

*Pictorial
Composition*

*The Art of Creating Expression
in Painting*

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Foreword

Why compose?

Human beings delight in the invention and discovery of *systems* – astronomical, physical, artistic. We have an inherent need to arrange things and organize them: we do not place our furniture haphazardly in our rooms, but organize it into a pleasing and functional arrangement. When presenting a business proposal at a meeting, we require the proposal to be logically and clearly set out. When examining the universe, we try to understand it as an integrated system and, when telling a story, we need that story to be well organized and to flow.

In addition, more germane and most important, we compose to make the painting involve the viewer emotionally – to make it more powerful, more compelling and more expressive. To simply copy nature is to do as Andy Warhol did when he filmed a person sleeping for twelve hours: the film lasts twelve hours and is easily one of the most boring visual experiences imaginable. A good director, by emphasizing some things and eliminating others, can create a powerful impression of a twelve-hour sleep in fewer than ten seconds. I think this may have been Warhol's point. A simple list is not a work of literature.

For us modern figurative artists, pictorial composition began in the Renaissance, when the painters needed to find better and more intense ways to tell their stories. The church was the largest buyer and the imperatives to the painters were threefold: tell the story in a clear way for the simple, an eye-catching and memorable way for the forgetful, and tell it with full use of all emotional resources, in order to involve the viewer. All these concerns are in the domain of composition, and, in order to do them well, the painters drew on a great mediæval tradition of picture-making and then, later, began to examine the techniques of the ancient Romans, as more and more of their work was unearthed. These studies were all practical – their purpose was to learn how a life-like and convincing image could be fabricated, how a figure could be made to express emotion and how an element could be given dominance, so that a story could be told effectively. Later, the idea of beauty

entered the picture (every pun intended) and joined with the search for expression. The painters and sculptors learned all this from studying works of art and coupling this with observation of nature. They had no textbooks.

Like these earlier artists, our purpose here is to examine the principles of composition as they are found in the paintings themselves. It is not important to us whether the painters consciously employed these principles or not (although I believe they did): the beauty exists in the work and it is this beauty and expressive power that we are trying to understand.

The discipline of art history tends to concentrate more on the artist, the artist's environment and the painting's provenance than on the work of art itself. The painting often seems to be important to the art historian only as an icon for the painter and his, or her, times.

This gives art students some grave problems, as they need information about the methods of expression contained in the paintings – they want to learn how to create beautiful and powerful works of art and need to know of what such things are made. As a painter, I am much more interested in the work of art than in the person who painted it. Should it turn out that Rembrandt's *Man in the Golden Helmet* is a nineteenth-century fake, I could not care less. It remains a beautiful, miraculous and powerful painting.

* * * * *

Many of the painters of the past wrote manuscripts on technique: the best being, perhaps, Thomas Bardwell's, written in the mid-1700s. Surprisingly, however, they seem to have written no practical books on composition.

This possibly came about because of a split in the painting world in the seventeenth century. Since the Florentine Renaissance, painters had been striving to be recognized as practitioners of the Liberal Arts, a class of things that included poetry, philosophy, music and mathematics, but not the visual arts. The Liberal Arts were practiced by noble intellectuals, the visual arts were practiced by craftspeople. Over the centuries, the artists tried to show their wealthy patrons (they were careful not to call them *clients*, mind!) that they too were educated and cultured, that they were people of the intelligentsia, not tradespeople who worked for money.

Because of this, the last thing these socially minded artists wanted was to be associated in their public's mind with the nitty-gritty of studio practice. Their books expound in broad, philosophical generalities and use a language designed to separate the writer from the common man.

Meanwhile, the fine old art of picture-making went on, but its principles were communicated to the student only in the studios, through examples and through word-of-mouth. The late nineteenth century saw the triumph of the socially minded artist – art came to be about the Artist, the Genius; the work of art became less and less important and, in the twentieth century, the art of picture-making almost disappeared. It hung on in the work of some of the great illustrators of the 1930s, '40s and '50s and in the work of some little known and shamefully ignored figurative artists (Pietro Annigoni, Anna Hyatt, Ives Gammell, Mario Parri, Gertrude Fiske, Adelaide Chase, Gretchen Rogers, Fannie Duvall, Andrew Wyeth – the list is actually very large), but none of them, to my knowledge, wrote a how-to-do-it book on picture-making, and the algorithms, the step-by-step instructions, for this art all but disappeared.

