# HOW TO FIND & DEVELOP YOUR ART STYLE

## *Pt.1- What is an art style and why is it important?*




*The Musician*, Tamara de Lempicka, 1929.

# INTRODUCTION



- Lots of beginner artists are eager to get to a point at which they're easily and consistently creating original art that is an extension of themselves.

- **Getting there takes time. It's a process that *cannot* be rushed and trying to force it or stressing over it, can actually make it take longer.**

- **Prioritizing our practice and artistic development is key. We need to create *a lot* of art and do the introspective work required to uncover who we are as artists. This is how we realize what makes us different from other artists and what it is we want to share with the world.**

- In many ways, your art style is already within you, but you need to pay close attention, gain clarity on where *you* stop and others' influence begins, and it does have to be honed.

- **A truth that's usually not shared: *You need to know yourself deeply and trust that you have a valuable and unique insight inside of you to share*.**

- **If you don't know yourself, you don't value your unique perspective, and you're not clear on what you want to communicate through your work, how can you ever expect to create original art?**

- Though there is no shortage of tips videos/blog posts on finding your art style, there is no *one* step-by-step process that works for all artists. This is because every artist's path is different and what might work for one may not work for another.

- However, there are essential truths and processes that can help you progress faster and this is what I'll be sharing in this series of classes with you.

*Mulholland Drive: The Road to the Studio*, David Hockney, 1980.



# WHAT IS AN ART STYLE AND WHY IS AN ART STYLE IMPORTANT?



- **Our work is an extension of who we are as artists and humans, living our unique experience. Our art is a glimpse into our inner world. Through sharing our work enough, people who are meant to connect with it, will.**

- **An art style is an artist's unique mishmash of techniques, processes and decisions.**

- **Everything from your choices in drawing/painting medium(s), subject matter, specific tools (pencils, paint, brushes, substrates), your unique handling of said tools (brushstrokes, mark-making), your use of Elements of Art (line, shape, form, space, value, color and texture), as well as overall mood/theme, are all components of an art style.**

# COMPONENTS OF AN ART STYLE

- **Subject matter (landscapes, urban scenes, still life, portraits, animals, etc.)**
- **Format (square, rectangle, circle, horizontal, vertical, etc.)**
- **Medium(s) (watercolor, charcoal, oils, acrylics, mixed-media, etc.)**
- **Tools (brushes, palette knives, fountain pen, rough watercolor paper, etc.)**
- **Use of Elements and Principles of Art (Which elements dominate? How are they being used? What principles are easily distinguishable?)**
- **Theme/Mood/Story**
- **Unconscious tool handling which leads to particular marks or brush strokes**

- **Some of these things are chosen consciously out of taste or practicality, while others happen unconsciously, as you work. In other words, there are things you control and things you don't.**
- Start analyzing both your creative process and your finished pieces to find common threads, especially when you're creating original art that is based on your own concepts and strategies.

# ART STYLE VS. ARTISTIC VOICE

- These two terms are oftentimes used interchangeably, but mean different things.

- **An artist's "voice" encompasses your art style, but its *more* than that. It's more than how you choose to visually represent your world and the "product" you create.**

- **Your voice is the underlying message behind your art and everything else you produce alongside it (media, exhibits, etc.), as well as your personality, unique quirks and values.**

- **How/where you present your art, the words you use when you're talking about your work, your personal style, your philosophies and perspectives, your story and identity as a whole, is all part of your voice.**



*Still Life: Fruit*, Roy De Maistre,1954.

- **Your voice provides an overall experience for people coming into contact with your creations. This is what ultimately differentiates what you create, from others' work that may be similar in style. *It's you!* The artist *behind* the art, that your ideal audience will connect with.**

- Your art style can change and evolve as you develop new techniques or experiment with different mediums, but usually, your voice remains a constant over the years.

## *Why is it important for artists to have an art style and a voice?*

- **Finding and honing your voice is essential for any artist who wants to create work that others deeply resonate with. If you create for everyone, then you're creating for no one in particular, and your message will be diluted. By tapping into our unique perspective and creating from this place, we have the power to connect with others on a deeper level.**

- Aside from this, an art style helps ensure that an artist's work is consistent in terms of quality, style, and subject matter. This can be important for building trust with clients and audiences.

- Your voice is, ultimately, the legacy you'll leave behind as an artist. It's the sum of everything you did in your journey.

# WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT: STYLE OR SKILL?

- **Don’t get so caught up in the quest for technical perfection that you forget about developing uniqueness in your work and making it your own.**

- Skill is often mistakenly linked with style. Even though they are related, they are different.

- **Confidence grows through developing our technical skills, and a certain level of confidence is needed to be comfortable making your own decisions and allowing your style to shine through.**

- **However, having a style is also not an excuse for lacking skill or understanding. It should not limit you It’s something we should always strive to achieve.**

