

DBAC Drawing & Painting Newsletter

Issue No. 8

Welcome

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to Issue 8 of the Newsletter and Happy New Year to you all!

Hopefully you're well rested and ready to get going again with some creative activities. The Spring will be here before we know it so we'd better crack on.

This issue contains some further lessons on colour theory as well as some suggestions for arty New Year resolutions, some critiques and a couple of new challenges.

Although the clubhouse remains shut, I'm still available via email if you get stuck with anything and want a bit of guidance. You can also still send me your photos of any artwork that you've been doing.

You can email me directly at clarerussellart@gmail.com.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue,

Clare

www.clarerussellart.com

www.facebook.com/clarerussellart

Drawing & Painting Course

Lesson 9 : More on Colour Theory

In the last newsletter I introduced colour theory and talked about colour wheels, primary, secondary and tertiary colours, neutrals, warm and cool colours, saturation and complementary colours. If you can't remember what all those are you might want to look back at the previous issue to remind yourself.

Last time we used a colour wheel example that was made from **three** tubes of paint as shown below.



The three tubes of paint were the primary colours (yellow, red and blue) and we mixed all the other colours from them. If you tried this yourself you may have found that although you could mix a secondary colour (green, purple, orange) from two primaries, the resultant colour wasn't always as strong or bright as you'd have liked. This time we'll find out why that is and what to do about it.

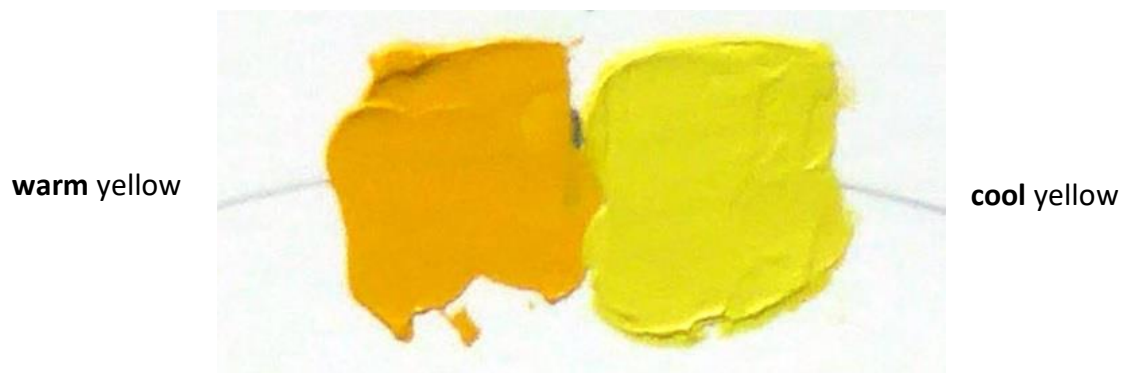
This time we're going to look at a colour wheel made from **six** tubes of paint as shown below. The tubes of paint are still just the primary colours but this time we have **two** yellows, **two** reds and **two** blues.



The tubes of paint I used are called the following:

Cadmium lemon	}	primary yellows
Cadmium yellow medium		
Cadmium red medium	}	primary reds
Alizarin crimson		
Cerulean blue	}	primary blues
Ultramarine blue		

Let's look at the two yellows to start with as shown below. Although they are both very definitely yellow, they look different. The one on the left is the cadmium yellow medium and the one on the right is the cadmium lemon but it doesn't really matter what the paint colour is called, what's important is that the one on the left is a **warmer** yellow and the one on the right is a **cooler** yellow. Have a close look at them now to see if you can see that difference in temperature.



This difference occurs because the paint in the tubes has a **colour bias**. This happens because the paint is made of real world elements and chemicals (pigments) that aren't pure 'middle of the road' yellow. So, the pigments of the left yellow contain a tiny bit more orange colour than the pigments of the right yellow, which contain a tiny bit more green colour.

