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Composing a still life



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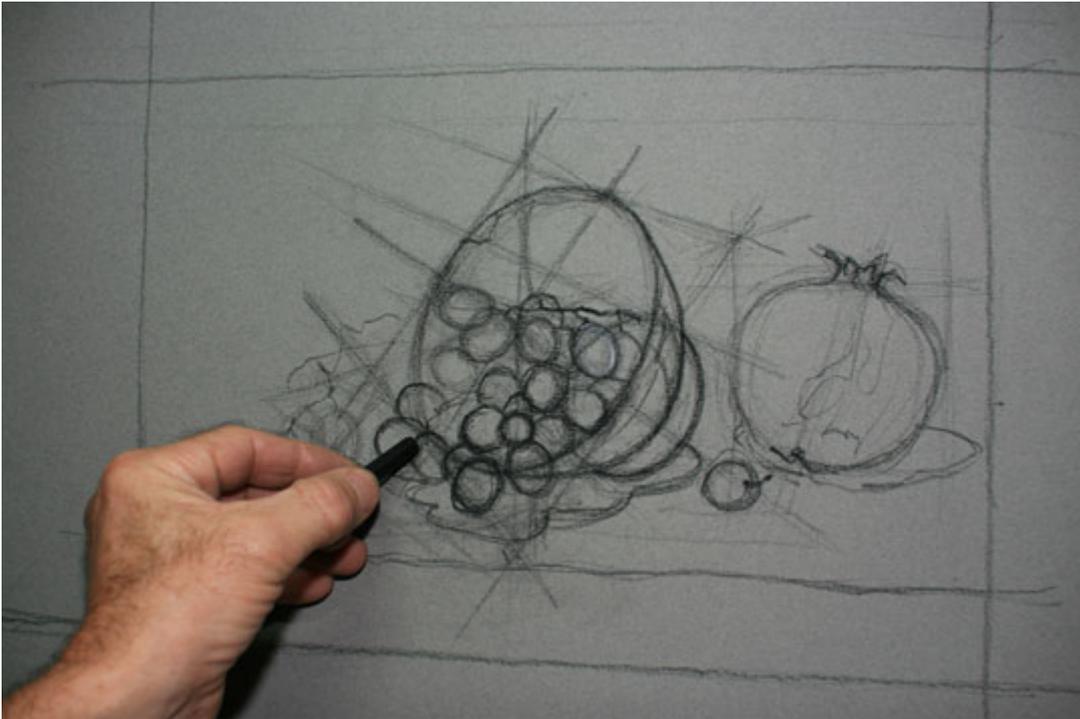
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A basket of fruit or vegetables, an armful of freshly gathered flowers or a pair of eyeglasses left near an open book: a still life is a freeze frame. Here are a few pointers to breathe some life into it!



1. Selecting your elements

- Any everyday object will be at home in a still life: a bowl of fruit, a vase of flowers? as well as a pair of well-worn boots, some toys, a stack of ironed linens, etc.
- Together, these various objects should tell a story, such as about an interrupted meal: a half empty plate, a glass of wine, a partly eaten loaf of bread?
- You can also bring together sundry items that have something in common: vertical shapes, identical color or material (metal, glass?).



2. Composing your scene

Always go for a realistic setting. Set your objects on a surface where they belong: a wooden floor for toys, a tile floor for shoes, a tablecloth for baskets, an armchair for a hat, etc.

- Place the subjects close enough together to create a link between them.
- Rank your objects: by size (biggest ones to the back) and importance to your narrative. In a scene about a meal, a salt shaker, even a very elaborate one, remains a minor detail.
- Place them on various planes to reinforce the depth of the image. Some objects can partially conceal others.
- Suggest a visual progression: use the folds or oblique motifs of a tablecloth to guide the observer's eye to the main point of interest. Add pointers: an accidentally fallen piece of fruit leads to the fruit bowl, etc.

Some advice: take your time! Make several attempts and wait until you are thoroughly satisfied before starting to draw.

Getting it right: Using the right lighting

Whether your use of alternating shadow and light is muted or dramatizes the composition outright, it will allow you to create subjects with realistic volume. The intensity of your light source and the angle from which it strikes your various subjects are essential. Choose them carefully.

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