

FLORAL STILL LIFE PAINTING

with COLOR & FEELING



CRITIQUING YOUR WORK

We all need to learn to critique our own work as objectively as possible. The more you cast a critical eye on your work, the easier it will become to see what it needs. Pay special attention to your first thoughts when you step back and look at your work—there’s usually a message there that you need to listen to. It helps to leave a piece for a bit and come back to it, especially if it’s late in the day or you are tired. You will be able to be much more objective if you come back to it when your mind and your eyes are fresh.

Tips for critiquing your own work:

- Use the “across the room test.” Hang it up, walk way across the room, turn around and pay attention to your first response—does it excite you? Is it boring? Does some little unintended glitch grab your eye? Is that something you want to fix?
- Take a photo of the painting and look at it on the computer or your smartphone—problems will jump out at you. Try looking at it in black and white mode to check values.
- Use a mirror to look at your painting in reverse. Weird compositional problems may jump out.
- Turn the painting upside down, does the composition still read?
- View it outside—no matter how good your studio lighting may be, colors will look different outside.
- Before you radically alter it, put it away and come back to look at it later on.

As you critique your paintings, use the Elements of Painting and the Principles of Design to guide your review. All painting depends upon these Elements and Principles for success. Review your work based on these aspects and you will learn to take a discerning eye to your own work and to pinpoint areas which need more attention. Try not to make sweeping generalizations about your painting such as “it’s awful” or “what a beautiful piece” but instead go through the list and assess what works, where your emphasis is and what you want to accomplish with the next painting. Remember, it is far more useful to your learning process to paint more paintings and not obsess over one painting. Critique it, fix what you see needs work and move on to the next one!

ELEMENTS OF PAINTING

- ✓ **Shapes-** Are the shapes interesting? Is there variation in shapes and the spaces in between? Are there an uneven number?
- ✓ **Lines-** Are lines in the painting saying what you want? Could you add lines to enhance the message?
- ✓ **Texture-** Is texture or lack of it saying what you want to say in the painting?
- ✓ **Value-** When you squint at the painting, does it read as all middle values (everything is one big blob)? Could greater contrast in values enhance the power of the painting?
- ✓ **Color-** Do color choices relate well to each other? Could more or less vibrancy of color add something?
- ✓ **Positive/Negative Space-** Are the positive and negative spaces varied and interesting?
- ✓ **Composition:** Is the overall composition interesting?

DESIGN PRINCIPLES OF PAINTING

- ✓ **Unity:** Do the design elements work in harmony to create a whole? Or does it look like it was painted by several people?
 - ✓ **Pattern:** Do the symbols or elements in the design work or look too arbitrary?
Would more or less be better?
 - ✓ **Rhythm and Movement:** Does the composition lead your eye through the painting?
Does it have a rhythm to it?
 - ✓ **Balance:** Does the composition convey a sense of equilibrium? Or is it out of balance?
 - ✓ **Scale:** Is the scale of the painting working? Would it have more of an impact if it were smaller or larger?
 - ✓ **Emphasis:** What and where is the emphasis in the painting and is that what you intended?
- *excerpted: "Bold Expressive Painting", Northlight Books, Annie O'Brien Gonzales, February, 2016*