

William Merritt Chase

Woman in a Black Hat, 1912

the only way to really understand the process of the brush was to copy it

A painting demonstration by William Merritt Chase was a 'must go' to event at the Chase School of Art (in 1898 it became the New York School of Art and is now the Parsons School of Design) in turn of the 19th/20th Century New York. Often dressed in a white linen suit, he was fond of his sartorial splendor, Chase could both entertain and paint with nary of drop of paint trespassing onto his suit.

Chase's coeval and fierce competitor Robert Henri would schedule his demonstrations at the same time. It was a titanic battle of the brushes.

Then, like now, a successful painter/teacher/demonstrator must seamlessly entertain with both banter and brush while painting at a high level. Not an easy task.

Within the more intimate confines of his classroom Chase would demonstrate the practice of painting using fresh fish as his subject matter. The lessons in painting fresh fish are manifold.

His students included luminaries of American Art: Georgia O'Keefe and Edward Hopper amongst many.



Copying master paintings is a critical element in your painting education. The language of painting is significantly different from the language of the photograph. It is only through copying that you learn the language; the grammar and syntax of the paint brush; it's concordant, fractile assemblies that very much like music proffer a direct conduit to the viewer's unconscious mind.

The beginner artist will understandably be intimidated. And you should be. Portrait drawing and painting is one of the highest endeavors of human achievement. It does not come easy. However, bear in mind that we all have weaknesses and strengths. Technicians generally do not make for great artists; artists often struggle with technique. And if you are filled with self-doubt ... well, welcome to the club.



William Merritt Chase, *Portrait of Louis Betts* [detail], Oil on Canvas, 20 x 15¾", c. 1894

The imprimaturi is the initial toning of the canvas, applied with a much diluted earth color such as yellow ochre or a tempered burnt sienna. It is applied unevenly, traditionally with either vertical or horizontal strokes.

The imprimaturi activates the canvas giving it a visual electrical charge. It is generally ill-advised to work on a white canvas.



William Merritt Chase: Woman in a Black Hat, 1912

In Module 5 your training gathers significant steam. Your palette is expanded to nine colors and you'll be introduced to the entire progressive process of painting a portrait from start to finish.

Whereas Module 4: Beginning Portrait Painting focused on the Ebauche, the initial construction of painting, Module 5 takes you significantly further into the passag-es of Pentimenti where you will learn how to strengthen and refine facial structure while acquiring the language of painting. This is why we copy master paintings.

You will learn how to mix realist flesh tones using color theory and applying your brush strokes with a sympathetic concordance to the underlying anatomical form.



Module 5 is comprised of enumerated 27 chapters. i.e., 501, 502, 503 ... 527 divided into four parts:

The ebauche : 5 parts

The pentimento : first pass : 6 parts

The pentimento : second pass : 8 parts

The finire : 8 parts

Download the reference image at: artacademy.com/tv/500.png and print on photographic paper at the same size as your canvas. But no larger than 12 x 16".

Supply List

The Ebauche—Serving it up in the abstract

An 11 or 12 x 16", or close to, canvas or panel toned with a light imprimaturi of yellow ochre and a very small amount of vine or ivory black.

The imprimaturi activates the surface of the canvas. It can either be stroked on vertically or in an abstract ex-expressionist manner. Use a very light medium of 1 part oil : 5 parts solvent.

Oils: Titanium/zinc white, yellow ochre, Indian (or Venetian red), vine or ivory black.

Calcium carbonate (available in most art stores)

Medium: 1 part linseed oil/4 parts solvent

Brushes: A range of medium size round and/or filberts.

Misc.: Rag, paint dipper for medium, wood palette preferred, two painting knives



Pentimento and Finire

Our palette is expanded to: titanium/zinc white, a pale yellow (i.e., titanium nickel yellow or lead tin yellow or lemon yellow, yellow ochre (pale is good, too), vermillion (or cadmium red medium), burnt sienna, Indian red, terre verte (green earth), raw umber and vine or ivory black. Plus egg yolk. And Stand Oil for the Finire (Session 4).

Reference: I recommend that the reference image be printed out on a high quality photo paper to the size of your canvas, but not larger than 12x16".

