# THE <br> NEWPALETTE Issue \#66 



## From The Editor

One of the more enjoyable aspects of my current, part-time job status is the fact that I get to interact with the artists, who travel from all over the country to take a week-long workshop at Cheap Joe's as well as the artists-in-residence.

As I write this we are in week eight of 26 weeks of workshops. Sterling Edwards is the artist in residence and was featured in issue 62 of the New Palette. Sterling began his painting career as a photo realist and is now more of a non-representational artist. After I read and re-read the article I realized that he took us from the beginning of his journey and quickly to where he is today. He had left out the middle part explaining how he transitioned from one form of art to another. Long story short, Sterling said that
he will do another feature in an upcoming issue about those "middle" years.

And that, my friends, brings me to issue 66. After having interviewed Frank Webb a couple of years ago, I recevied a request from a reader to feature Frank. So, I found his number and called him and asked if hed be interested in doing us a favor.

One of the insights that Frank shared with me during that interview was the fact that every painting needs to have a good foundation built before you even think about applying color. I am very grateful that Frank took the time to put together an article for us that outlines the steps he takes that leads him to the finish line. Enjoy. Terry Henry, Editor

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## Renowned artist and teacher FRANK WEBB* suggests



* In 1980 Frank Webb, AWS-DF, NWS left advertising art to pursue painting and teaching art. He has been a guest instructor in all 50 states and numerous global locations as well. John Salminen, prominent painter has said of Webb, "The abstract concept is conveyed by him in a very specific manner. His mantra is 'paint shapes, not things'. We learn from him that every representational painting needs a strong abstract foundation." Nine museums have collected his work.


Because color is perceived instantly, it is inclined to gain first place in a work order. Color is pure quality, it enthralls. But, before color must come design. Consider the human body. There is flesh and bone under the skin. When painting, line is bone, values are the flesh, and color is skin. The marks made on paper or canvas are elements of design. The next few pages deal with these elements. Design is the gravity that holds a painting together. By observation, anyone can learn to draw things, but design deals not with things but with relationship among things. Design is a tribunal in that it enables one to judge their marks while also providing a sense of ease from the security of design awareness.

## Value



Hudson Grain Mill, Watercolor, 9" x 12"


This monochromatic preliminary sketch was one of several from which I chose to make a finished painting. The eye is drawn to light and dark. So, be sure to utilize tonal values to catch the eye. While color helps differentiate one shape from another, the light-dark scheme is what projects the most important contrast. To simplify a painting, I design with four values: white, light middle, dark middle, and dark. Brilliant color resides in the two middle values, not in the lights and darks.

## Shape



Against the Sea, Watercolor, 11" x 15 "


Shape is the sine qua non of painting. This painting has a dominance of triangular shapes. A good shape should be longer in one direction and should interlock with its neighboring shapes. A subject often dictates a certain shape dominance, but if not, the painter should provide this quality as a ploy. A poor shape may be improved by stretching, slanting or interlocking with neighbor shapes. The shapes in this small painting resulted from speedy work with a two-inch flat brush.

## Size



Market, San Miguel Allende, Watercolor, 22" x 30 "


Every painting should have three sizes: small, medium and large. Having these three sizes offers a feeling of completeness. For the sake of dominance, one area or shape should be the largest. Fill the area with the subject, e.g. Caesar on a Roman coin. Dominance is character. There is no room in a painting for optical democracy. One size prevails. An exception for size dominance is a checkerboard. But, perhaps that scheme can be regarded as a texture rather than a pattern.

## Direction



On the High Road, Watercolor, 22" $\times 15^{\prime \prime}$

## Line



Biddeford Pool, Watercolor, 15" $\times 22^{\prime \prime}$


Here, line does not refer to line drawing, but to boundaries of shapes. There are only two varieties of boundaries, the curved and the straight. If one type does not dominate, then take charge and provide one. Curves make straights more beautiful and vice versa. A painting with all curves is flabby and one with all straights is brittle. It is good practice to make a line drawing with a specific focus on this concern. Christopher Schink's works are terrific examples of this concept.

