

Introduction

My name is Emil Sennholz. I graduated Slippery Rock University with a degree in Art in 2012. I had of course had art lessons and been interested in art long before that as well. I'm a person of many interests, and I love to learn from a variety of fields, art just happens to be one of those fields that interest me. I did some traveling to Germany and Taiwan, learning their cultures and artistic styles before returning to the United States. Since my return, I have been working hard on my artistic endeavors, building a reputation locally and globally. I have learned many things in my search for artistic enlightenment.

While I was unsure of my path, I had several artist friends encouraging me, even going as far as giving me free canvases. Having been a beginner, I made mistakes, and also discovered many things that may help other artists not fumble around like I did.

I began with more complex art, and trying to paint art drawn from my memory or even pictures. This was frustrating and discouraging for someone with no experience using paints, or even colors. Before using paint my main medium was charcoal or pencil. In this article, I'll be telling you what I've learned, and my opinions on art styles and stages that a beginning painter should learn.

Going from black, white, and brown charcoal to the large variety of colors of paints doesn't sound difficult, but when you are trying to paint someone or something, color is the first thing people notice, and if it's off, that isn't good, unless you have a good reason for it not being the same color.

Working with colors and paints is the first thing any painter needs to start with. A good way to get the experience you need working with color and many different kinds of paints, is to start painting abstract.

There are many kinds of abstract yes, but I recommend pure abstract. That allows you to focus your attention on learning how the paint you use mixes, blends, and its thickness. On top of that allowing you to focus on the colors as well. The paint may change slightly when dry and through off your whole painting! See what colors work well with each other, starting with complimentary colors like blue & orange, green & red, or even black & white.

Learning your paint and the colors needed to accomplish your goals is half the battle. Learning what mixtures of colors may turn into, is invaluable. These skills will stay with you no matter what style of art you are interested in working with. Don't do just one painting and be done with it, you wouldn't learn anything that way.

Understanding colors is important, but if you are interested in painting complex shapes, you first need to understand basic shapes. I'm not suggesting you learn how to draw a square or circle, the next style of art you focus on should be cubism.

Pablo Picasso made this art style famous for its general shapes and easy patterns, but it also helps guide your eye to more details. With cubism, you get to practice the shapes of objects and people, even allowing you to see patterns or shapes in objects you didn't realize had them!

Cubism allows you to put together the experience you learned about color, and also lets you learn shapes, even how your tools work at making different configurations. Experiment with textures in shapes and see how they work with or against the rest of the painting!

Cubism makes you analyze objects from multiple angles, so you can break up the objects into shapes, reassemble them in any manor desired, giving the work more information within the same space without being ruled by complex shapes. This style brings a multitude of shapes into reality for any painter, forcing you to learn shape without it being a burden.

After working with Cubism and understanding it well, the next step should be landscapes. They require both an understanding of colors and basic shapes and textures. After having learned abstract for color and cubism for shapes, landscapes should come more easily.

Landscapes are a middle ground of difficulty, but if you are already proficient in painting landscapes, I'd still recommend trying abstract and cubism to broaden your experience!

Landscapes are amazing and beautiful, getting to this stage is a big accomplishment! Painting a variety of landscapes will develop not only your eye for exact shapes and colors, but also your hand eye coordination. Understanding nature better by painting landscapes allows you to continue on with more difficult styles of painting.

This style of painting is also good for imitating reality, and learning more uses for your tools. Forming complex or simple textures, shapes, and colors is invaluable for any art style, and will come in handy when learning the next stage.

I recommend next learning portraits or people. This in itself is very difficult to accomplish, so I'd recommend practicing by drawing with pencil first. After understanding the shapes, curves, and lines that male and female bodies have, you may even try animal forms.

Animal figures may be slightly easier to try than going directly into the human figure. After working with and forming a strong understanding of animal figures and human figures, transition from pencil to paint. Working with these figures may be a challenge, but once this stage is accomplished, you have become an expert on fluid moving objects and understanding colors.

Portraits of people or animals is not only a good method of learning the shapes of different animals or people, it is also a good way to learn how to paint emotion and expression. Paint different variations of emotions on your portraits to learn how to show those expressions better. The next stage may not sound difficult after this, but it is good to learn geometric shapes and structures.

The next stage is cityscapes. I know, we've done landscapes, but painting these is more

different than their names may imply! This exercise is good for making straight lines with paint. This style even is good for learning how to layer your paints better for the complex form of the city. Have fun with cityscapes, even going as far as to make maps, or abstract buildings! This serves to not only relax you, but also form a strong understanding of architecture and city design.

Once you have mastered the complexity of a city and the human body, you can begin practicing a baroque style of art with much complexity and massive canvases with extreme detail. A baroque style has strong details and exaggerated motions within the art. This should help you learn and understand how to paint to build drama, tension, and exuberance in your paintings. With these skills, anything is possible in the world you paint.

Obviously most artists wouldn't bother trying to learn this style of art because of how long it would take to learn, or even paint a single painting, but once you have learned this style, everything else will seem easy. This is for those who want to become true masters of art, and after completing all of these stages, there isn't an art style that you can't quickly learn afterward.

After having learned all of these art styles, I have nothing more to suggest. Everything that you have learned up to this point will allow you to determine what style is best suited for you. If you decide to return to one of the previous styles you have learned, then you are that much more capable and can play with mixing the styles. If you decide to try a completely new style, it will be easy for you to learn on your own.

Learn more about the processes of artwork! Read more of my “how to” articles, or if you want personal lessons, that is an option as well! Thank you for reading! Enjoy making art!