

Visual studies, week 9, Monday the 19th of April 2021, Tracy Thompson.

Weekly 2 hour assignments, colour and light.

How much can you remember using working sketches executed in pencil or pen?

Introduction.

When you are out and about with your sketchbook very often you won't have time to sit down and do a two-hour sketch so you need to learn to visual note take quickly and efficiently.

It is all well and good taking a photo but it will not give you the subtleties of colour that truly exist out there.

Photographs are too simplistic to record the beautiful rich aspect of reflected light and muted colours. The subtleties will be lost in a photo. You need to learn to take notes and do working sketches.

Brief.

This week, now that you are able to go out and about, you have the opportunity to work on location if you want to. This exercise is a simple one but very investigative and focuses your attention on becoming more aware of the subject in front of you i.e. the overall image, the drama of the view/subject, forms, the colours and lighting. For this exercise, you will need to know your colours and their names and you will also need to set up a shorthand set of symbols to indicate colour and tone. (Note the times I have allocated for these exercises are approximate, if you need to adjust them do so)

Exercise one, approximately 20 minutes; developing a key.

This task will take a bit of practice but in time if you use it enough it is a very efficient method of note taking when you are out sketching. Take some time to think about creating a key, personal to yourself, that consists of a set of marks/symbols that you can use and easily identify when out and about sketching. Make sure to be able to use it when working in black and white, (i.e. pen or pencil). The symbols are to indicate the basic colours, for example; the primary, secondary, and perhaps the tertiary and earth colours. Keep them quite simple, make sure the key of colours is useful for you. You could use dots, lines, squiggles, letters etc. but most importantly you need to understand what your symbols represent for you in terms of the colours they identify. (see the work by Bonnard at the end of the brief and the quote explaining how he worked) Alternatively, you could write the colour names on your sketches as you work, such as cadmium red, viridian, burnt sienna etc. Sometimes the area in your drawing may be too small to write down the colour so this is why a set of key symbols is very useful. You may also use a set of numbers to define the tonal range i.e. 1 to 6; 1 being the lightest area, 6 being the darkest.

✓✓ lemon 000 cadmium 22 cerulean ✕✕ burnt // dark 555 cadmium
yellow 00 yellow deep 22 blue ✕✕ sienna // purple 555 red.

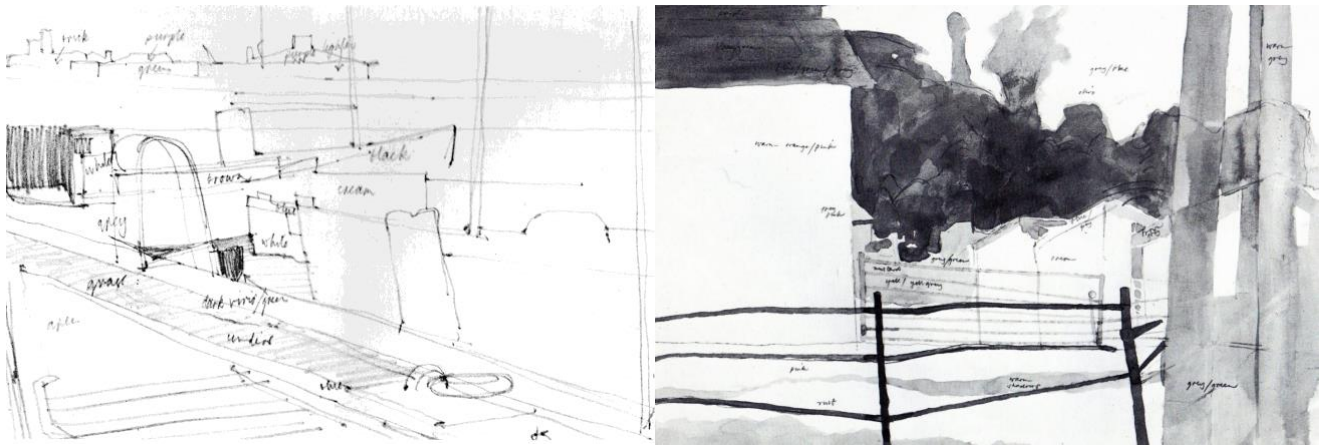
Above an example of a key of symbols to denote the colours you observe.