## Texture



Lake Erie Light, Watercolor, 15" x 22"


Someone once said, "Texture is the last refuge of a scoundrel." Texture is often hauled in when other elements are feeble. Texture can be the icing on the cake if the cake is otherwise substantial. It also adds a tactile dimension to the visual. The entire painting can be a texture. Small spots dominate a Georges Seurat painting in the pointillist manner, while a Toulouse-Lautrec poster is made of simple, flat shapes. Texture may also be used to separate one area or item from the others.

## Color



Sunny Side up, Watercolor, 15" x 22 "


Color Dominance


Cool Dominance


Warm Dominance

The most attractive attribute of color is interaction in their combination. In this sense no one color is more beautiful than another. A chaotic jumble of colors is unified when one of them is made dominant (e pluribus unum). If failing to create color dominance, another option is to go for plan $B$, a temperature dominance: a cool dominance or a warm one. Having successfully fulfilled the preceding six steps, time now may be exclusively devoted to color.

## Wrap Up



Seated Figure, Watercolor, 22" x 30 "


Most landscape subjects have many parts requiring a multifarious design, but even this simple figure painting has a dominant shape and also dominance of value, size, direction, line, texture, and color. I call these the nouns of design, but there are also eight verbs of design: unity, contrast, dominance, repetition, alternation, harmony, balance, and gradation.

For information on these, go online to artshow.com/webb to order Frank's books, Dynamic Composition, and also his new coffee table book, Frank Webb's, Life And Art.

## renowned artist and teacher, JERRY BROMMER

 keeps exploring new ideas in painting.by Christopher Schink


The great American portrait artist Chuck Close said, "Inspiration is for amateurs; the rest of us just show up and get to work. If you wait around for the clouds to part and a bolt of lightning to strike you in the brain, you are not going to make an awful lot of work."


A$t$ the age of 91 , the popular artist, author, and teacher, Jerry Brommer, continues to show up and work, exploring new and challenging ideas in design and expression.
Brommer's latest challenge is composing and working in a square-a distinctly different format from his usual landscape approach.

Brommer says, "The problem I gave myself was how to combine representational material and abstract components in a square format. It was fun!"


## Same materials, new possibilities

Each version in his Greek and Italian Hilltown series offers Brommer new design possibilities. Like playing on a checkerboard, he moves shapes, colors, and values into new arrangements while keeping his materials and the proportions of his support ( $11^{\prime \prime}$ square) the same.
Each work consists of:

1. watercolor
2. collage with tinted watercolor paper and rice paper (washi)
3. black and white ink
4. colored pencils
5. sweat
"Greece-Cliff Dwellers"
by Jerry Brommer
11" x 11" Mixed media

## A fun challenge

In this series, design considerations of abstract composition take precedence over accuracythe specific recording of an observed scene.
Brommer says, "I like the problem of combining realistic and abstract elements in the same image. It is challenging, of course, but it is also fun. After all, at 91 this is about the most fun my body can stand."
"Greece-Village with Windmill" by Jerry Brommer 11"x 11" Mixed media



## The abstract

The houses and cliff sides captured here lend themselves to a natural Cubism-rectangles in varying sizes, alternating from light to dark.
Note how Brommer constantly varies the dimensions of his shapes to avoid monotony. He applies an abstract design device to a naturalistic subject. This isn't what he saw. This is what he made.
"Italy-Remembered Hilltown" by Jerry Brommer 11" x 11" Mixed media

## A good idea

A good idea is worth its weight in gold. Once you find an inspiring theme or subject, you can mine the idea for almost limitless images. You don't need to get in your car and drive for hours looking for something new and inspiring. You can stay home and try another variation on a familiar theme, exploring new possibilities, exactly as Brommer has done in this imaginative series.
$11^{\prime \prime}$ x 11" Mixed media


## A different approach

Brommer takes a contemporary approach in this series of paintings by flattening forms and space, and emphasizing pattern and texture. Let's look at the devices he uses.

