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EXERCISE -TWO

Next, you are asked to do something esoteric (and messy). For this you will require: a number of sheets of cartridge paper, a fairly thick, round headed paint brush, some powdered charcoal or graphite or failing that, dark powder paint, i.e. Burnt Umber, Ultramarine, Ivory Black etc. But it must be a powder, some old newspapers and some water in a container.

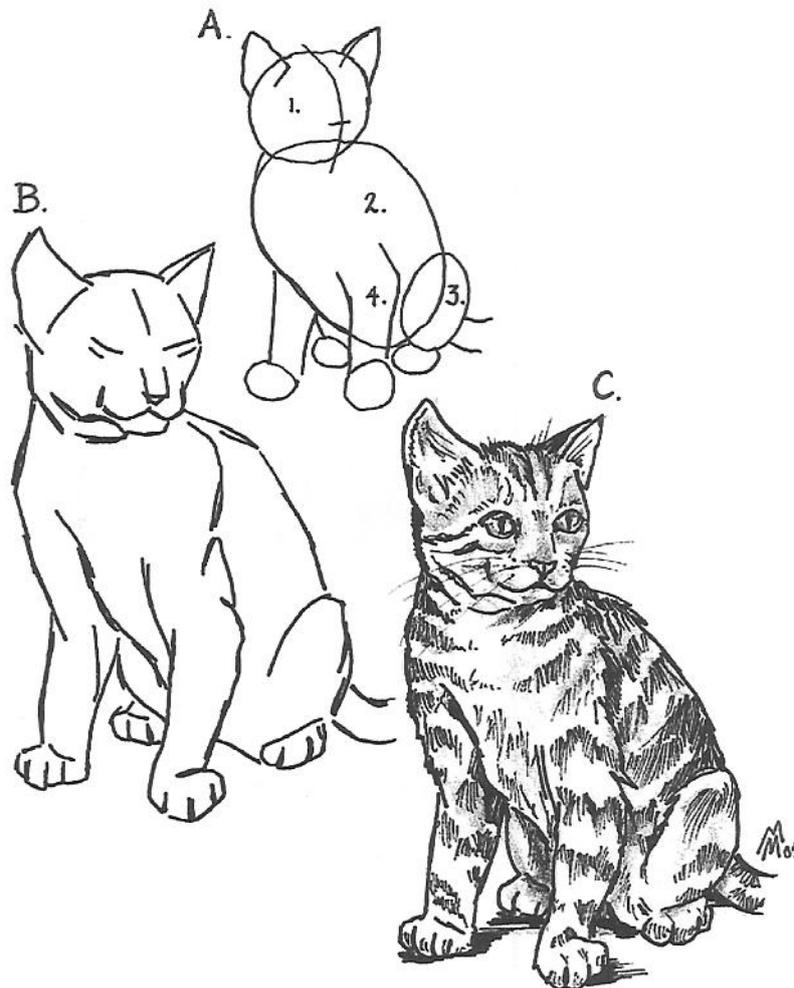
Put out the newspaper to cover the carpet or table where you will be working. Place a sheet of drawing paper down in the middle of the newspaper and have the powder, paint brush and water near to hand. Sit by your materials and close your eyes. Now think of anything you want to, and try to visualise something singular – tree, star, house etc. Get this image firmly in your mind. Open your eyes, dip the brush into the water, charging it well but not excessively with water. Put the brush to the blank sheet of paper and without hesitation, referring to the mental image you have just formed, paint the image with water onto the paper. Don't try to correct your mistakes; don't try to see what you are doing. Quickly paint the image of what is in your mind. Next, allow the water to soak in to the paper for a minute or so. Next: take some of the powdered pigment or graphite etc. and liberally sprinkle this over the surface of your painting, covering the whole 'image'. Next: lift up the sheet of paper and holding it by one edge; gently tap the base of the drawing paper on the newspaper, shaking off the excess powder. What arises should be a stark, dark image of what you visualised. The process illustrates the use of internal imagery in making a physical representation of this through a kind of drawing. You may find the result pleasing or surprising. In any case it is a good and different way to make a drawing. To show your tutor what you have done you can: photograph the result and send a print of the image, or if you fix it first, you can send a photocopy. To fix any drawing requires some understanding of what you are doing.

FIXING A DRAWING

Proprietary off the shelf fixatives are expensive. A cheaper alternative is odourless hairspray. Get any brand you like, lack of odour helps, otherwise your work will smell like a hairdo. Place the drawing to be fixed on a bed of newspaper on a flat surface, away from naked flames or any source of ignition. Ensure you have protected furniture or carpets with the newspaper. Open a window or at least make sure you carry out this operation in a well ventilated area. Shake the can of spray and gently drift clouds of the spray over the drawing. Cover it completely, don't soak it. It may help to check how the fixative affects the drawing first by doing a test piece. Some spray nozzles can cause splatter and upset the quality of the drawing. One coat will rarely suffice; you will probably have to do three at least. Check the effectiveness of the fixing each time the surface is dry by dabbing part of the drawing with the edge of your little finger. If any dust comes off, the drawing requires more fixing. Once a drawing is fully fixed, it can be placed on a copier. Don't put a damp drawing on a copier platen, it will stick to the glass and damage the drawing and mess up the platen.