It sounds more complicated than it is. All you really need to know is that a pure 'middle of the road' yellow doesn't really exist* and every yellow pigment will have different bias that pulls the colour slightly warmer (towards orange) or slightly cooler (towards green).



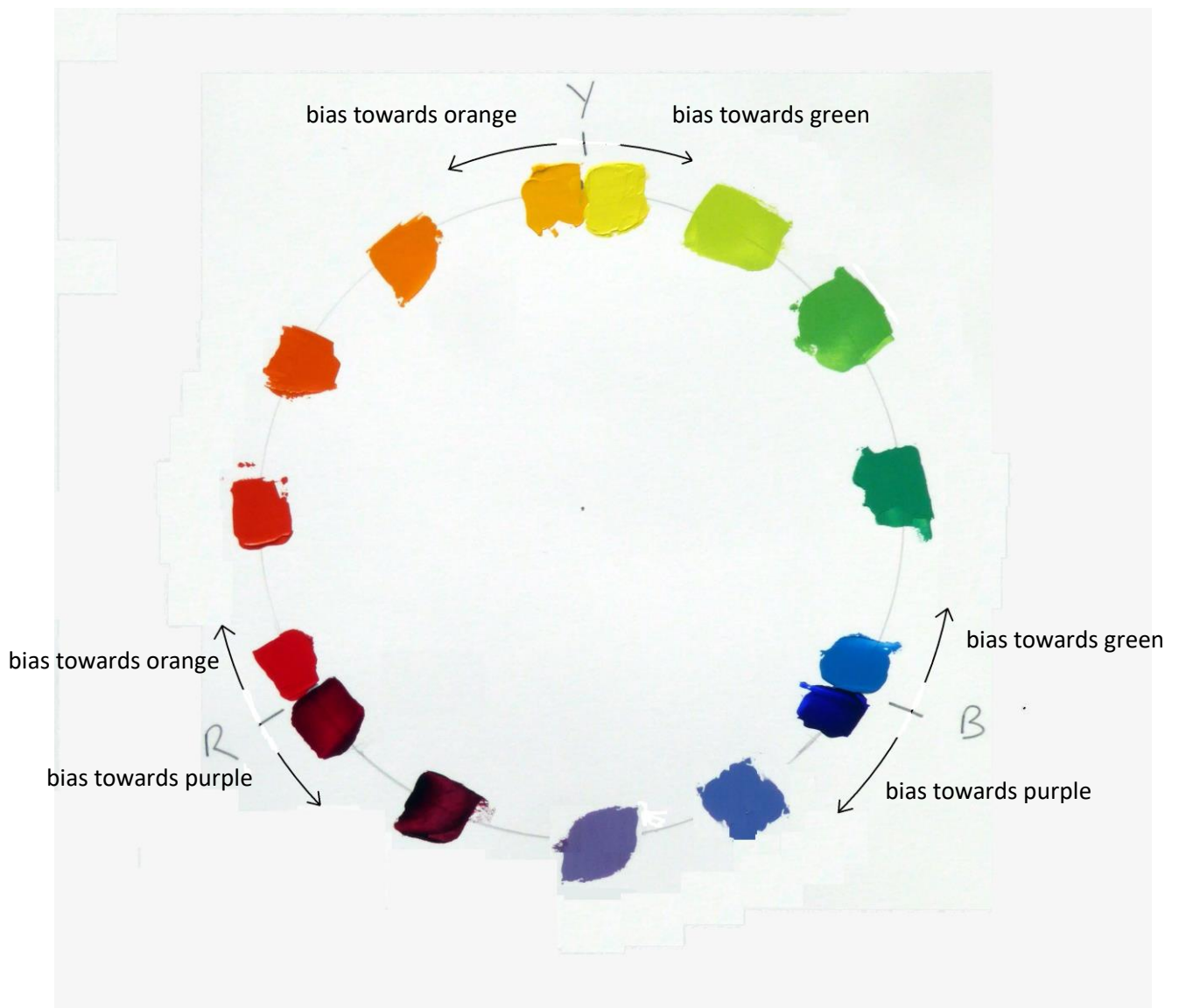
[* some paint companies mix pigments to give a 'middle' or 'process' yellow but this isn't the same as a **pure** pigment paint and colour mixing with it is greatly affected, as we shall see later].

