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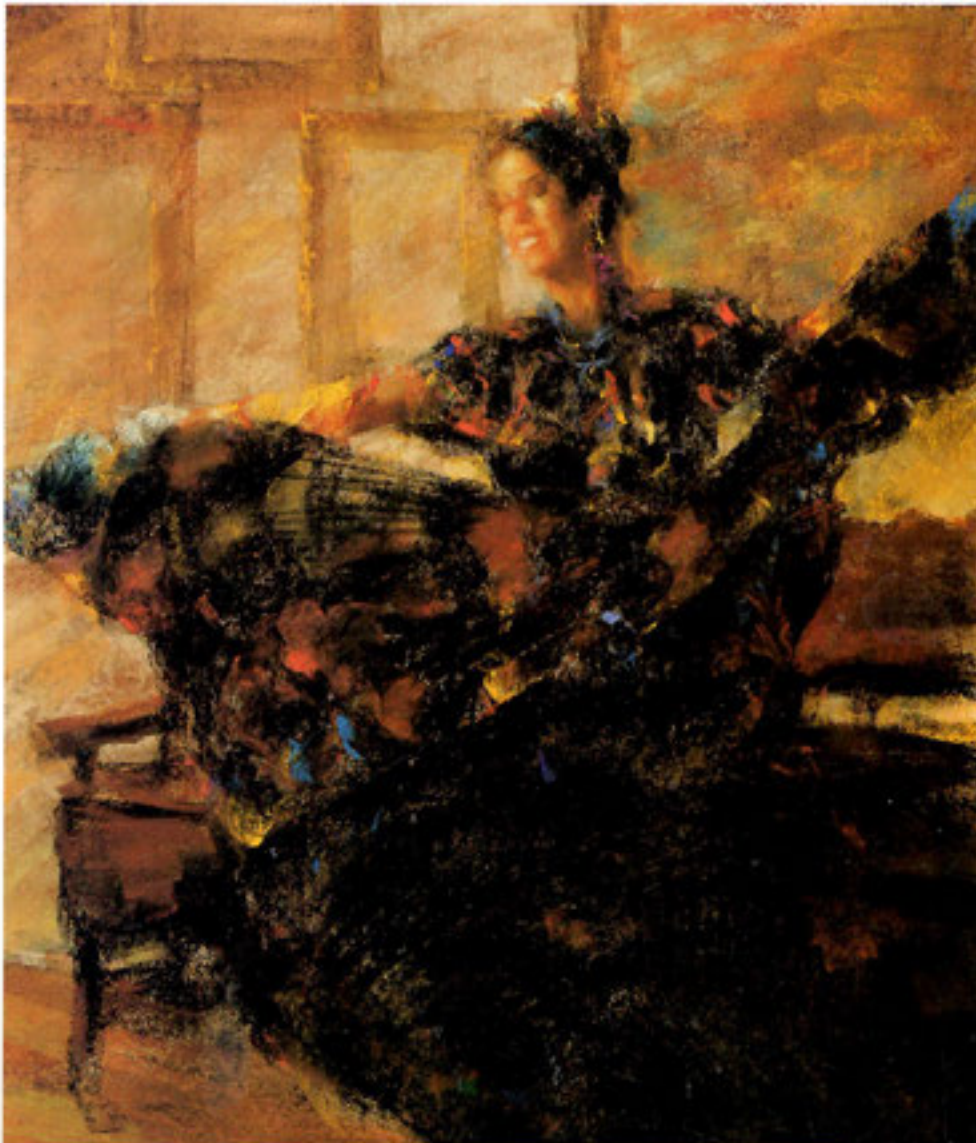
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the magazine for artists by artists from around the world

international artist

What Makes a Powerful Painting?



How 10 Modern Masters Use the 7 Foundational Truths of Painting

*Ramon K
PSA*



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C. W. MUNDY
Pond Yachts in the Studio, oil on linen, 20 x 16" (51 x 41cm)

I have chosen "Pond Yachts in the Studio" as my example of the foundational truths. You figure out why. You've had nine practice runs, so the tenth is all yours.

But let me just add that I owe all of this understanding to a merciful and gracious God. To be creating under the microscope of God is a humbling experience. Only because I was asked to do this article am I allowed to be in the company of such great artists. My prayer — and I'm sure I can speak for most, if not all, of these artists — is for this article to offer hope for the perpetuation of the foundational truths of traditional academic painting. If one person "gets it" and "applies it", this article is not in vain.

