



Consumer Goods Still Life:

Establishing visual Rhythm and a Limited Sense of Depth

Journal Exercise:

Most of us regularly buy various consumer products. These products might be staples such as milk, soap, socks, and light bulbs. Or they might be products we choose to indulge in more than is strictly necessary, such as gourmet chocolates, hats, designer clothes and shoes. For this exercise make a list of consumer goods which hold a special fascination for you- items you regularly buy as well as objects

which you simply enjoy looking at.

After you have finished the list, circle two products which hold an especially strong attraction for you. For each, write a paragraph (or two) exploring what the product means to you and why you like to buy examples. Does the item appeal to you visually, emotionally, intellectually, or sensually, or in some combination of these and other ways? What do you think your interest in the product says about you?

Painting Exercise:

Read the following article about drawing from observation: <http://www.studentartguide.com/articles/realistic-observational-drawings>

Make two drawings or paintings featuring multiple examples of one type of consumer product. The product may be one you wrote about in the preceding journal exercise. Artworks can be of any medium (colored pencil, watercolor, acrylic, oil pastel), but must be shaded in color. They should be at least 9" x 12" or of comparable area (i.e. 7" x 14"). Wayne Thiebaud is famous for creating this type of work. You will want to study examples of his work before completing your own work.

Colors: Work with a limited palette – white, and 4 other colors (2 warm & 2 cool colors). Choose colors that are different in value so you have both lights and darks to work with. Using these 5 colors alone and in combination, simplify the darks and lights and the warmth and coolness of the actual colors you see. (Because you are simplifying you shouldn't expect to match the actual hues of the objects as you see them.) Fill in flat areas and surfaces of objects with one consistent hue and value; on rounded surfaces paint a simplified version of the changes in value you observe.

Changing values: Lighten warm and cool colors by adding white. Overlap & mix colors to create darker darks. Alternatively, you can lighten the darker of the two colors by adding some of the lighter color to it, and vice-versa. (Or use a combination of these two methods for changing value.)

Painting 1 (exploring rhythm): Depict objects in a plane parallel to the picture plane. Start by placing the objects on a shelf or shelves, or attaching the objects to a wall. As you arrange the objects experiment with various ways of spacing and orienting them in order to enhance a sense of visual rhythm. Try moving the objects into highly ordered arrangements as well as relatively informal and irregular arrangements. Try arranging the objects based on patterns of light and dark, or by size and shape. Make thumbnail sketches, then, from these choices choose the most effective for your finished work. Wayne Thiebaud most often chooses a very ordered rhythm. You need not.

Paintings along one plane:



Painting 2 (a first look at creating depth): Arrange and then depict the objects so they appear to recede back from the picture plane. Portray depth in two ways. First, *where they are aligned opaque objects will overlap or shield the view of objects deeper in space.* And, secondly, *the contrast of values will be reduced in the distance.* (The reduction of contrast means that the darks appear less dark, while the lights appear less light.)

Both of these methods of establishing depth can be seen in the first painting below, *California Cakes*, by Wayne Thiebaud. Each cake partially eclipses the one behind it: and moving into the distance, the shadows cast by the cakes become increasingly less dark.

Paintings with depth:

