God & the History of Art II

by

Barry Stebbing

"David Mourning for Absalom"
Sarah Moyer  Age 16

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Picture Post Card Art Gallery/Part II

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The High Renaissance

During the 16th century, great artists, guilds and apprentices appeared throughout Italy. There was a marked hunger for learning, a high standard of excellence, and a gradual rising of the artist’s reputation during this time. Three great artists seemed to rise above the rest: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael. These three masters all lived during the same time, and because of their greatness, this span of time was given the title of the High Renaissance.

The High Renaissance only lasted for a brief period of time (1500-1520) but was the glory of the 16th century. Art reached such a height of perfection that this twenty year period became the zenith of the Renaissance. The High Renaissance ended with the deaths of Leonardo in 1519 and the young Raphael in 1520.

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Lesson #144: Into the Picture Gallery - Composition & Color

There were other great artists who lived and worked in Italy during the time of da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael. As a matter of fact, there were so many great artists that it is impossible to mention them all! In studying art we need to be selective and choose only those we feel contributed the most during a specific period. Sadly, as you continue your studies, you will find many artists are hardly mentioned, some of whom you may find to be more talented than artists you are familiar with. One such artist might be Jacopo da Ponte, otherwise known as II Bassano (1510-1592).

For this assignment, take out the picture postcard by Jacopo da Ponte, Flight into Egypt. Along with learning about perspective, human anatomy and oil painting, Renaissance artists also studied composition. This allowed them to arrange dramatic scenes in a creative way by using a balance of color, perspective and rules of composition. A good painting should read from left to right, like the page of a book. In the painting by Jacopo da Ponte, Flight into Egypt, the scene is very animated, as the figures seem to dance across the picture. Jacopo certainly created a delightful composition as his caravan prances along, leading the viewer's eye from left to right. Also notice that Jacopo has balanced his painting with color, splashing red to the left and right, with the rich blue in the center. Notice the warm browns which surround his subject matter.

Look closely at the painting, Flight into Egypt. Do you see the man drinking from a jug? How about the sad dog with his head drooped down? And do you notice the man picking up hens to put in his basket? Likewise, observe the angel that leads the group. What do you think all this means? Notice how old Joseph looks. Jacopo was certainly creative, wasn’t he? Is there anything else you notice in the picture? Write your feelings about the painting on the lines below.

Then, on a piece of paper, draw a picture of Mary and Joseph travelling to Egypt. Balance your picture with color, placing some of one color to the right and left, and taking another color and placing it in other areas throughout your picture. This is called harmony as your colors bring balance to the entire picture. Learn to make creative compositions, not only in the way you draw and compose your pictures, but also in the way you balance your colors.

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Lesson #145: Painting with Harmony

There are many ways to create harmony in a painting. One way is to use a limited palette, which means using only a few colors throughout the entire picture. A good way to learn how to use a limited palette is by doing a monochromatic painting. This is a painting in which the artist uses variations of only one color from light to dark. Another way of creating harmony is by using warm or cool colors. Warm or cool colors can create a certain mood in your picture (Lesson #22).

You can also use analogous colors to create harmony. Analogous colors are colors that lie next to each other on the color wheel and create a pleasing effect when placed next to each other.

Place Paint Card X in front of you. Notice the color wheel in the upper left hand corner. First, let's fill in the color wheel. Start with your primary colors: yellow in 1, red in 5, and blue in 9. Make sure to stay in the lines and paint with control. (You may want to make your red and blue a little lighter before painting these areas.) Next, skip a pie section between each primary color and paint in the secondary colors: orange, violet and green (3, 7, and 11). Remember, each secondary color is made by mixing the primary colors together that are on either side. For example, yellow and red make orange. Mix the secondary colors and place them in between the primaries that make them.

Finally, place the tertiary colors (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12) in between the primary and secondary colors. This is similar to what we did with colored pencils in Lesson #18. Remember, tertiary colors are created by mixing primary and secondary colors together which are on either side of them on the color wheel. For example, the color in between yellow and orange will be the tertiary color, yellow/orange. In between orange and red will be red/orange, and so on. See if you can make all the tertiary colors: yellow/orange, red/orange, red/violet, blue/violet, blue/green and yellow/green. When finished, return to the color chart on Paint Card VIII and add any new colors.