The same is true for the reds and blues, see below.



You can probably see this bias more clearly now when we look again at the colour wheel on the next page.

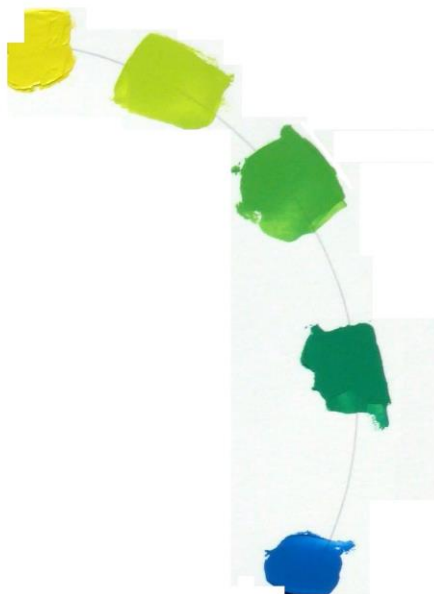
It'd be a good idea now to go through all your own paints (and any other coloured media you have) and see if you can identify the bias of the primary colours. Can you then identify exactly where they should sit on a colour wheel?



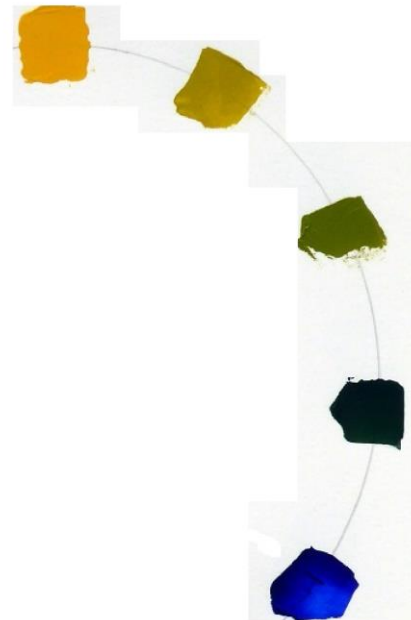
Painting with a palette consisting of these 6 primary colours is often referred to as a **split-primary** or **co-primary** palette; this simply refers to the fact that we are using two paints for each primary colour (a warm and cool version of each). Some artists also call it an '**impressionist's palette**'; you'll see why shortly.

So what's the point of knowing all this colour bias and co-primaries stuff? Well, it's about colour mixing and it's really important if you want to produce paintings with wonderful bright, clean colours. Read on...

Let's take a look at mixing green from primaries yellow and blue, as shown below. The green on the left is mixed from cadmium lemon and cerulean blue which both have a green (or cool) bias. They produce a vibrant, strong, cool green. The green on the right is mixed from cadmium yellow medium and ultramarine blue which both have an orange (or warm) bias). They still produce a green but it's much duller (and warmer) in comparison to the green on the left.



Green mixed from yellow and blue that both have **green (cool)** bias.



Green mixed from yellow and blue that both have **red (warm)** bias.

Why does this happen? It's to do with desaturation (which I talked about in Issue 7). The yellow and blue used on the right both have a red (warm) bias; their pigments have a tiny little bit of red in them. Red is the opposite (or complementary) colour of green which means when they are mixed the resultant colour is **desaturated** (duller, not as vibrant). Whereas the yellow and blue used on the left both have a green (cool) bias; their pigments have a tiny bit of green in them already which is fine as we're mixing them to produce green. The resultant mixed green is **saturated** (bright and vibrant).

