



COLLECTION 04 · EXPANDED ENGLISH EDITION

Painting the light

A notebook for artistic observation and practice

An invitation to make with attention



Ten progressive studios to understand value, temperature, edges, reflections and atmosphere, using materials that remain simple and accessible.



This expanded edition was designed as a genuine companion for practice. Every gesture is explained, the variations remain realistic and each proposal leaves room for intuition. The aim is not to accumulate rules, but to understand a few dependable principles and adapt them with confidence.

How to use this book

Read once from beginning to end, prepare the ingredients or materials, then follow the sequence without chasing perfection. Record what worked, what resisted and what you would change next time.

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Before you begin



Prepare less

Limited materials encourage decisions. Begin with what is already available.



Protect the time

Choose a short but real duration. Silence notifications and prepare the space.



Observe before interpreting

Describe colour, form, rhythm and sensation before searching for meaning.



Close the session

Photograph, date, tidy and write one sentence. Give the practice a clear ending.

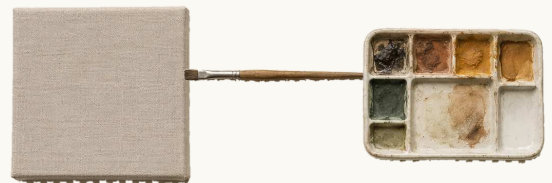
See before you paint

Intention

Separate value from colour. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Sketchbook
- Soft pencil
- A pale cup



What to notice

Where is the strongest contrast? Is the shadow edge sharp or soft?

Go further

Repeat with the same object at three different times of day.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1

Place the cup near a window.



Step 2

Half-close your eyes to simplify the masses.



Step 3

Mark five areas: light, midtone, core shadow, reflected light and cast shadow.



Step 4

Fill the shapes without hard outlines.



Step 5

Step back and compare the drawing with the subject.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Separate value from colour. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

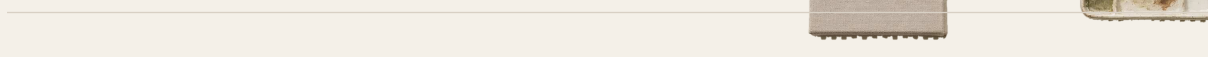
Return to concrete description throughout the session. Where is the strongest contrast? Is the shadow edge sharp or soft? If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Repeat with the same object at three different times of day. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



A scale of nine values

Intention

Build an even progression from white to black. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Heavy paper
- Black and white paint
- Flat brush



What to notice

A value too close to its neighbour disappears when viewed from a distance.

Go further

Keep the scale beside every exercise that follows.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1
Draw nine rectangles.



Step 2
Keep the first white and fill the last with black.



Step 3
Mix a middle grey.



Step 4
Create the intermediate values by comparison.



Step 5
Let them dry, then correct any sudden jumps.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Build an even progression from white to black. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

Return to concrete description throughout the session. A value too close to its neighbour disappears when viewed from a distance. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Keep the scale beside every exercise that follows. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



Warm light, cool shadow

Intention

Understand that shadow is not simply black. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Gouache or acrylic
- Ochre, blue and white
- Simple object



What to notice

Temperature creates the sensation of light before detail does.

Go further

Reverse the relationship: cool light and warm shadow.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1
Set up a warm lamp.



Step 2
Paint the background first in a middle value.



Step 3
Place the light with ochre and white.



Step 4
Build the shadow with blue and the local colour.



Step 5
Connect the areas with only a few transitions.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Understand that shadow is not simply black. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

Return to concrete description throughout the session. Temperature creates the sensation of light before detail does. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Reverse the relationship: cool light and warm shadow. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



The lost edge

Intention

Reveal volume by allowing some contours to disappear. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Tinted paper
- Charcoal
- Kneaded eraser



What to notice

The eye naturally completes contours that are missing.

Go further

Apply the method to a face or a fold of fabric.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1
Draw a simple form.



Step 2
Darken the background on one side.



Step 3
Merge one edge into the shadow.



Step 4
Lift out the light with the eraser.



Step 5
Keep only one edge very sharp as the focal point.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Reveal volume by allowing some contours to disappear. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

Return to concrete description throughout the session. The eye naturally completes contours that are missing. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Apply the method to a face or a fold of fabric. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



Window and backlight

Intention

Paint glare without painting the sun itself. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Watercolour
- 300 gsm paper
- Tape



What to notice

The brightest light should remain the least worked area.

Go further

Limit the palette to three colours.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1
Reserve white paper around the source.



Step 2
Wet the sky areas.



Step 3
Lay darker washes toward the edges.



Step 4
Paint the silhouettes as one connected mass.



Step 5
Add two fine reflections after drying.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Paint glare without painting the sun itself. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

Return to concrete description throughout the session. The brightest light should remain the least worked area. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Limit the palette to three colours. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



Reflections on water

Intention

Translate reflection through horizontal gestures. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Acrylic
- Flat brush
- Reference photograph



What to notice

A reflection echoes the subject's value but usually loses detail.

Go further

Try on black paper with light gouache.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1

Block in the landscape's large vertical masses.



Step 2

Mix slightly greyer versions of those colours.



Step 3

Pull the reflections downward.



