

ELEMENTS OF PAINTING WORTH CONSIDERING

LIGHT

Sunlight creates wonderful effects! How would you paint them? Ask yourself that question often as you observe the world. If a lighting effect appeals to you, create a series, painting it many times in different ways. You might vary the values, colors, point of view, or type of surface; whatever you can think of to be creative. This is good training for your right brain and will improve your ability to see. If you rely only on your linear thinking, left brain to tell you what it THINKS it sees, the results will be less creative.

For Instance:

As you look at a tree, you “know” it is made up of many individual needles, or leaves, each with veins and stems. They appear to be all one color. This is information from your left brain. Your right brain, if allowed a chance, may notice more subtle information. You may discover that many leaves are grouped together in the light or shade to form a large shape, or mass. You don't see the individual shapes at all, much less every vein and stem. There are colors reflected onto the tree from its surroundings, even in the darker shadows. That is exciting to paint! There will be similar discoveries when you observe any subject. Just find the patience to really look and SEE.



Fall; Saranac Lake 21 x 29"



Notice the way the light pattern combines leaves together.

Spell out the details in only a few. Suggest them elsewhere.

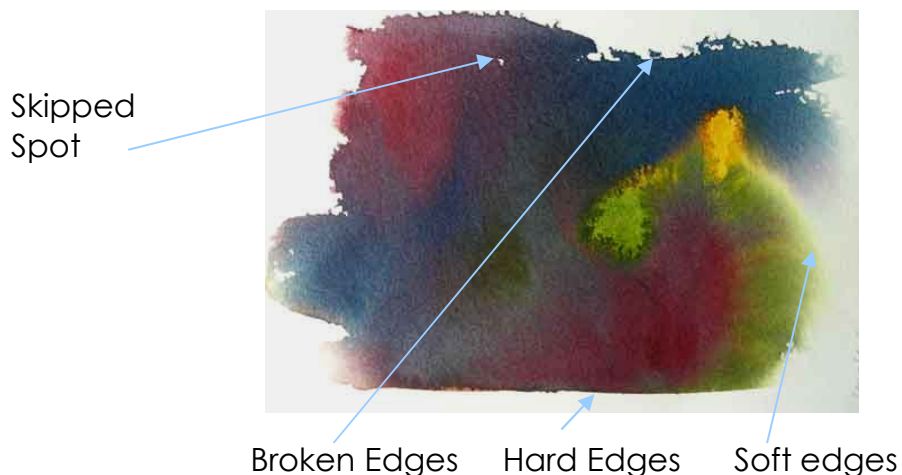
Streptocarpus Plant 14 x 21"

Look for new or unusual groupings of shapes and light patterns when designing from flower forms. Don't settle for a traditional and perhaps too common composition. Let your creativity lead you to something that is totally your own view of the subject. Experiment with colors too, rather than painting what you think you see. For instance, if you are painting a pink flower, use colors in addition to pink to do so. There will be numerous subtle colors reflected over the petals: lavenders and blues from the sky and greens and yellows from the foliage. Even if you don't see them, you can make them up for a more exciting painting. A flower painted all pink is more like a botanical illustration and can be unexciting!

EDGES FORMED BY LIGHT

Study how the light creates edges. Look at the world and notice how many edges are really defined and sharp. There are many edges outside our area of focus, or not well illuminated, which we do not see sharply. Keep this in mind as you paint.

Do not carefully define every edge of every object. That would be unrealistic, although it could be utilized to create a stylized or abstract work of art. If you choose to do that, do so knowing that is your goal and exploit it fully. However, if you intend to create a realistic work, use a good variety of hard and soft edges. Your paintings will be more believable and will invite the viewer to move through the piece.

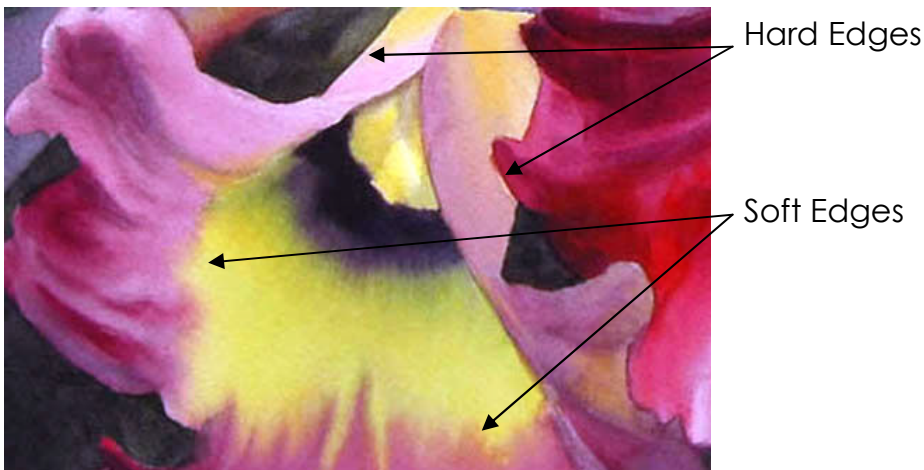


Use hard edges to define the subject and important shapes where the light is strongest and use soft edges to provide movement through the painting. Hard edges will stop the viewer's eye, so design the painting with this in mind. Too many hard edges create confusion about

where the focal point is and too many soft edges create boredom, with no focus to draw attention.

The texture of broken edges, or chatter marks, will also draw attention and should be quieted if they are distracting. Do so by softening the area with a clean damp brush. Prevent them by wetting the paper surface there before painting; or carefully paint on dry paper using enough paint to make a hard edge. A dry brush mark is made if there is not enough paint on the brush as it skips over the surface. This kind of paint quality can be very distracting. Use it to convey areas of texture, such as rough siding or a roof on a building. However, if it occurs within a smooth flower petal, it will draw attention and create confusion of the shape and details of the petal. It is not always a painterly way of stating a passage. It just means you did not pick up enough paint to cover the paper. Be intentional about how you apply paint to paper.

Paint with conviction and care. Decide what kind of result you desire and think about how to produce it. Envision it before you touch paint to paper!



From "Vibrant Orchid" DVD, Ann Pember