About C. W. Mundy

C. W. Mundy's award-winning landscape, still life and figurative paintings were recently exhibited in his first retrospective at the Richmond Museum of Art in Richmond, Indiana. Besides his many one-man shows, he has also enjoyed participating in several annual group exhibitions, including those of the Great American Artists (Cincinnati, Ohio), the Hoosier Salon (Indianapolis, Indiana) and the Oil Painters of America (Chicago, Illinois).

C. W.'s work is represented in numerous public,

corporate and private collections across the United States, and has been featured in a number of publications, including the April/May 2000 issue of *International Artist* magazine. He is a frequent guest lecturer and workshop instructor.

In addition to his personal gallery, C. W. Mundy Fine Art located in Indianapolis, Indiana, C. W. is represented by DeBruyne Fine Art, Naples, Florida; Gardner-Colby Gallery, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts; Meyer Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Whistle Pik, Fredericksburg, Texas.



Ramon Kelley is convinced making powerful art that stands out in a crowd is as simple as adopting five essential concepts. These essentials are so straightforward that any artist, working in any medium, can easily use them. This idea is such a breakthrough that Ramon has written an entire book on the subject.

What makes a powerful painting?



What makes this a powerful painting?

The Spanish Earring,
oil, 24 x 20" (61 x 51cm)

This painting contains very little pure or bright color. Instead, it draws its dramatic strength from a full range of values — the chiaroscuro effect. It's as if the changing values are sculpting the body from the background, making the spatial depth and light source very clear.



When people walk into a gallery or museum, there are a lot of great works of art they can choose to look at. But I'll be honest — I want them to look at mine! After all, it's my profession. It's how I make a living. However, I believe I'm also an entertainer and that means I want to create art that will grab my viewer's attention long enough to

let them explore it and have some kind of reaction to it, good or bad.

So I've asked myself many times, what makes someone stop and take a closer look at a painting? For me,

a great painting has presence so powerful that I can't walk away from it. That's what I strive for in my work — art that stands out in a crowd. My continuing goal is to make paintings that are dramatic and intriguing, a unique expression of me.

In my opinion, creating art that fascinates my viewers usually comes down to effectively using a handful of essential ingredients. It doesn't

What makes this a powerful painting?

The Church Cortez Built, oil, 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm)

If you squint your eyes, you'll see that this really only has three shapes — it's very simple. What makes it so powerful is the force of direction of that angled line across the foreground. The line sweeps you up into the darker upper right corner, where the arches then direct you over to the figures. This proves that a very simple composition can work, as long as it keeps the viewer's eye moving within it.





Detail



What makes this a powerful painting?

Brass Pot and Oranges, oil, 8½ x 11½" (21 x 29cm)

This painting exemplifies how texture can transform the most ordinary, humble objects into a beautiful painting. On a board primed with visible brushstrokes, I put down background chunks of color, then scraped them off to leave nice color tones. I also used palette knife work and brushwork to create the textures of the pot and drapery. The simplified oranges now provide resting spots for your eye. This combination of smooth, lean areas with fat, juicy passages makes the painting exciting.

