

## Painting 1: Understanding Painting Media

# Part one Using found images



Cathy Lomax, *Film Diary* (oil on oil-prepared paper)

Use the grid below to keep track of your progress throughout Part One.

Exercise	Page	Complete
1.1 Painting thin and small	38	
1.2 Black and white	39	
1.3 Quick and focused	41	
1.4 Look at what you see - not what you imagine	41	

## Introduction

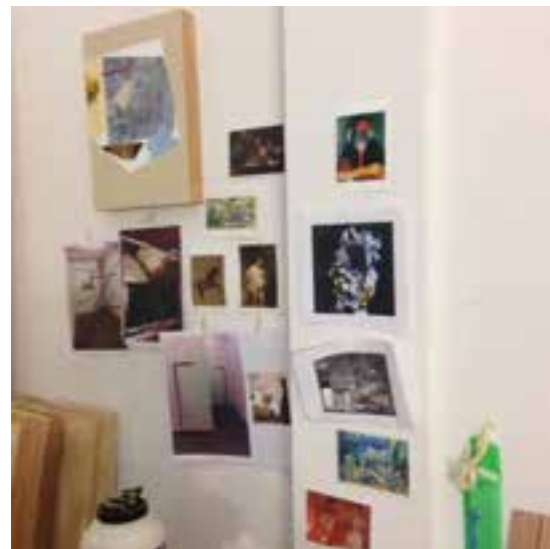
In Part One you'll work quickly and experiment with a variety of painting media using found images. The exercises are designed to give you confidence with materials and processes. Your selection and interpretation of images that appeal to you will give you a greater understanding of where your visual inspiration lies and what you want to communicate as an artist. This is the start of the development of your personal artist's voice.

Artists have been using found images such as photographs since photography's invention. Edgar Degas' cropped compositions owe a lot to his use of photographs as resource material. Walter Sickert used newspaper clippings of contemporary news events as well as photographs that he took of everyday activities; these included images of popular culture such as music halls, the exterior of shops and domestic interiors. Contemporary artists Luc Tuymans and Gerhard Richter use images they find online and in newspapers to create paintings that are a cultural survey of our time.

Most artists, contemporary and historical, collect images that inspire them and have them on their studio wall (just as we recommended you to do in the introduction to this course guide). Lucian Freud's painting of his studio sink shows a postcard of sumo wrestlers tucked behind the pipe.



Kirsty Buchanan's studio wall



Paula MacArthur's studio wall



## Research point

This list of contemporary and historical painters is in subsections of painting style. Have a look at these artists online, or even better, try and view their works in a gallery and record what you like and dislike about them and why. Try to research at least one artist from each section and pick at least two works that particularly appeal to you. Apply the questions you considered in the introduction to the work you choose. Make some visual responses to the work: make copies, re-create the colours used or make quick continuous line sketches in pencil or paint. Reflect on your own work in relation to theirs.

Slick, flat paint	Loose thin paint	Photo-realism
Gary Hume	Mimei Thompson	Chuck Close
Sarah Morris	Annie Kevans	Mark Fairington
Ian Davenport	Cathy Lomax	Robert Priseman
Inka Essenhigh	Eleanor Moreton	Tim Gardner
Jane Callister		
Brian Alfred		

Black and white	Colour and pattern	Messy
Raymond Pettibon	Peter Doig	Denis Castellas
José Toirac	Édouard Vuillard	Cecily Brown
Alli Sharma	Tal R	Carole Benzaken
Gia Edzgeradze	Daniel Richter	Elizabeth Peyton
		Chantal Joffe
		Jasper Joffe
		Harry Pye

Optional supplementary reading:

- *Gerhard Richter: Atlas* by Helmut Friedel (2007, London: Thames & Hudson) considers the impact of the found image on Richter's career and how the found image leads the development of his painting.
- *Walter Benjamin's The Archive*, by Walter Benjamin (2007, New York: Verso) reflects on the visual ephemera that surrounded Benjamin and the ways in which it informed his work.
- *The Artist and the Camera* by Dorothy Kosinski (1999, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press) considers the ways that artists have used photographs in their work.

## Preparation for working with found images

Choose a mixture of black-and-white and colour images. Although you're going to be making paintings in black and white, you'll find it useful to interpret your coloured images into black-and-white tones to give you an appreciation of their tonal values.

Gather as many images as you can. The only criteria for selection are that you like the image and that you'd like to paint it. These images could be: film stills, images of your pets, scenes from *Hello* magazine, images from the newspaper, the internet or museum websites, photographs, books, postcards, timetables, receipts and other everyday ephemera.



Good artists to look at for this project are: Luc Tuymans, Gerhard Richter, Annie Kevans, Eleanor Moreton, Alli Sharma, Cathy Lomax, Walter Sickert, Andy Warhol, Edgar Degas, Keith Tyson, Kurt Schwitters.

