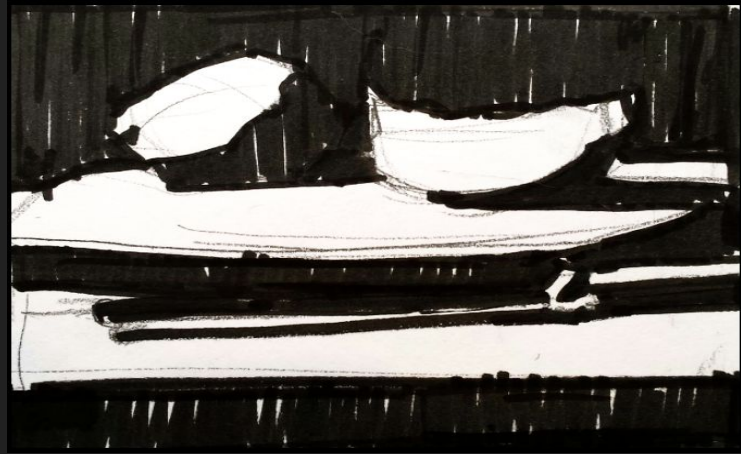

How to Build a Strong Painting

by Jessica Masters



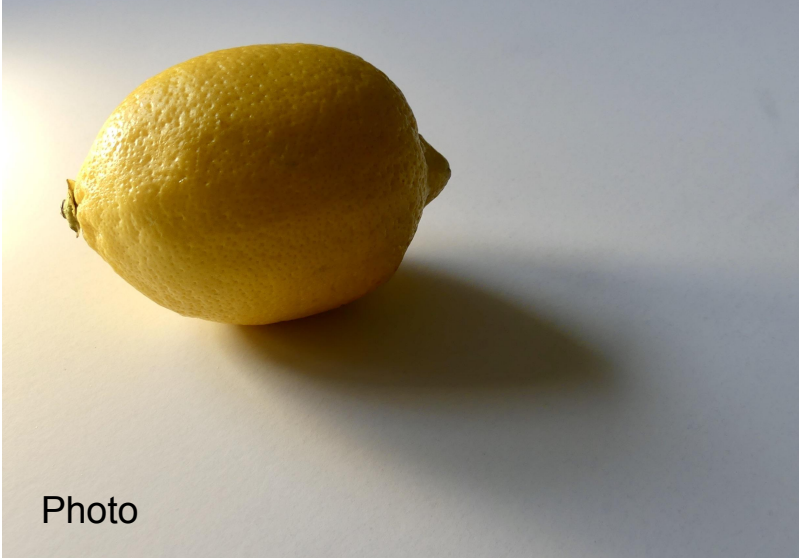
The Notan & 4 Value Sketch

- These two preliminary drawings help build a strong foundation in our paintings
- Adding these steps before we begin the painting process will deepen the knowledge of our subject, ensure greater accuracy of form, create strong compositions and increase our awareness of colour
- With a strong understanding of our subject we open ourselves up to paint with confidence and expression

Why are the Notan and the 4 Value Sketch important?

- They **simplify** your subject and bring out what is essential to paint. **Only 30%** of what you see needs to be painted
- They **deepen your knowledge** of the subject allowing you to paint intuitively and not tentatively. The more familiar you are with your subject the easier it is to translate it into art
- For **accuracy** - problems with composition cannot be corrected with colour. Inaccurate placement of shapes or rendering will inhibit colour awareness and cause you to over work your subject as you subconsciously try to fix problems
- Thumbnail studies will objectively **“reveal” the effectiveness of your composition**

The Notan – a two value sketch



A Notan uses only two values and is a simple division of light. The image is broken down into the light family and the shadow family only. This division of light is the painting's structural foundation upon which all half tones and colours will be placed. This is the skeleton that holds up the body

