

LIGHT AND ATMOSPHERE: DRAWING TECHNIQUES USING TRADITIONAL PASTELS

Inspired by Claude Monet's *The Meadow*

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Grade Level Middle & High School

OVERVIEW

Fear of making a mistake can limit one's ability to fully experience the drawing process. Participants in this exercise will be coached in unique methods of observation and recording; they will experience traditional (chalk) pastels as a direct and expressive drawing medium, even as they seek to make representational drawings, and they will be encouraged to note the unique power of direct observation while enjoying the layering potential of this very colorful medium.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Monet did not paint objects or scenes: He painted light. The stunning abstract quality of his work was directly related to his powerful observational skills. I encourage you to look closely, challenging yourself to see beyond the subject, responding instead to simple light and shape, working quickly and immersing yourself in the drawing without considering the end result.



Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926), *The Meadow*, 1879, oil on canvas, 32 x 39 1/4 in., Gift of Mr. William Averell Harriman, 1944.79

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will recognize value and intensity as primary attributes of color.
- Students will practice basic pastel drawing techniques in drawing from life.
- Students will understand atmospheric space as represented in 2-dimensional art.
- Students will discover the value of close observation in immediate surroundings.
- Students will employ alternative methods to basic matching in the selection of colors.

VOCABULARY:

- **Hue:** The main property of a color, or the place where it lands on the color spectrum.
- **Value:** The lightness or darkness of a color.
- **Intensity:** The brightness or dullness of a color.
- **Tint:** A hue with white added.
- **Shade:** A hue with black added.
- **Monochrome:** Using a single color and its tints and shades.
- **Observational drawing:** Drawing what one actually sees.
- **Picture plane:** The visual space within which the artist creates his work; usually defined by and within the physical edges of the paper or canvas.
- **Composition:** The arrangement of the objects within the picture plane.
- **Palette:** The set of colors selected for use in a drawing.
- **Blocking in:** The first painting stage, where areas of color are used to designate broad value areas.

- **Atmospheric perspective:** The idea that objects become less defined (and less "bright") as they move further away from the viewer.
- **Texture:** Marks that suggest a specific sense of touch.

MATERIALS:

- Strathmore drawing paper, assorted colors
- Traditional (chalk) pastels - ideally Rembrandt or Blick artist brand
- Easels or drawing horses
- Masonite drawing boards
- Large binder clips
- White plastic erasers
- Kneaded erasers
- Fine steel wool (0001-001)
- Blending stumps or tortillions
- Workable spray fixative
- Glassine
- Hand towels or baby wipes
- Flower arrangement

LESSON OUTLINE

- Discuss value in color (show grey scale color wheel) and demonstrate the use of varied drawing pressure to create tints and shades.
- Select 2 sheets of mid-tone colored drawing paper.
- Practice basic pastel techniques by making informal pressure value scales and modeled spheres. Think like a sculptor, pushing in to reach the "back" of the drawing, relaxing as you move "forward."
- Select a single color of a darker value (not black) and quickly (approximately 5 min) draw the entire flower grouping, working to capture the gesture of the arrangement.
- Wipe the entire page with steel wool, "pushing" the gesture into the background
- Select a light color to add to your palette – avoid white
- Emphasize the painterly quality of soft pastels and the importance of value and shape over line in initial representation
- Squinting at the flower arrangement to "find" the lights and darks, quickly work into the drawing, seeking and blocking in the lighter areas.
- Step back from the easel and note the way that the drawing resolves itself, even at this early point
- Continue to work the surface, moving from general to specific while slowly adding colors to your palette as needed. Avoid using black or white, unless mixed with a color on the page.
- Use tortillions to create fine edges and erasers to blend large areas. Continue to use the steel wool to add atmosphere, pushing portions of the drawing into the background.
- Demonstrate the proper use of spray fixative (be patient!), and cover drawings with glassine to protect them.

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Joslyn Art Museum; Omaha, Nebraska
Claude Monet, *The Meadow (La Prairie)* (1879)

Thursdays for Teachers Writing Prompts: February 2017
Thomas Cole, *Stony Gap, Kaaterskill Clove* (1826-27)

FAS K-2 FA 2.2.3.c Interpret mood or feeling in a work of art.

FA 2.2.4.d Identify how images and objects are used to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world.

- **Claude Monet:** *The Meadow (La Prairie)* (1879). This artwork shows children (look carefully) crossing a meadow in France. The artist chose mostly yellow, green, light blue, and lavender as colors. Draw a face that shows how you feel when you see this. You may also use words.
- **Thomas Cole:** *Stony Gap, Kaaterskill Clove* (1826-27). This artwork shows a scene in New York's Catskill Mountains. The artist's color choices include very dark colors along with some lighter shades. Draw a face that shows how you feel when you see this. You may also use words.

FAS 3-5 FA 5.2.3.c Interpret the message communicated by a work of art, using knowledge of visual elements (*glossary*), subject matter (*glossary*), and mood.

FA 5.2.4.d Explore how images and objects are used to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world.

- **Claude Monet:** *The Meadow (La Prairie)* (1879). What message do you think the artist was communicating? How did his color choices do that?
- **Thomas Cole:** *Stony Gap, Kaaterskill Clove* (1826-27). What message do you think the artist was communicating? How did his color choices do that?

FAS 6-8 FA 8.2.3.c Compare and contrast various interpretations of themes (*glossary*), styles, and mood.

FA 8.2.4.d Explain how images and objects are used to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world.

- **Claude Monet:** *The Meadow (La Prairie)* (1879). Monet was the founder of Impressionism (a style of art). How do you think Monet's message would be different if he used contrasting colors on the children? Would that still be Impressionistic?
- **Thomas Cole:** *Stony Gap, Kaaterskill Clove* (1826-27). Cole was the founder of the Hudson River School (a style of art). Imagine that you are new to the Hudson River School style. What do you think are some characteristics of the style?

FAS 9-12 FA 12.2.3.c Interpret and explain expressive qualities of artistic styles (*glossary*) and movements (e.g., contemporary/pop cultural vs. historical art movements).

FA 12.2.4.d Connect images, objects, and a personal work of art to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world.

- **Claude Monet:** *The Meadow (La Prairie)* (1879). In this Impressionist artwork, notice that you cannot see expressions on the children's faces. What are possibilities for that artist's choice? How would visible expressions change the artwork?
- **Thomas Cole:** *Stony Gap, Kaaterskill Clove* (1826-27). Imagine yourself in this artwork of the Hudson River School style. Make real or imagined connections to your personal experiences. Do the color choices impact your story?

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