Exercise two, 20 minutes take longer if you wish

Now choose a subject to sketch; a scene, still life, cityscape, self-portrait etc. (Whatever you decide to sketch from life make sure you take a photo to send to me as part of the submission process for this assignment, however in this exercise **DO NOT USE THE PHOTO AS REFERENCE**)



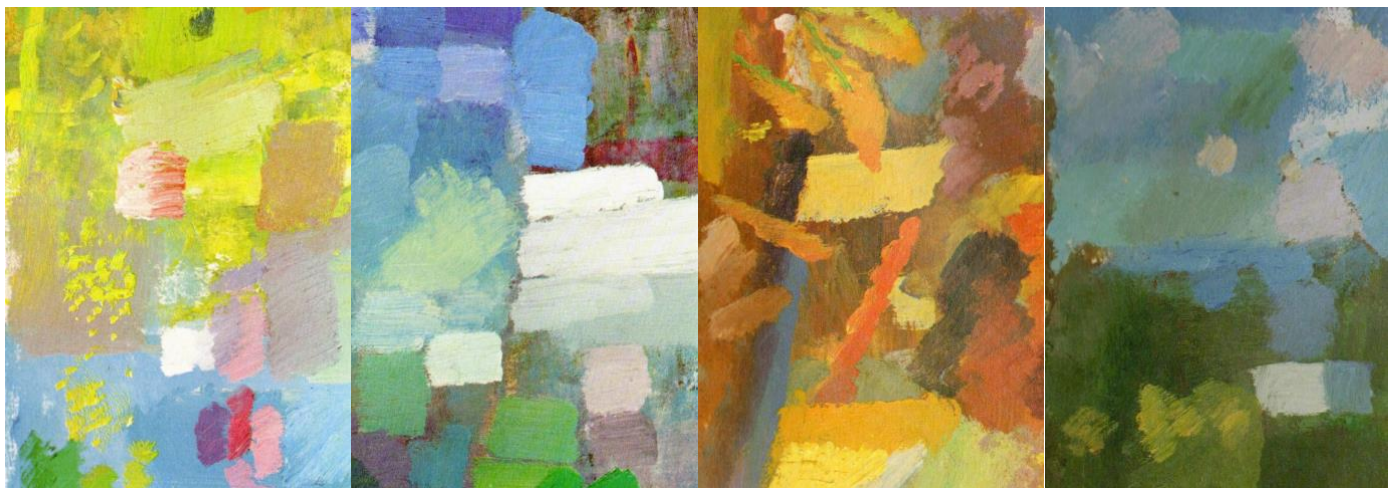
Working sketches, clearly indicating tonal values, and blocks of form, with notes added.



Above are examples of working sketches in black and white indicating tones and notes on the colours to use.

For 20 minutes (take longer if you wish) do a sketch/sketches of your subject using only black and white/grey scale, this will help you define your tones more clearly. Choose a medium to work with that is easy to control for your note taking i.e. pen or pencil. Take in everything about the view, still life, portrait, composition that you've decided to do a final colour study of. As you are sketching use the info in the 'key' you have designed for yourself applying this information to your sketch/sketches.

Take note of the colours, is the blue more green than red is it a cerulean blue? Does the grey have a hint of yellow in it or magenta? (Use your superimposed colour chart you did in the first session this Semester to help you if you need it) Note whether there is any reflected light from colourful objects nearby. Take note of the direction the light is coming from, take note of the time of day. If you are using artificial light in which direction is the light source, the angle of the light and the shadow shapes, how much of the daylight is visible and how much is artificial light. Take a note of whether the light source or colours you are observing are cool or warm. Shadows will often be in the cool range. If you are working outside, you need to become aware of the seasonal variations in colour palettes. Note all of these details down in your working drawing. You have done observational drawings working from life these are working sketches packed with information for you to use.



