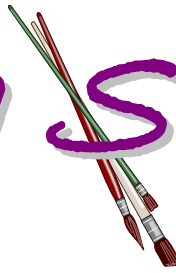




Brush Strokes



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Shadows Make the Painting

Think about this! But first, where is the light? This painting was entered into a show and brought about a “Signature Membership” into Watercolor West.

Yes, it was very difficult to paint, and I set it up in front of a cold, wintery window. However, without the shapes created by the shadows, the painting might not have drawn much attention. I recently found the drawings and colored pencil renderings I did of this painting before beginning to paint, even down to blowing masking fluid on the windows, coloring in the black with a black Sharpie and then removing the masking fluid. I found this was a big part of not only the shadow work but also the whites that were left.

You can also see how one branch of the cactus casts shadows on its neighbor and that is important to a painting. The window shapes casting shadows on the ledge holding the pot drew a lot of interest as well.



Without shadows cast by the many objects in this painting it might not have enjoyed more than a casual glance. The little dog and its shadow brought life into the painting, and the various sizes, shapes and colors of boatyards captivated many of the men who viewed it.

Next time you start a drawing think about what you can add to your composition with the shadows you cast. First think about the light and which direction it is coming from. Perhaps you

can actually make this happen by choosing the lighting yourself. Set up an interestingly shaped object in a room with little light and start moving a spotlight around the object to see what happens. (You can even use a lamp without a shade.) If the object is sitting on a white surface the black shadow it casts should be not only an integral part of the composition but one which draws the eye to the painting. Darks and lights are always the first attention grabber in a competition and then it's the subject itself.

Next time you are in a gallery stop and watch the viewers for a few minutes and see what they are drawn to. That way you can incorporate some of these observations into your painting to make it stand out from the rest of the competition.

Hopefully this can be a good lesson for many of you who are afraid to enter a juried show.

