



# How can Painting be taught in Art Schools?

**Dr Jonathan Chapman**  
Senior Lecturer in Fine Art  
The Northern School of Art

## Recommended citation:

Chapman, J. (2023) How can Painting be taught in Art Schools? PAD| Perspectives in Art and Design. Edition 5. The Northern School of Art Research & Scholarly Activity Conference. July 2023



# How Can Painting Be Taught In Art Schools ?



# How to Paint

- At the Glasgow School of Art in the 1950s both my Mum and Dad were taught how to paint.
- They were taught to start with a lean medium, without too much linseed oil, they were taught to tonally under-paint in browns and greys – they were taught to scrape off any lumpy bits from their easel bound canvases at the end of the day.



James Morrison Tenements 1960, Oil on Canvas - taught at Glasgow School of Art

70 years later – it's now not as simply as that, there are an infinite number of ways to apply paint and paintings can at times look more like sculpture



Fabian Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories*, 2000, installed at Casa Daros, Rio de Janeiro, 2014. Pigmented ink on canvas, silicone, poly-optic resins, oil, wood and metal. 13 x 328 feet.

# This is Painting in the Expanded Field



*Jonathan Harris* suggested that since the 1970s 'painting' cannot be, has not been, easily limited to either certain materials, certain techniques of construction or certain conventions of display

# So - **how** do you teach Painting now?

When Contemporary Painting can be :-



Lucien Freud  
Representational - brushed  
oil on canvas



David Reed  
Abstract - squeegeed translucent  
acrylics applied on to Perspex



Jessica Stockholder  
Expanded Field  
Multi-media

So - **how** do you teach Painting now?

A little before the Pandemic, Tony and Myself attended a conference entitled:

“Teaching Painting – How can painting be taught in Art Schools?”

With the Programme about to be revalidated – reflecting on the papers from this Conference has enabled the department to consider our Programme believes Painting should be taught



# How do we teach our students **how** to Paint?

## CONFERENCE

“If an artists wishes to deliver...their ideas...through the process of painting, it is crucial that a solid understanding of the...methodologies are in place if inventive, articulate and insightful works are to be the outcome”

*Stuart McKenzie and Joseph Mark Wright*

“Through [ a series of ] workshops we...reveal painting as a discursive area rather than presenting any set position [or] mode of practice. This...enables students to filter and select a particular framework for their own practice”

*Sarah Horton and Sarah Longworth-West*

# Level Four Workshops that feed into Painting include:

From our modules Two Dimensional Analogue Practice, Time and Lens based Practices,  
and Three Dimensional Practice



Oil Paint and Colour Mixing



Abstraction, Composition, Collage



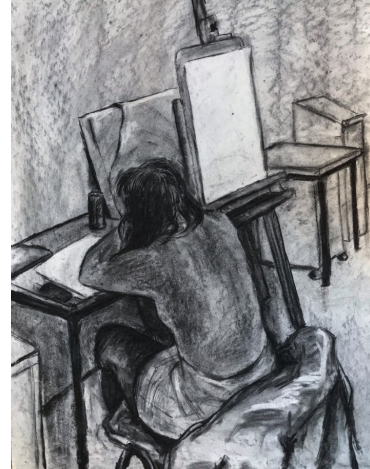
Photography and Photoshop



Print techniques



Use of Found Objects



Approaches to Drawing



Preparation of Canvases

# How do we teach our students **how** to Paint ?

## CONFERENCE

“In teaching the practice of painting...we are supporting a learner engaged in the process of trying to find an....obscured destination”

*John McClenaghan*

“Painting is a learning experience and painters learn in the studio; they speculate, take risks and test ideas in materials in an attempt to give the them form” *John*

*McClenaghan*

This happens in our Personal Practice Studio Modules

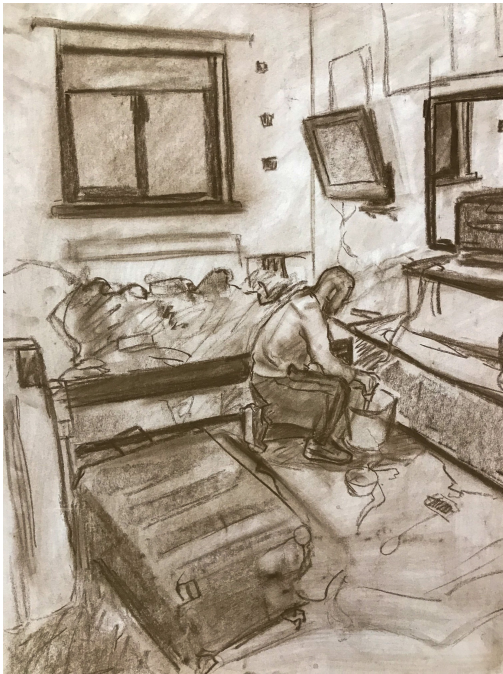
Level Four Introduction to Personal Practices

Level Five Establishing Personal Practice

Level Six Research and Preparation and Final Major Project

# How do we teach our students **how** to Paint ?

OUR STUDENTS WORK



We are able to support our painters  
to develop 'traditional' painting skills



# How do we teach our students **how** to Paint ?

OUR STUDENTS WORK



“Embracing the importance of painting recognises its....unique ability, to transgress and absorb other influences, be it film or video or performance” *Dan Sturgis*

# How do we teach our students **how** to Paint ?

OUR STUDENTS WORK



We are able to support our painters to develop digital imaging skills  
Support “Post-Analogue Painting” *Ian Gonczarow*

# How do we teach our students **how** to Paint ?

We are able to support our painters to develop 'traditional' painting skills



We are able to support our painters to work in the 'expanded field' of painting



How do we 'teach' our students **WHAT** to Paint ?

