

## Creating Strong Compositions

*Taking a look and experimenting with what makes a strong composition.*

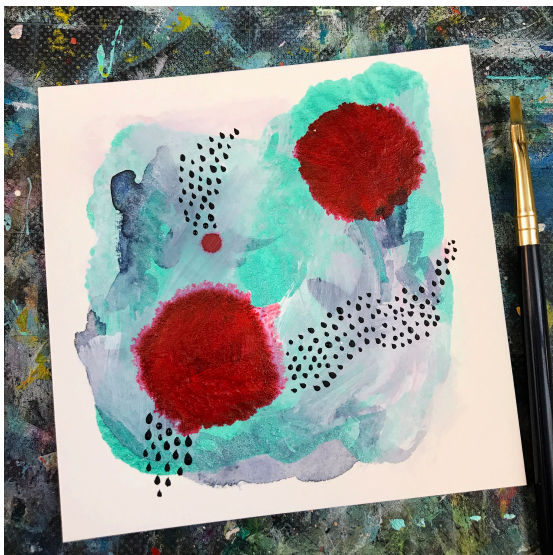
I find it is much easier to understand a concept if it can be broken down into its base definition or concept. Composition is one of the fundamental parts of creating art that may seem elusive and hard to define, we are all creating compositions whenever we put brush, pen or pencil to paper so what makes one composition better than another? Lets look at a few of the fundamental concepts of art and explore what makes a strong composition together.

### Definition of Composition

Composition is the arrangement and classification of the picture elements which together form your imagery. The composition is the framework or starting point for your paintings process. The evolution of a composition ranges from direct and intense spontaneity through construction and consideration.

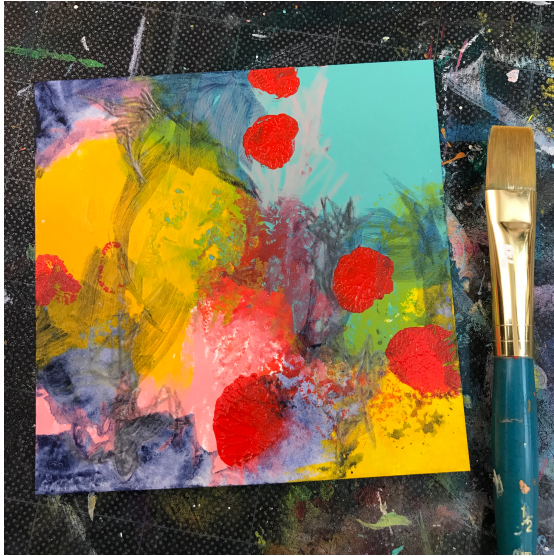
### A Successful Composition:

Has a clear tension and equilibrium based in a specific opposition and contrast. There is excitement in that something is happening and there is a specific action. Factors such as direction, dynamics and emphasis all have a part to play. It is useful in your work to pay special attention to:



#### - **Focal Point**

The red circles in the image are definitely a focal point its hard to not look at them, even when you look away your eye is drawn back.



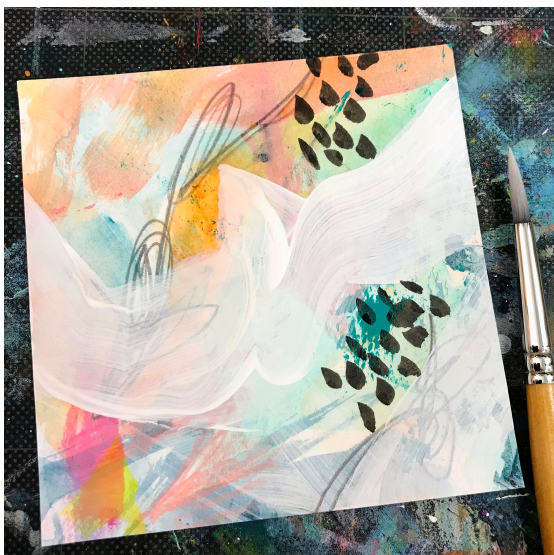
- **Active and Passive**

There is a lot of activity all over this example however the upper right hand corner is just a serene field of blue. This blue area is the passive portion in this composition and the rest of the page is active. This area creates contrast and interest.



- **Surface Division**

Large color fields split this composition in half and define the left and right parts of this composition pretty strongly. Color is also helping to create surface division in this example because blue and orange are complementary colors, this also creates contrast and interest.



- **Foreground and Background**

In this example the transparent white paint over the top of the piece creates a strong compositional element but since it is also transparent it creates a sense that it is in the foreground while the soft colors and graphite lines are in the background. The black ink pattern is also in the foreground and the contrast of the black and white together create contrast and interest.

## Composition and Elements of Art Exercise:

### Supplies:

Sketchbook or loose paper (I used 140lb watercolor paper)

Acrylic paint in colors of your choice

Pencil

Acrylic Ink or india Ink

Using 3 pages in your sketchbook or loose pages create a compositional “study” (*a study is like a sketch, you use these to plan or refine your work*) explore the compositional concepts described above with the art elements of line, color and shape described below.



### - Line

Use line as an element in your first study. Line can take on many forms, scribbles, pattern, thin, fat, wavy etc. explore what type of lines you like and what type of medium you like to use to create them. The line in the example below is graphite.



### - Color

Color is an important compositional element subtle blues can give a sense of calm or serenity where red can create excitement. Using complementary colors also create contrast and tension in your composition like the orange and blue used in the example below.



### - Shape

Simple shapes can draw a viewer into your piece, our brain likes order and when it can recognize a shape, mark or pattern it is drawn to it.

Think about a time when you have looked at an abstract piece and seen a shape like a fish, bird, etc. in it that is your brain at work trying to recognize and make sense of what it is seeing. You can use this to your

advantage when creating your composition and incorporate shapes and

patterns that help push the viewer to see certain aspects of your work in a certain order. In the example below you see that big red circle and then the black patterns next. Both of these shapes are so dominate you almost don't even see that the background is blue.





As with all things working with the concepts of creating strong compositions takes practice. Make a personal goal of creating so many compositions in a day, week, month or year! I made 100 recently and I learned something from each one of them!