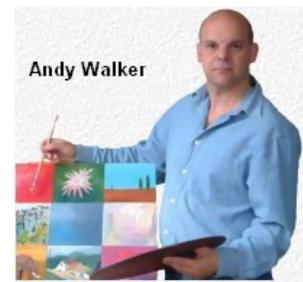


Hints and Tips *to improve your drawing and painting.*



Simplifying Scenes

When we paint or draw any subject, it doesn't matter if it's from a photograph, or a landscape outdoors, or a still life on the kitchen table, we are faced with an enormous amount of visual information. There is so much going on! Our eyes immediately fix on the details; the pattern on the vase, the tiles on the rooftop, the grass in the field, and we can be left feeling overwhelmed and not sure where to start. In fact, very often we don't start, but we move on in search of something simpler.

But what if we could make every subject simpler? Then, surely, we could have a go at painting anything. We would never need to be afraid of any subject, or say to ourselves, "I couldn't draw that".

The truth of the matter is that it is not the frightening mass of details that hold a picture together. They may be the icing on the cake, and add sparkle and interest, but that's all they do. Details are not really that important. Most details don't even need to be included, just suggested. You don't need to paint every blade of grass to make a field.

The key to making a good picture is the tonal structure. By that I mean the relationship between the light and dark areas. If we can learn to see the tonal value of things (how light or dark they are), we can then build a strong image.



Take a look at these pictures here. They are all quick sketches I made from photos on my computer. I didn't take long over each one, and they are all quite small, but what I wanted to do was to just capture the main shapes and tones of things. If you look carefully you will see that they have all been drawn with just four tonal values (black, white, a light grey and a darker grey). But there is enough information in each one for me to use them as a basis for a painting if I wanted to.

Try this exercise

Have a go at doing this yourself. It's good fun and you can quickly fill a sketch book with drawings that you can use in future paintings. Choose a photo, or draw from life, but restrict yourself to reducing everything to one of four tonal values (black, white, light grey or mid grey). You may have to alter a few values as you go along to make the picture work better. Keep the drawings small (no larger than 3" x 4") and don't take too long over them or you will start to fiddle and add unnecessary detail! If you do this often I can guarantee that your painting will improve