The twenty-first century is seeing a renaissance in Humanism, in the concern for a human way of life and in the figurative art forms which echo that. But where is the student to learn the practicalities of this art? Like our predecessors of the Italian Renaissance, we look to the great art of the past, and the works of art themselves become our text.

This empirical attitude happened also in music, by the way. For hundreds of years, the musicians who came after Bach analyzed his compositions and the compositions of other of their predecessors, and developed a myriad of successful variations of musical form. This became the huge structure of compositional practice.

Annigoni said that there is only one art, and it manifests itself in different forms: music, painting, literature, *etc.* In an abstract form, identical compositional principles apply to all the arts and to all times. Simon and Garfunkle are using the same principles in their *Six O'Clock News* as many Classical composers have done: the introduction of a quiet background element that grows and grows until it becomes the dominant sound. This principle is employed in the colour composition of many paintings, and we find it, too, in novels wherein a seemingly minor incident encountered early in the book takes on more and more significance as the story develops and, finally, shows itself to be a major theme. In the book that follows, however, I am talking about these principles as they apply to painting.

It is important to remember, though, that the figurative artist, whether working from landscape, figural, or still-life elements, must add observations from nature to these compositional principles. Art based only on other works of art quickly runs the risk of becoming affected and manneristic (in the pejorative sense). Worse, it becomes boring: human invention is limited when compared to the great suggestiveness found in nature. As we shall see, nature is able to evoke underlying structural principles in the most easy seeming manner, rife with variation – *dither*, as Harold Speed liked to call it. To be successful artistically, the painter must combine the conceptual (the understanding of abstract compositional principles) with empiricism (the intelligent observation of nature). To write this book, I have had to look at many beautiful things (flowers, trees, works of art) and to figure out what they have in common. Primary amongst these things were hundreds of *paintings* – I have gone to the source and looked, not at what I think the painter did, but what the paintings *are*, what they *look like*.

There are many aesthetics in art and those students who are interested in twentieth-century-type, abstract (i.e., non-figurative) work will not find a lot here to help them; although, there is some overlap. This is not to imply that I only like paintings that are realistic, by the way, nor that I like all paintings that are figurative – far from it: certain styles and philosophies simply do not appeal to me. But style and aesthetics are different subjects from that of composition.

* * * * *

The exercises which follow each chapter are the heart of this course. It is not enough for the painter to merely understand the principles outlined in the following text; the artist must practice them, in order to learn the skills required by this fine art of composition. As you have found in your work from plaster casts, the principles themselves are fairly easy to understand, but the assimilation of them is won only by long hours of practice. The same is true for the discipline of Composition. Never cut corners in your studies; to do so is to opt for mediocrity.

Pictorial Composition

CHAPTER ONE

First Principles

A SIMPLE, ABSTRACT ELEMENT should be placed on the page such that the left and right margins are equal to each other and the bottom margin is the largest of the four. The top margin can be the same width as the sides, or can be slightly smaller (fig. 1).

However, a figurative element (a figure, a head and shoulders, a jug, a mass of flowers, a group of trees, whatever) looks better when placed slightly off-centre. This gives more interest, more animation, and hints at an increased realism, as nature is rarely seen perfectly centered. Be careful, though: do not completely remove the (dominant) element from the centre; part of it should remain across the vertical centreline. If the subject is a head, a portrait, there must be more space in front of the face than there is behind the head, so that the subject does not appear to be uncomfortable. Similarly, to avoid a sense of oppression, the subject must not have too much space above the head (fig. 2).

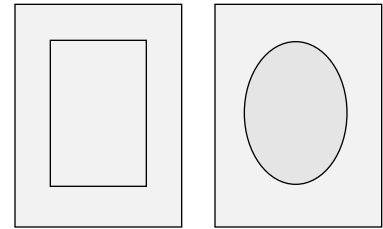


figure 1

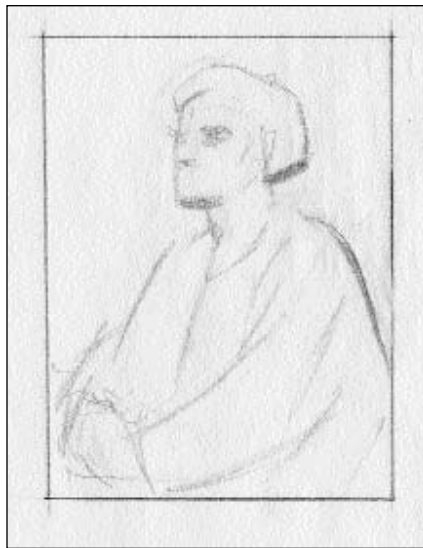


figure 2



figure 3



figure 4



figure 5

In figs. 3 and 4 we see two examples of beautifully placed portraits (and beautifully designed shapes): a Holbein (fig. 3) and an Annigoni (fig. 4).

