

The principal goal of the Advanced Painting Program is to bring each student to the highest possible standard in painting realistically, and to help them attain creative independence. This is possible because students normally achieve a very high level of technical proficiency, and a profound understanding of their materials and craft. They can therefore balance the myriad of possibilities found in painting. We expect our students to develop the confidence to tackle their own creations. The checklists and end of term critiques mirror these expectations. This will help them to make the transition from student to professional.

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.” - Aristotle

Continuous repetition, like, for example, searching for proportions or color values, develops good habits. The Advanced Painting program adds to these the challenges of composition. Students are first introduced to composition through still life painting, from a simple set up of three objects, to the most complex composition they have the ability to confront. They learn to understand and render texture, atmosphere, the relationship of the one to the whole, local color, etc. At the same time, students begin composing their first portraits in oil. They consider the construction of the features, the design of light and dark shapes, the balance of positive and negative spaces, personality, psychology and expression, and, ultimately, perfect likeness. As in the still life, the projects become more ambitious with the addition of hands, clothing, interior objects and ambience. The students will use their technical knowledge to design and arrange the composition. In these assignments students work in pairs with one model. This is very important as it allows interaction, problem solving, and fruitful dialogue that will enrich artistic thinking.

From day one until graduation, figure painting is the heart of our program. Students work directly from life. They look for the design of light and shadow shapes; rhythm and atmosphere are at the top of their priorities. They set up the pose and learn how to control their own painting environment. This is a practice essential to begin their careers.

As the program challenges individuals to push their technical ability beyond their perceived capacity, they develop strength of character and the confidence necessary to be a professional painter. This helps to create a state of mind in which they are certain of their choices. Our graduates will never stand in front of a blank canvas and feel lost. They will always be able to return to the method. They will never say how am I going to do this, but rather concentrate on what they want to say, and follow their inspiration.

On a personal note, being the program director has been a delightful experience. It always makes me feel proud when I hear about our graduates winning international competitions, and making merits of their own. They are continuing to spread the tradition of working directly from life, a unique form of art that derives deep from our human emotions.

- Ramiro Sanchez, Program Director, Advanced Painting, 2012