How to break it down

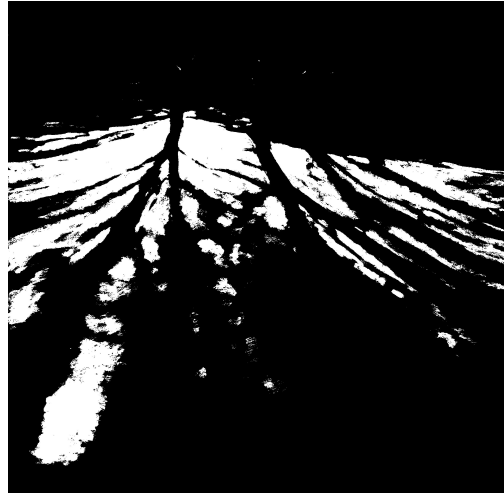
1. Identify the **direction of the light source**
2. **Group value shapes** together to be either light or dark (No Greys!)
3. Use brush and ink or a paint tip marker for solid shapes
4. **Average** the values by squinting



Shadows don't need to be dark to be shadows



Photo



Notan

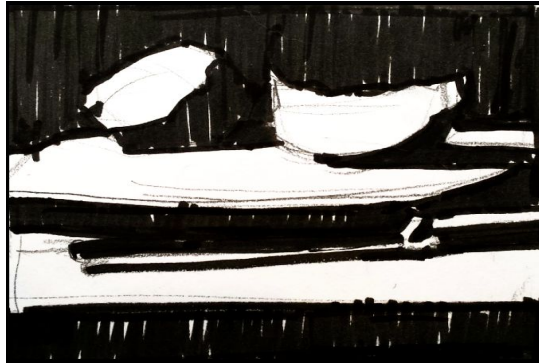


Painting

Another example



Photo

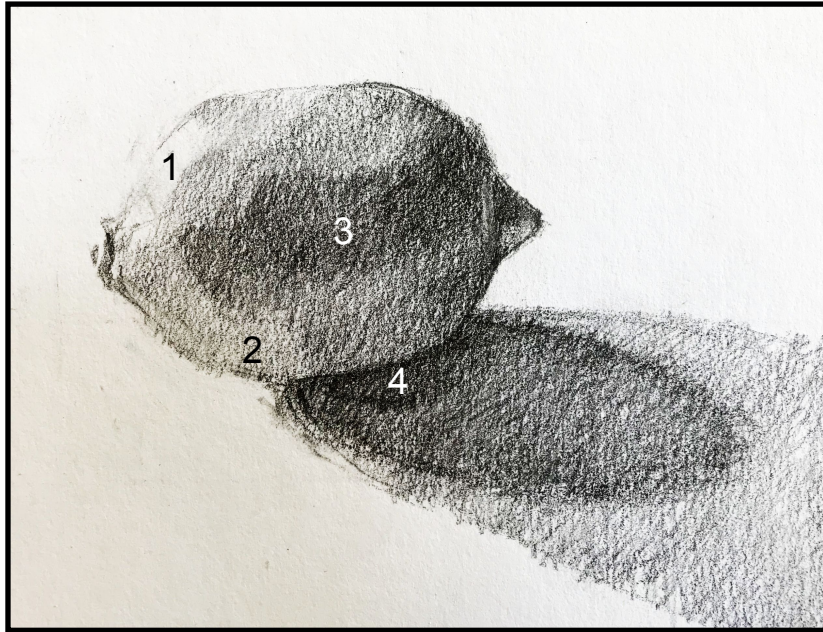


Notan



Painting

The 4 Value sketch- builds the planes of the subject and shows how light reflects off them



- A Four Value sketch is a more detailed description of the value shapes and **further reveals the form** by using only 4-5 values
- Continues to simplify the information into **value shapes** (not details)
- Is a detailed map to **guide the viewer's eye** around the painting
- Provides the value **map for colour** application

