

MALCOLM DEWEY FINE ART

# Painting Notes

## The Painting Secret that All Painters Need to Discover

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## Introduction

**How often do we look for something that has been staring us in the face for ages?** Pretty often. This allegedly increases with age, but I have no comment on that .. ahem. Suffice to that when it comes to painting and creative skills this concept is huge. In the video below I talk a little about how I struggled with my painting. True the challenge is always there, but I was stuck at the beginning. My paintings were not working for me. I should have known better since I started as a graphic design artist.

**You may be wondering what I am on about?** I'll explain it all, but first watch the video and then I have exciting news.



**Click image to view video**

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## Graphic Design Artists Know the Secret

What do all graphic designers have in common? Well for one thing they all want their art to be noticed. No that is putting it mildly. They want their art to leap out and grab you by the lapels then plant a big smooch on your lips. Unforgettable stuff. If you hire a designer for your new marketing campaign, comic book series or movie poster you want one thing. Eyeballs on the art.

**How do design artists get attention?** Scantly clad supermodels? Couldn't hurt, but usually too expensive. Instead what they use is [color](#), [values](#) and [composition](#). As I mentioned above I started painting commercial art. Posters and such. I enjoyed it very much as a young artist, because I knew what great design could do. Powerful and persuasive design motivates us almost every day. When it is done well it is sublime on so many levels. Did you know that French artist [Toulouse Lautrec](#) was an excellent poster designer?



Look at this example of Lautrec's work. Stunning not so? Designed in 1892 to advertise a show by Aristide Bruant in Paris. What more do you want from a good poster?

Brilliant color, bold dominant dark shapes contrasting with light shapes. Strong composition. It has it all.

**What does this have to do with fine art?** Quite a bit actually. Firstly I have not met an artist that does not want anyone to see their work. Modesty aside we all want our art to be admired, noticed or appreciated in some way.

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Secondly the methods used by Lautrec apply to fine art too. The painter has a considerable burden with many technical skills that need exercising. Think about it. You need to use color, composition, brushwork, layering and edges. Not to mention the vast range of [gray colors](#) that nature produces.

## **How to Bring Order to the Chaos?**

To add to the technical skills you are faced with many details in any subject. To get anywhere you need to simplify most of it. Look at Lautrec's poster. He has simplified everything into a bold shorthand. Yet it speaks volumes about the kind of person depicted in the poster. I am guessing that Mr Bruant was a force of nature to deal with. A French [Brian Blessed](#) perhaps?

Anyhow you need to simplify details into shapes and paint it all to look really lovely. But it all gets too much and you lose your patience. Sound familiar? But let us pause and consider how to make this easier. At least which parts can be made easier. It took me a long time to figure it out. I am slow at things I suppose, but I should have approached fine art like I did graphic design.

## **Breakthrough Light-bulb Moment**

After spending time looking through the old art books and learning from excellent teachers the connection was made. A painting stands or falls on the preparation stage. The assessment of a subject begins in abstract shapes. The essential composition and value contrasts that will give a painting guts. Doubtful? The Old Master painters knew something about this too.



The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp (1632) by Rembrandt

Amazing isn't it? Macabre certainly, but compare the techniques that Rembrandt and Lautrec have in common. The use of value contrast and composition. That spotlight on the focal point is also a favorite trick used by the master painters.

**So before brush hits canvas** you must have your composition zoomed in to the action. Also have your value structure planned out. Preferably a dominant dark shape to give the light values that smack in the chops effect. Get that right then your painting can follow a strong path to success. Even if your brushwork is sketchy your painting will still get positive attention. It will stand out for its bold and interesting structure.

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We humans respond to design and value contrasts. It is hardwired in our primitive brains. Might as well use it to good effect then.

## Take a Short Course On Me

To shed more light on this method I put together a short course called *How to Add Power to Your Paintings Instantly*. It has one aim and that is to show you what made me get my painting mojo back. Like I said before it sounds so simple. But simplicity is power. Hemingway knew this as a writer. You will know this as a painter. The techniques shown in the course do work. **Practice them**. Do hundreds of studies and apply the results to your painting process.

[Now you can join the course for free](#). Easy as registering on my Art School and then watching the videos. Do the assignment and practice. That is it. Yours free forever. I hope you enjoy it. I have one little favor to ask though. **Share this article** with your friends so that they can benefit from it too. Thank you :)

Happy painting!