For example, Keith Tyson has made a beautiful copy of a page of the Yellow Pages; Kurt Schwitters has made a 'Merzbau' out of sorted collected material; Alli Sharma uses found images and often uses black-and-white oil paints or black ink diluted to different tones.

As you work through Part One, you'll discover that found material can take on a new 'personality' when collected, grouped and documented with paint. Think about the images that most appealed to you and maybe consider returning to these in future projects. Keep them in your learning log and reflect on their appeal.

As you complete each exercise, record it in your log. Note the materials you used, which you liked or disliked using and why. Which combination of media would you like to return to? What would you do differently if you did this project again and how would you like to develop it further? Would you change the materials? The scale? The subject? And how might that change the outcome?

## Exercise 1.1 Painting thin and small

Using your found images, make some small, quick painting experiments using thin paint on small surfaces.

Use HP (hot pressed) smooth watercolour paper of any weight. Remember, the thicker the stronger. You can use cartridge paper for this as they're only exercises but you'll find it rolls up because it's not thick enough to remain flat. Cut the paper into 20 rectangles of roughly A5 size (148x210 cm). These don't have to have perfectly straight edges.

Use watered down acrylic/gouache/poster/watercolour paint – at least one of each if you have them all – or just use the paints you have. These will be the backgrounds for your paintings and you will return to them when they are dry.

### Backgrounds/grounds

Paint splodges on three pieces of paper. Paint them however you like. It's surprisingly hard to make a non-descriptive shape but have a go.

Then make two of each of the following surfaces, covered entirely in:

- black paint
- white paint (don't just use the white of the paper)
- grey
- varnish (spray/paint – you might have to wait a while to use this one so prepare it in advance).
- very pale watercolour watered down (load the brush heavily)
- thin black ink
- very thin acrylic or gouache paint.

### Paint your image

When your backgrounds are dry, use the following materials in any order to make a painting of your found image. Try mixing materials creatively – for example, a matt acrylic or gouache paint onto a shiny background. Make 20 paintings.

- black paint
- white paint
- grey
- coloured paint
- very pale watercolour (water the paint down a lot but don't load the brush too much)
- thin black ink
- very thin acrylic or gouache paint
- varnish (i.e. used as a paint to depict your found image).



Roxy Walsh, *Second Sex* (layers of acrylic, gouache and watercolour paint)

### Exercise 1.2 Black and white

Make five postcard-size black backgrounds and five postcard-size white backgrounds, using poster/acrylic paint on cartridge paper, watercolour paper or cardboard.

When your backgrounds are completely dry, make paintings of one or more of your found images – one on a black surface and one on a white. Use the following materials, thinned only with water:

- black ink
- black acrylic paint
- white gouache
- white acrylic paint
- grey acrylic or gouache.

Don't forget to make brief notes in your learning log when you've completed this exercise.

Alex Gene Morrison makes black-on-black painting using different textures of black paint to create the image and occasionally using highlights of other colours.



Alex Gene Morrison, *Skull* (oil on canvas)



### Exercise 1.3 Quick and focused

Use A3 paper for this exercise; cartridge is fine but HP watercolour paper is even better. Select five of your found images. Now use your brush as you would a pencil. A long thin brush is useful for this. Get a plate or palette and have any combination of water-based paint and a large vessel of water at the ready.

Now, looking at the images and NOT the paper, paint what you see. Time yourself for one minute. Overlap the images as you go and work quickly.

Do this three times on three different pieces of paper. Make brief notes on the outcomes.

### Exercise 1.4 Look at what you see – not what you imagine

Using A4 or A3 paper, lay an image upside down and, using ink, watercolour, gouache or acrylic, make a 10-minute copy of your image.



Do this again with another image. This time make a 20-minute copy.

## Reviewing your work for Part One

For each assignment you'll be asked to assess your work against the criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide. Here are some ideas as to how you might do this.

- **Demonstration of visual skills:** Materials, techniques, observational skills, visual awareness, design and compositional skills.

Continuous line drawing is a fantastic way (as mentioned in the introduction) to develop your observational skills. Experimenting with composition will enable you to make informed decisions on a successful composition; document these experiments and decisions in your log. The painting-specific tips in the introduction to this course guide, and what you glean from your reading and research, will help you to consider the best way to use each painting medium. Trial and error will be the best way to develop these skills. Making a lot of quick work as well as more considered work will help you to develop all of your visual skills.

- **Quality of outcome:** Content, application of knowledge, presentation of work in a coherent manner, discernment, conceptualisation of thoughts, communication of ideas.