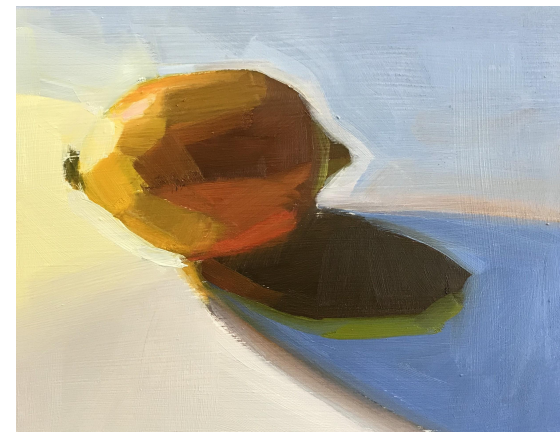
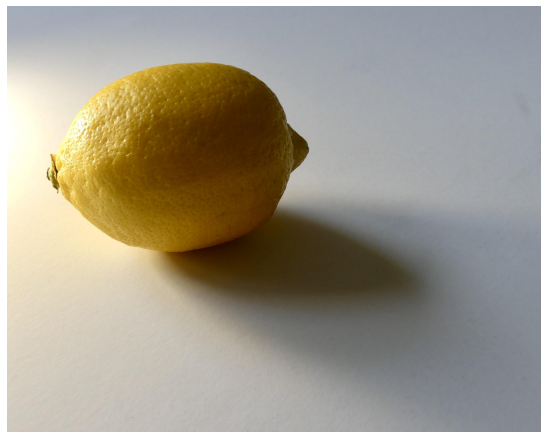
Draw like you are carving wood.

For accuracy it helps to break your subject into shapes or planes.

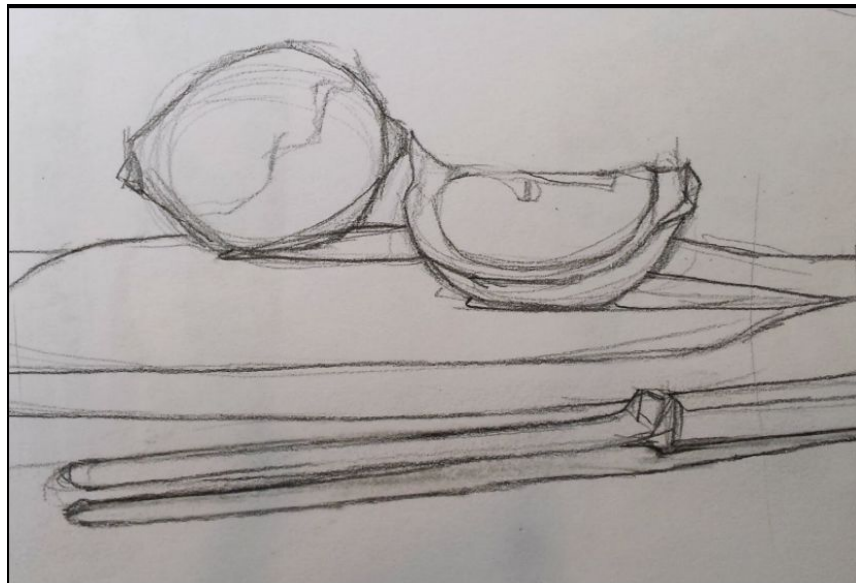
- Instead of drawing the surface details of your subject, approach your drawing like you are carving shapes out of wood. Each plane will be a certain value depending on how it angles toward or away from the light source.
- This sculpture by Ron Mueck gives you a visual on how the angles of the planes reflect the light. These planes create values that roughly (but accurately) define the subject.
- These shapes provide a strong architecture for your subject and will be excellent supports for the tiny details that are so fun to paint.



Value Studies



The Contour Drawing – a line drawing



- **This is the drawing that will be done on your canvas as a start to your painting**
- A contour drawing is a line drawing that defines the shapes of each object in your scene, simplifies forms and provides a deeper understanding of your subject
- If the painting goal is to distill the information in the subject and capture the essence of what you see and feel, a contour drawing will help you break the image down into the necessary shapes for painting
- Use the Notan to help divide your shapes
- **Squint your eyes to reveal the important shapes!**

Sketches are foundations and getting your ingredients together; think of painting like making a great cake



**Largest blocked in shapes/ Darkest value
5 to 7 major shapes**

**Mid-size and halftones- makes up the
majority of your painting**

Small details



Highlights

- The big and dark shapes make up the foundation / basic ingredients of any cake
- They hold up all the smaller shapes and halftones
- Mid sizes shapes that bring form and recognition to the large blocked in shapes. (“unique flavouring and ingredients for your cake”)
- The majority of your painting happens here
- Small shapes in the painting (“frosting”)
- We see “details” starting. Think branches and leaves
- Smallest shapes in the painting (“decoration”)
- The highlights and “sparkles in the eyes”