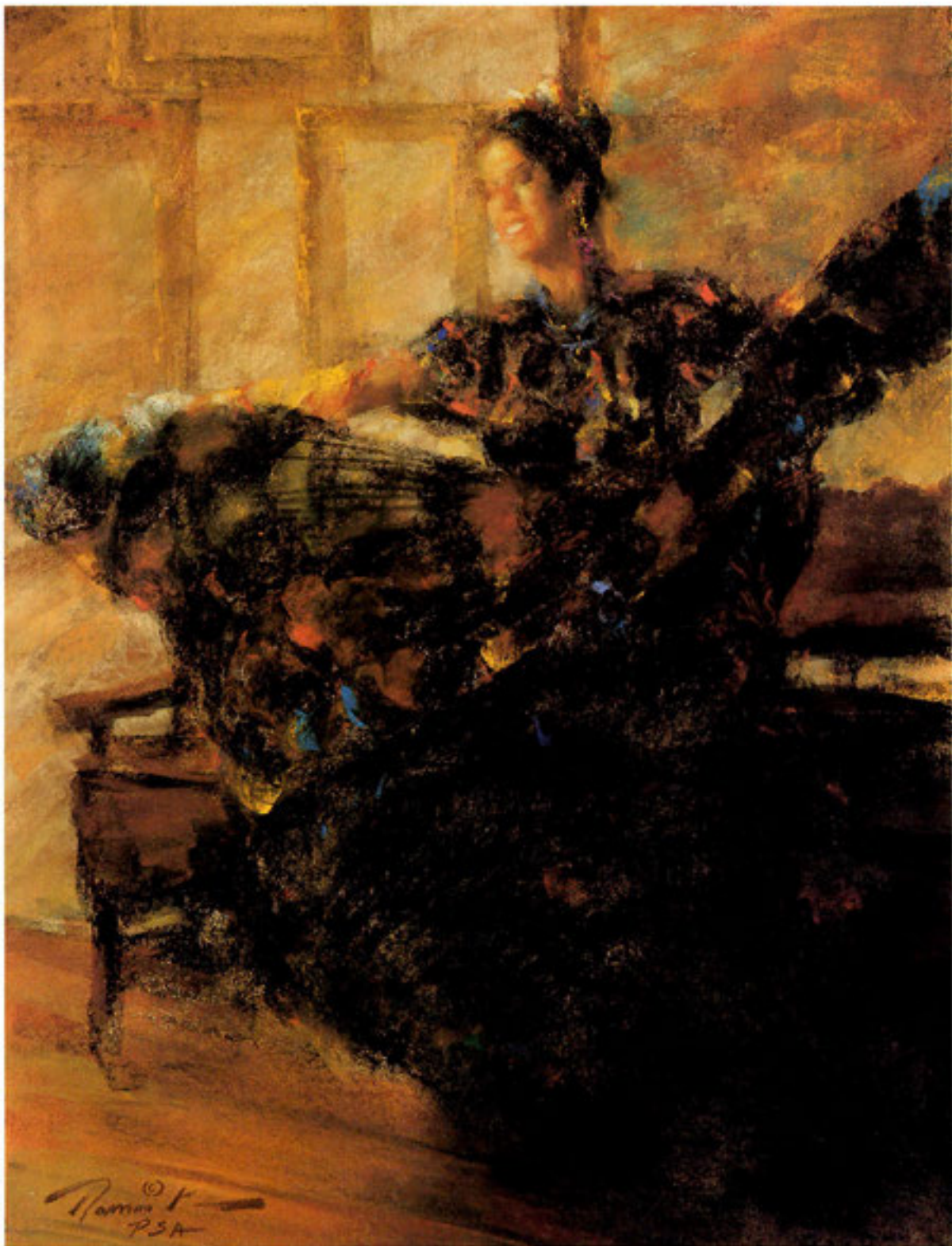
Why not push the envelope?

If you have been looking for a way to make your next painting a little unusual, a little more eye-catching, then consider these possibilities, or use them as a springboard to creative ideas of your own:

- ✓ Reduce your subject down to just three shapes, then find ways to make those shapes more interesting.
- ✓ Set up tension in the painting and see if you can restore a sense of balance to the composition.
- ✓ Use a full range of values from black to white to create drama in the painting.
- ✓ Use an extremely limited range of mostly high-key or low-key values to test your ability to suggest mood.
- ✓ Push color as far as you can, using the balance of neutrals and pure brights as well as the balance of color temperature, to maintain control.
- ✓ Explore many ways to create a whole range of textures with your medium and your surface.
- ✓ Position your focal point in an unusual place.
- ✓ Choose something unexpected as the focal point.

mean going beyond the norm, and it doesn't mean doing something new, shocking or revolutionary. Instead, all I have to do, and all you'll ever have to do, is apply a little creative thinking to one or more of a handful of essential ingredients to create paintings with presence.

The best thing about these essentials, in my opinion, is that there is an infinite variety of ways to use and interpret them. Of course, you need to master them first, which is what my new book is all about. But once you've accomplished that, you'll always be able to challenge yourself with new levels of sophistication in composing your subjects and using these fundamental concepts. Isn't that great? We'll never fall into the rut of sameness again! □



What makes this a powerful painting?

***Spanish Flair*, pastel, 24½ x 18½" (62 x 47cm)**

A face can be a powerful focal point, but I don't always want it to be the dominant element. Here, I wanted to put the focus on the beautiful rhythm of the skirt. This is why I softened the face and made it more vague, while making the skirt a huge, dark shape with plenty of bright accents.

What makes this a powerful painting?

Guitarron, oil, 12 x 16" (31 x 41cm)

Although this is meant to be a portrait of a guitarron player, in a mariachi band, I wanted the painting to have action and movement. I started by dividing the composition almost in half with the diagonal sweep of the guitarron's neck, and then I used passages of light-valued shapes and dark-valued shapes to repeatedly lead the viewer's eye back to his face.



