HOW TO FIND & DEVELOP YOUR ART STYLE

Pt.2- How to Find Your Art Style



Portrait of a Young Woman, Paul Gauguin, 1896.

INTRODUCTION

- **The process of finding and developing your art style *does not* have to be an obscure, mysterious thing. You actually have more control over your development than you may initially think, as long as you know what to do, in the right order, and you're willing to put in the work that's required.**

- **In this class, I will be providing a plan of action that, if implemented, will help you develop your own signature style than you can then hone.**

3 Powerful quotes:

"What a good artist understands is that nothing comes from nowhere. All creative work builds on what came before. Nothing is completely original."
-Austin Kleon, Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative

"You are, in fact, a mashup of what you choose to let into your life. You are the sum of your influences. The German writer Goethe said, "We are shaped and fashioned by what we love."
-Austin Kleon, Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative

"Those who do not want to imitate anything, produce nothing."
-Salvador Dalí

A WORD OF CAUTION



- **As I explained in the first class in this series, trying to find/develop your art style *before* giving yourself enough time to build basic skills, as well as explore to your heart's content, is putting the cart in front of the horse and will likely end up backfiring.**

- **In the beginning, it's important to experience different mediums, subjects and styles to see what *you* find most fun and what you feel is most *yourself.***

- **Experience different things *before* narrowing down your focus and spend some time developing skills with those (few) mediums you're *most* excited about.**

- Once you've developed basic skills, it'll be much easier for you to do the following work, which will require higher level thinking.

6 PHASE ROADMAP TO FIND YOUR ART STYLE

- **The first thing you'll want to do is to establish a time frame for yourself. How many months will you be working through these phases and how many weeks will you be spending in each phase? **Some phases will take longer than others.***
- **Be practical and set realistic expectations based on what you have going on in life and how much time you have available for high-focus, dedicated practice.**
- Different people will be moving at different paces and will make it through the 6 phases at different times. One person may spend longer in a phase than someone else. It all depends and no timing is right or wrong.
- What matters is that you make this a priority and work through the plan, taking action each week.
- 6 months is a good amount of time to set for anyone who has a minimum of 6 hours to work on their art each week.
- **Check out my masterclass on Goal-Setting and Time Management for Artists** if you'd like to learn how I establish long-term goals and break them down into short-term goals, then into weekly doable tasks.



Each phase entails *strategic*, thoughtful action which will bring with it *a lot* of self-discovery. Phase 3 and 4 will take much longer than the others.

PHASE #1: COLLECT YOUR INFLUENCES

- **Create a Pinterest board or a folder on your computer and start collecting drawings or paintings that you're deeply drawn to.**

- Research artists, art movements and art from the past instead of only using Instagram and social media. **Online resources like* Google Arts and Culture *and* WikiArt *are great!*

- Alongside whatever you're doing for your current art practice, take at least a week to fill up your board (or folder) with artwork that you love.

- Be deliberate when you're choosing work to add to your folder. Observe pieces carefully and make sure it's work that you *really* resonate with. Delve deeper into artists you've just found, if you wish to!



Still Life with the Dome of St. Peter's, Gino Severini,1943.

- **Start analyzing the work you've chosen and take notes. *What common threads can you find among them? How about differences? What do you think you've connected to so deeply?***

PHASE #2: NARROW IT DOWN

- **Once you have collected a good amount of artwork (at least 20 pieces) it's time for a deeper analysis.**

- **Choose 3 artists from your board/folder who's work interests you most.**

- **Create *a second* board/folder where you're *only* including work from these three artists. Fill it up with, at least, 5 pieces from each. *15 total.**

- **Analyze each artists work using the list of components below. Take notes on how these pieces are similar and how they are different. What is it *exactly* that you like so much about these artists work?**

  - Subject matter (landscapes, urban scenes, still life, portraits, animals, etc.)
  - Medium(s) (watercolor, charcoal, oils, acrylics, mixed-media, etc.)
  - Use of Elements and Principles of Art (Which elements dominate? How are they being used? What principles are easily distinguishable?)
  - Theme/Mood/Story
  - Distinguishable marks or brush strokes
  - Level of realism or abstraction

PHASE #3: COMBINE YOUR INFLUENCES

- **Now that you know *exactly* what you're drawn to and love about these 3 artists' work, it's time to combine these elements or characteristics to create something of your own! These are going to work as "parameters" that you'll be working within. *Setting constraints video link.**
- If you'd like to work on individual artist studies before combining them, I talk more about this type of practice here.
- Say, for example, you like one artist's use of a limited color palette, another artists subject matter (still life), and another's loose/expressive painting style. Combine these characteristics to create an original piece based on your own reference photo.
- **This is a time to experiment and explore. Don't expect to create successful art right away. *It'll take time!* You're going to want to explore different combinations of characteristics until you arrive at a look you enjoy.**



Dragonfly- Daughter's Portrait,
Ilya Repin, 1884.

