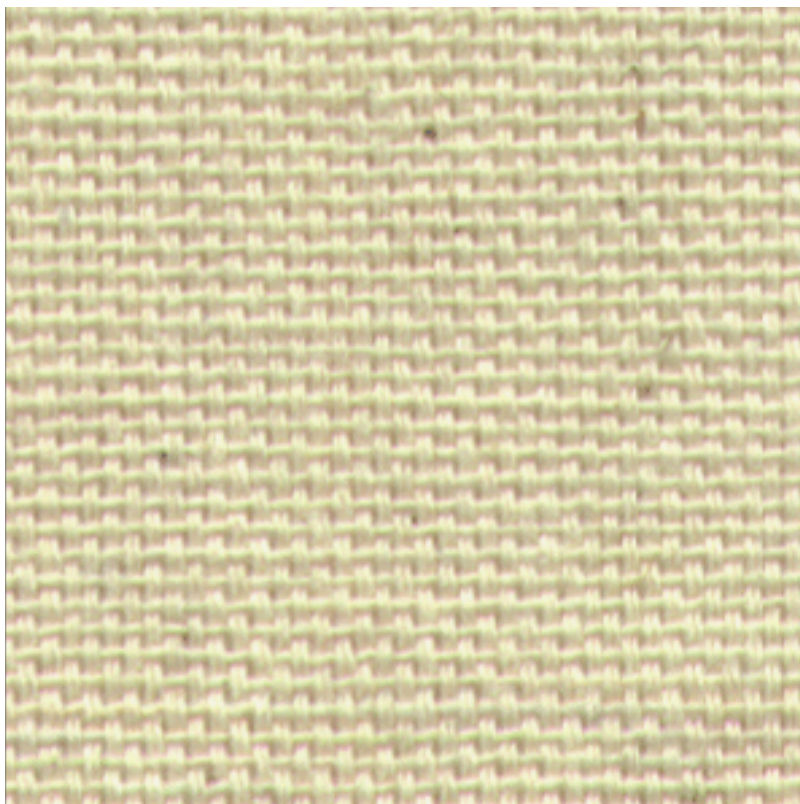
The method for preparing a canvas varies from artist to artist. This is primarily because there are several options to choose from in every phase of preparation. Here, we outline the choices available so that you can confidently begin to work in oil.

by Naomi Ekperigin

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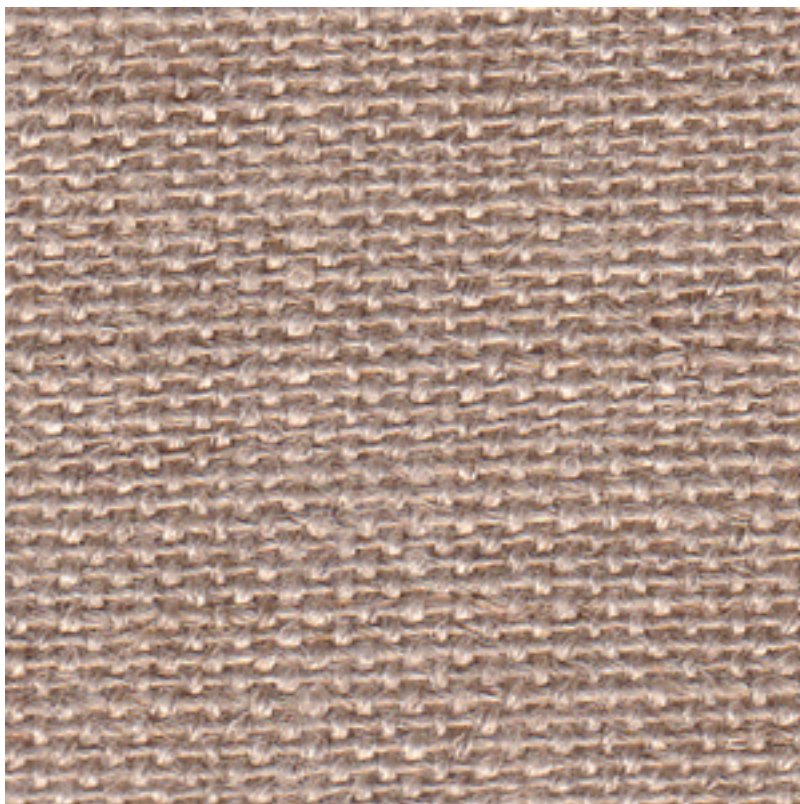
THE CANVAS

The most common support used by painters, canvas, does not refer to one particular material, but can be used to describe many kinds of closely woven fabric. The two most common canvases used as a support for oil painting are cotton and linen, with linen being the more expensive. When both are unprimed—that is, not coated with a material that prevents the paint from soaking through the surface and deteriorating the canvas—they can be easily distinguished. Both kinds of canvas can be purchased primed or unprimed; either way is acceptable. Both cotton and linen are a light tan color when they are unprimed. Primed canvas allows you to skip the process of mixing and applying the sizing and ground, which many beginning artists and hobbyists prefer. However, unprimed canvas is less expensive, and frequent painters find it beneficial to learn how to apply their own priming, as it cuts costs and enables them to create a texture specific to their painting needs.



An example of unprimed cotton.