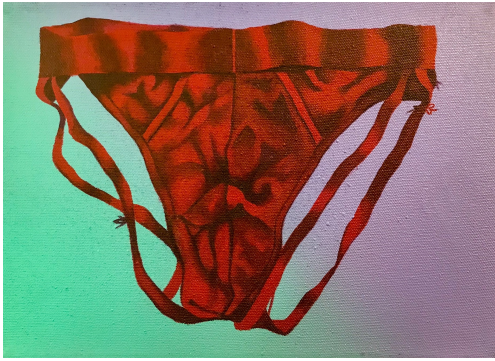
## CONFERENCE

- “Painting...is a material practice...a process of work with sensible materials....it is a...distinctive... transformation through which idea and value [are] embodied in those materials” ...Caroline Wilde
- “Painting is an attempt to come to terms with life, There are as many solutions as there are human beings” George Tooker



How do we 'teach' our students **WHAT** to Paint ?

L4 Exploring Subject Matter considers three 'genres'



Still Life



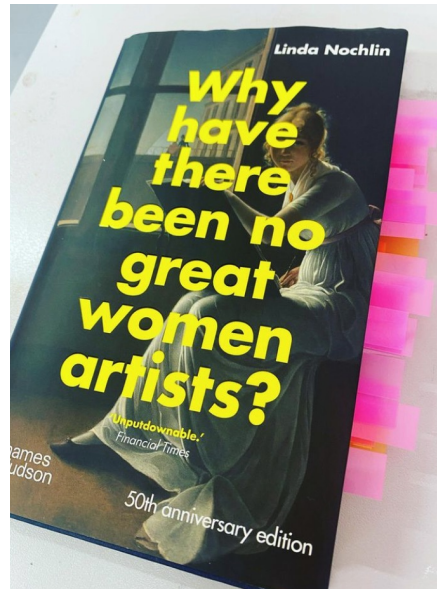
The Human Figure



Landscape

# How do we 'teach' our students **WHAT** to Paint ?

## Plus the 'genre' of working from Theory and other Texts



Theory surrounding Process Art & painting in the expanded field.

Feminist Theory

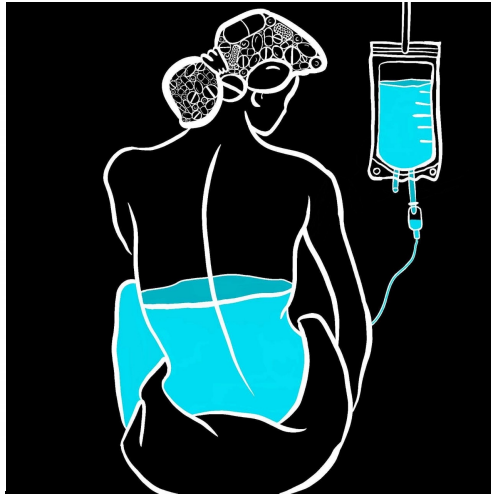
“Just as the importance of feminist history is being marginalised within the official history [of painting] so too is the importance of black artists” *Dan Sturgis*

How do we 'teach' our students **WHAT** to Paint ?

Importantly - This exploring subject matter modules works for our non-painters too



Still Life



The Human Figure



Landscape

# How do we teach students to **contextualise** their Paintings?

## THE CONFERENCE

[It is] important for students to know how painting has defined itself in the past...to see what is being kicked against [and] see the limitations of more recent definitions of painting” *Dan Sturgis*

Painting...must strive to remain critical...must continue to advance its operative function within...contemporary art [and] contemporary life....through questioning the conventions of the medium itself.

*Ian Hartshorne*

Seminal texts, addressing the relationship of painting to its processes, strategies, aesthetics, epistemologies and historical precedents [allow] students to have an awareness of the critical perspectives...that frame painting as a practice

*Stuart McKenzie and Joseph Mark Wright*

# How do we teach students to **contextualise** their Paintings?

## OUR STUDENTS WORK

L4 From the Renaissance to Modernism

L5 Theory in Relation to Practice



Adam Shaw – Intertextuality 2023 – In dialogue with 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Bather Paintings and the theory of Intertextuality

# How do we teach students to **contextualise** their Paintings?

L6 Dissertation and Report

About 50% of our students that go on to MAs, are undertaking written theoretical courses such as Art or Design History or Curatorial Studies



# How do we teach our students to enable them to **keep making paintings after they leave ?**

## THE CONFERENCE

“A painters career has to be self-sustaining...it needs to be driven by the heart” Dan Sturgis

“Should we be trying to teach...students to produce artworks located successfully and knowingly within a contemporary context as objects destined for the museum”

or is it

“Losing one’s way is the key to knowledge” *Walter Benjamin Cited by John McClenaghan*

# The Departments Philosophy



“People should continue to paint, but while they are doing it they should be thinking about, what is it for , what’s the purpose of it, where it’s going to be seen?”

*Bruce McLean*



# How do we teach our students to enable them to **keep making paintings after they leave ?**

OUR STUDENTS WORK

L5 Professional Studies – Exhibition  
L5 Situating Personal Practice  
L6 Exhibition and Portfolio



How do we teach our students to enable them to **keep making paintings after they leave ?**

OUR STUDENTS WORK



John James Perangie – Artist and Performer with a studio at The Auxiliary

**PAD**

Perspectives in Art and Design