- **Don't be afraid to bring in mediums or tools that none of these artists used, and to bring in techniques or methodologies that you enjoy.**

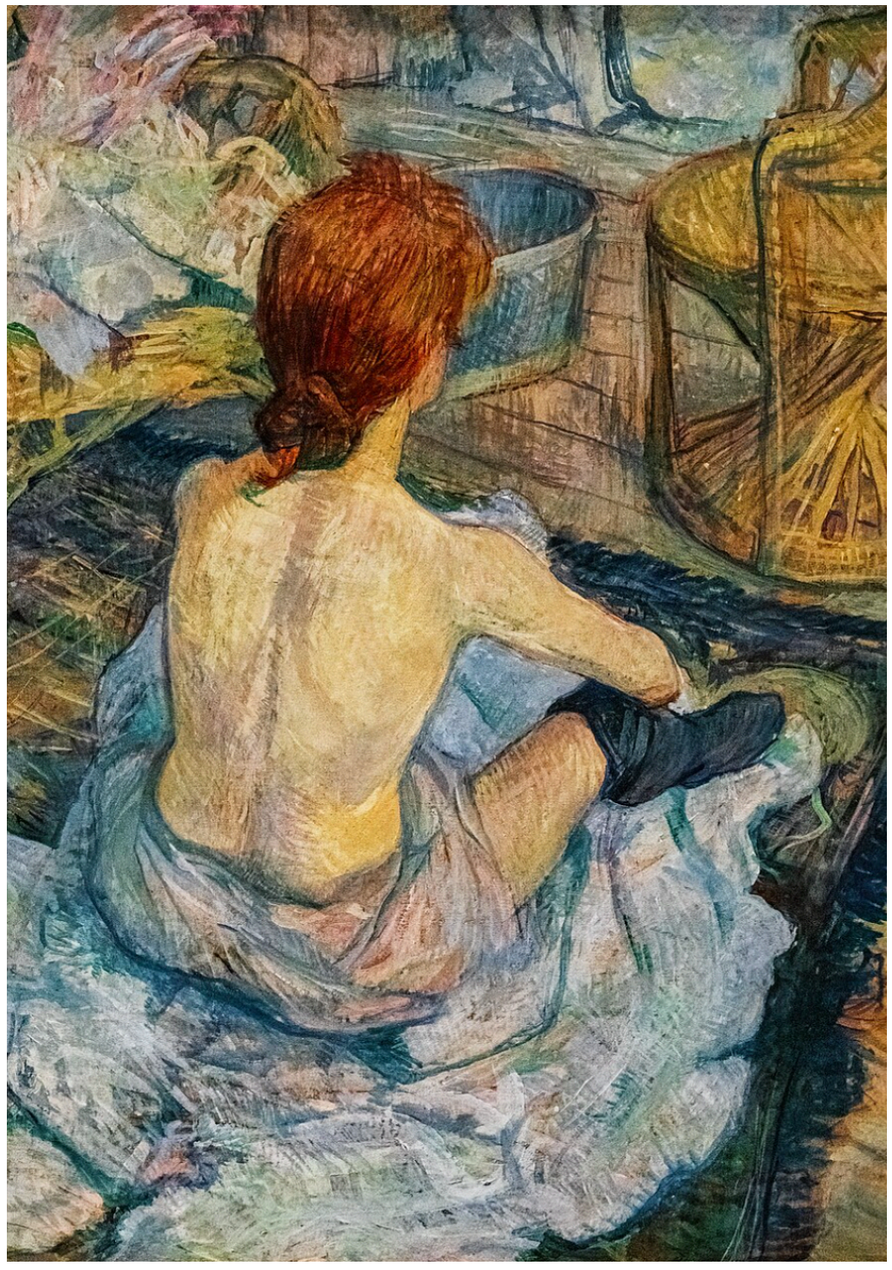
PHASE #4: CREATE A BODY OF WORK



The Kiss, Gustav Klimt, 1908.

- **Commit to creating a series of drawings or paintings that will be an amalgamation of these three artists. These pieces can be small or large (I would do both).**
- **This is a time to prioritize creation over consumption. If you continue taking in a lot of art, it can distract you from everything you've already discovered and it can subconsciously start influencing you.**
- Limit the amount of consumption you do and keep these 3 artists work around you every day.
- As you work on more and more pieces, and things start becoming comfortable, remember that finding your art style and personal process has a lot to do with finding a process (and a final "look") you enjoy.

PHASE #5: SELF-EVALUATION



La Toilette, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1889.