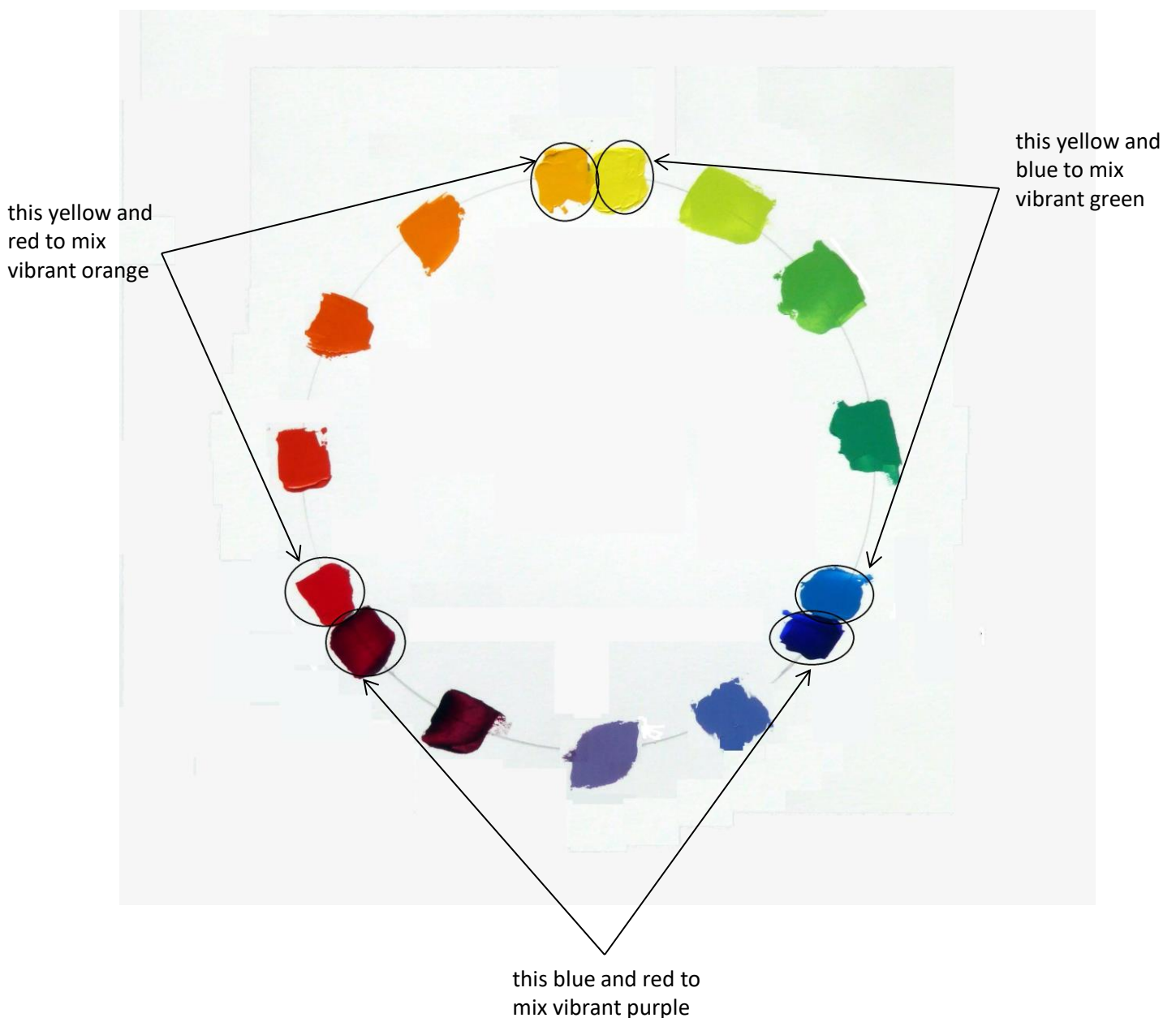
Now, there's nothing **wrong** with using a duller green if that's what you want. But often I have students complaining to me that they can't mix the bright green they desire even though they're putting in lots of yellow and white. The reason is usually because they're using the wrong yellow and/or blue to produce a bright green.

Bias affects the mixing of all colours on our colour wheel.

If you want a vibrant orange you'll need to use a warm (orange) biased yellow and warm (orange) biased red.

If you want a bright purple you'll need to use a cool (purple) biased red and a warm (purple) biased blue.

It sounds a lot more complicated than it is but if you produce your own colour wheel like the one below then it's easy to pick the correct primaries to mix your other colours from; you just pick the primary that is nearest the colour you are trying to mix. Give it a go and see what vibrant colours you can produce.



Arty New Year's Resolutions

Here's a few ideas for New Year's Resolutions. Pick and mix or make up some of your own!

Some to do right now...

- Start a sketchbook and put something in it every week.
- Tidy up all your old art work. Decide on what you want to keep and place everything else in a pile to reuse, rework, crop or recycle (Issue 3 had some ideas about what to do with existing work).
- Tidy up all your art materials. Make sure everything is clean and ready to use. If there's anything you're never going to use that someone else might want, put it aside for donating to the club once it's back open.
- Clear a space in your house for doing artwork and keep it tidy. That way it'll be ready whenever you want to be creative.
- Make a plan for some art projects to start and complete this year. Is there any area that you'd really like to improve? If so, how are you going to go about doing that? Having some short term and some longer term goals will keep you motivated.
- Commit to making more time for your art. Maybe get up earlier (not one for me!) or watch less telly in the evening or less social media surfacing.
- Go through the back issues of the Newsletter and do all the challenges.
- If you've never done it before, commit to putting at least one or two artworks into the next DBAC exhibition. Plan them now so they'll be ready in plenty time.



Some for later in the year...

- Visit a public art gallery. Pick a couple of paintings you like and really study them; make notes in your sketchbook about the composition, tone, colour, brushwork, overall feeling and why you like them.
- If you've never done it before - attend a life drawing class.



The Brushstroke Challenge

Obviously everyone found this challenge very difficult as I had very few emails. Maybe I'll do a demo of this one in a future newsletter. Thanks to Dorothy who was brave enough to send in her effort for sharing.

Here's a brief reminder of the challenge:

Paint a landscape or still life in a maximum of twenty brushstrokes. A brushstroke can be straight, curved, zig-zag or wiggly – however each one must be placed in a single continuous movement; once the brush stops moving that's the end of the brushstroke. Count the number of brushstrokes as you go.

This is a challenge in thinking about what's important in the composition and considering the brushstrokes carefully before you make them; if you only have twenty, each one has got to be important.



'Landscape' by Dorothy T.

"The painting is on 9x11 paper using big brushes and knife with more than one colour on them. I don't think the painting is very good but I enjoyed trying to do it. I would not have managed to do this on large paper."

Beginners Challenge: Fruit & Veg

Here's a challenge for you if you're a beginner to painting...

The Fruit & Veg Challenge

Please read through the whole challenge so you understand it before you start.

This challenge is to arrange some fruit and vegetables on a table, plate or bowl and paint them directly; that means paint them whilst they are in front of you (no using photos or iPads). You can use acrylic or watercolour or gouache.

Don't spend time doing a detailed drawing, just dive straight in with the paint and make alterations as you go.

The things you should be looking for are listed below but don't worry if you can't get all of them in the first painting:

- Shape of individual objects
- Relationships between objects (size, what's behind/in front of something else)
- Dark and light areas (including shadows)
- Bright and dull colours
- Warm and cool colours

Only spend 1-2 hours maximum on your painting.

Once you've done the first painting, leave it for a day or two before looking at it again from 6 feet away and seeing what you could have improved from the list above.

If you want continue, do more paintings of different fruit and vegetable arrangements. Just remember each time spend no longer than 1-2 hours actual painting.

If you'd like some help or feedback on how you're progressing just drop me an email with some photos of your work.

Remember, the more practice you do the better you'll become.

Good luck!

Gesture Drawing Challenge

This challenge is suitable for everyone and will help you get started in your new sketchbook...

The Gesture Drawing Challenge

Please read through the whole challenge so you understand it before you start.

This challenge is to sketch in your sketchbook **ten pages** of gesture drawings of **living & moving** objects; that's humans, animals, birds, fish or invertebrates.

A gesture drawing is a very quick drawing to capture the essence of a subject; its form, pose and movement. It's got to be done quickly – almost without any thought – maybe only five seconds up to a couple of minutes. Anything more than that and it's not a gesture drawing.

Remember you can do lots of overlapped drawings on each page. You can use the same subject or seek out ten different subjects. Maybe you'd like the extra challenge of filling a page every day for ten days in a row. You can use biro, pencil, coloured pencil, two handed coloured pencil, felt tip etc. (but no eraser – you won't have time to use it). If you don't have a sketch pad you can use loose paper, even on top of newspaper or card board. I'd recommend trying different sizes of paper too – and bigger is always better.

Here are some ideas for subjects (remember you can look out of the window for this):

Partner/family member making the tea or doing some housework

Kids or grandkids dancing or doing keep fit

Pet dogs/cats/hamsters/budgies/goldfish

Wild birds in the garden or on the feeder (lots of wood pigeons, magpies, robins, starlings)

People walking outside in the street, with dogs, children

Joggers/cyclists

Delivery people

Too easy? The more advanced of you might want the further challenge of taking your gesture sketches and trying to work them up in the studio in a different media, e.g. paint, collage, ink splashes etc. You don't need to do a whole finished piece, just experiment to see if you can replicate the **feeling and movement** of the sketches, rather than the lines that you drew. I think you'll find it much harder than it sounds.

Let me know how you get on and good luck!

Coaching & Critiques

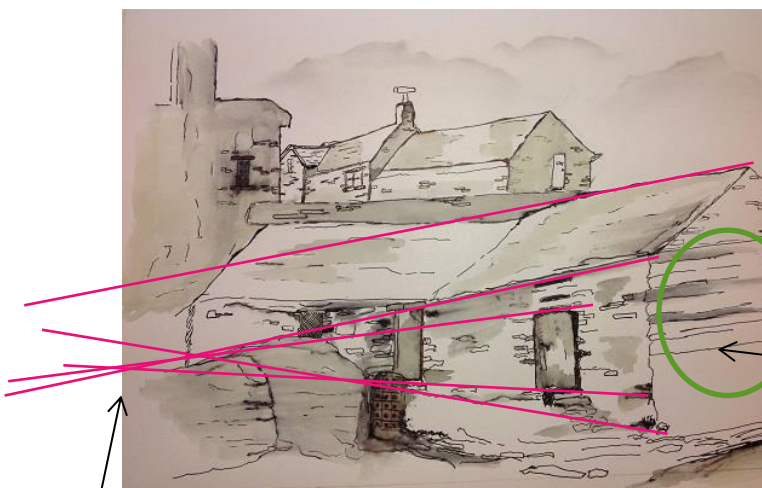
Boat Sheds & Lobster Pots

The artist has attempted to copy a drawing from a book. The artist says “The perspective in my effort is not great as the length of the buildings are out compared to the picture. The small window (top left), and the lobster pots (bottom middle) are too dark which causes them to be very obvious, caused by me over-working them.”



Artists drawing (left) copied from book (right)

Critique:



VP about here?

The red lines I've drawn are all parallel in real life so should all disappear to the same vanishing point. They're not bad but the roof line looks a bit off.