Photo courtesy Fredrix Artist Canvas.



An example of unprimed linen.

Photo courtesy Fredrix Artist Canvas.

STRETCHING THE CANVAS

Before the canvas is primed, it must be stretched to fit the frame. Attempting to stretch it after it has been primed will result in cracking and flaking of the priming, which creates a rough surface on which to apply oil paint. Primer also makes the canvas rigid and it is unlikely to yield no matter how hard you tug at it. Stretching your own canvas can be difficult at first, but it is more cost-effective than purchasing pre-stretched canvases, which is a consideration for many artists. The following tools are required to stretch a canvas:

- Four stretcher bars (pieces of wood that make up the frame. These can be purchased at any art-supply or hardware store). The most common bars are tongue-and-groove with mitered corners and beveled sides.
- Staple gun and staples (or a hammer and carpet tacks, depending on preference). Coated or iodized metal staples made of copper or brass are best.
- Canvas pliers (to help you maintain a tight grip on the canvas as you attach it to the stretcher bars)
- Scissors, knife, or other sharp blade.
- Right angle (to ensure evenness)

First, join your stretcher bars at the corners, forming a rectangle. You may have to push them by hand to tighten them, or lightly tap them with a hammer (be careful not to dent the wood when you do this). Use the right angle to make sure that all corners are 90 degree angles. Once the stretchers are securely connected and straight, roll your canvas out on a clean surface. Place the frame on top, and use your scissors to cut the canvas to size, making sure to leave at least two to three inches of extra material on all sides so that you can staple the canvas to the frame.

SIZING, GROUND, AND PRIMING

Now that the canvas is attached to the frame, it is ready for sizing and ground. These terms can be very confusing, as their meanings overlap and are sometimes used interchangeably. Sizing is applied first, and acts as a sealant and protection for the canvas. For oil painting, a weak solution of animal glue is applied to linen canvases to protect them from the acid in the paints, which can cause the canvas to deteriorate. Ground is applied on top of sizing, providing a uniform color, texture, and level of absorbency, in addition to acting as an additional layer of protection for the canvas. In the case of oil painting, the most common ground is gesso-- a combination of oil with an inert white pigment such as chalk, whiting, or plaster of Paris, and an aqueous binder such as casein or animal glue.

Gesso can be made and purchased in varying levels of consistency--from cream to a paste--depending on the desired texture and level of absorbency. It also comes in different colors, though white is the most common. Water-based gesso was created in the mid-1950s and it is primarily used for painting with acrylics. Making your own gesso requires heating animal glue, such as a calf or rabbitskin, and mixing it with white pigment. The glue must be heated until it is smooth, but not to the boiling point. Perfecting this method requires practice, and with the various types of prepared gesso available for purchase, beginning artists can avoid this step.

Normally, gesso is applied in two or three thin coats, to create a smooth finish. If a rougher texture is preferred, only one coat may be necessary. "The amount of gesso applied determines the texture of your painting surface," explains artist Joe Gyurcsak. "If a painter is going to be working in detail, a smoother surface may be better."

After stirring your gesso, add a small amount of water (no more than 1 part water to 2 parts gesso) to thin it. It is tempting to mix a lot of water into the gesso to increase its quantity and save money, but doing so cre-

ates an unstable ground. "Overthinning is dangerous," warns Gyurcsak. "The polymer can only be broken down so much, and adding water compromises the integrity of the gesso film." Gesso dries rapidly, so it must be quickly applied in smooth, even strokes in one direction. After the first coat, allow the gesso to dry (approximately one hour) and lightly brush with fine sandpaper to smooth. After smoothing, wipe the surface with a soft, dry cloth to remove dust and residue. You should also thoroughly rinse your brush between applications, because gesso cannot be removed once it dries. The next coat should be applied in even strokes in the opposite direction of the previous coat so that no brush marks are visible. Don't forget to coat the sides and corners of your canvas--many paintings have disintegrated along the edges due to lack of priming. ■



Applying gesso in thin coats ensures an even painting surface.

Photo courtesy Utrecht Art Supplies.