Of course, one must break these rules if one's purpose is to disturb the viewer. A tree placed dead-centre will give a strange, mystical feeling. A low placement of a head, or figure, will create the feeling that the subject is weighted down, oppressed by the environment. Please note that the gesture – the mime, so to speak – of the figure should be appropriate to this mood. As Hamlet advises the actors: let the action suit the words. The subject and the composition must gel together – it is, in fact, the mood of the subject that dictates the type of compositional elements needed. We shall consider this idea again, later.

As we have seen, in painting all design work starts from the *centre*, not from the frame, and works outward, symmetrically or asymmetrically. Granted, the frame, or boundary, creates the centre in the first instance, but it is the centre that holds the primary place. One enters a painting from neither left nor right, but from the *front*, going straight to *that element of greatest contrast nearest the centre*.

Composition begins, then, from the centrelines. All things being equal, the eye will go to the centre, or to that area of greatest contrast closest to the centre. If there are two areas of similar contrast, the one closest to the vertical centreline will be the dominant. However, a high-contrast, eccentrically placed element will tend to dominate over a low-contrast, centrally placed one.

These contrasts can be created using any of the normal devices: value, hue, chroma, hard-edge, etc. A light object seen against a dark background, or a bright red drapery seen against a duller green one and both seen against a more neutral background: these are two examples of contrast. All other things being equal, a warm colour generally dominates over a cool one and a high chroma dominates over a low one.

It must also be emphasized here that the eye has a tendency to rise; of two elements placed one above the other, the lower one may grab our attention, because of high contrast, or anomaly (see below), but the eye will then rise to the upper one. This is particularly useful in a representational painting, wherein the upper element may draw our attention away from a greater contrast element directly below it, because of the addition of anecdotal interest. We can see that this is a common ploy in portrait painting; the initial attention may be grasped by a white collar, for example, but the eye will then rise and look at the face.



These are the two most powerful forces with which we have to deal: the tendency of the eye to look to the centre, or to the area of great-

est contrast closest to the centre, and the tendency of the eye to rise.

DOMINANCE: UNITY AND VARIETY

A painting, like any other work of art, needs to be arranged in a comprehensible order, a system: there should be a dominant element, with secondary and tertiary elements ancillary to it.

In fact, one definition of a work of art is that it is the presentation of a (real life) subject in an artistical form. The painter can use old forms, which are tried and true, or invent new forms; but, in either case, some form must be discoverable by the viewer if the painting is to be a work of art. We shall look at these wonderful old forms in Chapter 3; they are surprisingly simple.

All painters work within a system, just as all poets, musicians and choreographers do. A poet's system can be one or another of the sonnet forms, or the ballade, or the sestina; a musician can use any of the concerto forms, or the symphonic form, etc., etc.

To say the same thing a different way, the artist must first establish a system within which she can work. One cannot, for example, introduce a variant without first having a unified system into which that variant can be introduced. Nor can one move elements back into space, another example, without a system within which they can be moved.

It is this system which is the most difficult part to design. And it is this *unified system* that gives the strong, over-all character to the work.

A work of art is composed of two major, contradictory aspects: **Unity** and **Variety**. Unity (sameness) gives character to the work, whereas variety (contrast) gives vivacity and life. Of the two, unity (the unified system mentioned above) is the hardest to design and is the most fundamental. Unity creates the field within which the painter operates.

Two examples of portraits, unified by the consistent use of the oval construct are figs. 5 and 6 (Raphael and Ingres). The oval creates the sense of wholeness and of motion. Figure 7 shows a 17th-century Dutch still life by Willem Kalf, which uses the circle in both its constructs and its placements. Fig. 8 is a portrait by van Dyck, using flowing lines, which give animation and verve.

