

Fundamental Contemplation in Art Appreciation

Dedicated to my Master in the Art,
Antonio Salemme 1892-1995

William DeRaymond
will@williamderaymond.net
www.williamderaymond.net
copyright(c)william deraymond 2009



A GRAIN OF SALT

When it comes to practicing and appreciating art, taking everything with a grain of salt is absolutely essential. What is this grain of salt? It is your intelligence brought to the subject matter. No one else can do the work for you. No one else can experience art for you. Finally it rests squarely on your shoulders, the quality of your experience.

The thoughts and examples, the ideas and concepts I share here, have arisen out of my experience. I began in great openness, a true beginner, and began working with the principles and ideas Antonio shared with me at my request. Openness and receptivity are essential to art and art appreciation, as well as ‘a grain of salt’. In Service,
William DeRaymond

Antonio Salemme
Master Sculptor and Painter
1892-1995



Here with his head of Paul Robeson.

Style

a quote by Antonio Salemme

Style is most important, whether it be a book, a piece of music, a painting, or a piece of sculpture. But style is recognized only in retrospect. If one has style in mind while one is painting, one becomes stylistic. One produces a style after the Gothic, or Renaissance, or African. The style becomes superficial and becomes a manner, and we call that stylistic.

My style comes out of my whole life. The style is the result of the state of mind of the artist, the subject matter one is handling, the state of one's health, and the clarity of one's mind: all that goes into the work. After it's done, the style can be recognized. Whatever comes out is a spontaneous and mysterious thing. Style cannot be defined intellectually. It can be seen only in retrospect.

For example, the Gothic style came out of the condition of France and Germany in the 13th and 14th century. The 12th century was Romanesque: after the Romanesque came the Gothic.

The Romanesque was a result of the Roman Empire, the Greek art and all of that. Then the Gothic came because the people began to express themselves more directly. It came out of The climate, the stones they had to work with, and their religious approach... their interpretation of Christianity. That whole thing produced what we call the Gothic style, and the word

'gothic' means 'barbarian', uncivilized'. It was original expression, getting away from the Greek and the Roman. But it all came about in retrospect. The people who built the Gothic

cathedrals built them as well as they could under the condition and the state of mind they were in, and out came what we call the Gothic style.

So when someone does a painting, the same process takes place. Everything one is comes out in that painting. If one's able to be spontaneous, then there is spontaneity in the style and there is vigor in the brush strokes. If one is not able to be spontaneous, because one is still immature and one is uncertain, and one's technique is not complete, then style doesn't come

through, because one is still struggling with technique. If one has mastered the technique and lived, and is still vigorous, and paints with pleasure, then out comes what we call style.

Style is never an intellectual and willful effort. It is like grace in the spiritual life.

We try, we pray, we sit, we meditate. By the grace of God in a mysterious way we become enlightened. You don't become enlightened by mere effort. You don't achieve enlightenment. Enlightenment comes after great discipline and effort, but we don't achieve. It is the same with style in Art.

An Artist's Manifesto

Color is God

Brush is God

Motif is God

You are God

Artist is god

Art is God

An Exercise/Meditation in Art Appreciation

A Painting is comprised of a limited number of basic principles. There is COLOR, There is the BRUSH (the tool that expresses color, that expresses the personality of the artist, and expresses the motif), PERSONALITY OF THE ARTIST (which is the medium which expresses color, brush and motif, and there is the MOTIF (the subject matter-that which moves the artist).

A short meditation /contemplation on an art object given considerations brought up by these principles will go along way to deepening your appreciation of the art form.

The Exercise/Meditation

1. Take any painting and put your attention on it. Here it is important to be totally receptive. Suspend the judgement. Just look and receive.



Here we will use my composition, 'Fathers and Sons'

Any painting will do. Some recommended artists would be Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Monet, Cezanne, Morisot, Titian, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Degas, Sisley, Manet, Pissarro...

2. Note the subject matter, the motif.

Spend a few minutes looking at the work simply as a picture, that is, just what is represented in terms of subject matter.

3. Next, see the work as an expression only of color. Receive the color relationships, and color vibrations.

Give yourself a few minutes to simply receive and note the changes and color relationships. Pay attention to the effect the color has on your nervous system