Beginner Oil

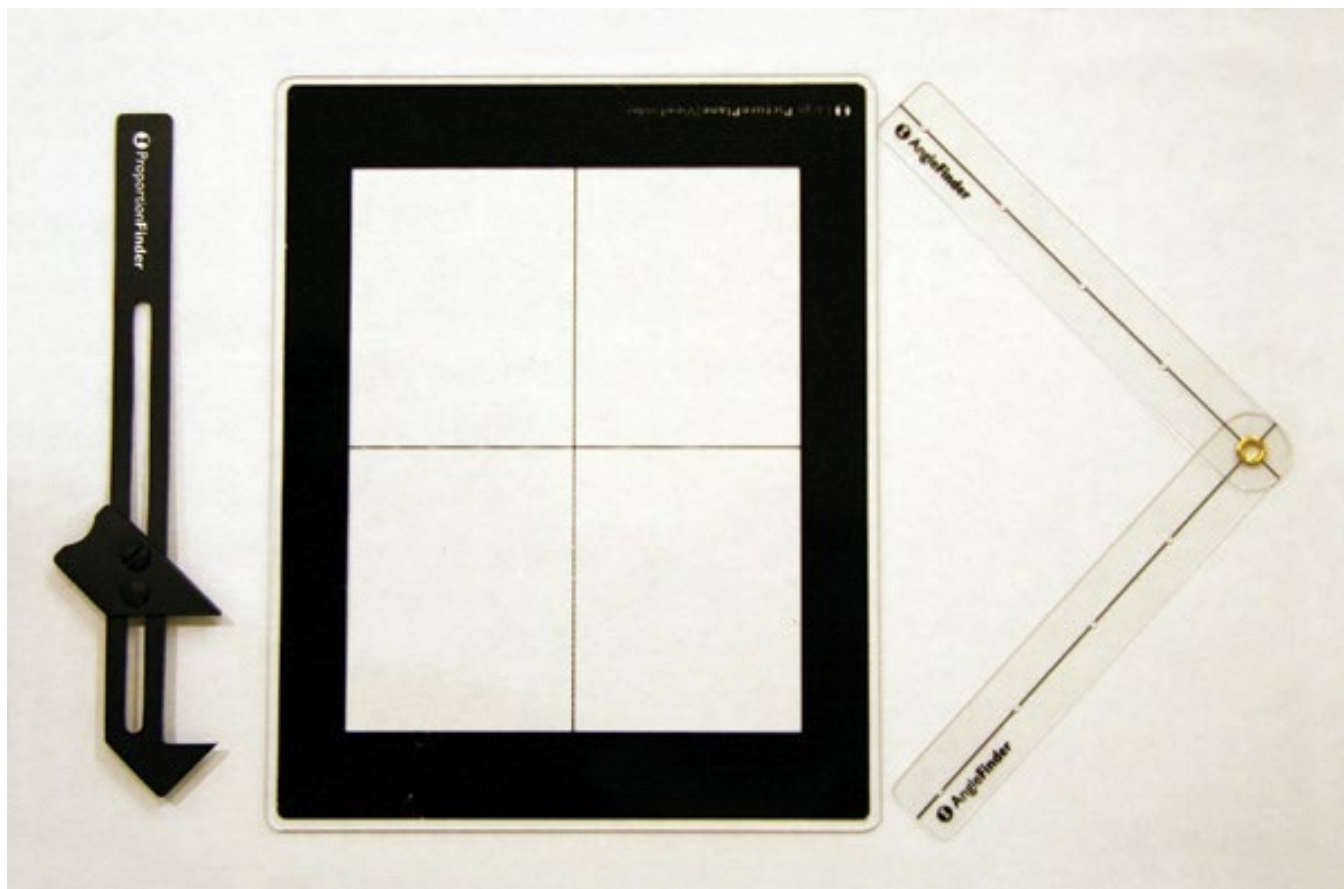
Determining the focal point of a painting



Deciding where to place the elements in a painting can be difficult, but the decisions are crucial to creating a successful piece.

by Naomi Ekperigin

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When a composition is done well, it may go unnoticed; however, a poorly composed piece instantly strikes the viewer's eye as awkward. The goal of composition is to direct the viewer's eye through a painting and lead them toward what the artist thinks is important. Although there is no single right way to do this, there are specific devices one can employ to draw a viewer's eye to a point of interest, as well as to create the illusion of objects, people, and places existing in tangible space. Here, we list some of the tools at an artist's disposal that will aid in influencing and directing the viewer.

Many beginning painters tend to devote their energy to drawing and painting objects accurately, and find it difficult to create a strong composition. "It's easy to become overwhelmed by all the possibilities one discovers in the

landscape," says artist-instructor James Sulkowski, who teaches plein air workshops to help students overcome the fear of decision-making. Some artist-instructors suggest using a viewfinder, which many artists employ when faced with a large scene. One can purchase a viewfinder at any art supply store, or make a simple one out of cardboard. Regardless of the material, it serves the same purpose: a viewfinder allows an artist to isolate the key elements of a scene, as well as view multiple compositions before committing one to paper. When faced with a large scene, it is helpful to ask several questions. Why do I want to paint this scene? What initially attracted me to it? What content is needed to attract the viewer and make them feel what I feel? As these questions are answered, it becomes clear that a given scene is not set in stone,

A proportion finder, viewfinder, and anglefinder developed by artist-instructor Brian Bormeisler for his beginning students.

even if the subject is a mountain range. An artist can alter the scene to suit the emotions or message he or she seeks to share with the viewer. A landscape or still life is meant to spark the imagination and excite the senses; it should be an image that is begging to be painted or drawn. If a certain area or image is not appealing, change locations or choose alternate subjects. Or, one could crop a scene tightly and focus on minute details that often go unnoticed in a large scene.

Sulkowski recommends that students determine the focal point before applying the brush to the canvas. "No matter what the circumstances, an artist needs to identify the focal point of

his or her painting and then structure the painting process so that the viewer immediately understands the center of interest. When painting en plein air, it is very important to keep that focus in mind so time and energy aren't wasted on elaborating areas of the canvas that are of secondary importance." The same also holds true when painting a still life.

Nashville artist-instructor Gayle Levée has her workshop students spend hours arranging elements to create the best composition. She advises that they initially put together more objects than they think they'll need, and then choose one as the focal point. "Place that object first, and then place the supporting pieces around it," she suggests. When painting a still life, Levée begins with the focal point, and makes measurements on the canvas proportional to the center of interest.

In her painting *Reflections in Gold*, Levée employs the rule of thirds to draw the viewer's eye to the vase and fruit (view a demonstration of the piece). This is one of several devices that can draw the viewer's eye to a center of interest. This rule, employed in painting and photography, is meant to yield a more aesthetically pleasing composition. It advises that artists divide a canvas into three sections both horizontally and vertically, and place the center of interest at a point of intersection, or in the upper or lower third of the frame. By doing so, the focal point is taken out of the "dead center" of the canvas, and the viewer's eye is led across the entire space. This can be seen in Joseph Wright of Derby's painting *An Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump*, in which he places the figures in the upper and lower thirds, as well as in the left and right thirds of the canvas.

Derby also uses light to create areas of high contrast, which naturally attract the eye. He creates a single light source, which emanates from the center but does not illuminate all the figures equally. The viewer's eyes are



naturally drawn to the figures that are most brightly lit, and those in shadow gaze in the same direction, which refocuses the viewer's attention. While the young woman on the left looks towards the canvas edge at her companion, his gaze toward her prevents the viewer's eye from wandering off the canvas.

An Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump

by Joseph Wright of Derby, 1768, oil, 72 x 96. Collection the National Gallery, London, England. Derby's painting divided according to the rule of thirds. Notice that the scientist and the young girl are placed at points of intersection.



Avenue l'Opera

by Camille Pissarro, 1898, oil. Private collection.

The old man to the left of the center looks outward, which serves to create the illusion of a much larger space, and possibly unseen participants. The moon in the upper right corner offers an additional light source, and creates an ominous tone that sets a mood for the viewer. It is not by any means the most important element in the piece, but it is vital for the emotion it evokes, and as such, Derby draws the viewer's eye to it by making it bright in comparison to the dark clouds surrounding it and the shadowy interior it illuminates.

Many landscape painters use leading lines to direct the viewer's gaze. This is often seen in the form of lakes,

rivers, streams, fences, and roads. In these instances, the illusion of three-dimensional space is created by the use of perspective. As the objects recede into view, they naturally become narrower, and the viewer follows the path created as depth increases. For instance, in Camille Pissarro's Avenue l'Opera: Morning Sunshine, the viewer's eye is above ground level, taking in the scene. However, we are drawn into the distance by the receding path. Our gaze is further echoed by the large buildings on either side that follow the path of

the road. We also see the rule of thirds at work, as the sky occupies the upper third of the frame, and the fountains are on both sides. This leaves the emptiest space in the center, though it is clearly occupied—both by the passersby and by the viewer, who looks in this direction.

By creating areas of sharp contrast and bright light, as well as positioning the points of interest asymmetrically, the artist can subtly and powerfully direct a viewer's gaze. Once a focal point is established, determining the emotions or message it evokes will help one decide which of the aforementioned tools will most effectively tell a clear and evocative visual story. ■

Simplifying Relationships

Richard Baumann relies on two complementary colors to develop his landscapes and interior scenes, applying mixtures of them around the canvas so he can orchestrate the relationship between shapes and values. As a result, subtle color accents stand out against the balanced composition.

by M. Stephen Doherty

The best way to make something important in a painting is often to make changes that subdue everything around it. That's a simple statement to make, but the concept is one that artists often forget when they are trying to make a flower, a vase, or a cheekbone more significant than it currently appears in a painting. They are inclined to add more yellow to the color of the flower, thicker highlights on the vase, or more pink to the crest of the cheekbone. But quite often the best solution is to make everything around that object grayer, softer, or less contrasting. By adding a complementary color, smoothing an edge, or reducing the difference between values, the competing shapes become less important and the center of interest becomes more obvious.

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**Abingdon Square
Studio With French
Tulips**

2007, oil, 14 x 11.
Courtesy Chrysalis Gallery,
Southampton, New York.





Interior With Poinsettia
2006, oil, 20 x 16. Collection the artist.

“Objects gain a sense of truth, vibrancy, and life in the way a painter moves them in and out of the atmosphere.”

Richard Baumann understands and applies that concept as well as almost any contemporary artist. His interior scenes and landscapes are brilliant examples of how colors, shapes, and values can be simplified so they will have the maximum impact in a painting. The key to the success of those paintings is that Baumann works with a limited palette of colors that emphasizes the complementary relationship of violet and yellow, red and green, or blue and orange. For example, Abingdon Square Studio With French

Tulips is structured around the relationship of violet and yellow, with most of the sunlit shapes warmed with a cadmium yellow and the shadows cooled with shades of lavender that represent subtle shifts in the combination of blue and red. Because the composition is developed with “color/gray” mixtures of the complementary colors, the yellow tulips and blue cloth stand out without

the colors or the values being pushed to the extreme. That is, with most of the canvas covered in subtle mixtures of violet and yellow, the pure yellow and pure blue grab the viewer’s attention without much effort.