## Controlling depth

In order to reduce the illusion of depth, Brommer positions his buildings and cliffside to run parallel to the picture plane; to move across rather than to recede into pictorial space. He is not interested in the depth or three-dimensionality of his subject. but rather the design possibilities in its surface patterns and textures.



## Color

Brommer uses a limited palette of warm and cool neutrals. Countering the effects of aerial perspec-tive-making objects in the foreground brighter and warmer and objects at a distance grayer and cooler to create the illusion of depth-he uses hues similar in intensity and color throughout his design. In many of these versions, Brommer makes the sky area (for example, right top) not very different from the foreground (bottom right). Pictorial space appears flatter when there is very little difference in intensity or warmth between the closest area and the distant space.
To animate his objects, he uses value alternations and texture rather than color change.


Flattening form
To create a convincing illusion of three-dimensionality you need to depict an object in bright light with strong value contrast between the light and shaded side of the object (illustration above). To reduce this illusion and flatten the forms in his painting, Brommer keeps the value change on objects to a minimum and avoids strong directional lighting.


## Seattle artist JACQUI BECK offers

a creative approach

"Chair \#1" by Jacqui Beck

## Making painting decisions

I make a plan for each painting before I start with an eye on creating some form of dominance in my design (for example, mostly warm with a little cool, or mostly white with black line, or mostly dark with a little light).
I lack experience in mixing a range of quieter hues, so I took time to play around with complements until I created ones I liked that also worked with the colors I'd chosen for that particular painting. I had triumphs and defeats, but that's all part of the process.

## "I had triumphs and defeats, but that's all part of the process."

## Adding brights

I enjoyed the zing of bits of bright color that were in contrast to the quieter hues. By trial and error, I increased my vocabulary of colors and the solutions that I could apply to future paintings.


## Avoiding the ruts

I've been painting for a long time, so I've developed habits and preferences. During this exercise I made a point of paying attention to decisions I was making as I went along. My intention was to shake things up so that I wouldn't just retreat to my comfy ruts.

## "My intention was to shake things up so that I wouldn't just retreat to my comfy ruts."



Acrylic on paper, $30^{\prime \prime} \times 22^{\prime \prime}$
"Chair \#3" by Jacqui Beck

## New territory

To broaden my choices of how to use color, value, line, and other elements, I needed to stay conscious of the decisions I made as I progressed. Feeling uncomfortable was part of this. I knew I was on the right track when I was feeling edgy or a bit unsure, because it meant I was heading into new territory.

"Chair \#4" by Jacqui Beck
Acrylic on paper, $30^{\prime \prime} \times 22^{\prime \prime}$


Acrylic on paper, 30" x 22"

## Intuition

I believe that what we think of as intuition is primarily integrated experience and learning. The magic comes when we take what we already know, but then twist how we're using it, or when we combine the familiar and the unfamiliar in unexpected ways.

## "In a way, the chairs were like people to me."

## An emotional quality

After I had done a few paintings, I started to realize that the way I had designed each chair and the colors I had chosen evoked an emotional quality that I could further explore. In a way, the chairs were like people to me. Some were loud and bold. Some felt quiet, withdrawn, or lonely. For a few of the pieces I used two chairs, so that part of what I was expressing was the relationship between them. Thinking of my chairs as people enriched my experience of painting, and I believe it also gave depth to the pieces themselves.

## Energized

While experimenting with these new methods and ideas, I didn't find myself feeling drained as I sometimes do in the studio. My energy level remained high throughout the process. Instead of getting stuck on outcome, I allowed myself to focus instead on playfulness and curiosity, which was very freeing.


"Chair \#8" by Jacqui Beck
Acrylic on paper, $30^{\prime \prime} \times 22^{\prime \prime}$
". . . I used two chairs, so that part of what I was expressing was the relationship between them."


"Chair \#7" by Jacqui Beck
Acrylic on paper, $30^{\prime \prime} \times 22^{\prime \prime}$

## Contributing editor, Skip Lawrence, discusses painting a series

I believe working in a series (such as Jacqui Beck's wonderful group of paintings) is a sure-fire recipe for artistic growth. By exploring new possibilities of expression within the same subject, the artist is free from having to start from scratch with each new painting. The works build upon each other and the decisions and choices in one painting inform the next. It's a "what if" approach rather than "what will I paint today."
Every great artist works in some form of a series. A series does not have to be limited to painting the same object over and over, although that is one way
to do it. A series can be based on depicting the same subject or place, or on consistently using the same form (color, line, shape, etc.), or on emphasizing the same feeling or mood.
The narrower and more specific the focus, the deeper the exploration and the greater the challenge becomes to finding new ways to express it. That is where an artist's growth and awareness comes from. This consistency of attention is how you really find out What you want to say and How to say it. It is nearly impossible to identify that if you keep hopping from one subject or style to the next.

## making some

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When we were first learning to paint, the task seemed fairly simple: we found something picturesque or appealing and tried to accurately reproduce it on paper, copying the shapes, colors, and values that we saw. And if we didn't like standing outside to do it, if we didn't enjoy the rigors of plein air painting, we took a photo and worked on the subject at home, where we had more time to get it right without mosquitoes, bad weather, and bystanders. If the subject was too challenging and the result didn't look like the thing we observed, we searched for a different, ${ }^{\circ}$ appealing subject (or another photo), hoping we could successfully reproduce it with better accuracy.

## Make a change

Thus, as beginning painters, we produced thousands of paintings of Adirondack chairs in the sunlight, trees in autumn turning bright colors, boats anchored in the harbor, and kitties sleeping on the couch. Nothing wrong with any of these paintings; they did no harm and attempting such tried and true subjects is how most of us got started. But constantly hunting for appealing subjects can become tiresome, and accurately painting them can become boring. You may want to do something more, something different, something creative and imaginative. Here's one place you can start.


Heighten color
An old building nestled in the woods makes a warm, appealing subject until you try to paint it and find yourself in a swamp of green (see the photo at right).

Skip Lawrence overcomes the monotony of the local color and values in the subject by introducing light, intense areas of violet-pink, orange, and red. These small areas of subjective color contrast with the predominant area of naturalistic yellow-green. By making these changes, Lawrence has created a warm, inviting work of art. It feels right.


William (Skip) Lawrence

"I translated the subject matter
into simplified geometric shapes."


## Simplify shapes

Working from a photograph of a small creek that runs behind my
(Christopher Schink) house, I translated the subject matter into simplified geometric shapes that are more symbolic than realistic.

As Skip Lawrence has done on the preceding page, I've altered the color, playing cool blues and greens against a predominance of warm brown.


## Stylize shapes

Nothing could be more commonplace as a scene than two friends visiting on the couch, but the great American artist, Milton Avery (1885-1965), transforms his figures into simple, somewhat eccentric shapes whose gestures suggest the intimacy of the scene. He then adds a wonderfully harmonious and subtle color scheme, makings this into an exceptional work of art.



## "Larsen's painting is as much a work of imagination as it is of observation."



Flatten space/fragment color
New Mexico artist, Fran Larsen, has explored and recorded practically every back road, village, town, and church in her state, but what she saw wasn't what you got.

Larsen's painting (left) is as much a work of imagination as it is of observation. She raises the horizon to flatten space, breaking the rugged mountain forms into a multitude of shapes filled with subjective color. She creates an engaging story with the white winding road leading to a red church. The painting perfectly captures the charm and romance of New Mexico.


