Virgil Carter
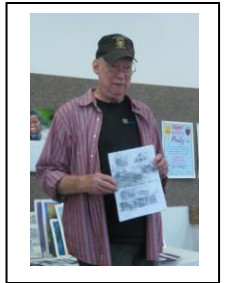## Loose and Colorful Landscapes Workshop
GWG / April 18, 2017

The Virgil Carter workshop included a lecture, a demo, a painting time and a friendly "show & tell" critique that wrapped up the day. He shared a wealth of knowledge in a short period of time while illustrating the concepts with a collection of his paintings.

During the lecture he urged us to consider our expression of what we wanted to say and how we wanted to say it as artists. He told us not to worry about local color when painting a loose and colorful landscape. He shared three secrets:

1. Forget realistic objects and search for simple, visually interesting **shapes**.

2. Use a variety of soft, hard and lost **edges** to create eye movement through the painting.
   a. **Hard** edges always attract and hold the eye.
   b. **Soft** edges cause the eye to pause, but it doesn't linger
   c. **Lost** edges keep the eyes moving.

3. **Color** should change every two inches on the painting.

Landscapes and cityscapes are challenging because they have a lot of information. Landscapes are in constant motion with moving subjects as opposed to a Still Life which remains motionless. A camera captures everything and simply replicates all that is there. There is a need to simplify and interpret what is shown in a photograph. We have the ability to "recompose" a scene just as a poet or essayist has the freedom to choose their own words. Artists have a secret weapon. It is a **sketchbook**. Thumbnails can be used to explore ways to tell the story. Figure out what story is going to be told before ever picking up a paint brush. A sketchbook allows you to compare composition and design options.
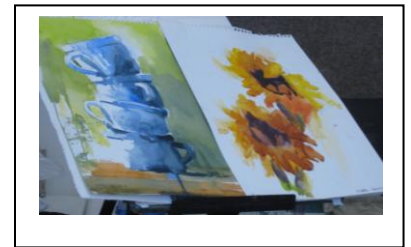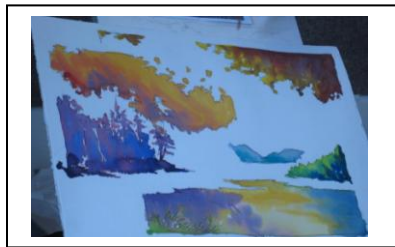

Virgil discussed some Foundational Principals to create a sense of space and depth so that the painting does not appear flat. These were developed during the Renaissance Period.

1. Use three **planes**: foreground, middle ground and background.
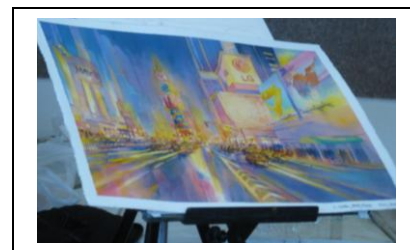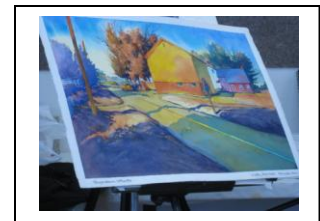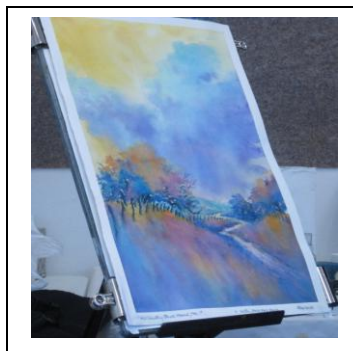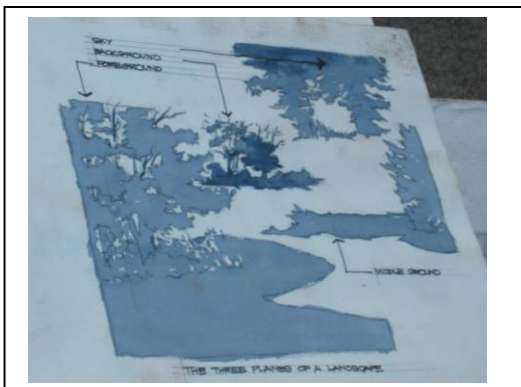
2. Use of **aerial perspective** that is produced by moisture in the air
   a. **Warm** colors advance in the foreground.
   b. **Cool** colors and less definition recede in the background.
   c. Middle ground is a mix between the warm & cool and definition of detail.
3. Use of the **rule of thirds** for composition will help work out proportions and points of interest. There are horizontal and vertical planes and four points of area of interests.
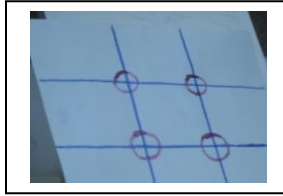
4. **Contrast** will draw a viewer's eye to a point of interest in the painting. Below are examples of contrast using different techniques.
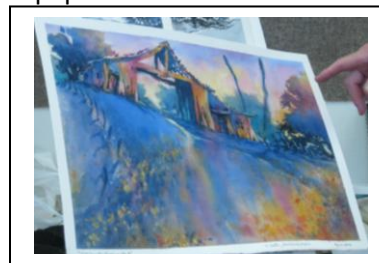   a. **Shapes** and **edges**.
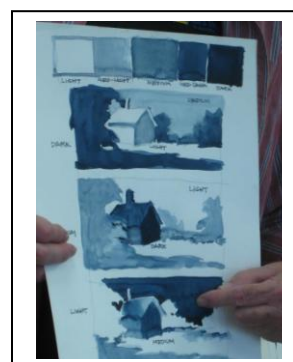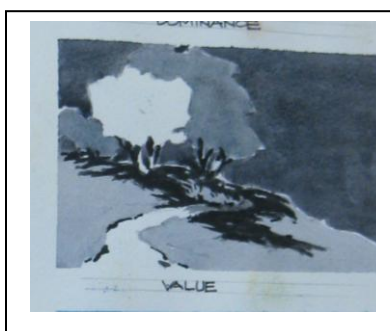