Please note that the different types of elements create different emotional responses in the viewer. As we have just seen, flowing elements give animation and verve, while the oval gives a sense of wholeness. The straight line gives architecture and strength, the zig-zag is electric and shallow curves (both S-curves and C-curves) are lyrical. The horizontal gives calm and repose, the vertical creates dignity and the diagonal is full of action.



figure 6

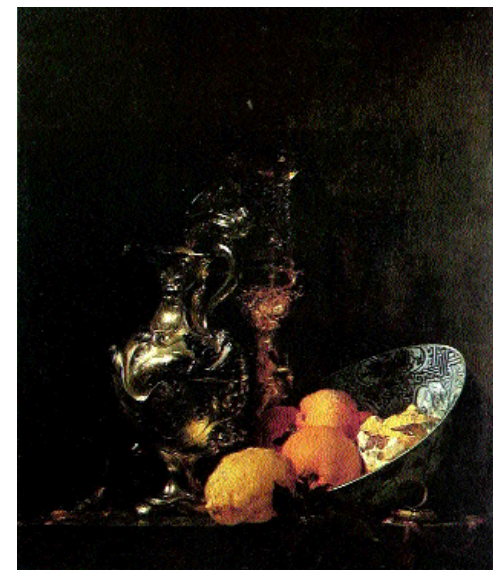


figure 7



figure 8

ANOMALY

When a different type of element is introduced into the unified field, the result is startling. We see in fig. 9 how the attention is caught and held by the two small, leaf-like shapes, even though the vast majority of shapes in the picture are box-like. It is this maverick element, called an **anomaly**, which calls to the viewer and may become the main subject. In writing, as you are seeing, *italic text* acts as an anomaly, calls out to us and impresses itself on our attention.

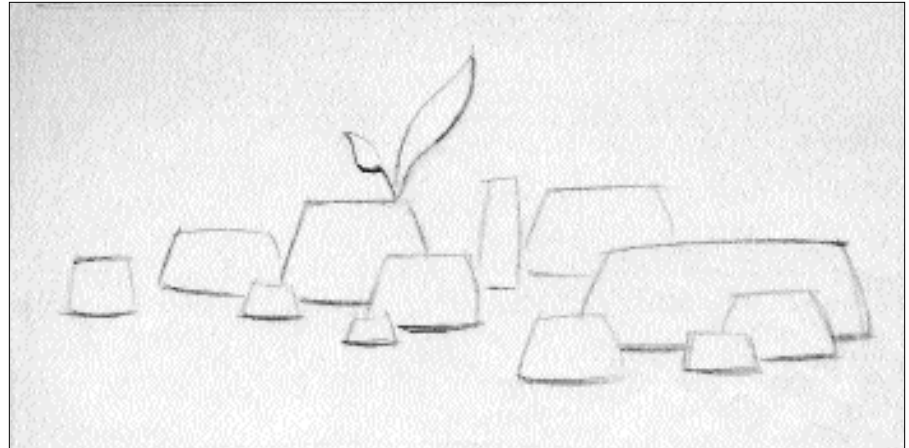


figure 9

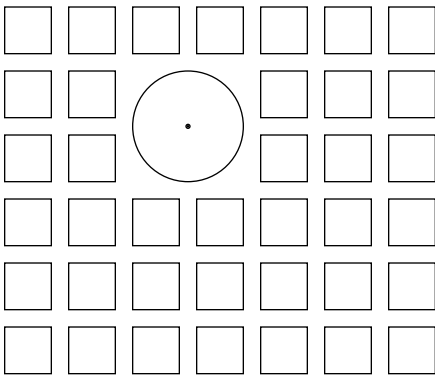


figure 10

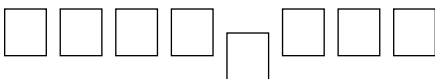


figure 11

Figs. 10 and 11 are two abstract examples of anomaly. In fig. 10, our attention is immediately caught by the circle, while in fig. 11, which is an example of anomaly of placement, our eyes go straight away to the displaced square (the one that has dropped down). The Ciseri *Trasporto di Cristo* (fig. 12) is a figurative example of anomaly of placement, the equivalent of fig. 11.

In fig. 13 we see an example of anomaly used in landscape; the majority of the painting (the clouds and the land) is constructed out of cloud-like curves, but our attention is held by the startling horizontal straight lines across the centre, near the horizon.

We introduce anomalies for the sake of variety and, as we have seen, they are real attention-getters. If, however, our anomaly is not to be the main subject, we must introduce more, similar elements and place them around the dominant, or focus, such that the attention of the viewer falls in



figure 12

between them; i.e., falls on the focus. Please note that the anomalies do not have to be placed at equal distances about the dominant, nor do



figure 13

they all have to be the same size, or exactly the same colour. They need to be placed asymmetrically and with wit, such that the resultant tensions (as the pulls between these elements are called) hold the viewer's attention at the required focus. Fig. 14 is an example of a single-figure composition (a portrait, by Bouguereau), in which the dominant, unifying shape is the oval, but into which has been introduced several rectangular shapes, for variety.