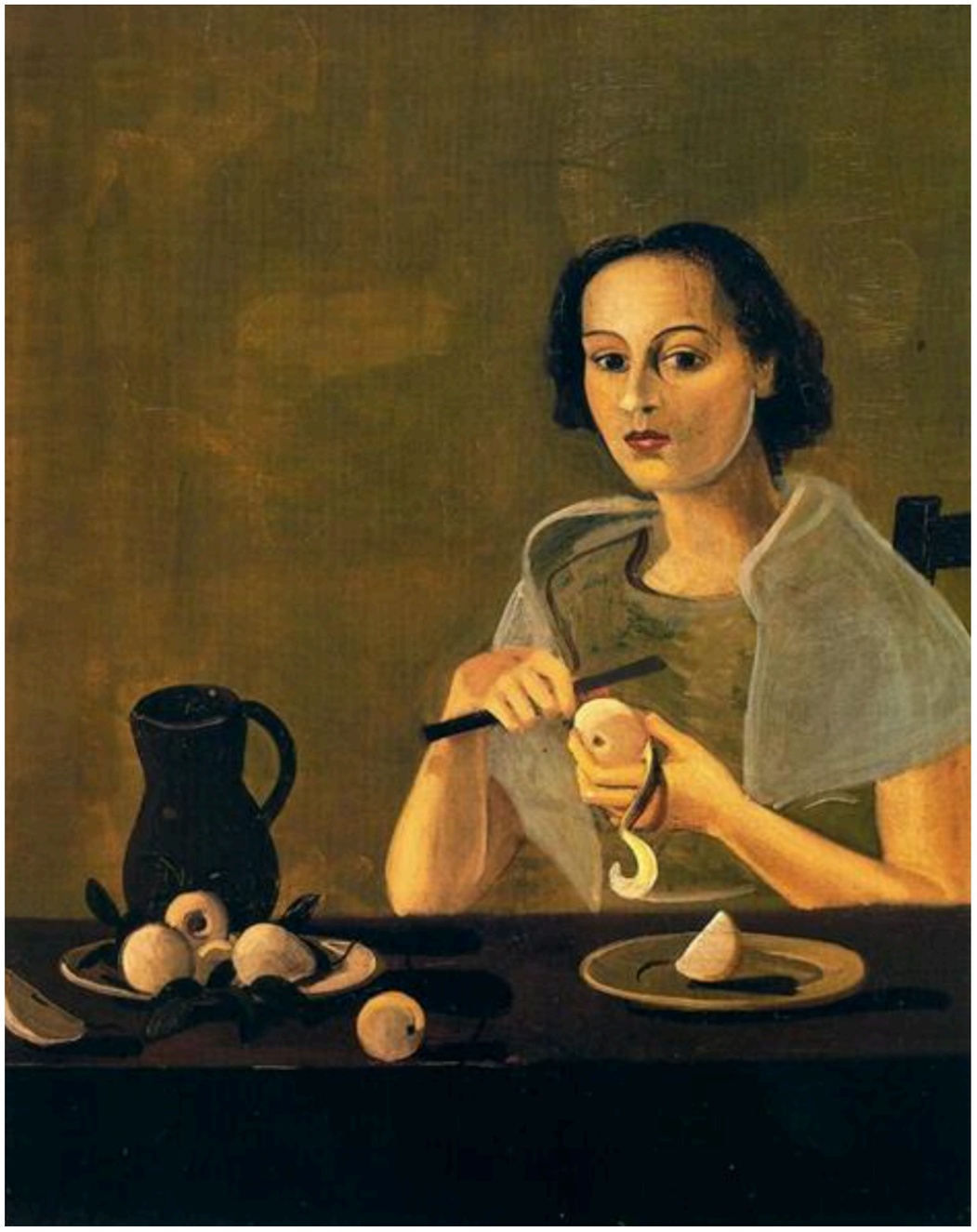
- Developing technical skills is important, but it shouldn’t overshadow discovering and nurturing one’s innermost perspective.



*Portrait of the Artist’s Wife*, Egon Schiele, 1917.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITTING TO PARAMETERS

- **Lots of beginners stay scattered, making little progress in a variety of areas as opposed to committing to a few. They go wide instead of going deep.**
- It *is* important to explore different mediums and subjects when you're starting out, but staying there for too long can hinder you.
- **Once you find a medium and subject that calls to you, commit to them and work within parameters for a certain period of time.**
- Practice establishing parameters using the components of an art style mentioned in slide 5.
- It'll help you develop skill, fluency, and will help you hone your process.
- **If too much brain power is going into learning to use a medium, you won't be able to also think about how to bring more of yourself into your work.**



*Girl Cutting Apple*, Andre Derain, 1938.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

- **A lot of people have no problem growing their mastery over their medium and developing good *technique*, but when it comes to creating original art, they struggle. They continue depending on others to provide a composition and taking them step-by-step through the art-making process. If you don't start trusting in yourself, using your own concepts and references, and bringing in your understanding of the fundamentals to build up work from scratch, you won't ever find your style or your voice.**

- **Follow your interests and *commit*. Develop a certain skill level with your medium and, as soon as possible, create work that is your own. You can continue improving techniques, composition, etc. as you go.**

- **As you focus on improving your craft, continue expanding your knowledge on the fundamentals, and analyzing successful artwork, your tastes will become more refined. This will help you gain clarity on what you want your art to look like.**

- **At times throughout all our journeys, we might get a bit lost and will benefit from others' input. Sometimes we need to ask others what is unique about us and our work to gain clarity again.**

- **Once you develop your art style, it won't always stay the same. Expect it to evolve as you continue growing and experiencing life.**

# LET'S COMPARE & CONTRAST ART STYLES!



*Young Mother Sewing*, Mary Cassatt, 1900.



*Mother and Child*, Alice Neel, 1982.

# ART ASSIGNMENT

**Find three artworks that show very different styles. Take notes about each on the following:**

- **Type of subject**
- **Format**
- **Medium**
- **Tools**
- **Use of Elements and Principles of Art**
- **Mark-making or brushstrokes**
- **Theme/Mood/Story**

- **Are there any similarities among these pieces? How about differences? What do you like most about each?**