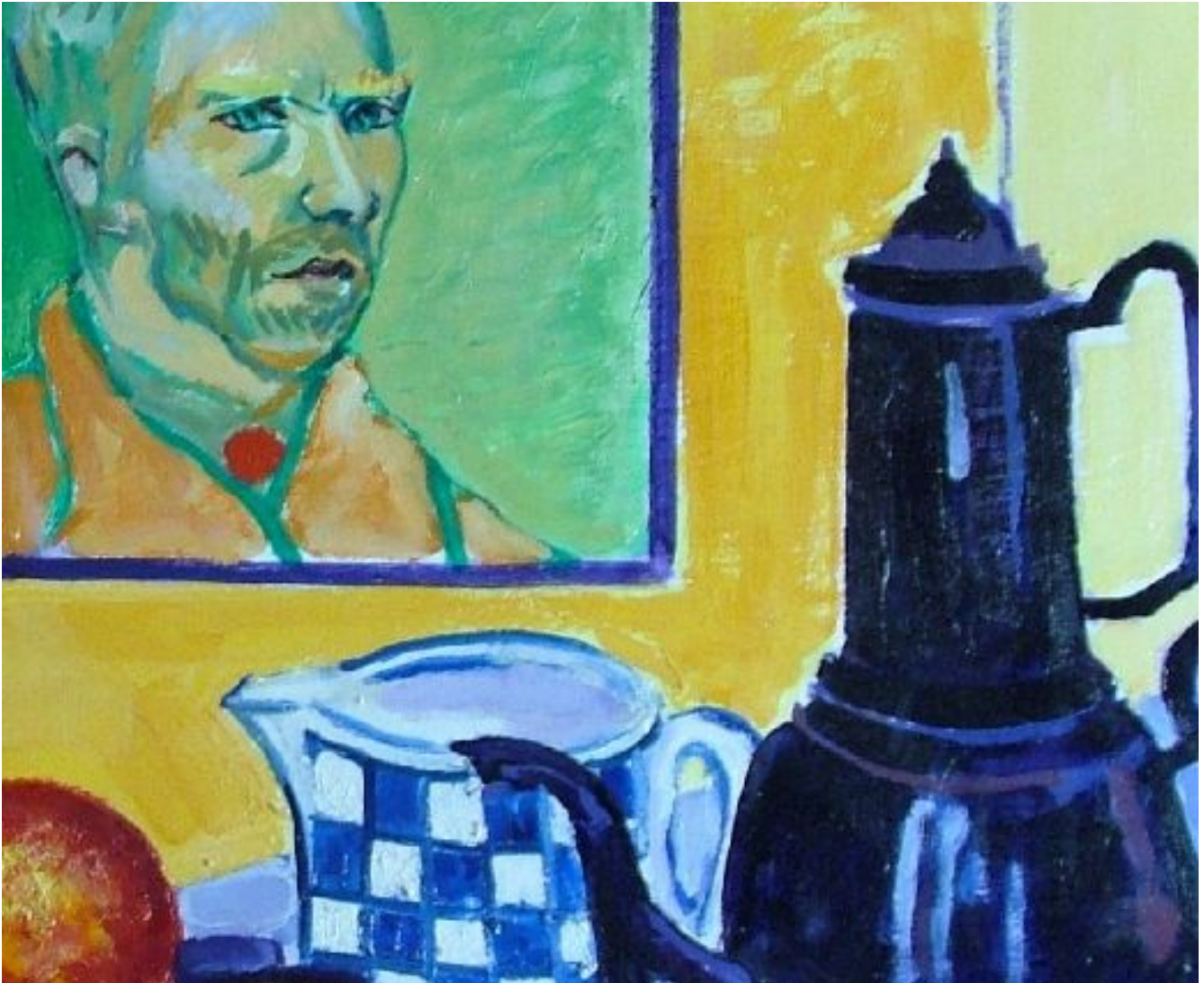
"Color and form are one."

– Antonio Salemme

A brief meditation on this concept will show you the universal truth of this. It has special value for the visual artist!

4. Now see the work simply as an expression of the brush. Are the brush strokes visible? How is the brush expressed? Note the various textures created by the brush. Again simply receive, suspending judgment.

Take a few minutes to contemplate the brush work. Note the textures and innate abstract qualities of the brush. Receive without judgment, as you would any natural phenomenon.



a closer look...The best place to 'read' a painting is about the same distance you would use to focus when reading a book. Here you can see exactly how the artist is using the various aspects of the medium. With a conscious painter this space is generally beautifully abstract.

Antonio was in his late 80's when I started studying with him. By that time, and in his wisdom, the **strongest** teaching he offered with regards to appreciating painting was, "Look at the brush strokes."



Here's a photo of Antonio at 100

5. Now, see the work as an expression of the Artist's personality.

Here are some questions you might ask yourself. What are the aesthetic concerns of the artist? Do you think the technical concerns of the artist dominate the brush, the color, and the motif and to what degree? Does the subject matter dominate the medium? Does the medium dominate the subject matter? Does the artist dominate the medium? Is the artist dominated by the medium?



Finally, try to see the painting all at once, that is with 'one eye'. Take in all the vibrations created by color, brush, and motif at one time.



Quotes from my writings as an artist:

"A painting is more than Muzak for your walls."

"The Abstract nature of reality is the source of beauty."

"A painting is a doorway into psychological/spiritual space. It is an expression of transcendent form that opens out into the infinite."

This ends Lesson 1

an introductory lesson involving the principles of art appreciation.

There is much to gain from the principles I have presented here. Remaining receptive and allowing your judgment to arise out of that receptivity is an essential aspect to any art appreciation. This is a direct approach to seeing, not a conceptual approach.

You can apply this exercise to any painting you might be looking at and begin to develop your own sense of art appreciation and more importantly an authentic authority by contemplating these foundation principles.

Art appreciation is a discipline in its own right, and a life long one at that. It is part of the great journey of life!

Please feel free to email me at will@williamderaymond.net with any questions or comments you might have.

yours in service and eternal bliss, William DeRaymond

copyright(c)william deraymond 2009