Let me stress again that the main focus is almost always placed on the vertical centreline. If it is not, there must be a good reason for it. All our discussion of anomaly should not lead you to believe that the main subject must be a maverick element. This is simply not true; the main subject is often made up of the unifying elements, but it is given power and made to hold the attention because of its placement near the vertical centreline.

A spectacular example of a powerful use of anomaly is Bonnat's *Portrait of Cardinal Lavigerie* (fig. 15), in which the over-all rectangular constructs are interrupted at the centre by the anomaly of the single triangle, created by the opening at the front of the cardinal's robe. The effect is riveting. It is true that there are hints of half-formed triangles elsewhere in the painting, a suggestion of counterpoint (see below), but nothing so blatant as this powerful, centrally placed triangular monolith. Please note how the eye then rises to look at the Cardinal's head, as we discovered earlier (page 2).

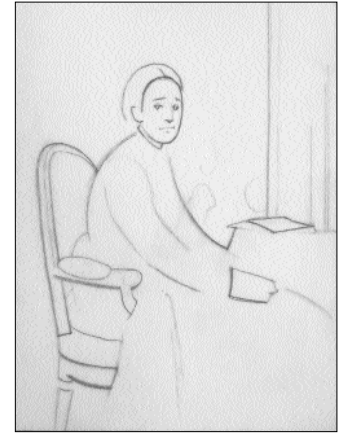


figure 14

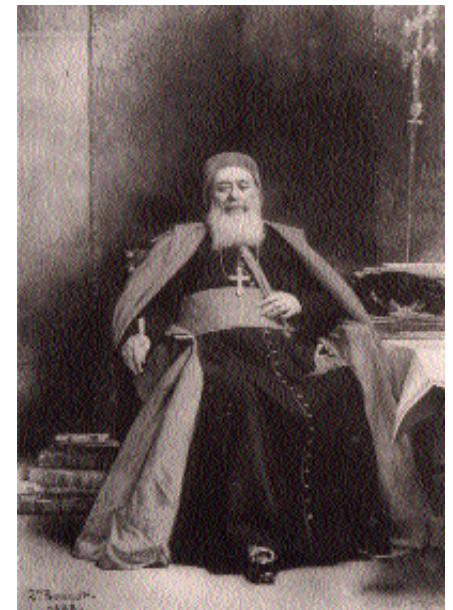
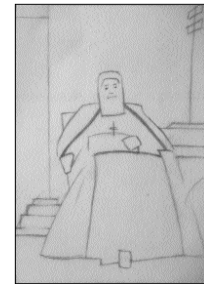


figure 15

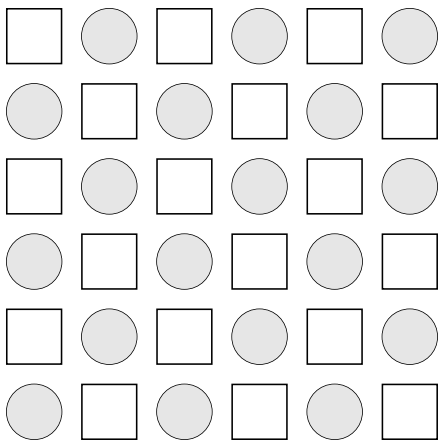


figure 16

A common anomaly mistake is found in the colour scheme of some portraits. The painter will use a grey-brown background to offset the colour of the face and will then colour the subject's clothing blue, for variety. The result is that the *clothing* becomes the anomaly, the attention-getter, not the face. A very common mistake in the value composition of a portrait, in which a business person wears a dark suit, is to make the background the same over-all value as the face, in an attempt to get away from a dark, pre-20th-century look. The result is a painting of a suit, rather than of a person. The old masters knew what they were doing; the dark suit and the dark background, in their paintings, became a unity against which the light-value face is electrifying.

COUNTERPOINT

As we add more and more repetitions of the anomaly, an equality of incidence between the original unifying element and the new, anomalous element becomes manifest. In fact, we arrive at a point where the painting is now composed of two nearly equal sets of elements, though they are different in type. This double-system (or triple-system, if there are three sets of different types) is called **counterpoint**.

An abstract example of counterpoint can be seen in fig. 16. There are two equal systems, seen simultaneously: the white squares and the darker circles.

Fig. 17 shows Raphael's *School of Athens*, both whole (at the bottom) and in a computerized separation. The separation makes it apparent that the artist has composed this work as counterpoint: the frieze of figures is constructed from his usual ovals, whereas the architecture is made of straight lines and blocks. How beautifully they play against each other! The Alma-Tadema (fig. 18) is similar: swirling lines (the two women) are presented against a counterpoint of massive straight blocks (the architecture).