Step 4

Interrupt them with light horizontal strokes.



Step 5

Keep some irregular breaks.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Translate reflection through horizontal gestures. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

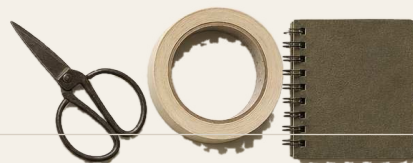
Return to concrete description throughout the session. A reflection echoes the subject's value but usually loses detail. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Try on black paper with light gouache. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



Metal and brilliance

Intention

Observe the extreme contrasts of a polished surface. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Gouache
- Metal spoon
- Grey paper



What to notice

Metal appears brilliant through abrupt value changes, not soft gradients.

Go further

Paint a transparent glass next and compare.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1

Reduce the spoon to three large shapes.



Step 2

Place the deepest black.



Step 3

Reserve an almost white glint.



Step 4

Add one coloured reflection from the surroundings.



Step 5

Refine only around the glint.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Observe the extreme contrasts of a polished surface. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

Return to concrete description throughout the session. Metal appears brilliant through abrupt value changes, not soft gradients. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Paint a transparent glass next and compare. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



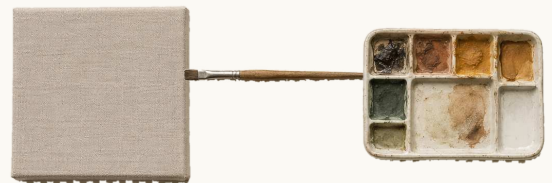
Paint a flame

Intention

Create a believable source of light. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Pastel or gouache
- Dark paper
- Candle



What to notice

The centre of a flame can be cooler than its orange edge.

Go further

Photograph the candle so you can continue without leaving it lit.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1

Work in a calm, safe room.



Step 2

Place a wide, low-saturation halo.



Step 3

Add a smaller orange shape.



Step 4

Reserve a very light core.



Step 5

Darken the nearby surroundings by contrast.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Create a believable source of light. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

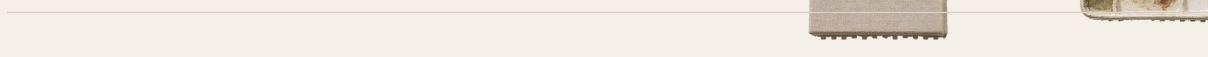
Return to concrete description throughout the session. The centre of a flame can be cooler than its orange edge. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Photograph the candle so you can continue without leaving it lit. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



Light through foliage

Intention

Alternate masses and openings. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Watercolour
- Natural sponge
- Fine brush



What to notice

Light can circulate when the empty spaces remain connected.

Go further

Begin outdoors, then refine in the studio.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1
Lay down one large irregular pale mass.



Step 2
Add two greens of different values.



Step 3
Dab without covering the first layer completely.



Step 4
Keep connected openings of sky.



Step 5
Draw only a few branches to structure the whole.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Alternate masses and openings. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

Return to concrete description throughout the session. Light can circulate when the empty spaces remain connected. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Begin outdoors, then refine in the studio. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



A series of three atmospheres

Intention

Understand how light transforms a story. The exercise offers a structure, never an obligation to produce a result. Let traces, hesitations and changes of direction remain part of the session.

Materials

- Three small formats
- Limited palette
- One subject



What to notice

The subject stays the same; emotion changes with value range and temperature.

Go further

Create a fourth version from memory.

The gesture, step by step



Step 1

Choose a very simple subject.



Step 2

Paint a pale morning version.



Step 3

Paint a high-contrast noon version.



Step 4

Paint a warm evening version.



Step 5

Align the three and note every value decision.

Journal prompts

What did I notice during the practice? When did I want to hurry or correct? Which detail deserves to be revisited tomorrow?

Understand it. Make it your own.

1. Why this frame

The intention is precise: Understand how light transforms a story. The protocol deliberately reduces the number of decisions so attention can settle on gesture, material and rhythm. There is no model result; quality of presence matters more than polish.

2. During the practice

Return to concrete description throughout the session. The subject stays the same; emotion changes with value range and temperature. If an emotion appears, receive it without rushing toward an explanation. Pause, look from a distance, then decide whether one more gesture is truly needed.

3. Build continuity

Date the page, photograph the final state and write one sentence about the process. Create a fourth version from memory. Repetition compares ways of working; it does not classify sessions as successes or failures.

Personal note

What I want to keep, modify or pass on after this attempt:



The next chapter is yours

A practice becomes personal when it is repeated, simplified and transformed. Returning to a recipe, exercise or notebook page reveals what has changed in the gesture and in the gaze. Brief notes, dated attempts and clear acknowledgement of sources build a more sincere body of work.



Three commitments

1. Choose curiosity over perfection.
2. Respect people, cultures, ingredients and the body's limits.
3. Create something useful, however simple, then pass it on accurately.



Doris Waelchli Giraud

Food · Art · Travel · Well-being

A collection inspired by travel, Switzerland, artistic creation and food that is simple, authentic and free from unnecessary stress.

Editorial note

Recipes should be tested under the conditions of your own kitchen before commercial publication. Well-being content is informational and does not replace individual medical, nutritional or psychological advice.

