



Oil Painting Techniques and Materials

Harold Speed

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Stimulating, informative guide by noted teacher covers painting technique, painting from life, materials — paints, varnishes, oils and mediums, grounds, etc. — a painter's training, more. Speed also provides expert analysis of works by Velasquez, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Hals, Rembrandt, and others. 64 photos. 5 line drawings.

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Magi says

I review this yearly - An essential resource; especially for art teachers.

Katherine says

Harold Speed, asked to write a book on the art of painting, ultimately wrote a book on many of his philosophies surrounding painting. Written in 1924, he writes of modern art, eloquently stating both the impressive and the absurd aspects, and hypothesizing what he hopes is to come of it. He writes of the influence of press, the various workings of the art market, the Paris salons, and overfed food critiques. He also writes of very intricate philosophical aspects of painting, colour technique, tone, etc. so only the first half of the book would be exciting for the non-painter. The book is so fluid, however, that it wouldn't surprise me if a non-artist enjoyed it.

"The use of swear words by ignorant people is quite excusable, because they have not the wit to use, or the knowledge of, just those words which would forcefully express what they want to say. And failing to give their expression the force they desire by the legitimate use of words, they throw in some nasty expression of entirely alien association, like a bad smell, but calculated to give a shock; which gives them the satisfaction of having made a forceful remark. The violent use of colours and forms adopted by much of so-called advanced art nowadays, is just like these swear words. They want to create a sensation, and not having the wit to use the wonderful instruments of expression that are at the disposal of the modern artist who is prepared to follow the straight and narrow way, they would destroy the restraints of tradition and rush to the use of swearing yellows and screeching reds, of clashing lines and jarring planes, in lieu of anything really forceful to say."

Brandon says

Most of the time I'm getting painting books for the pictures. This is the first book on painting I've really sat down and "read". As such, I found it pretty amazing. He talks about a lot of different subjects related to painting, and in particular how it should/should-not be taught. Lots to think about...here are some quotes that struck me:

"There is a widespread desire to break with all restraints, that the individual may express himself more freely. Perfect freedom is a thing only conceivable, for one individual, in one universe. If there were more than one, their desires might clash and all would have to give up their freedom to the one. But even one individual endowed with unlimited freedom, would be enough to upset the smooth working of any universe. This desire for absolute freedom, this anarchy, is a destructive not a constructive tendency. And in art it is everywhere destroying but nowhere creating. It is so much easier to destroy than to create, so much more effect can be got for your effort. And to those not capable of the long-sustained effort creative work requires, destroying is very tempting as a substitute. One seems to be doing so much, and certainly attracts more

attention." (p35)

"The study of nature can never be neglected by the artist without impoverishing the language in which he expresses himself." (p59)

"That earnest person of honest narrow vision who comes along and says, "I don't see that colour," should have one's sympathy, as looked for with his coldly accurate eye, all the glory of colour disappears and has no existence. But Turner was quite justified in saying "Don't you wish you could!" for colour is one of the most rapturous truths that can be revealed to man. Colour must be felt before it can be seen." (p138)

I was accosted, when copying in a Continental gallery, by a globe-trotter, who said: "Young man, you are an artist; will you kindly explain to me the beauties of that picture? It is 'starred' in Baedeker, so I suppose it is a good one but I can't see anything in it." This attitude of mind is hopeless, however earnest. In the commercial world thing can be explained, but artistic things have to be experienced. And the picture itself is the only thing that can produce the experience. When this has failed, as it obviously had with my inquirer, you are as helpless as you would be if he had just partaken of a good dinner, which he had not appreciated; and had asked you to explain the quality of it, and refused to believe it was a good dinner because you could no do so. (p213)

There is too much striving for an aggressive and self-centred individuality, and not enough of the artist's losing himself in the deeper currents of the emotional life of his time. It is this "herd matter," as I believe psychologists would call it, that gives the weight and significance to art. (p265) [This discussion continues in an analysis of Rodin's sculpture as it represents the masses 'coming to power' through literacy and democracy, catching the emotional wave of the times.:]

It cannot be too much insisted upon that the creative faculties are not in the conscious intellect, are not the result of "taking thought." To be of the right quality they must come unsought, surging up from some unknown tract of inner mind, and nourished more by the affections than the intellect. A painting may be perfect as far as any known principles of form, tone, and colour are concerned, and yet lack the vital something, that is the most important element in the whole thing. (p274)

Raven says

An excellent reference book for ANYone interested in oil painting and art instruction in general. Highly recommended!

Lydia says

Speed wrote this book in 1924, and if you can gloss over Chapter two where he rails against the current impressionists, you can move on to very useful chapters on how to train yourself as an oil painter. He tells you how to approach painting, how to concentrate, how to create a portrait, and how to view the masters (Velazquez, Vermeer, Rembrandt). He spends a whole chapter on tone values, and two chapters on color, plus a couple chapters on how to construct and compose a painting, and how to think about inspiration for a painting. This is a very useful book, a classic.

Alistair Topping says

Fucking phenomenal - to all self indulgent humans a- like, this really grasps the spirit of an artist; a selfish, self pitiful, arrogant or oxymoronic human depending on how well your Rabbit fat soaked in - here it lay, the unravelled mind of a lifetime of canvas staring, tobacco chewing and depressive drinking.

He seems to flicker between progression and conservatism throughout, more toward ones deep connection with ones art, and more the art of doing art, reacting from instinct but sticking to fundamentals, like most books, this the discussion of the grey, thought provoking shit mind.

Need I note, he's an eloquent mother fucker like.

Tip - read with a dictionary to hand lol.

Michael Fleming says

old book but still great info

Emile B says

great need to keep going through this.