When one compares several paintings created in Baumann’s New York studio using the same chairs, mirror, fireplace, vases, and flowers it becomes even more obvious how the artist uses carefully balanced color relationships to offer completely different responses to what he observes. The same is true

Gloucester Boatyard in Fog

2006, oil, 15 x 20.
Courtesy State of the Art Gallery II,
Gloucester, Massachusetts.





with the paintings he creates on location and in his studio in Gloucester, Massachusetts. “My wife and I have a vacation home in Gloucester where I spend most of the summer painting,” he explains. “Some of the smaller canvases are started on location and completed in the studio, and others are done indoors from sketches and studies. Despite the change in venue and working conditions from my New York studio, my palette and working procedures are essentially the same. I’m always striving to simplify things and concentrate on the fundamental relationships of shapes, edges, values, and colors.” The benefit of this concentration can be seen in the painting Gloucester Boatyard in Fog. Most of the picture is developed with slight shifts in a basic violet color that leans toward

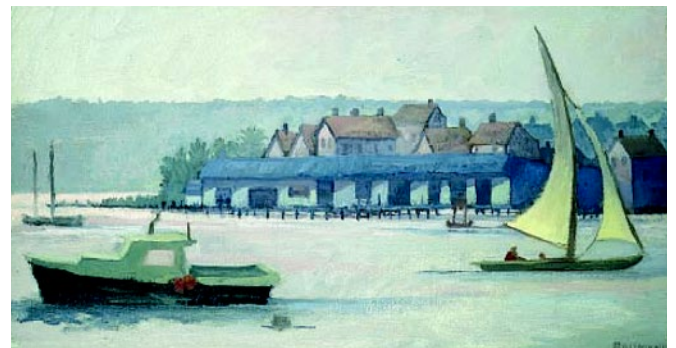
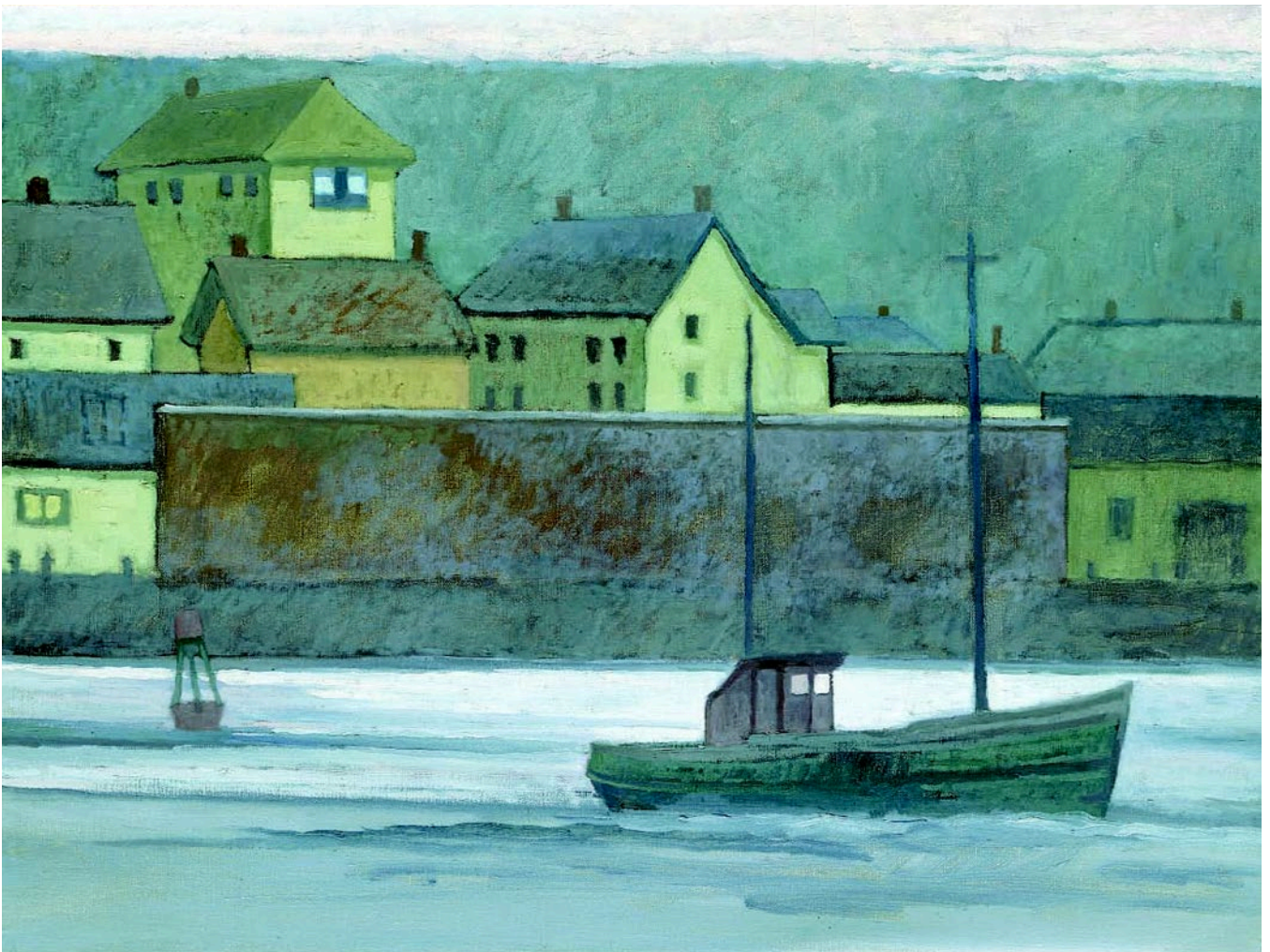
T.J.’s Whistle Stop Gloucester
2004, oil, 12 x 16. Collection the artist

brown in the foreground, ochre in the middle range, and blue in the distance. The exceptions are the circular buoys hanging from the side of the boat, which are brighter red shapes. They stand out because they are exceptions to overall composition, not because they are painted with new colors added to the limited palette.

