Chapter Twelve: Painting

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- Encaustic
- Fresco
- Tempera
- Oil
- Watercolor
- Gouache
- Synthetic Media

Works in Progress
Michelangelo’s *Libyan Sybil*
Milton Resnick’s *U + Me*

The Critical Process
Thinking About Painting: Judith Baca’s *Great Wall of Los Angeles*

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

This Chapter Will:
- identify and distinguish between painting media
- discuss the expressive qualities of each painting medium
- illustrate the denotative and connotative aspects of painting
- describe the technical properties of each painting medium
- discuss the advantages and disadvantages of traditional and modern painting media

KEY TERMS

mimesis
denotative
connotative
pigment
binder
support
primer
ground
vehicle
encaustic
fresco
fresco secco
buon fresco
tempera
gesso
oil
impasto
vanishing
lacquer
enamel
casein
gesso
cement
gesso
trompe l’oeil
scumbling
watercolor
gouache
synthetic paint
duco
acrylic resin
LECTURE AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Traditional and Nontraditional Painting Media
Provide an historical overview about the development of painting media—from the ancient techniques of encaustic, oil, tempera, and fresco, to the more contemporary media such as acrylic and computer-generated painting. Emphasize the importance of binder and vehicle appropriate for each media.

Discuss the impact technology on painting media. Discuss how the Industrial Revolution on the development of paint pigments and receptacles. The French Impressionists, for example, were the first artists to paint out of doors, directly from nature, as the result of manufactured, premixed paints in collapsible tubes.

2. Encaustic
Artists have practiced the technique of encaustic painting for over two thousand years. It is the oldest painting technique still in use today. One of the earliest applications of encaustic paints dates back to ancient Greece, where artists highlighted the features of marble statues with wax paints. This treatment adorned many statues that were part of the Acropolis, including The Parthenon. Encaustic painting was so popular that the artists of that day referred to their wax paints as "waxes" just as modern artists speak of their "oils" and "watercolors". This incredibly durable medium was used to adorn sculptures, but murals, boats, and architecture. Greek influence in art and culture spread to Egypt during the Hellenistic period. The Egyptians quickly mastered the art of encaustic painting, as evidenced by the famous mummy portraits (fig.333) excavated in Egypt's Faiyûm District (near Cairo). Greek or Greek-trained Egyptian artists commonly painted portraits on small wooden panels that were attached to mummy cases or the wrappings of the deceased. Since the beginning of the 19th Century, over 600 of these portraits have been excavated. These portraits are remarkably well preserved and strikingly lifelike, testifying not only to the advanced skills of these ancient portraiture artists, but also to the unique color qualities and durability of encaustic paints.

3. Fresco
Discuss the technique of fresco with the examples in the chapter, from Pompeii’s Still Life with Eggs and Thrushes (fig.334) to Diego Rivera’s public murals (fig. 340). Include a discussion of Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel (figs. 338-339) to emphasize the technical process and application of paint to plaster walls. Continue a discussion of fresco by introducing Judith Baca’s (fig 361) The Great Wall of Los Angeles as a contemporary work that was greatly influenced by Mexican muralists.

2. Tempera and Oil
Compare the advantages of using one type of paint over another for visual effects. For example, to achieve a jewel-like surface, Jan van Eyck (fig. 344) used oil and glazing to create a luminous surface quality. In comparison, Andrew Wyeth (fig.342) used traditional egg tempera, which resulting in a matte finish. Elaborate on how artists can create a variety of surface textures in a painting.
3. Watercolor and Gouache
Illustrate the characteristics of watercolor and gouache with the works of Winslow Homer (fig. 352), John Marin (fig 353), and Georg Baselitz (fig 354). Stress the significance of paper quality to artists interested in expressing their ideas with watercolor. Remind students that watercolor is an unforgiving painting medium, in that it does not allow for changes once an artist has made a mark on the paper.

4. Synthetic Media
Synthetic painting media was attractive to artists who desired a faster-drying paint. The re-workable aspects of oil paint was an advantage for many artists, but others, like Morris Louis (fig. 357), Helen Frankenthaler (fig.358), and Lynda Benglis (fig.359) were more interested in exploring alternatives to the traditional process of using a brush to paint on canvas.

CRITICAL THINKING: More Opportunities to Think About Art
Several artworks are detailed in the Critical Thinking and Works in Progress features found in this chapter. In addition, diverse opportunities for studying these works are located on the Companion Website and Companion CD-ROM.

1. Works in Progress: Michelangelo’s Libyan Sybil
When Michelangelo returned to Rome in 1508, he was to paint the Twelve Apostles and a few ornaments on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He, who had always insisted that he was a sculptor, was to learn the art of fresco painting, and practice it on a vaulted ceiling decorated by fifteenth-century artists as a starry sky. However, as he began work on the project, Michelangelo conceived grander designs for the decoration of the ceiling. He spent the time between 1508 and 1512 painting more than 300 larger-than-life figures on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. In the scheme of divisions, the key elements are the thrones of the seers (prophets and sibyls) flanked by plinths and colonnades decorated with pairs of putti supporting the cornice running above the crowns of the spandrels, at about a third of the way across the curve of the vault. Have students examine Michelangelo’s development of the Libyan Sibyl (figs. 338 and 339) pertaining to its placement on the ceiling.

2. Works in Progress: Milton Resnick’s U + Me
Have students examine life and work of Milton Resnick pertaining to the progression of his painting U + Me from its early stage (fig. 350) to its final completion (fig. 351). Have them identify any changes in compositional elements.