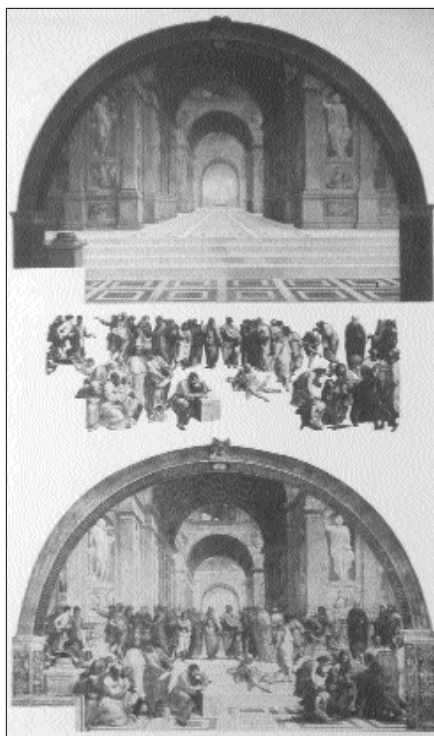


figure 17



figure 18

The Maxfield Parrish mural (fig. 19) is an example of triple counterpoint. Like the Raphael and the Alma-Tadema cited above, this mural plays a frieze of figures (created from organic, frenetic, curved-line constructs) against a symmetrical, straight-line architecture. Then, Parrish brings in a third set of elements, with its own type of organic curves: the trees and sky, which are seen through the arches. Note how the columnular aspect of the woman in blue, seen in profile, half-way between the vertical centreline and the left edge of the painting, harmonizes the figural set with the architectural set, by blatant repetition. The colour composition is also contrapuntal, albeit double, rather than triple. The figure set and the architectural set are combined as one, in a brown-and-red colour chord, while the landscape set is blue-and-green. Note again how our woman-in-blue unifies the two, beautifully.



figure 19

SYMMETRY & ASYMMETRY

We have learned that the main element, the dominant, is usually placed somewhere on the vertical centreline. But how should the ancillary elements be placed? There are three types of arrangement: **symmetrical**, **asymmetrical** and **asymmetrically symmetrical**.

Fig. 20 is an example of pure symmetry. The main subject is placed on the centreline and the ancillary elements are distributed exactly equally on either side: whatever is added on the left is mirrored on the right and vice versa. Symmetry was much favoured in the Middle Ages and during the Early Renaissance. It is also a favourite with the Symbolists, as this exact central placement and this exact mirroring is unnatural and immediately creates a sense of otherworldliness, or of dreams.

The danger with pure symmetry is that it very quickly becomes tedious when used in a work, such as an easel painting, that is small enough to be seen all at once. In a large work, such as a mural, or in architecture, where the composition is carried in the memory, the simplicity of symmetry is a positive factor, rather than a bore.

Elements can also be balanced asymmetrically. A large, central element, or group of elements, can be balanced by a small mass, placed away from the centre, near the frame (fig. 21). Figs. 22 and 23 show two examples, by Corot and by Friant respectively, wherein a large, dark mass at the right is balanced by a much smaller dark mass over to the left.



figure 22

Element, or group of elements, can be balanced by a small mass, placed away from the centre, near the frame (fig. 21). Figs. 22 and 23 show two examples, by Corot and by Friant respectively, wherein a large, dark mass at the right is balanced by a much smaller dark mass over to the left.