Next, paint the picture of the fish with a limited palette, using only blue. See how many different tones of blue you can mix, painting with an assortment of tones from light to dark. Practice mixing various tones of blue in the circles on the side before placing them in your picture. You can add white to make blue lighter, or some red to make it darker. If you want to make a dull blue, add a speck of its complement (orange). Make sure to mix a very light background color. Before beginning, color the picture of the fish on this page with your colored pencils, seeing how many different tones of blue you can make.

Then, paint the flowers with warm colors, creating a variety of oranges, reds and yellows by making them lighter or darker. Last of all, paint the third picture using analogous colors - colors that lie next to each other on the color wheel. Select any three colors which are next to each other and paint in the picture. You can make these colors lighter or darker if you like, but try to stay with these three colors.
"Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci, Benjamin Franklin, and Abraham Lincoln never saw a movie, heard a radio, or watched television. They had 'loneliness' and knew what to do with it. They were not afraid of being lonely because they knew that was when the creative mood in them would go to work."

Carl Sandburg

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

Of the three great artists of the High Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci (vin-chee) was the oldest and the first to pass away in 1519. Leonardo was born out of wedlock in 1452, the son of a lawyer and a young peasant girl. In those days, a mother who gave birth in such a manner would give up the child to the successful man. His father married many times and had nine more sons and two daughters. However, Leonardo's siblings were jealous of him, both for being the firstborn and for the many talents he demonstrated early in his youth.

He was born in the town of Vinci, Italy. Many Italians received their names from the towns in which they were born (da means from in Italian). Thus, Leonardo was from the town of Vinci. Like many other young aspiring art students, Leonardo apprenticed under a great master Verrocchio. Verrocchio was recognized throughout Italy as both an admirable teacher and an excellent sculptor. At the age of 17, Leonardo became his star pupil and also his assistant. Leonardo remained with Verrocchio until he was 25.

Da Vinci was industrious and innovative, always striving to create with new ideas. At 21, he made his first drawings of landscapes. Not much later, he developed what would come to be known as chiaroscuro (meaning clear-dark), a method in painting using light areas next to dark areas to give an object a more dramatic and realistic form. Even though Leonardo did not invent this new technique, he did much to develop it. Not long afterward, he created another technique in painting called sfumato (meaning smokey), placing a light, blue haze over distant areas in his landscapes to create more depth.

Lesson #146: The Mona Lisa

For this assignment, go into your picture postcard gallery and retrieve the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci. There is so much that can be said about the Mona Lisa, as it is considered one of the greatest masterpieces in the history of art. The painting took Leonardo nearly three years to finish, and once completed, it never left his side. Just before he died, he gave it to the king of France. The Mona Lisa has remained the property of France ever since, becoming one of the great treasures of the Louvre Museum. In the early 1900s, the painting was stolen from the museum and vanished for three years before it was recovered. In 1963, the painting went on a goodwill tour throughout the United States where it was seen by millions of Americans. Over one million people viewed the Mona Lisa in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art alone.

Study the Mona Lisa, and on the line below, write what you think of it. Do you like it? What about the colors and the composition? Is there anything peculiar you notice about it? What do you think of the landscape behind Mona Lisa? Where do you think the location is? Can you guess why she is smiling?
Lesson #147: Sphumato

Da Vinci was one of the first artists to paint on canvas. During this time, most of the paintings in Italy and southern Europe were done on walls in fresco, or plaster. As mentioned, this type of painting was well suited for the warm climate. However, with the invention of the canvas, paintings became much smaller in size and portable. This may be one reason why Leonardo decided to carry the Mona Lisa with him wherever he went. Leonardo also experimented with chiaroscuro and sphumato techniques in the Mona Lisa, using new painting concepts that combined science with art. Notice the soft, hazy effect in the background of the Mona Lisa as the details fade into the distant land and merge with the sky. This new technique of sphumato was the beginning of atmospheric perspective, meaning: as objects recede in the distance they become lighter and have less detail.

For this assignment, draw and color the picture below (A) in figure box (B). Lightly draw the hills and tree, and then starting with the background, color your picture. Your sky should be a very light blue blended with a touch of violet and white (if you have white). Skies are always lightest near the horizon (where land or hills meets sky). Notice how light the sky is in the background of the Mona Lisa.

Next, lightly place the same colors from the bottom of your sky into your distant mountains (C), softly blending and merging the sky and mountains together. For objects in the distance, you do not need to outline everything. Instead, give them soft edges so they will merge into the haze of the sky. This was Leonardo's technique of sphumato. Using the side of your pencil point will give a lighter, softer color. You may even want to try a little of a cream color in your sky and distant hills. Next, soften the edges of your hills with an eraser by gently going over some of the areas and blending them together.