The two types of drawing you've done so far are 1) imaginative, 2) imaginative & expressionistic. There are lots of other possible labels for drawing types. But the exercises should have proven that you can create with drawing. The next type of drawing is called observational.

Take a look at diagram 'A' which shows you how to start the drawing by using mainly circles and ovals.



Use a soft pencil for stage 'A' as these markings are indicated as a rough guide which will need to be rubbed out once the outline is complete (stage 'B'). When drawing the outline, make sure the cat's head is large enough with an alert expression.

Then in the final stage 'C' use pen and or pencil to texture the fur, creating the distinctive 'tabby' markings.

Study Unit 14

Size and Proportion of Pictures

Now although we recommend a certain size and 'proportion' (relationship of the length to the breadth) of paper, do not let that become an inflexible rule.

Question your choice after you have completed a piece of work or even a preliminary sketch. Look at it critically. Is there too much sky perhaps? Or is that left-hand corner redundant? Would the picture be better off without it?

If the answer to these, or other questions, is "Yes", get a pair a scissors or a sharp knife and crop the picture in accordance with your new assessment. You may be tempted to crop it right up the middle - but resist this temptation!

Art, and it is one of the fascinating things about it, does not move with the inevitable linear sequence of life. Great artists and even minor ones have been known to go back to sketches twenty or thirty years old and 'work them up'.

Everything you do has value, if it is done with thought - and as much care and skill as you can give it - even if that value is only to illustrate how far you have travelled since you did it!

Determine the size

Let us go back now and look at the question of SIZE.

The size you make a painting has a lot to do with the 'medium' you are using.

It is very laborious to cover large areas with washes of watercolour. It is also difficult to control the fluid and rapid nature of the medium. That is not to say that large watercolour paintings are not possible. The work of a remarkable artist called Edward Burra proved this, but he was an enormously skilled exception to the rule.

A size of 60cm x 45cm is probably as large as the average artist can manage.

Size should also relate to the theme or subject matter you are dealing with.

A cottage interior, for instance, may be enhanced by being painted quite small, in a format that would increase the sense of intimacy and enclosure essential to the character of the theme.

A battle scene, full of charging horses and smoke and flames, would however be entirely inappropriate in a cramped frame.

Perhaps this is why 'epic' films, like Ben Hur, are so disappointing on the television.

So think before you start a major piece of work, or one that you want to do independent of your sketch book. Determine its size in relation to its character.

A QUESTION OF STYLE

Be carefully not to adopt a 'style' of painting too early in your experience with oils.

At first let the subject matter dictate the way you work.

A storm at sea might be best in thick, broadly applied paint, 'impasto' technique as it is called.

If you want to express the vibrancy of a dawn or sunset scene, putting little touches of paint, close together in a 'pointillist' manner, would give it a shimmering quality.

You can also experiment with 'optical mixing' by putting the components of a colour down separately. Touches of blue and yellow close together will come together from a distance to make green, as touches of blue and red will give purple.

The great French painter Seurat used this method and you can see the texture of the dots in this one of his paintings.



So experiment and adapt and be responsive to the subject matter, A wild expressionist style is hardly appropriate for still life, but that did not stop Van Gogh from doing some very fine still life's, but he did have to moderate the violence of his style to do it.

EXERCISES

1. We would like you to produce two watercolour paintings, no larger than 38cm x 28cm.

In the first one push the medium as far as it will go in terms of precision, detail and visual information.

With the other painting be as 'impressionistic' as possible without losing form and structure.

2. We would also like you to experiment with two small oil, acrylic or gouache paintings. These should not be more than 25cm x 25cm.

You may paint any subject you like but they must each be worked in a different style.

You might even end up doing a rather more substantial piece of work in which you make an abstraction. If you decide to try an abstract I can assure you that you will be very surprised at your reaction. We will certainly find it valuable in getting to know the way you are thinking about art. But it may be that you do not want to do this at the moment, this is also fine, but do try it later on.

3. You may also send your step-by-step painting in oil or acrylic.

Write a few comments on the back of each picture telling us about your reaction to the nature of the task and the outcome.

PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT MORE THAN 4 OR 5 PIECES OF ARTWORK FOR THIS STUDY UNIT.

Please see the back of the file for how to submit your work.

Drawing & Painting Diploma Course