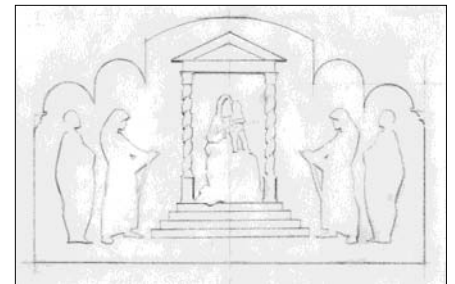


figure 20

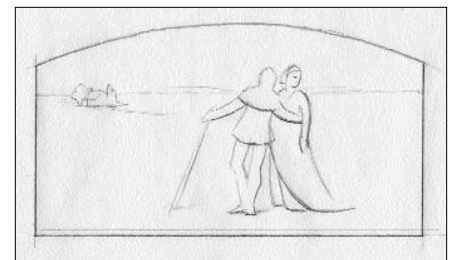


figure 21



figure 23



figure 24a



figure 24

Fig. 24, Wojtech Hynais's *The Judgement of Paris*, is one of my favourites. Look how the artist has given the figure of Paris, off to the left, extra weight by playing up the colour of his Pythian cap, which helps him to balance the figures and landscape at the right. This sense of balance is important to the viewer; human beings are immensely uncomfortable when confronted by a lack of equilibrium. Notice, in the black-and-white version (fig. 24a), how the dominant changes when the red of the cap is removed; the attention is held by the nude goddesses at the centre and *they* become the element of greatest contrast nearest the centre. The artistical balance behaves very much like a weigh-scale: the further away from the centre the smaller mass is placed, the larger the apparent weight that it can balance (fig. 25).

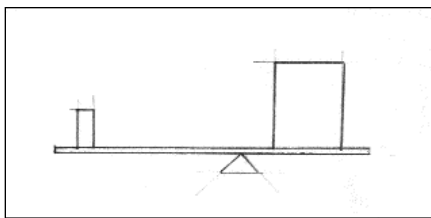


figure 25



figure 26

The third type of arrangement is asymmetrical symmetry and is a type used often by artists – it is, in my opinion, the most interesting. As an example, let us look at a Raphael compositional sketch (fig. 26). The main subject, the Madonna, is placed on the vertical centreline, as we would expect. To the right of her, almost sitting on her knee, is the baby Jesus and to the left is another baby, the infant St. John the Baptist. However, St. John is not placed perfectly symmetrically, but asymmetrically: he is lower. This is true too of the landscape behind the Virgin's head – whatever happens on the right is repeated on the left, but with variations: the trees on the right are smaller and more plentiful, the trees on the left are larger and fewer, *etc., etc.* This sketch has been composed so well, that we mistake it at first for Naturalism; it is only after some minutes that we become aware of the formal symmetry. Many paintings are designed this way.

A more obvious example of asymmetrical symmetry is Maxfield Parrish's mural, *Old King Cole*, in the Hotel Knickerbocker (fig. 27).



figure 27

The king is in the centre and is flanked by two jesters, one on each side. But the one on the left leans towards the king, while the one on the right stands up and twists away. The two boys, who sit at the king's feet are likewise variations on a theme, as are the two guards, halfway between the centre and the edges of the painting. On the far left is a beautifully designed grouping of three adults, who are momentarily static and bowing, while at the far right is the group which balances these three, but which consists of only two people, a man and a boy, who walk in from the side. Behind all these, we see a fairyland landscape, with its trees that rush in from the right, while the castle, mountain and clouds dream away asymmetrically, on the left. Between the landscape and the figures, we see perfectly symmetrical architecture.

Kenyon Cox's *The Sciences* (fig. 29), a mural painted for the Library of Congress, is the same kind of thing, although simpler. Fig. 28 further illustrates the idea, using a single figure on the left to play against a whole group on the right.

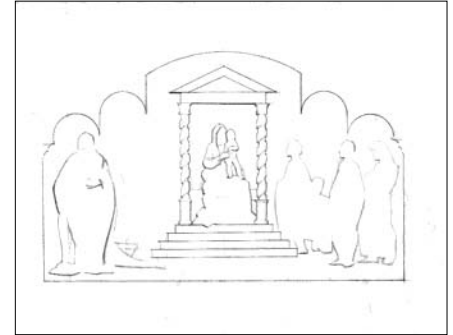


figure 28



figure 29

This asymmetrical symmetry is, in fact, based on an observation of nature; all natural things grow under what seems to be a geometrical

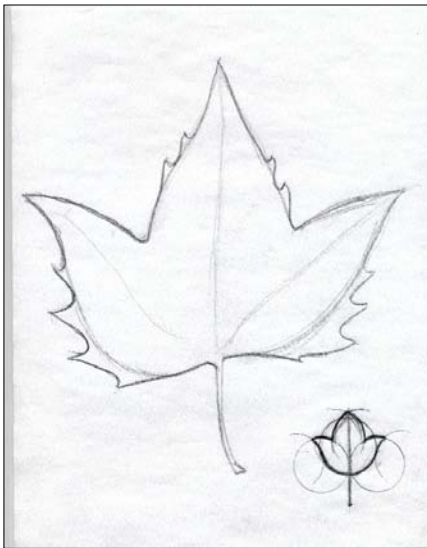


figure 30



figure 31



figure 32

imperative. However, they do this with the most marvelous apparent insouciance. The leaf in fig. 30 is obviously symmetrical, what happens on the left is mirrored on the right, but the mirroring is so free, so replete with variations, that the viewer is not bored, even for a moment. The leaf also makes us aware of the arrangement of circles that underlie its form. The diagram at the bottom right of fig. 30 shows this arrangement in a strictly geometrical way and we are immediately aware of how tedious such a diagram is, when compared to the leaf itself. So, it is not the geometrical structure alone that creates the beauty, but the verve and freedom with which the geometrical structure is made manifest.