## Activate line

The great American artist, John Marin (18701956), employed an active, busy brush calligraphy to convey the forces of nature. His water crashes, his rocks tumble, his trees blow in the wind. There is nothing static in a Marin painting.
Marin's approach relied on a personal kind of Cubism, active brushwork, and a flattening of space.


John Marin (1870-1956)


## Distort shapes

African-American artist, Romare Bearden (1911-1988), was a trained, skillful artist who could reproduce exactly what he saw; but he didn't. Bearden gave his works expressive character by distorting shapes and changing natural proportions-big hands, small heads.The result is



Keith Crown (1918-2010)


## Create shapes

Renowned American artist, Keith Crown (1918-2010), has a unique approach to landscape painting; seeing his subject in wiggly, wormy shapes often tipped upside-down. He distorts and redesigns this subject to make every inch of his painting exciting, whether right side up or upside-down.


## Do some things

You're more likely to find old aluminum chairs in a yard sale than in a painting; there's little about them that an ordinary person would find interesting. But by making changes, distorting shape, and emphasizing color and texture, Skip Lawrence transforms them into a delightful visual experience.
Producing something original from a subject that is already visually appealing is a challenge. Beautiful scenes are hard to improve on or add to. Less prepossessing subjects-old aluminum garden chairs, an old shack, or a rusty tractor offer more creative possibilities.

In the top painting, Lawrence emphasizes the clunky shape of these old chairs by using a strong outline and bright color. In the bottom painting, he employs line and surface pattern to describe the same subject. The form and the feeling in each of these paintings is different, but both are original and expressive.


## Repeating some changes

You can explore a variety of approaches by changing color, shapes, reorganizing space, or emphasizing some design quality. That's the first step in the creative process. Eventually, you may find an approach that you feel is most
effective in expressing your feelings and ideas and you then consistently employ this treatment in your work. This consistent approach becomes your style, making your work distinctive and recognizably your own. Not a bad thing.



## Add movement

The great American painter, Charles Burchfield, had a unique approach to capturing the landscape. His trees vibrated, his bushes hummed and buzzed. Nothing was static; the landscape came alive.
Burchfield developed a personal brush calligraphy that emphasized his highly personal viewpoint.

## Add texture/pattern

Renowned watercolorist, teacher, and author, Gerald Brommer, is a master of texture and design. His theme of Italian hill towns with their weathered buildings, and barren cliffs provides him with endless possibilities. To emphasize these qualities, Brommer has used a limited hue palette for the color scheme of his imaginary hill town.


## Making some changes

"Does this need to be painted? And if it has been painted before, does it need to be painted again? And if so, what are you going to bring to it to distinguish it from the thousands of other paintings like it?" These were questions the late American painter, Barse Miller, would ask his classes. They are challenging questions. Although skill is important, simply doing the same
shopworn subject with greater skill is not the answer. Developing an imaginative approach, taking an original viewpoint, finding a personal concept will help you produce a more satisfying work of art. Think about it.

## the challenge of PAINTING PERFECTION



Acrylic 12" x12"
by Skip Lawrence

ANNOUNCEMENT
I have a new grandson, Rowan Wesley, born Dec 8, 2017. Talk about a "ready made subject," this little guy is exactly that and more. The conundrum I find in the midst of all this joy is how to portray the love I feel for this new fellow.

## Capturing my subject

The first consideration is how to get the model to be still—no way! The answer is, of course, the camera. The camera, while valuable, can also become the crutch that will not let go. If there is anything I have learned after 60 years of painting, it is that art is not about visual accuracy. The outward appearance of someone often belies the true character of this person: their personality, their heart, and their soul.
My language is color, line and shape arranged around a predominant element that delivers the mood and response I feel toward this subject. The response I have to this cast of characters, my family, is always love, joy, excitement, and an occasional tear- but always strongly felt emotions.
> "This little guy has opened an avalanche of feelings that deserves my honesty, compassion, and my best craftsmanship."