What makes this a powerful painting?

Ramoncito and His Toys, oil, 16 x 12" (41 x 31cm)

I decided to fill the entire foreground with palette knife busy-ness, but then I positioned this little boy against a plain backdrop to create a much-needed area of calm. This also makes him the focal point. Some of the elements within the foreground are easy to recognize, but none have the power of the plainly recognizable boy.



Detail

What makes this a powerful painting?

***The Swan Dancer*, oil, 11 x 14" (28 x 36cm)**

Cutting through the very dark and fairly dark passages of this painting is a swath of light coming from the upper left and continuing on the lower right in the white fabric. In my estimation, you can't get more dramatic than this.



What makes this a powerful painting?

***Oranges and Brass*, oil, 12 x 16" (31 x 41cm)**

I was asked to be part of a show that paid homage to the Fauves, the early 20th century painters who used wild colors for their expressive qualities. I decided to see how wild and crazy I could get with color, and this was the result. What fun! This painting is loaded with every rich, beautiful color on my palette, but I used a limited range of dark values to hold it together. Only the brass pot — the main actor in this show — and the strategically placed oranges were allowed to go lighter.



What makes this a powerful painting?

Flower Market, oil, 16 x 20" (41 x 51 cm)

I recommend using a lot of grays in a painting, but I don't mean dull, lifeless grays. My favorite grays show visible signs of their original colors. Look at these flowerpots and cast shadows, for example. You can clearly see hints of blues, yellows and pinks throughout them — very exciting!

About the artist

Ramon Kelley grew up in Cheyenne, Wyoming and developed a strong interest in art. After serving in the US Navy, he won a scholarship to the Colorado Institute of Art, and by the early 60s had settled permanently in Denver. Needing to support his wife and young son, he worked as an illustrator and graphic designer, making portrait drawings in the evenings. Jane Hiatt, owner of the Village Gallery in Taos, New Mexico, suggested Ramon move into color and paint. His career in fine art was off and running.

His first watercolor was accepted into the American Watercolor Society's annual exhibition, where it won the Helen Gapen Oehler Award. At the same time, Ramon adopted pastel and became one of the first members of the Pastel Society of

America. He also took up oils and acrylics, and tried his hand at many other media, including sculpture.

His work has been exhibited in one-man and group shows from Tucson to Taiwan, and his memberships in the Allied Artists of America, the Pastel Society of America, the National Academy of Western Art, Knickerbocker Artists, Oil Painters of America and the American Watercolor Society reflect the high caliber of his paintings. In 1986, he was elected to the Pastel Hall of Fame by the Pastel Society of America. His sensitive character studies are included in the collections of the Seattle Frye Museum, the Santa Fe Museum of Fine Art, the Denver Public Library, the Spokane Museum of Native American

Cultures and the Academy at West Point, among numerous other public and private collections.

In addition to painting, Ramon is a world-class teacher. His work has been featured in 15 art magazines and in two books. Ramon's new book, *The 5 Essentials in Every Powerful Painting*, published by International Artist Publishing, is destined to become a world bestseller.

While Ramon has worked very hard to be a successful artist, his family remains his priority. His success has not dulled his passion for excellence, nor has it affected his personality. Ramon Kelley is still a very grounded, honest, humble person with a great sense of humor who continues to challenge himself in his profession.



What makes this a powerful painting?

***Mona in the Garden*, oil, 14 x 11" (36 x 28cm)**

Used creatively, texture can guide a viewer's eye around a painting just as much as shape, value or color. In this painting, I used the textured strokes of the foreground flowers to lead the eye toward the figure. Then I used softer, feathery strokes of grayed purples in a pattern across the left background to hold the attention there.

What makes a powerful painting?

We were so impressed by Ramon Kelley's work, and so interested in his approach of using a handful of essential ingredients, that we asked him to write a book on the subject. We are happy to announce that the book has exceeded our expectations, and puts painting the Ramon Kelley way within the reach of every artist willing to follow his advice.

In his exciting new book, Ramon Kelley considers some ideas you could apply to your next paintings that might make

them more special and more engaging for the viewer. He explains and demonstrates his brilliantly simplified approach to painting in any medium.

The 5 Essentials in Every Powerful Painting by Ramon Kelley is now available through *International Artist* magazine. Turn to page 142-143 for details on how you can get hold of a copy.