3. Thinking About Painting: Judith Baca’s Great Wall of Los Angeles
Since 1976, Judith Baca has served as the Founder/Artistic Director of the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) in Venice, California. She has taught studio art as a Professor of Fine Arts for the University of California since 1980. As of 1996, she concurrently holds two academic appointments: as Vice Chair of UCLA's Cesar Chavez Center and as Professor of Art for World Arts and Cultures at UCLA.
As a visual artist and one of the nation's leading muralists, Judith Baca is best known for her large-scale public art works. In her internationally-known *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* (fig 361), a landmark pictorial representation of the history of ethnic peoples of California from their origins to the 1950's, Baca and her planning and painting teams of approximately 700 participants produced 2,435 running feet of murals in segments over seven summers, from 1976 to 1984. *The Great Wall* engaged over 400 young people, 14-21 years of age, of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. Working with scholars, oral historians, local artists and hundreds of community members, it is one of the most acclaimed monumental cultural projects in the United States dealing with interracial relations. It provides a vibrant and lasting tribute to California and the unrecognized ethnic groups who have shaped this state's history. Its half-mile length in the Tujunga wash drainage canal and its accompanying bike trails and park in the San Fernando Valley, hosts thousands of visitors every year. Restoration of the older elements of *The Great Wall*, along with the research and design for its continuance into the 1990’s is currently underway.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

Direct students to their Student Study Guide when assigning Writing Assignments as the following assignments are written as instruction for the student and are contained in the guide as they are here.

1. **The History of *The Great Wall***
   Have students research Judith Baca’s mural *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* to write an historical account of the work.

2. **Michelangelo, The Painter**
   It is a common known fact that Michelangelo despised painting. In his letters and poetry he expressed his disdain for the medium, yet he managed to paint one of the most famous testaments to painting itself with the Sistine Chapel Ceiling. Have Students compile research about Michelangelo that provides solid evidence that either reinforces or dispels the notion Michelangelo hated to paint.

**PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS**

Direct students to their Student Study Guide when assigning Hands-On Projects as the following assignments are written as instruction for the student and are contained in the guide as they are here. For additional project ideas, remember to investigate the Hands-On Projects found on the Companion Website.

1. **A World of Art Companion Website Featured Project : Pop Art Self-Portrait**
   Have students create a self-portrait from an original photograph in the style of the Pop artists. Direct students to *A World of Art Companion Website* for detailed instructions.
2. **Watercolor Vacation**

Using a vacation photo as inspiration, students will create a watercolor painting in the manner of Winslow Homer (see *A Wall, Nassau*, fig.352).

**RESOURCES**

*A World of Art Companion CD-Rom:*

**Oil Painting: Pigment and Color Demonstration**

Have students enter the *Visual Demonstrations* room found in *A World of Art Companion CD-ROM* and complete the *Oil Painting: Pigment and Color* demonstrations. The video in this segment of the CD-ROM covers how paint is made to how it is mixed and applied on a canvas.

*A World of Art Companion Website:*

*Remember to direct students to* *A World of Art companion website*  
(*www.prenhall.com/sayre*) *to help further their understanding of the materials discussed in this chapter with ideas for completing hands-on projects and exercises. Self-testing materials are also available and offer students the opportunity to evaluate their understanding of the chapter materials in a variety of formats. In addition, links to websites featuring contemporary artists, and museum and gallery exhibitions related to this chapter will enhance discussion and comprehension. Links for this chapter include:*

**CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS: Janet Fish.** A short biography on Janet Fish accompanied by Fish Vase image. The World's Women On-Line! is an electronic art networking project demonstrating the professionalism and achievement of women artists internationally.

**GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS: The Los Angeles County Museum of Art**  
(LACMA) is the largest art museum west of the Mississippi, and has over 100,000 works of art dating from prehistory to the present day. The web site is well designed, be sure to check out "What's New!". The permanent collection includes Greek and Roman art; European paintings and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; modern and contemporary art; pre-Columbian art; Egyptian, Islamic, and ancient West Asian art; Far Eastern art; and Indian and Southeast Asian art.

**GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS: The Whitney Museum** is physically located in New York City, in a building designed by Marcel Breuer in 1966 (see Contemporary Artists in Chapter 16). The site is divided into several areas, all worth exploring. Be sure to look at the Exhibitions and Permanent Collection links, which both provide access to images from their collection of 20th-century American art. Art on the Web has links to artists working on the web.
GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS: The Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio has been called "America's Art Museum," according to the description that introduces their site. It has possibly the largest collection dedicated to American artists, and their permanent collection index reads like a "who's who" of 19th- and 20th-century American painters. As the introduction page says, "To walk through the Butler galleries is to walk through the history of America."

Other Suggested Websites:

Everything Encaustic is provided at www.encaustic.com/

Frescoes at Pompeii are provided at a site at old.jccc.net/~jjackson/pomp.html. To view a computer representation of the Pompeii Frescoes visit .cs.bris.ac.uk/~devlin/pompeii/pompeii.html

Diego Rivera’s life and works are covered extensively at his site www.diegorivera.com/

Suggested Videos:
Videos and other resources are available for purchase through any of the distributors listed in the Resources section of this manual.

Painting Projects technique instruction (30 minutes)
Winslow Homer: The Nature of the Artist feature artist (29 minutes)
David Hockney feature artist (55 minutes)
Chuck Close: A Portrait in Progress feature artist (57 minutes)
Diego Rivera feature artist (35 minutes)
Graffiti Verite: Read the Writing on the Wall contemporary graffiti artists (45 minutes)
The Murals of Mexico City: Wall of Celebration mural painting (56 minutes)