

Hugh Yorty

I have been painting the still-life for a long time. The neutrality of subject matter is a major attraction because it lets me place the significance of the painting on the visual and formal elements. I place the objects on a flat surface to study them, to find multiple visual relationships. The objects that I have been using are simple forms that are more interesting structurally than what they are as objects or things. I set them up on a plane in complex relationships and positions, also at times in simple just-positions to each other. These forms are the bases for me to make a painting. The color, spacing between & around the objects, source of light plus my point of view are the essential reasons for making visual decision. The positioning & spacing of the object can be motivated by the memory of a place; often I use as references, maps, photographs, drawings or verbal descriptions. The painting progresses through a process of trial and error continuously rearranging, repositioning the objects as well as conceptualizing forms. Most of these changes are dictated by the painting; what is not working compositionally, color relationships and light source. In other words the still-life keeps getting re-invented. I am approaching the still-life in my studio much like an interior landscape. I want my paintings to have, to convey the sense of a "place" a "location" that has atmosphere and is solid. Of utmost importance for me is the paintings have a strong visual impact.

Notes on the Landscape

Why I look at landscape: because it presents particular visual problems that interest me.

There is neither beginning nor end.

I not only look at the landscape I am part of it.

My eyes must find a motif or focus.

I must be cognizant regarding scale when moving from foreground to middle ground to background.

I must work from the general to the specific. I see my subject all at once, but cannot draw it all at once. I must work the page all together not in parts or sections.

I must find my point of view.

I look into the space of nature, not at it. (The bottom of the page is closest to the picture plane; as the eye moves up the page it moves further away from picture plane).

The landscape is not flat; the paper is flat.

I investigate the landscape. I cannot copy it. I cannot reproduce it. But, I can explain it, using visual equivalents to what I see.

I try to give a sense of atmosphere and time to the place.