The gable end is square on so the lines of brickwork would usually be shown fairly horizontal rather than angled (like you have done for the far away building gable). I know in the original drawing they are also angled but this doesn't look correct. This is a good example of understanding what you are drawing and being confident to make changes where required.

As you say, the length of the buildings is wrong as you've made the one on the left too long. You've ended up putting the middle door on the left hand building when it should have been on the right. A small, simple, mistake but it has huge consequences to the overall composition as now the buildings are of equal size which is boring compared to the original. I suspect you got caught up in all the details of the doors and brickwork before checking that your overall large shapes were correct. Am I right?

When I look at the original, one of the lovely things about it is how we are funnelled into that small area between the wall and the sheds, passed the lobster pots and into the dark opening; this lead-in is done by compositional lines showing the direction and shape of the wall and shading indicating how the light falls across it and produces a shadow on the path. In your drawing, you seem to have straightened out the wall so that it is flat on to us. Although you have nice shadows for the lobster pots across the path there are none for the wall. I suggest that if you want to work from other people's drawings or photographs that you like, then don't just sit down and try to copy them. Firstly, really analyse what it is that you like about it – spend time doing this, write it down, try a few tiny sketches of the important elements to understand what is going on in the composition. Then, when you come to your drawing you can capture that 'thing' that you liked. If you do that, you can change all sorts of other details to make the work more personal without losing your original intention.

I've been quite harsh with you here but I know you can draw so it's time to move you up to the next level. On the plus side, I love the raggedy lines that you've used to evoke the slightly run-down feeling and the areas of light wash work well, especially in the far buildings where they clearly describe the light and shadow. Be careful in the foreground buildings where the wash seems to have been applied a bit more haphazard rather than describing how the light falls. Again, if you had done those little compositional sketches you could have applied a bit of wash or shading to them to check where the shadows fall. Keep at it though – you've worked hard and made great progress over the last year.

Three Pen & Ink Drawings



This has some potential. The cliffs are well done as you've changed the direction of shading to describe the shape of the landscape. The first cliff clearly has two faces; one towards us and one going off into the paper. The middle cliff also works really well with the vertical lines as it gives the feeling of a height. I like that the stack is much darker – just watch it doesn't look too much like a tree.

The background above the horizon doesn't work so well. I'm not sure what the harsh lines going across the sky represent and are the outlined shapes distant mountains or clouds? Flick through some of your books or search the web to see if you can find examples of how different people do illustrations with sky and clouds and just practice these on their own without any land or composition to get a feel of what might work for you.

The foreground, below the horizon is an area which is almost working but not quite. The horizon line and small indication of distant waves is fine. But coming closer, I'm assuming there are more and larger waves and then rocks and pebbles on a beach that comes right up to the viewer. You've put in a bit of this but it's not enough to describe the space convincingly. More rocks, getting larger as they get closer would have helped. Remember, it's good to have less detail on far away objects but the closer something is the more detail and tonal variations you're going to see.



In this one, the areas that work best are the dark trees on the left and the rough rocks and small cliff below the cottage on the right; both these areas are using tonal shading rather than outline to describe their form.

I don't think mixing the ink hatching with the pencil shading is working; it would be better to have it all in ink – that will force you to make decisions about how you show different objects against each other. Yes, it will be harder for a while but it will improve your skills. Think about what needs to be lighter and darker to get the piece to make sense. The distant hills in the middle and the closer ones behind the cottage have the same pencil shading which makes them difficult to differentiate. If one had been done slightly darker than the other (using ink) then you would not have to rely on outline to describe them. Similarly, if there had been some ink hatching on the hill behind the cottage then the gable end would have stood out without it needing to be fully outlined.



There are some great bits in this drawing. The distant walls and the people on them are excellent – very well done – people aren't easy to do, especially getting the scale of them correct. The large wall with the steps and the water is also very well described. The perspective all looks good and the overall scene and space is believable.

