

## UNDERSTANDING HOW PAINTERS CREATE

**Coordinator:** Peter Houts

We study five groups of painters: Dutch renaissance landscape painters, Impressionists, “Ash Can” painters, Precisionists, and Cubists – one group per session. We discuss how these painters used composition, value (dark to light), and color to create interest, communicate a message, and convey a sense of beauty. In addition, we discuss one painter in depth per session. During the course, each class member (working alone or with other members) creates a piece of art (using painting or photography) in the style of one of the painting schools we have studied. These projects are presented and discussed at the sixth class session.

### **Readings:**

Aaris Sherin, *Design Elements: Color Fundamentals*; Rockport Publishers, 2012, ISBN 978-1-59253-719-8, \$25. A course pack will also be available for purchase.

Assignments will also include viewing artists’ paintings on the internet and reading course pack materials on each painting group and its place in the history of art. .

**Peter Houts** attended art school for three years after retiring. His oil paintings are based on photographs he has taken – many in the style of Edward Hopper. He has coordinated three photography related IRP courses.

### \* \* \* \* \* **Syllabus** \* \* \* \* \*

The first five classes begin with a discussion of one painter from the painting school being considered that week. We will discuss that painter’s life and place in the history of art. Next we view examples of his or her art and discuss the unique features of his or her paintings focusing on use of color, value, and composition to create interest, communicate a message and a sense of beauty. Then we discuss other painters in that week’s school, how they compare with the first painter as well as features shared by all painters in that group. We also discuss possible projects (to be presented at the last session) in which each class member (or pair of members) presents a painted or photographic image created in the style of one of the schools discussed in the course. Each person (or pair) presents one such project in the last session.

Prior to the first class: read pages 10 through 37, 50 through 59, 78 through 103, and 114 through 117 in “Design elements, Color Fundamentals” by Aaris Sherin. (Much of the page space is filled with illustrations.) This is a text for graphic designers but will be helpful to us in explaining how color and design interact to

affect the viewer's experience in viewing art. In addition, before the first class view a selection of Dutch renaissance painters' landscape scenes on suggested web sites including those by Pieter Breugel the elder and read related material in the course pack.

**Week one:** Pieter Breugel the elder and Dutch renaissance landscape painting. The first class will begin by discussing principles of composition, color and value that we will be using throughout the course and discussed in the course text "Design Elements, Color Fundamentals". We will then discuss Pieter Breugel the elder's personal history and place in the history of art. We will view and discuss his landscape paintings and those of similar Dutch renaissance landscape artists in terms of how they used color, value and composition. Homework: view impressionist images and read summaries of Claude Monet on the internet and in the course pack.

**Week two:** Claude Monet and other impressionist painters. We will begin with a discussion of Monet's personal history and place in the history of art and impressionism. Then we will view and discuss his paintings and those of other impressionist painters in terms how they use color, value and composition. Homework: view images and read summaries of Edward Hopper and the "Ash Can" school of painting on the internet and in the course pack.

**Week three:** Edward Hopper and the "Ash Can" painters. We will begin with a discussion of Hopper's personal history, how he used color value and composition, and why his work is so popular with the general public. We will also discuss work of other "Ash Can" painters. (While Hopper is not often called an "Ash Can" painter, I will make a case that his work is consistent with the rationale and similar to the work of Henri and other "Ash Can" painters.) Homework: view images and read about Charles Demuth and other "Precisionist" painters on the internet and in the course pack.

**Week four:** Charles Demuth and other "Precisionist" painters. We will discuss Demuth's personal history followed by a discussion of how he used color, value, and composition and his place among "precisionist" painters of the 1920's. We will also compare his work with that of other "Precisionist" painters. Homework: view cubist images and read about Picasso and Braque on the internet and in the course pack.

**Week five:** Picasso and Braque's cubism: We will begin by discussing the history of cubism and its place in the history of art as well as Picasso and Braque's contribution to the movement. We will discuss how they used color, value, and

composition to create art that combined realism with abstraction. Homework: complete class projects using either paint or photography in the style (color, value, composition) of one of the painters discussed in this course.

**Week six:** Present and discuss projects by class members and review how color, value, and composition can be a unifying theme for understanding, appreciating and relating different approaches to painting.