In effect this means: When looking at your work can the viewer grasp the essence of what you're trying to communicate? Are you interested in the sublime nature of the landscape around you? Are you interested in the unique identity of each person? How can you demonstrate this? Sometimes it is helpful to think about what interests you in your work and in your life and write this down as a list of words. For example, one list might be: trace of lives gone, the history of an object, lost stories. Your lists of words don't have to make sense yet; just note them down and return to them occasionally. Your thoughts may change and develop, so note these changes down too. Which materials would be best to demonstrate the ideas that concern you? Which techniques might work well? The artist Desmond Lawrence uses silverpoint drawing for its parallel to memory, for example, because it tarnishes and changes with age. How can you best present your work to communicate your ideas? In her 1994 show at the Freud Museum, Susan Hiller used archive boxes to present her work, an aesthetic that was in tune with a psychiatrist's office.

- **Demonstration of creativity:** Imagination, experimentation, invention, development of a personal voice.

This can often be demonstrated more clearly in learning logs and sketchbooks. Self-consciousness and self-editing sometimes curtail a creative, imaginative thought process or a series of experimentations. This is why your learning logs and sketchbooks are such an invaluable resource. Artists often return to an idea for work maybe a decade after they conceived it. Keep all your sketchbooks and logs and return to them. When you're collecting images, ideas and techniques that interest you, try not to be self-conscious or self-censor. Often a tutor can see the kernel of a fantastic idea in a quick sketch, a photograph or a magazine clipping stuck in your learning log. It is sometimes hard to know what your own work is about; by collecting and collating visual and theoretical records of things that inspire you, you and your tutor will gain a deeper insight into your unique creative voice.

Try not to worry about a 'final piece' or how a piece will look when it is finished; sometimes the initial idea or the experiments can become the work. The artist Wolfgang Tillmans at the British Art Show 7, for example, displayed an archive of drawings, internet printouts, magazine and newspaper clippings and this was the work.

- **Context:** Reflection, research, critical thinking (learning logs and essay).

Have you looked at a diverse range of artists from those suggested in the project brief? Have you digested these artists' work and is this evident in your work? If so, how? Write this down in your learning log. Could you have gone further? If so, how? How did looking at these artists' works help you identify what really motivates you as an artist and help you to develop your personal voice? Is there a way of working or a subject that intrigues you? If so, have you found an artist who works in this way or who looks at a similar subject? If not, have you asked your tutor? Could you borrow working methods from another area, for example archaeology as the artist Daniel Silver does, or anthropology as the artist Mark Dion does? How does the age you live in, your gender, where you're located geographically or socially, affect your work? For example if you live on a boat you'll probably find it easier to make small work, as the artist Nadia Hebson does. Her location affects how Hebson makes her work and relates to a feminist discourse on women and their entitlement to space. How you make your work and who you are may seem incidental or irrelevant, but these factors will inevitably influence your work, and consciously acknowledging this shows you have a critical understanding of your practice.

## Assignment one

### A series of paintings

This assignment is designed to help you integrate the techniques and observations you've made in the exercises.

In the work you produce now you must demonstrate:

- an understanding of different painting media
- an ability to choose the most appropriate painting media and ground for the image you're making
- evidence of visual editorial decision-making
- experimentation with media and materials
- consideration of the context in which you've made the work
- a growing understanding of what interests and motivates you as an artist.

Cut out 20 squares of HP watercolour paper (6x6" or 15x15cm each). Using the materials you enjoyed most during the exercises in Part One, make a painting of one found image on each piece of paper. Once you've made them, arrange them in a grid next to one another to form a large painting. Photograph the work. You can return to images you've already painted or paint new ones.

When you arrange your paintings you might want to photograph them in different sequences and consider the different effect this has. Placing a white sheet, piece of paper or wall behind the paintings will make them look more unified.

Reflect on your paintings in your learning log or blog. Which are the most successful and why? Which arrangement worked best and why? If you were to develop this work, how would you do it? Which artists have influenced you and how? Reflect on the ways you'd like to develop your work and the essence of what you hope to communicate.

Send to your tutor:

- a photograph of the final arrangement
- the 20 paintings and evidence of the found images you worked from
- your learning log, to include your chosen images from the research point
- a selection of work from the exercises as evidence of your development, particularly those that bear on your work for Assignment One.

Put your name, student number and the part/exercise number on the back of all your paintings and send them to your tutor together with relevant pages from your learning log or blog url. It may be more convenient to photograph some or all of the relevant material and email it to your tutor or send it on a USB, but discuss this with your tutor beforehand. Your tutor may take a while to get back to you so continue with the course while you're waiting.

As inspiration, look at the work of Charlotte Salomon and Roxy Walsh and also at the examples of series painting below.



Annie Kevans' painting of young dictators works well as a series.



Elizabeth Dismorr, *The Borderland I* (acrylic and gouache on paper)



Annabel Dover, *One a Day for a Year* series (oil on gesso)



Emi Avora's wall with black-and-white found images

## **Reflection**

Revisit the assessment criteria listed at the start of this course guide and, using the notes at the end of Part One to help you, carefully consider how well you've done against the criteria and make some notes in your learning log.

## **Reworking your assignment**

Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment, especially if you are ultimately submitting your work for formal assessment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you have done, and why, in your learning log.

