PLEIN AIR WORKSHOP; COLOR, LIGHT AND MARK-MAKING Dennis Aufiery
SEBRING HIGHLAND ART LEAGUE January 8, 9, 10th, 2015
HOBE SOUND FINE ARTS LEAGUE: February 6 and 7th, 2015

During this workshop we will work on:
- **Producing light through color.**
- **Creating a composition that moves through the space.**
- **Using value and edge to create space**
- **Mark – making and Paint handling**
- **Spatial tension and the theory of Push Pull in landscape painting**

Dennis Aufiery, ISLAND RIDGE, 20 x 30 inches

This plein air workshop is open to all students who want to develop their painting skills through a deepened understanding of creating light, space and form through color, light and mark-making

We will begin with COLOR- AID paper studies of landscapes.
By starting with 3 to 5 relatively large shapes colors we will learn to see that a sensation of light comes from how these colors react to each other. We will develop compositions from these "relational colors" and add smaller shapes of color. This exercise will help the student see the weight of each color and explore how these shapes of color can create space, volume and light on a two- dimensional surface. This method is an important bridge between what we see- perception - and painting. We learn to see paintings as shapes of color on a flat surface

PAINTED LANDSCAPE FROM PAPER STUDY

THREE COLOR OCEAN STUDY

After the paper studies participants will work in small formats directly from nature utilizing at first a limited color palette. Limited palettes produce a broad range of color and in using them we will gain a deeper understanding of how to mix paint. We will also use a more complex palette as the workshop progresses.
As we mix and paint we will work on developing a personal language of mark-making.
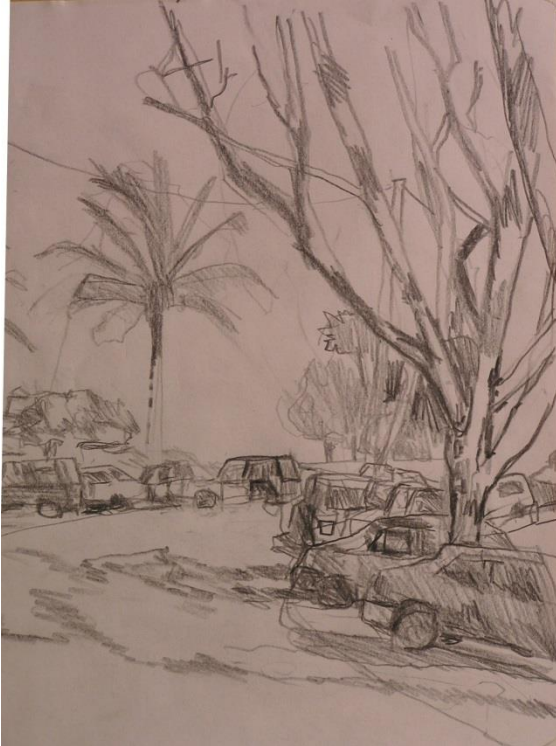

Dennis Aufiery SANDPIPE, oil 13 x 13 inches 2014

The goal is to translate what we see into pictorial space that is at once convincing, full of air and light and inventive. There will be daily critiques.

Draw first on paper or the painting

First, while outside look for a situation that is easy to make into a composition. Look for some geometry in a space your eye can move through and strong contrast between lights and darks. Begin by making several pencil or charcoal sketches and pick the best one to paint.

These two sketches move the viewer's eye through the space rather than to a single focal point. The idea is to allow a continuous journey through the space stopping momentarily at certain points but never locking up the movement of the eye. The scale helps create the space in these 2 drawings as much as perspective. Getting the relative sizes right will increase the feeling of depth.

Getting comfortable with paint and color:

To begin painting start with a large brush dipped in thinned paint and draw with the brush a rough composition based on the sketch. You can use any thinned color you want in the composition or a neutral such as ultramarine blue mixed with raw umber for initial drawing with paint. Then find 3 to 5 large areas and develop them as shapes of color. Try to get a relationship between each color to create light, space and mass. This is a matter of judging the way the colors interact with each other. You can look for complements at this point on the palette by mixing several colors before painting. They can be very subtle or more intense. They can be a little off direct complements or direct opposites.

Dennis Aufiery, Study of Palms, 20 x 18 inches

The painting above is in the beginning stages. I chose 4 or 5 large shapes and brushed them in with one color and a couple of variations. They are basically; sky, palms, distance, middle space and near space. I painted the sky after the palms and just worked back and forth to firmly establish more definite shapes of sky and palms. A great deal is suggested by working with these large shapes first to see how they feel sitting on the canvas.

This enables the painter to focus more on moving the paint and shaping the painting as whole rather than rendering details. Part of learning to paint from observation has to do with understanding how to suggest what you are seeing with the paint. Artists invent a kind of language of marks to accomplish this and every artist is different.