“My teachers at the Art Students League of New York, Frank Mason and Robert Maione, always talked about atmosphere being one of the most critical aspects of painting,” Baumann explains. “They pointed out that objects gain a sense of truth, vibrancy, and life in the way a painter moves them in and out of the atmosphere. That’s how

an artist creates the magical illusion of three-dimensional objects existing on a two-dimensional surface: It’s all about the “air” in a painting suggested by the subtle relationships of closely related colors and values.

“The English artist Bernard Dunstan wrote about the same issues, and he had a strong influence on me,” Baumann adds. “He described how artists can control grays by mixing complementary colors. For example, he demonstrated how a green can be softened with the addition of a small amount of red; how the combination of complements can drop a color in value without it becoming muted or dull (as would happen with the addition of black); and how an artist can maintain the richness of color through all the incremental shifts in value. Monet



TOP
**Gloucester Harbor,
The Return of the
Phyllis "A"**
2004, oil, 24 x 32.
Collection Pfizer, New
York, New York.

LEFT
**Gloucester Harbor,
Early Sunday
Morning**
2005, oil, 11 x 14.
Private collection.

ABOVE
**Gloucester Harbor,
Yellow Sailboat**
2004, oil, 8 x 15.
Private collection.



Abingdon Studio

2005, oil, 14 x 11. Collection Kris Fischer.

did this brilliantly in such paintings as his famous *Le Gare Saint-Lazare*. The reds stand out because they exist in an atmosphere of cool blues, grays, and violets. The warm colors explode because of the foil of cool colors around them. Many of Monet's paintings include those kinds of dramatic notes set off against color grays made with combinations of complementary colors.

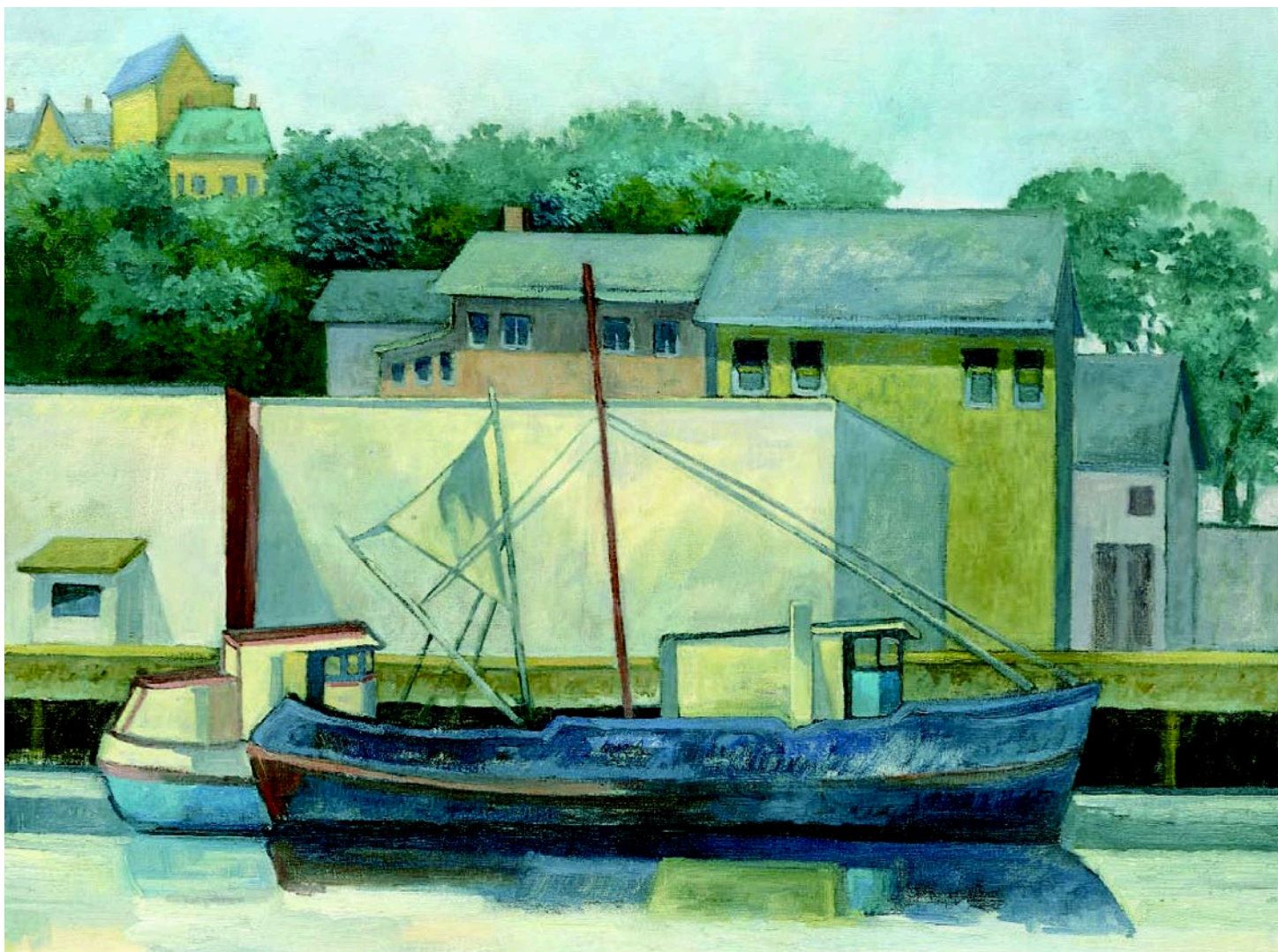
"My method of developing a painting is also based on my study of Cézanne," Baumann explains. "Cézanne painted patches or slabs of color around a canvas and gradually

