

LESSON 8 OF 10

Acrylic Fruit Studies*by Debi West*

To draw what you see can be difficult.

It takes time to learn to “see” and it takes time, and a lot of practice, to develop the necessary drawing skills needed to showcase this learned task. I explain this to my students from the first day they enter my art room.

To see how contour lines close to create a measured and exact shape ... to see how you fill that shape in with color harmonies and values that create textures and then put it all together within a space, this is what the art of drawing is all about, it's about the art of seeing! It's quite wonderful when you break it down and consider how important each of these steps is in helping students become better drawers.

When I introduce my students to their first acrylic painting lesson, I reiterate all that they have learned thus far in the semester, and remind them how important it is to draw what you see ... not what you think! And, the same applies to painting.

I love this lesson because my students are always so excited to begin painting and it's the perfect time in that I have set them up to succeed via the previous lessons. To begin, each table receives a few pieces of plastic fruit. I use apples, pears, pomegranate, lemons, limes, oranges and bananas. Of course, if students want to bring in their own piece of fruit, that's OK, too.

I have pre-cut 6" x 6" white poster

board for them to use and each student is given one square. I have them use a pencil and draw what they see in front of them—*exactly* what they see. In doing this, they are looking closely at the contour lines and shapes that make up the fruit, as well as the shadows that fall around the fruit.

I then give each table a primary color palette with a squirt of white. The students all have their own brushes and for the first of this three-part series, I don't give them water. Water dilutes the paint and becomes more like a watercolor, so I want them to experiment with the full consistency of acrylic paint for their first try.

They then turn their square fruit



Students receive a primary color palette with a squirt of white—but no water—for the first of this three-part series.



As they paint their fruit for the second time—with water—they consider the two different techniques and do a compare and contrast.



drawings over and begin to draw with their brushes, creating an underpainting as they paint the shapes they see and then mix the colors they see to mimic the fruit in front of them. This takes quite a bit of time as they “play” with the blues, yellows and reds and add touches of white to create tints. It’s always amazing to me to see how successful they are with this first attempt, and once their first fruit study

is complete, they begin their second, this time with water.

As they are painting their same piece of fruit for the second time, I have them consider these two different techniques and do a compare and contrast.

Finally, for their third painting, I introduce them to spackle and have them experiment with making impasto paintings, which forces them to consider texture in their work.

INTRO TO ART CURRICULUM SERIES

Acrylic Fruit Studies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

High-school “Art 1” students will ...

- learn different painting techniques using acrylic paint, from dry brush, to water, to impasto painting, using the same subject matter study.
- learn to mix secondary colors from primary colors.
- learn to mix tints and shades.
- mount these onto a board to create a painted study series.

MATERIALS

- 6" x 6" white cardboard
- Acrylic paint (blue, yellow, red, white)
- Paintbrushes, water cups
- Spackle
- Glue
- Black poster board (cut to size)

PROCEDURES

1. Introduce the lesson by discussing the importance of looking closely at a subject matter.
2. Students will learn to paint a piece of fruit, by looking at it closely and mixing their primary acrylic to create their palette.
3. Students will begin this with a dry brush technique, using nothing but paint, brush and their “seeing” skills.
4. Students will begin their second painting by adding water to see how that changes the texture of the paint.
5. Students will begin their final study by adding spackle to their board and to their paint, creating an impasto artwork.
6. Students will glue each piece onto a large mat board, creating a painted fruit study.
7. Final artworks will be hung in a class display and critiqued. This lesson is wonderful in that students are very proud of what they created using only the primary colors and using their under-painting skills to create beautiful, quick-painted fruit studies.

ASSESSMENT

We do in-process critiques using my “2 Glows and a Grow” model: Each student selects a classmate’s work that speaks to him/her and attaches three notes—two with what works, and one with what the artist might want to consider or change. There is also an evaluation form that prompts students to appropriately reflect on the learning at hand and provides space for them to comment on the process and how they feel their final piece turned out. There is also space for me to comment and give them a grade based on their learning and the final work.

For this particular lesson, I also have my students write a compare and contrast based on the textures, techniques, and elements.



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Often, students ask for more squares to continue the experimenting and “playing” and then they select their top three and adhere these to black poster board, creating a triptych fruit study. This is another highly successful lesson and one that builds their confidence and prepares them for the next art challenge!

Next up...Weekly Visual Journals. ■

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