More realistic results can be achieved by matching more closely the colors you see and slowly building more and more intricate forms within the larger shapes. However a sense of light through color or optical vibration can only be achieved by working with the relationship between all the colors. Neil Weliver taught me to see "bug-eyed". By that he meant to see what happens to color as you move your eyes across your field of vision.

More abstract landscapes can be made by keeping the large shapes intact and concentrating on the energy in the mark-making or allowing forms to push into each

other aggressively with lots of paint. The near and the far become more interchangeable that way. Creating ambiguity between near and far is the basis of push pull in painting. Cezanne, Matisse and Soutine are good example of artists who play with the idea of flatness and space. The back and forth between abstractness and naturalism has been going on since the beginning of painting.
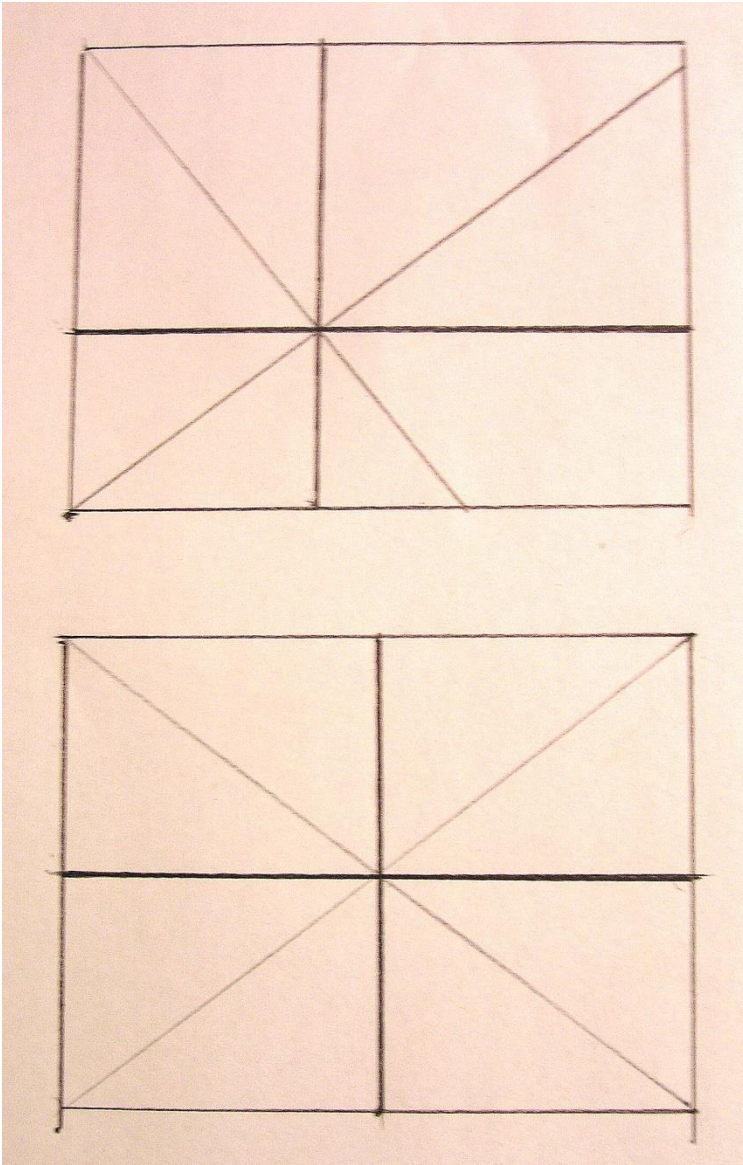

Dennis Aufiery, Last Commercial Dock, Jupiter 20 x 20 inches

In "Last Commercial Dock", Jupiter the shapes of color are stacked almost on top of each other. The lighthouse seems to sit on top of the round ridge of coral rock as the blue barrel sits on the dock. It is a simultaneous building of the flat surface of the canvas and the illusion of depth combined with strong mark-making.

<u>Composition</u>

Placing major elements off center will result in a dynamic composition. This is true of diagonal elements in a painting as well as horizontal and vertical. Placing major elements in the center will be more static. A stable composition is the result of Dominate horizontal and vertical elements.

Extreme off center compositions will be more unstable.   There are unlimited possibilities within this simple concept.

This Schooner wrecked near my home in Jupiter Florida. I made ten paintings during the month in was beached, before it broke completely to pieces. The cropped, diagonal off center composition seemed to sum up the precarious situation.

Beached Schooner 20 x 24

We will begin with a small format support such as gessoed mat board 8 x 10 inches or small canvasses or gessoed paper. The last day we will use a full palette and increase the complexity of the compositions.

Edward Hopper, Lighthouse at Two Lights

**More intense color relationships will produce a more expressionistic quality.
The key is to balance these strong colors so they do not cancel each other out. Even
strongly expressionist paintings usually have some relatively neutral areas of color to
absorb the stronger color.**

Selden Gile, Dinner 10 x 12 inches

ADDEMDUM

Color and Its Basic Optical Attributes

The Industrial Revolution made highly saturated, quality tube colors widely available and changed painting forever. This brief discussion involves the four basic optical attributes of modern industrially produced artists paint.