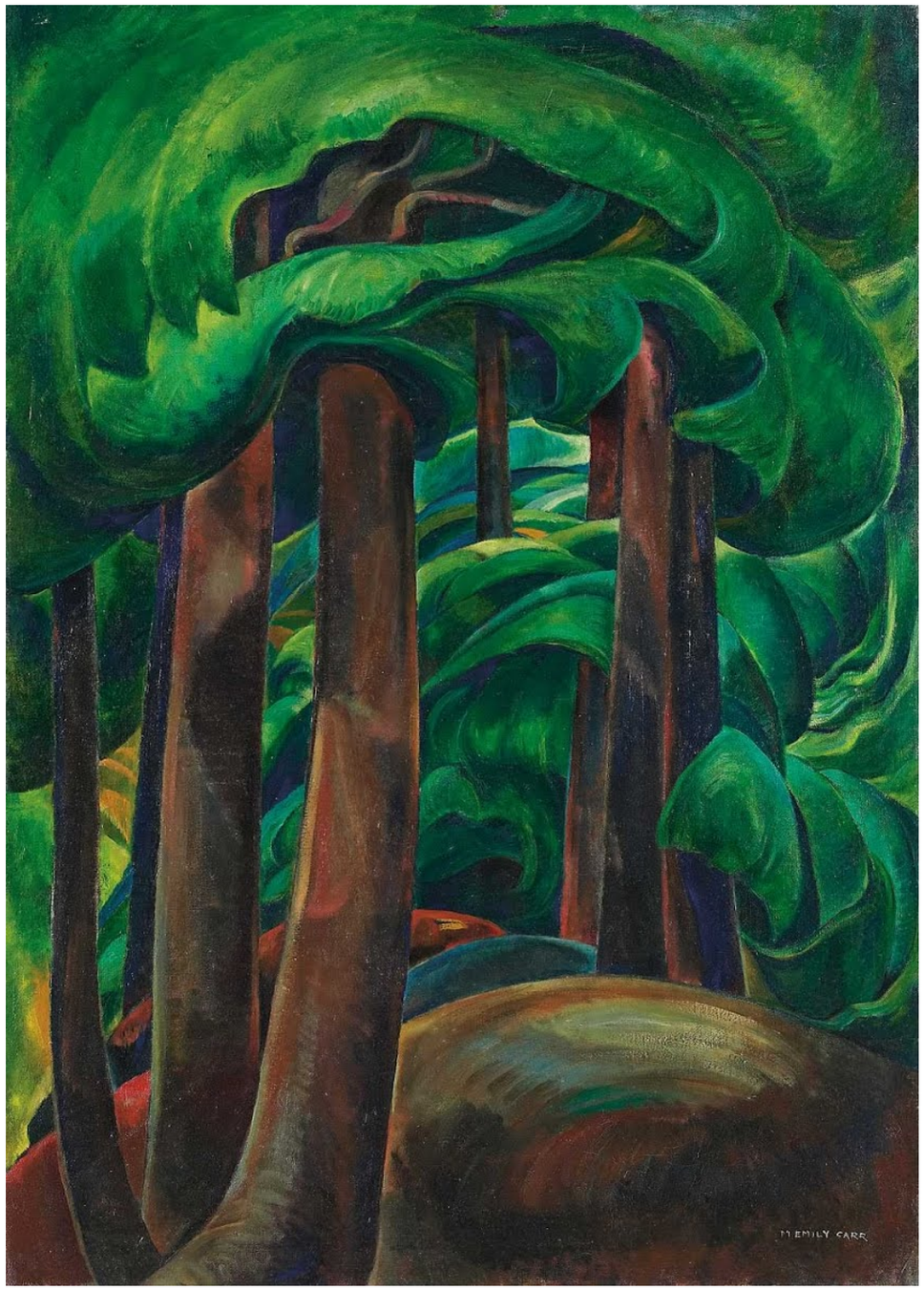
- **Once you've created a body of work (*at least* 10-15 pieces), set aside time for self-evaluation. *Link to self-evaluation live class recording.**
- **Place your drawings/paintings in front of you and answer the following:**
  - **Which pieces did you like most? *Why?* Which pieces did you like least? *Why?***
  - **What pieces did you enjoy creating most? What did you do differently that was so enjoyable?**
  - **What strategies did you find lead to best results?**

Notice both your strengths and your weaknesses. What strengths do you want to keep honing, and what weaknesses do you want to work on? Are there any imperfections that you want to keep?

Consider asking for feedback.

PHASE #6: RINSE AND REPEAT

- **When you reach this phase, you'll have learned *a lot* about yourself, the work you want to be creating, and you'll have developed your skills further.**
- **After doing your self-evaluation (from phase #5), decide if you'll be changing anything in your set of parameters that you decided in phase #3.**
- **Ex. You can decide to change your subject matter, and keep the color palette and the overall style.**
- You can also change one of the 3 artists if you wish to. If you do, make sure to follow the steps you did for the others in the beginning phases (collect enough pieces from the new artist and take time to analyze their work before moving forward and combining them).
- Create another body of work, self-evaluate, consider asking for feedback, and continue with the cycle!



Western Forrest, Emily Carr,1931.

ART ASSIGNMENT

- **Be honest about where you're currently at in your art journey and if you'll need to spend more time building up basic skills with your medium(s). If you're still at this point, give yourself a timeframe. How long will you be building up those basic skills for? *Refer to my 10 Phase Roadmap for Incredible Artistic Growth. *By phase 6, you'll have developed a great foundation and you can start working on this project if you wish to.***
- **If you're ready to start developing your art style, establish a timeframe (I'd recommend 6 months or more), and plan how many months you'll be spending in each phase. Phases 1 and 2 could be done in just a couple of weeks, while phases 3 and 4 will likely require months of dedicated work.**
- **Once you've established your plan, set it in your calendar and start with Phase 1!**