   b. **Dominance**- more than 51%, but try for 60-70%

   c. **Asymmetrical imbalance** for placement on paper.

   d. **Values** of dark, medium and light can be explored in the three planes of a landscape. Exceptions to muted atmospheric backgrounds occur when the "star" is in the background. The color red is an eye magnet. Figures and animals become focal points.

e. **Intensity** occurs with the use of highly saturated, intense color surrounded by neutralized colors or when complements are side by side. A color can be neutralized by adding a complementary color.

INTENSITY

f. **Hue** is when saturated color is everywhere juxtaposed to complements.

HUE

g. **Temperature** is when warms and cools are juxtaposed.

TEMPERATURE

h. **Light, shade and shadows** used as design tools will bring the eye into a painting. Morning light is cool and yellowy. Midday light is neutral with local color appearing as it is. Evening light is an orangey pinky color.


LIGHT, SHADE & SHADOWS

Demo: Virgil did a demo of painting a loose and colorful landscape. The story of his demo was of his love of the rolling hills, trees and texture of the Texas Hill Country. He used the "portrait" orientation for his painting. He finds that orientation to be really expressive. He purposely leaves portions of the painting undefined in order for the viewer to personalize it with their own experiences. He chooses either the top line or bottom line of the "rule of thirds" for his horizon line. He first wet the entire paper with a large 3" brush. He then painted wet into wet to get soft edges. He loves the accidental nature of watercolor, so he worked at an angle so that gravity could create effects and the paint could run. He paints from light to dark and from large to small. He used a paint/water ratio of 50/50 as he began the

first stage of painting the sky. He created a variegated sky using a cool Lemon Yellow, a warmer New Gamboge, Yellow Green and Indian Yellow.

The horizon line was very much lighter than what was directly overhead. For the background he used Turquoise (which is lighter and recedes), Manganese, and Yellow green as you get closer. He lets the colors mix on the paper letting variations occur rather than making homogenous mixtures on the palette. He blocked in the trees to see the shape, but not in the final color or value. He had a light source in mind. He used Orange, Permanent Rose, Perylene Maroon, Magenta and Ultramarine Blue. He rounded the color wheel using analogous color harmony with up to 5 colors. There is a saying in watercolor about being willing to accept what the paint and water gives you.
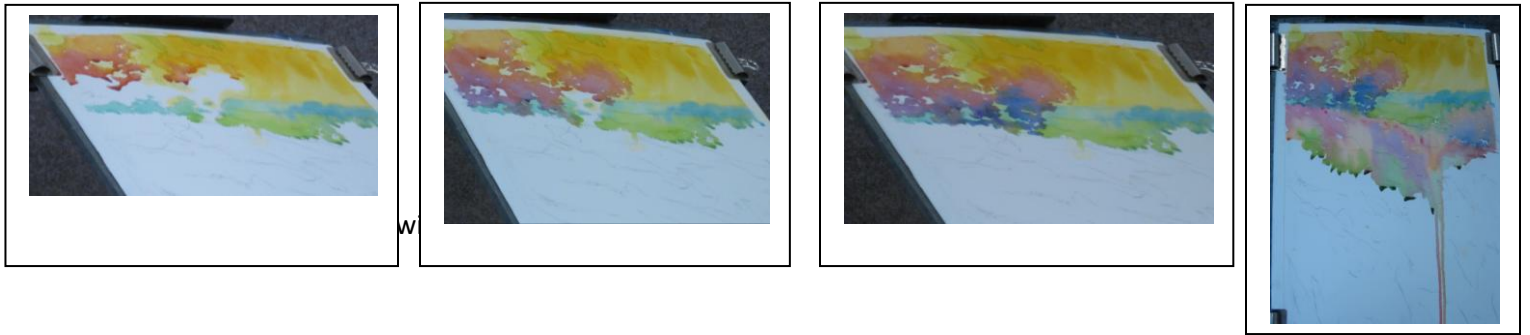
For the plane with the ground he used fluid shapes as abstractions of the hillsides using reds. He misted the dry paper to get runs.

At the conclusion of the workshop we had a fun, positive and painless **critique**. He pointed out positive aspects that were working in each painting.