brought those together to identify a tree, building, or mountain. No one element of the landscape was completed until Cézanne was able to bring the entire picture together. That is, he would make a few strokes of the brush to place a limb in the lower right, indicate a roof line in the upper left, paint the local color of the rocks in the middle of the canvas, move to the left to establish the location of a distant hill, and so forth. Eventually he would go back to the limb, the roof, the rocks, and the hill to complete them at the same time every other section of the

painting was being resolved.

"Cézanne's approach makes a lot more sense to me than painting the center of interest and working my way out from there to the edges of the canvas," Baumann comments. "The approach follows the movement of the way objects relate to one another in space. Everything is incomplete and at the same level of development until the painting is finished. I actually followed his example and painted watercolors in this "point-to-point" or "patch-to-patch" method so I could understand it better before using it with oil colors. The advantage is that I know where things are and have a better sense of the overall proportions and integration of the pictorial elements before I've applied a lot of thick paint. People who watch me are totally confused by the seemingly disjointed strokes of oil paint all over the canvas, but I know what they indicate about the landscape."

Baumann says this method of painting is one that can best be employed when the subject is directly in front of him and he has the opportunity to edit what he is seeing. "I rarely work from photographs because they don't accurately record the atmosphere, nor do they allow me to move things in and out of the picture," he explains. "When I'm looking directly at a landscape or a setup in my studio, it's easy to move objects closer together or farther apart, to make them darker or lighter in value, or to take them completely out of the picture. Interestingly, this idea of making radical changes inside



a picture first occurred to me when I was working as a security guard for the New York City Ballet in the 1980s and watched the designers build sets, change the lighting, tear everything down, and then construct an entirely different scene. I could stand in one place and watch the world inside the theatre change completely in a matter of minutes.”

In commenting on his technique, Baumann explains, “I’m not saying these methods are superior to other approaches. The point is that this process works well for me and makes sense in terms of what I want to express.” ■

**Gloucester Harbor,
The Delores Louise I**
2005, oil, 24 x 32.
Collection Peter and Jo
Hart.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Richard Baumann earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Pace University, in New York City, and a teaching certificate in fine arts from the State University of New York at New Paltz. He also studied at the Art Students League of New York, in Manhattan. Baumann’s paintings have been exhibited in a number of group and solo exhibitions in New York and Massachusetts. He is represented by State of the Art Gallery II, in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and Chrysalis Gallery, in Southampton, New York. For more information on Baumann, visit his website at www.rbaumannstudio.com.

Behind a Beautiful Painting

David A. Leffel teaches artists to respond to light and shadow, values, edges, color, space, and texture—the abstract qualities of a picture, rather than the identity of the subject matter or the tedious formality of rendering.

by M. Stephen Doherty

After more than 35 years of teaching drawing and painting, David A. Leffel is widely recognized as a master of a particular approach to oil painting, one that emphasizes the abstract concepts that have guided artists for centuries. The ideas he advances are at once simple and all-encompassing. They promote the need to understand the basic notions implicit in expressing our perceptions of the three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface, taking full advantage of the natural qualities of the materials at our disposal. In short, Leffel teaches that painting is about the paint and its ability to create beauty on a canvas.

“Most people begin painting by trying to match the reality of what is in front of them,” Leffel explains. **“The closer they come to achieving that match, the more they believe they have accomplished something. But in truth, they have only copied what is outside of them. That**



Santo With Phaelenopsis

2001, oil, 26 x 22. All artwork this article private collection and © David Leffel. Photos courtesy Bright Light Publishing, Inc., Santa Monica, California.



kind of external process doesn't lead to a fulfilling conclusion."

To better understand Leffel's conceptual methodology, it helps to contrast it with other painting approaches. "The conceptual approach has nothing to do with the artist's personal feelings toward the subject matter," he writes in his latest book, *An Artist Teaches: Reflections on the Art of Painting* (Bright Light Publishing, Santa Monica, California, www.brightlightpublishing.com). "The artist is concerned with making a beautiful painting. Beautiful configurations of paint. Beautiful spots of color or

colorlessness. Beautiful edges or empty space. That is the problem.

"There are today and have been through the years, painters who are skilled craftsmen," Leffel goes on to write. "Talent and facility abound, run rampant even, if we include all the excellent commercial illustrators. What is in short supply is taste. Talent without taste is tragic. Taste must be cultivated. It must be nourished in every aspect of one's life. It is the consideration of life itself."