Above are examples of different colour palettes, become aware of being able to identify and name the colours you observe. If you decide to work outside be aware of the seasonal colour palette. **Remember you are naming the colours not actually painting in colour at this stage.** Left to right; Spring; sharp yellows, yellow greens, clear blues, lemon yellow, cobalt blue and monastal blue are useful colours. Summer; sharp greens, while yellows become darker, rich greens against bright light ochres, reds and amber creep into the landscape. Autumn; yellows ochres, reds are richer, both warm and cool blues, blues and purples on the horizon are more subdued due to misty atmospheres, earth colours are useful in autumn. Winter; sharp cold greens dark greens, copper browns, hard blues, whites and reds softened with white, cloud formations can be dramatic along with dark greens of evergreen trees, copper brown tree trunks against cerulean blue skies, with touches of red for berries. Images and some notes from Painters progress, edited by Ian Simpson.

In addition, you could do a little tonal study squinting at your subject and identifying the tonal differentiations (you have done this before in Semester 1 using inks). This part of the exercise is information gathering. Gather as much as you can in ways personal to you!!

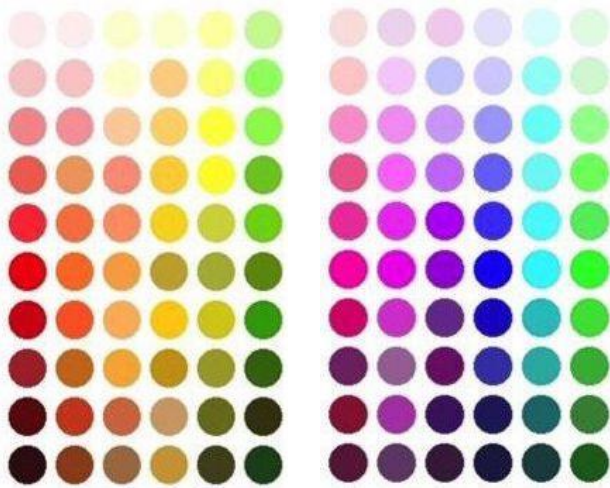
Exercise three, 40 minutes, colour study using your working drawings and notes

Using only your notetaking and sketches in black and white I now want you to do a painting from the information you have gathered in colour (do not use Photos as reference or work from the subject for this part of the exercise). Work on your painting only using your working drawings and notes. You can use any medium to do this colour piece;

watercolour, coloured pencil, pastel, digital, acrylic, I don't mind but I want you to only use the studies in black and white that you have done.

When you have completed the piece as far as you can take a photo of the image at this stage before you do any final work on your colour study.

As you are working on your colour study note where you have not got enough information sketched out to work with. Jot down any information you need to revisit and investigate on either your original working drawing sketch you did in black and white or on a separate piece of paper.



Above from left to right, the first image is an example of some warm colours and the second image shows examples of cool colours. The third image shows a market scene using warm colours in the shop itself with artificial lighting and cool colours for the figures outside. Because of this colour differentiation it has quite a wintery feel or gives a sense of being outside at late dusk. Painting by Fred Cuming.

Exercise four, 10 minutes, revisit your working drawing notes

Now that you have done your first attempt at a colour study using your working sketches, revisit your subject again and you will be able to see much more clearly the areas where you had not gathered enough information originally. Again, jot down in grey scale using pencil or pen, the additional information you need to further rework up your painting in colour.