1. Hue refers to the colors of the spectrum. They are; yellow, red and blue, primaries, and their combinations, orange, violet and green, secondary colors. Combinations of the secondary colors are tertiary
2. Value refers to degree of darkness or lightness of a given hue. According to Albert Munsell each hue can have a value from 1 to 10. The darker the value the closer to 1, the lighter the value the closer to 10. Black, according to Munsell, is given a value of 0, white 10. Within this scale, I give cadmium red medium (oil from Grumbacher) a value of four and three quarters and lemon yellow (oil from Windsor Newton) about an eight. Each hue or pure color has a different degree of lightness or darkness or *value*.
3. Intensity refers to the saturation or chroma of every color. A pure cadmium red light, for example, has its greatest intensity right out of the tube. If white is added the red is less saturated, less intense or less chromatic. Cobalt violet will be weakened or less intense by adding white or black. It is at its most violet-most saturated-directly out of the tube, as are all colors out of the tube. Earth colors are not as intense as cadmiums.

6.
4. Temperature. All colors are warmer or cooler relative to each other. Lemon yellow or cadmium yellow light is cooler than cadmium yellow medium. Cadmium red light is warmer than cadmium red medium. Alizarin crimson is cooler than cadmium red medium. Ultramarine blue is warmer than thalo blue. Intensely saturated colors begin to lose their strength *and their inherent temperature when* mixed with other colors. By recognizing that each color has a temperature relative to those around it we can use temperature to create form, light and space in a painting.

When we speak of color we are really referring to all four of the attributes of color. In painting, color only exists relative to all of the colors in a painting. Color is affected and changed by all the colors around it. This is generally known as the interaction of color. Color according to Josef Albers is the most relative of all medium in art. We all have very personal ideas about color, perhaps even strong feeling about how color is used in a painting. For me, color has emotional qualities as well as optical. For others color is a purely structural element in painting. Studying Cezanne in a slide lecture I did not feel the passion I now feel for his painting after seeing large groups of his actual paintings in Museum shows, nor did I understand the clumsiness of his early paintings. No doubt, having continued to study and paint prepared me for seeing actual Cezannes. Now I see much more of the structure in his color and the passion in his emotional use of color. I'm sure you all have seen artists in new ways as you have developed your own work and see color differently the more you investigate its possibilities.

Dennis Aufiery, Vernaza 9 x 12 inches

Atmospheric Perspective versus Push Pull

These two apparently opposite ways of composing a painting have been used for centuries. The idea is a little like walking a tightrope. However, there is much to be gained using these two apparently conflicting theories. We will extend the pictorial possibilities in our work. After some practice they become second nature.
The basic system of atmospheric perspective is, objects as they recede in space become bluer and less distinct. Red weakens as it retreats into the distance and is replaced by colors with longer wave lengths, such as violets and blue grays. Color is affected by distance. A red hat two feet away is much redder than the same hat two miles away.

Contrasts also decrease as objects recede and shapes blur at the edges and details are edited out. Stronger darks against sharp lights blur and diminish as space moves back. Relationships between complementary colors become less intense as space deepens. Conversely, as objects become nearer, contrasts increase, color intensifies and details clarify. Marvelous paintings can be made by applying this theory, however, if overused; work can become formulaic and dull.

 Hans Hoffman's theory of push and pull is his best known. Hoffman articulated something in a new way that has been around for centuries. The theory focuses on the unstable spatial nature of color. Wolf Kahn was Hoffman's monitor at one time and this is Kahn's recollection of the famous theory. "The space of a picture…has to be a coherent volume, equally penetrable in all it's parts. The thrust of a form into deep space must be reciprocated by a countermovement out of deep space back to the picture plane. It is important that these thrusts, which *in toto* define the volume of the picture, must never become one way, else the eye would remain "stuck" in one area,

rather than able to move freely throughout all parts of the picture. In painting practice this dictate means that any area, while pushing into space, must also be pulled back in relation to some other area. Each part of the picture pushes at the same time as it pulls, carrying out an essential double duty."

Paul Georges was also a student of Hoffman's and I had the good fortune to study this theory with him. The surprising thing was Paul nearly always used Bruegal or an old master or Van Gogh or Gaugain to teach push and pull, not twentieth century artists, which was also Hoffman's method. Many of Hoffman's students became figurative artists and American landscape painting has been changed by the theories of American abstract painting. I keep an open mind to these various approaches and use them as I see fit. The strongest element in a two-dimensional painting is the flatness of the picture plane and once space is established it is usually a good idea to do something to bring the viewer back to the picture plane and play to the strength of painting. The best lies are almost true.
Examples: Manet's "Races at Longchamps", Degas's "Jockeys" and Hopper's "Lighthouse at Two Lights."   8.

Degas, Jockeys