"Swim Lesson with Dad"
Acrylic, 30" x 22"

## Picking an approach

"Learning the Ropes" is handled with the same approach as "Swim Lesson". The figures are drawn and painted as one shape. The water is divided into two shapes. The red thing , a flotation device, becomes the third shape. Eye sockets and goggles complete the reference material.
While this approach is suited perfectly to my taste, it is not for everyone. My good friend, Ted Nuttall, whose work I admire greatly, paints very differently with far more precision and accuracy. It takes many years and many screw-ups to discover what works best for you.

## Picking a medium

All the paintings represented are done with acrylic paints. Acrylic paints were introduced into the art world in the early 1960's, or at least in my world. These paints were going to revolutionize painting as they dried quickly, easily cleaned-up with water, and were as permanent as plastic. All this is true. The one factor that is most difficult is that they dry darker and with less intensity.

## Avoid the details

My first thought is to avoid getting bogged down in details. To that end, I translate three-dimensional space into two-dimensional space-in other words, I flatten everything.
I find that the more decisions I make the more freedom I possess. The opposite is also true-for the more slavish I am about visual accuracy, the less likely I am to explore new ways of seeing and expressing.
In "Swim Lesson with Dad", Rowan and Josh are rendered as one shape with a great many lost edges. It is difficult to separate father from child in the middle part of the figures.
I find it magical how our mind fills in the missing edges. Joshua's dark swim suit, being under water, allows me to distort the edges and to ignore many of the other edges that are seen underwater. Having gone this far it is easy to omit facial features and all incidental objects.


"Rowan and Jen (Mom)"

Acrylic 30" $x 22^{\prime \prime}$

## Attitude

Gesture and attitude say as much about a figure as their features. We can see a friend two blocks away and immediately know who they are. But if I show you a closeup of their eyes, you will probably not know who they are.
Elegant, honest, and forthright are words I would use to describe Diane, but never supercilious. I try to convey this here.
The next time you want to capture the essence of a friend, think more about shapes, colors, gestures, and paint quality, and above all, relax.

## Not portraits

"Rowan and Jen" represents early spring in San Fransisco, CA. Faces are always a problem for me. I want my images of people to be about the whole person not just their facial features. I am long past the need to be praised for how recognizable the "likeness" of a person appears to others. I must admit it is almost impossible to not strive for perfection when painting your grandchild, (puppies and flowers also fit in that category). I try to make every part of a subject equally important.


"Carly and Friends"

## A willingness to explore leads to new discoveries

## Exploring

Nothing new here. I flatten the shapes, select a color and value for each shape, and then begin the painting. I paint through a series of trial and error, what might also be called mistakes. Believe me, there are too many levels of paint on every shape in my work to count. A willingness to explore leads to discoveries a rational mind would never find. I want to paint the figures with the same freedom I found with the dog.

## Paint relationships

Some subjects are so prepossessing, so beautiful, so perfect, that, as an artist, there is nothing you can add to them by rendering them in paint. When attempting to accurately paint babies, or bouquets, or Yosemite Valley, your efforts will invariably fall short. What succeeds is not visual fact but rather emotional responsean observation of feeling and relationships-a young
girl and her dog, a father and son, an old couple on a park bench, men playing cards.
But beware: the closer these subjects are to you, the greater the temptation to be visually accurate. But if you can capture the essence of, the feeling, not the fact, the rewards are great.


We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the New Palette Magazine. Our goal is to continue adding new articles, lessons, product reviews and interviews with many inspiring artists and re-purpose some of the great articles that appeared in the former Watermedia Focus Magazine. Our desire is to be your go-to magazine for inspiration, education and much more.

We welcome your feedback along with your ideas and suggestions for future articles, as well as your thoughts about interesting artists and techniques. We are always on the lookout for stories about what you are doing and photos of your studio and artwork, as well.

In other words, we encourage your participation in keeping the New Palette Magazine the best art instruction magazine available anywhere. You can get in touch with us at: editor@thepalettemagazine.com