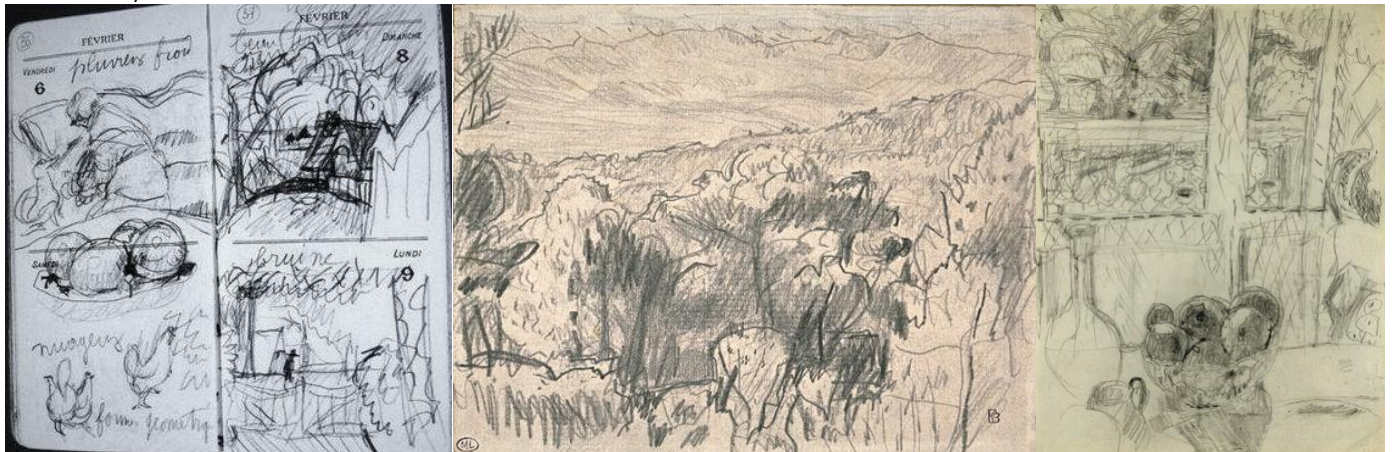
Exercise five, 20 minutes

Now rework your colour image again with the additional information you have observed and gathered.

What is the point of this exercise?

You may wonder what the point of this exercise is when you can just observe the object you want to paint. One reason, as I have said above, is that sometimes you don't have the time to observe a subject fully with lots of time. Also, this exercise really makes you become more acutely visually aware of what you are looking at. It forces you to really concentrate on the information you are seeing. You also have to really take note of the colours you are using and their names. As you get quicker at this exercise and develop your shorthand you can start to note down information quickly and efficiently which gives you enough information from life to work up and inform your future illustrations/paintings.

Sketches by Pierre Bonnard



note the way he uses symbols when he draws. These sketches are packed with information that he applies when he transfers the drawings into paintings.



Bonnard's sketches and note taking are extraordinary he was a genius depicting colour and light. He often painted full canvases from small studies drawn very quickly in a diary.'personal shorthand dashes, tick marks, spirals, dots, circles, crosses, and squiggles indicated colour or colour combinations: a zigzag meant red and green; a fast fleck stood for orange and blue; a slow scribble represented yellow and violet. Other marks conveyed the intensity of light that fell on and through various surfaces. An erased blurry smudge or the sharpness or spacing of marks indicated opening space or a form's contour. Some marks move the eye quickly through an area and others slow it down to convey his visual experience of a transitory moment.' A quote from https://meighanmaley.com/2020/05/01/_trashed/

Hand in date Sunday 25th April 2021 midnight.

Make sure you take a photo of your chosen subject as a record to send to me.

- Hand in the key you designed to define your colours (if you decided to create one)
- The original sketch/sketches you did in black and white to inform your colour painting,
- A copy of the first colour image you attempted from your black and white notes and sketches (you will have needed to photograph or scan this as you will have worked into the painting further)
- Any further notes you needed to make in black and white to inform your colour painting.
- The final colour study you have done after the additional black and white notes you took.

A very good publication to help you understand colour and light in more depth is called; Light for Visual artists by Richard Yot. (second edition). I understand some of you already have a copy. This is an invaluable book as it explores light in great detail. I recommend you all get a copy of this book if you can.