

PAINTING A STILL LIFE: TEACHER NOTES

In this unit, much depends on making steps using a specific protocol.

1. The drawing underlying the painting must record the right shapes so that painted shapes can slot into the right areas. An accurate painting cannot be made from an inaccurate drawing.
2. Students may need help mixing a neutral glaze that is dark enough to provide a dark ground, but thin enough so that the drawing is visible.
3. Make sure the student does not smooth out the brush strokes made by the dark ground. Leaving a texture from brush strokes often adds positively to the final appearance of the painting.
4. Once the dark ground is applied, the student may feel compelled to complete the appearance of each object separately. It is important to develop the painting evenly, sticking to the largest shapes, only adding details in the final stage of the painting. This requires that the student comprehend the still life as a whole and not just study each object in the composition separately.
5. Make sure the student begins with only the largest shapes and does not try to refine any specific areas before making large general statements.
6. Mixing colors is the most challenging aspect to a painting assignment. It is important that the student pre-mix colors for various objects in different values so starting and stopping to mix basic colors is not necessary. There will be refinements to color mixing made during the painting process, but the general colors should already be mixed and stored in small containers.
7. It is also important that students begin their painting by making only large, general statements, ignoring any surface details. They need to understand that the painting will be done in layers and they are working on the bottom layer as they begin.
8. Using thin layers of paint without using thick impastos until the end of the painting is important. I have found students easily become frustrated with the paint is used too thickly. Stress the importance of not using too much paint. This was demonstrated in the video.
9. The exact colors are not as important as the exact values. Judging values correctly is a new skill for beginning students and it will probably be a struggle.
10. There are three principles of color of which a student needs to be aware. Students need to make sure their colors are accurate in terms of intensity as well as in hue and value. I have found that students have a hard time judging color intensity and tend to make their colors overly vivid without neutralizing color enough. That is why grass is often too green, skies too blue, etc. I have rehearsed students on identifying colors by asking them to match the colors in a magazine photograph. When they paint over an area in a photograph, they begin to realize the degree they need to tone down the intensity of their colors.
11. Students are eager to make the painting they are working on resemble the appearance of the objects as they work. Otherwise, they want the painting to “look good,” while they are working on it. Discourage this by pointing out that one has to build a cake before the frosting is put on.