Although Leffel cautions against being overly concerned about such

Santo With Phaelenopsis
T'ang Horse and Rider With Flower
1998, oil, 22 x 24.

things as anatomical detail, the identity of the subject, strong emotional content, and tedious detail, he is not trying to limit artistic expression. Quite the opposite, he tries to bring attention back to the concepts celebrated in the work of such masters as Van Dyke, Rembrandt, and Velázquez. "Great painting is the product of a mind that is seeing, tasting, exploring the entire fabric of life," he explains.



**George Carlson and
Boy With Eagle**
1991, oil, 42 x 34.

Self-portrait in Costume
1995, oil, 1734 x 1334.

“Great painting is the product of a mind that is seeing, tasting, exploring the entire fabric of life.”

Leffel is quite articulate in explaining how to pursue that exploration. In his books, videos, live demonstrations, and class discussions, he offers specific descriptions of how one should approach drawing and painting. For example, on the question of how to hold a brush, he says, “The brush is held toward the back, away from the ferrule. It rests on the side of the middle finger, held in place by the pressure of the thumb. The finger rests on the wood of the handle. The fingers are long rather than bent. The brushstroke is made from the shoulder. The fingers, wrist, and elbow do not move individually—the whole arm moves as one unit.”

When discussing relative values within a painting, Leffel again is very specific with his advice: “When setting up a still life, posing a model for portrait or figure composition, or viewing a landscape, the artist has the definitive



task of visualizing and assigning the various elements of the subject matter a value. To accomplish that requires averaging out each area of light or dark into a singular value. This is called massing. The bigger and/or simpler the masses (light mass versus dark) the greater the potential for a fine painting. A painting comprised of many small areas of lights and darks will look petty and small. Conversely, a painting with a few major masses will look big, simple, and powerful.”

Leffel has the unusual ability to offer this kind of instruction while in the midst of creating a painting, making it possible for those who observe his demonstrations to learn both from what he says and what he does. Quite frequently he uses analogies to writing or composing music when he describes his painting process. “Putting objects into a still-life painting is like using characters in a novel to advance the plot,” he says. “The decision about how many characters a story needs and what kinds of per-



Apricots With Häntz Vase
1997, oil, 15 x 21.

sonalities those individuals should have is the same as deciding on the colors, values, and textural changes in a painting. Everything has significance—or it should have. The choices shouldn't be haphazard."

In most of his demonstrations, Leffel establishes the dark shadow areas in his paintings quickly. "Think about what needs to be seen and what should be a background to that area of interest," he advises. "The more you know about the way you want the picture to come out,

the more it will happen. If, on the other hand, you 'wing it,' then you'll likely wind up in a difficult position. You'll wind up where you don't want to be.

"I advise artists to start painting the darks in the background and save the lights until the last part of the painting process," he adds. "Darks give structure to the painting and give you a reference for all the other areas of the picture. Painting is developing a series of relationships—thick and thin paint, soft and hard edges, warm and cool colors, foreground and background shapes. Those relationships get viewers to look at one place and not another. They are

like loud and soft passages of a musical performance that either demand intense attention or a more relaxed state."

People watching Leffel demonstrate often pose questions about the Maroger medium he dips his bristle brushes into when mixing colors on his palette. Maroger is a somewhat controversial medium made by heating litharge (or lead white) and linseed oil, then combining that mixture with mastic varnish and turpentine. "A medium allows you to manipulate the paint in a comfortable fashion," he says in response to the question.



Tang Horse
1993, oil, 32 x 36.

Drawing is a matter of focus and concentration. Rubens and Michelangelo could create a feeling of form with simple line or tone because they could see the form they were drawing from a specific point of view.

“I once used copal painting medium even while I was selling Maroger to students at the Art Students League to help support myself. One day I ran out of copal medium and used Maroger instead. I liked the way it modified the paint, so I continued using it.”

Leffel is just as clear in describing a conceptual approach to drawing as he is about painting. He urges artists to make quick gesture drawings rather than renderings of plaster casts of models holding the same pose for hours. His point is that in a gesture drawing

one is more apt to capture the total sense of the figure than if one drew the linear outlines of body parts or the subtle gradations of shadows. “Drawing is a matter of focus and concentration. Rubens and Michelangelo could create a feeling of form with simple line or tone because they could see the form they were drawing from a specific point of view,” Leffel says. “There can’t be that kind of convincing form when you are only matching spot for spot as artists do when they slavishly draw plaster casts or use the sight-size method to

copy reproductions of classic works. Their viewpoint is so limited.”

In both his drawings and paintings, Leffel often leaves sections of his paper or canvas sketched in rather than polished and refined. “If a thinly painted area of a canvas or a roughly sketched section of paper is beautiful as it is, there’s no reason to cover it up unless it distracts from the rest of the picture,” he explains. “Sometimes I cover an entire canvas or sheet of paper from edge to edge and don’t allow any of the undersurfaces to remain visible. Other times I allow the loose paint or charcoal to remain sketchy against the white surface. As with every other decision, my initial concept guides me in determining how to complete the image. If the empty space is beautiful and supports the concept, I leave it alone.” ■

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—Shirley

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