The 10-Phase Roadmap to Incredible Artistic Growth

Where are you currently and what do you need to spend more time on?

Phase #1: Developing Basic Skills + 2D Sketching

- Understand basic drawing supplies
- Practice holding pencils for drawing, moving your entire arm and drawing on tilted surfaces with basic drills (lines and shapes)
- Start developing your observation skills and hand-eye coordination via recreating shapes and proportions freehand
- Learn to simplify subject matter as simple 2D shapes or combinations of simple shapes
- Practice with the **4-Quadrant Method** and the **envelope technique** to develop successful block-ins and outline sketches
- My **Drawing Mini-Course for the Total Beginner** will help you practice skills from both Phase 1 and Phase 2

Phase #2: 3D Form + Perspective

- Understand and practice **Linear Perspective** (1, 2 and 3 Point Perspectives), first using grids to draw basic forms and then with simple scenes such as simple cityscapes, interiors of rooms, etc.
- Learn to draw cubes, rectangular prisms, cylinders and spheres from different angles/perspectives (everything around you can be simplified into one of these forms or combinations of these forms- these would be *compound* objects)
- Once Linear Perspective has been covered, practice **Informal Perspective** with exercises such as this one or this one or this one
- Continue using the **4-Quadrant Method** and the **envelope/block-in method** to start your drawings, but now acknowledge what you're drawing as having mass and volume
- Make sure you are practicing your drawing using both **reference photos** and **direct observation**

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Phase #3: Light Behavior + Shading

- Learn about light behavior, and light and shadow areas to develop in drawings for believable depth
- Understand the relationship between **3D form, light and value**
- In greyscale (or with one single color), practice your shading by pinpointing lights, midtones and darks in reference photos or objects you have in front of you in real life, and making them happen in your drawings
- Understand the difference between *edges* and *outlines*, and notice gradual transitions between values vs. hard/sharp edges
- Develop your ability to create gradual transitions between values by varying pressure control and layering graphite
- Practice using different pencil grades for successful shading

Phase #4: Color Theory + Exploring Different Painting Mediums

- Learn **Color Theory (Color Wheel, Color Temperature, Color Schemes)**
- Choose your painting medium(s) and learn what makes this medium different from others as well as basic painting supplies
- Practice holding a paintbrush properly, water control, and basic techniques (ex. Watercolor- 3 basic washes and brush strokes)
- Start developing your ability to mix colors successfully by bringing in your understanding of color relationships
- Start painting simple objects like flowers or simple illustrations with little-to-no background
- Follow basic tutorials and use resources that are **beginner-level**

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Phase #5: Commit to 1-3 Drawing + Painting Medium(s) + Start With Fuller Pieces

- Start with paintings or fuller pieces that have multiple elements and backgrounds (but still have a level of simplicity to them)
- Still life arrangements or simple nature scenes are a great way to continue honing basic techniques while starting to bring in the knowledge you've gained on the fundamentals
- Continue following tutorials (beginner-to-intermediate level), **making sure that you're bringing in your understanding of perspective, form, light behavior and value**
- Ask for feedback
- Continue with your habit of sketching (even if it's quicker sketches of objects)

Phase #6: Composition + Analyzing Successful Artwork

- Learn about Composition and its importance in art creation
- Research past art movements and the evolution of art styles throughout history
- Analyze other artists' use of **Elements and Principles of Art** and start reflecting on what you're drawn to
- Use **Feldman's 4-Step Method of Critiquing** to analyze art from the past, as well as more contemporary pieces, to understand what makes visual compositions successful
- Take notes on what you want to take to your own work
- **Artist studies** could be a great type of practice to incorporate in this phase

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Phase #7: Start Creating Original Art

- Start using your own concepts, ideas, and reference photos to create art that is entirely your own
- Working with still life is helpful because you have greater control and it's an easy way to put your knowledge of composition to the test to create something harmonious, balanced and interesting
- You can still follow tutorials in this phase to continue improving your techniques with your medium(s) of choice
- Continue getting feedback on your work

Phase #8: Choose Your Subject Matter + Develop a Body of Work

- Choose a subject or two you want to commit to *at least short-term* (landscapes, portraits, abstract, still life, etc.) and create original art with this focus
- Get to know your own creative process + develop a project mentality (from prep phase, to production of final piece, to self-evaluation and how you set objectives for future pieces)
- Implement *Incubation Periods* where you limit your consumption of media and use inspiration you're taking from within yourself (intrinsic instead of extrinsic)
- Create more than you consume!
- Trust your own ideas and practice seeing full projects through
- Don't be afraid of failing at projects- some will!
- By the end of this phase, you'll have compiled a body of original pieces (made up of smaller sketches and explorations and more finalized paintings)

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Phase #9: Specialization

- Focus on mastering your specific medium(s) and delving deeper into your favorite subject-matter
- By this point, you'll have created many original pieces and will have developed your skills to intermediate-advanced
- Look for more advanced resources (courses, books, workshops) to help you improve in weak areas, or more specific skills that will help you take your work to the next level
- *For example:* Delve deeper into specific fundamentals that'll help you improve your work such as learning more about anatomy if you're into figure drawing, perspective if you're into urban sketching, how to add moving figures into scenes, etc.
- Start building up a solid library of more advanced resources and also reference photos taken by yourself.

Phase #10: Developing Your Art Style + Voice

- By this point, you'll have created a good amount of original pieces
- Bring in your understanding of Elements and Principles of Art, composition, and your creative process/use of tools, to find common threads in your work
- Self-evaluation, reflection and daily note-taking will help you get to know yourself and gain clarity on what kind of art you want to share with the world
- This is no longer a time to follow step-by-step tutorials but you can continue seeking advanced workshops that apply to your specific subject matter and goals, as well as mentorship from advanced artists
- Continue honing what you're loving about your work and changing/improving what you don't

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