Color in the hills in the middleground (D), which is between the background and foreground. Observe that the middleground is more in focus in the Mona Lisa, with more outlines, color and detail. However, not all the details are clear as the artist still wanted it to look distant to the eye. Use the same technique to color in these hills as you did the distant hills, pulling the colors down but making them just a little richer in color. You may want to add just a touch of green. Then, blend some of the edges and other areas with an eraser.

Finally, the foreground is where you place your details and richest colors. Mona Lisa is in the foreground and that is where Leonardo placed most of his color and all the details. Likewise, add more color and detail in the foreground to your tree and hill, giving this area rich colors and detail.
Lesson #148: Soft Edges

*Mona* is the abbreviation for Mrs. or Madonna. The woman pictured in the *Mona Lisa* was the wife of a merchant from Florence named Giocondo. Over time, many stories have evolved to explain why *Mona Lisa* is smiling. However, the one I believe is that, as a young married woman, she had lost a child at birth. Because of this, when Leonardo came to do her portrait, she was very sad. To cheer her up he hired musicians and jesters to stand behind him to amuse her while he painted, which brought a slight smile to her face even in her sorrow.

One of the most intriguing things about the *Mona Lisa* is the reality of the portrait. Just as Leonardo had used soft edges in the background, he also softened the edges of the face. Let's return to the picture postcard of Saint Luke. Notice how defined the lines are in the nose and eyebrows. Now look at the *Mona Lisa* and how da Vinci softened many of her facial features. By not defining every outline on the face, he leaves the viewer's eye and mind with subtle images to piece together. And, by not putting in hard lines for facial features (leaving them vague, or hazy), the feeling of stiffness that was so common in portraits during his time was avoided, resulting in a more life-like portrait. This was a new technique which would be used by many great masters in the future. For example, select the *Head of Christ* by Correggio; *Portrait of the Artist's Son, Titus*, by Rembrandt; and *Le premier baiser*, by Bouguereau and notice the soft facial features in each of these masterpieces.

For this assignment, we are going to draw soft edges. One way to do this is by blending the shaded areas with the light areas. First, lightly draw the ball below (A) in the figure box with a drawing pencil. Use a dark drawing pencil if you have one (4B, 5B or 6B). Notice where the light is coming from to assist you in which side to shade, and keep the outlines of your shadows light and soft. Shade the darker side of the ball and the cast shadow beneath it using the side of your pencil point to create flat values. Shadows are usually darker closest to the object, and lighter and hazier the further away from the object. Create at least four different values by making some of the areas darker. Do this by putting more pressure on your pencil. Finally, take a Q-Tip and gently rub the shaded side into the light side to create softer edges.

**A. Ball & Soft Edges**

Next, lightly draw the nose (B) without using heavy outlines. Shade the darker side and underneath the nose. Notice in the *Mona Lisa* that da Vinci did not use a line to draw the nose. Instead he used soft shading to help mold it. When you are finished, blend the shaded side into the light side with a Q-Tip or an eraser to merge them together.

**B. Nose & Soft Edges**
Lesson #149: Drawing the Mona Lisa

The *Mona Lisa* is the most copied painting in art, largely because students and artists have a great desire to learn Leonardo da Vinci's masterful techniques. For this assignment, copy the *Mona Lisa* in the figure box below (A) or in a sketchbook. However, try not to use outlines for the facial features, but rather create *soft edges*. The three tricky areas are: the corners of the mouth, the corners of the eyes, and around the nose.

Start by drawing lightly with your orange colored pencil. You may want to first place light marks in your picture to show where the top of the head, the shoulders, the sides of the body, the arms, and the hands are situated (B). This will greatly assist you in your drawing as everything will be proportioned correctly.

“Mona Lisa”  Leonardo da Vinci

A. The "Mona Lisa" by:

B. Use Markings

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**Portrait Painting in the 1500s**

During the 16th century, portraits were not done for pleasure but were often commissioned by wealthy patrons. First popularized by the Romans, interest in portraiture eventually died. For a thousand years after the fall of Rome, the only portraits being done were of the faces of nobility etched on coins. The Renaissance brought a new appreciation for portraits, largely because of Leonardo da Vinci. His innovative breakthroughs were a great help to artists who wished to provide an accurate likeness of an individual, and his variation of color and use of soft indoor light were often copied by his peers, resulting in portraits of a very high quality.