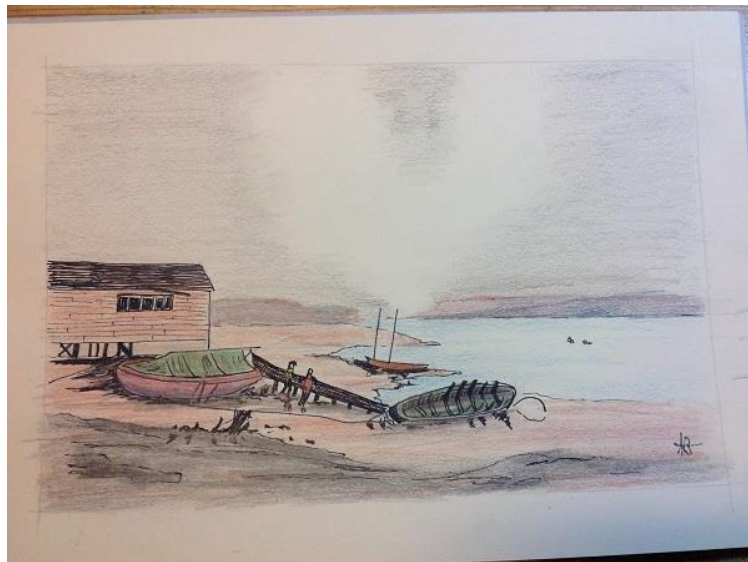
As I said before, I don't think the pencil shading works well with the ink; I'd either have it all ink or ink with watercolour washes (remember the washes could be greys – it doesn't have to be in colour). Remember, if you're going to apply a wash to indicate shadow areas then you'll need to decide before hand which direction the light is coming from.

One area I can see you've had difficulty with is the two people on the left; you've had to stop drawing the wall bricks to make them stand out against a white background. It would have been better if you could have found another solution to this; maybe continued some of the brickwork so the two elements were at least integrated or maybe shaded the wall darker and had the people lighter in tone. Drawing is really about solving a collection of problems.

The other area that is a little weak is again that foreground. I'm not sure what's going on here. Is it a wall, pathway, shore? I think it's maybe meant to be a jetty sloping down to the sea and we're seeing it side-on? If so, then there should be an indication of the path at the top coming towards us which would allow us to understand it a bit better. It's ok to not fully describe things to a viewer – we don't want everything in high detail – however, we need to strike a balance to give the viewer just enough information for him to fill in the gaps.

Overall, the three pen and ink pieces have some great bits in them. A little more work on the skies and foreground will make a huge difference. The last piece especially shows the potential that you have for this sort of artwork. Well done and keep going.

At the Boat House



What you've drawn here has been well observed. There's lots of interesting bits around the boat and the figures. You've even got some suggestion of the foreground which is good and there is a sense of distance with the hills in the background.

The only negative is that vast expanse of empty sky. Don't feel you have to put a large sky in just because it's a landscape. In the image below I've taken your picture and cropped it into the action to make it more interesting. The cut-off boat on the right suggests that there's more going on outside of what you can see, without having to show it all. Playing about with a pair of 'L' shaped pieces of card can help you find better compositions in existing work.



If you'd like a critique of your recent drawings or paintings, then you can email me photos along with a description of how you produced the work, what you're trying to achieve and any problems you're having.

Next time...

Hopefully that's enough to get you kicked into action again.

Next time I'll maybe do another demo and see if I can come up with some harder challenges. If there's anything else you'd like me to cover just drop me an email and I'll do my best.

In the meantime see if you can get to grips with colour theory, write down some art plans for the year and have a go at the challenges.

Get ready for Spring, it's just around the corner...

...and whatever else you're doing, keep drawing & painting.
Clare



"Beyond Findatie" Acrylic on board, 40 x 40 cm