This free-seeming presentation of a geometrical imperative is found throughout nature. A flower takes a single, simple design element (a petal) and repeats it in a simple, easily readable pattern, but does this in such a way that the appearance is of an asymmetry of form and spacing (figs. 31 and 32). Leaves are impelled to grow in simple, specific arrangements, such as in pairs across the stem, which alternate their orientation such that any given pair grows at right angles to the pair below it; or, a second example, in a spiraling arrangement, such that every fourth leaf is directly above the first. A further imperative is that the leaves become progressively smaller as they position themselves further and further away from the roots. These strict governing principles are carried out in such a way that the observed result is one of staggering beauty. The asymmetrical way in which the leaves seem to mass themselves, the negative spaces created by such massing and the play of colour and shadow are truly lovely. And seem potentially infinite (fig. 33). We have a lot to learn from nature.

Before closing this chapter, let us take a brief look at the situation wherein the main subject of the narrative is off-centre.

We have already seen some examples of this, in the section on true asymmetry. The smaller part, which is off to one side and which balances the larger, is often such an attention-getter that it may be used as the focus (fig. 22). The success of this depends on the strong contrast inherent in the smaller element (if the contrast were not strong, the smaller element would not be great enough to balance the larger); so, this kind of off-centre situation is just an extreme case of greater contrast dominating over a weak-contrast centre (see the top of page 2). The rule here, then, is to not place any kind of strong contrast near the centre if you want the off-centre contrast to dominate. You must also not place a strong-contrast element on the opposite side of the painting from your off-centre subject. This would result in the viewer's

attention staying in the middle, caught, as it would be, in the tension between the two high-contrast elements.

The Giotto *Marriage at Cana* (fig. 34) is different, however. Our attention goes straight away to the bride in the centre, then, attracted by her halo, we notice St. Mary. It is only after a little meandering that we are pulled to the halo at the far left and discover Christ. This in-the-sidelines placement suits the narrative: the marriage feast at Cana occurs before Jesus begins his mission. “Mine hour is not yet come,” he says. It is not until the end of the feast that he performs his first miracle and is revealed.

A similar thing happens in Caravaggio’s *Calling of St. Matthew* (fig. 35). We are first attracted to the two young men in the middle; i.e., the area of greatest contrast nearest the centre, then, made curious by their obvious agitation, we follow the direction of their gaze and find the two figures off to the right. We are suddenly startled to realize that one of them is Christ (we notice his halo, almost lost in the dark background), who, rather spookily, raises his arm and indicates Levi (soon to become St. Matthew).

Our attention goes back to the five men, grouped around the table, and we see Levi, whose finger indicates himself and whose arm parallels that of Jesus. We now stay with this group, excepting occasional forays back to Christ and St. Peter (and, once in a while, to the window) for relief, and we discover the various compositional relationships between its members (see Chapter 2, *The Principles of Grouping*). The strong value contrasts in this central group show it to be the dominant; the story focuses on the men and their reactions, as Christ suddenly manifests himself out of the spiritual darkness.



figure 33



figure 22



figure 34



figure 35

Exercises

Chapter I

Please note: although they do not specifically state it, the following exercises must be created using the principles of dominance and placement (balance) learned in Chapter I.

1. Make five construct tracings of five paintings – two simple figure compositions (i.e., one, two or three people: portrait or any other type) and three still lifes – that show how the paintings were constructed using constructs that create a unified system, such as we see in figs. 1.5 to 1.8. These paintings must be by at least three different painters.
2. Compose two of your own – one simple figure composition (one, two or three people: portrait or any other type) and one still life – based on life, or on photographs taken from life. These must employ a unifying construct type, without anomaly, and be presented in construct form.
3. Make three construct tracings, from three paintings (any subject), which show the use of anomaly, as in figs. 1.10 to 1.15.
4. Compose three examples of your own (one each of landscape, still life and portrait), using anomaly as in 3, above. These too must be presented in construct form.

Exercises in **counterpoint** and in the various types of **symmetry**, all of which require work with groups, will be given in later chapters.