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The Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary Of Painters

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An Explanation of the Technical Terms, ...

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***EXPLANATION of the TECHNICAL TERMS,
Used either by ARTISTS or AUTHORS, on the Subject of
PAINTING.**

AERIAL PERSPECTIVE, is a degradation of the tones of colours, which throws off the distances of grounds and objects; and which the judicious artists practice, by diffusing a kind of thin vapour over them, which deceives the eye agreeably. It shews the diminution of the colours of objects, in proportion as they recede from the eye, by the interposition of the air between the eye and the object, as if the object was seen through a column of air.

ANTIQUE. By this term is implied and understood, such paintings and sculptures, as were made at that period of time, when those arts were in their greatest perfection, among the antient Greeks and Romans; from the age of Alexander the Great, to the irruption of the Goths into Italy under Alaric in 400. The term *Antique*, is more particularly applied to the sculptures of the period before mentioned; such as statues, basso-relievo's, medals, intaglio's, or engraved stones. However, all those remains of antiquity, are not equally excellent, or good; but even in those that are indifferent, there is a certain degree of beauty, which distinguishes them from the works of the moderns. But, it is the most perfect of the works of the antient great masters, which are to be the objects of our taste and imitation, as they continue still to be the objects of our wonder and astonishment.

ATTITUDE in painting, is the posture or disposition of the limbs and members of a figure, by which we discover the action in which it is engaged, and the very sentiment supposed to be in the mind of the person represented. It comprehends all the motions of the body, and requires a perfect knowledge of ponderation, and whatever refers to the centre of gravity; but whatsoever attitude be given to any figure, that attitude must shew the beautiful parts, as much as the subject will permit, let the subject be what it will. It must, besides, have such a turn, as, without departing from probability, or from the character of the figure, may diffuse a beauty over the action. It is allowed, that the choice of fine attitudes, constitutes the greatest part of the beauties of grouping.

* The authors whose works have been particularly used in this Explanation, are Baptista Alberti, Montefquieu, Felibien, De Piles, Richardson, Houbraken, and Chambers.



BENTVOGEL SOCIETY. The Flemish Painters who resided at Rome, formed themselves into a society, into which they received all those of their own nation, who, after their arrival at Rome, desired to be admitted as members. The introduction was appointed to be at a tavern in the city, at the expence of the person introduced; and after some whimsical and droll ceremonies, a name was given to the new brother, which expressed either the perfections, or the defects, in the form or countenance of the person; any remarkable peculiarity in the style of his colouring, or composition; or any thing very singular in his character, conduct, or manner of living. That ceremony was continued for one intire night; and the next morning, they walked in procession to a place some distance from Rome, called the Tomb of Bacchus, where the whole ceremony concluded. By this society Peter van Laer was named Bamboccio, from the form of his body; Philip Roos, Rosa da Tivoli; Herman Swanefeld, the Hermit of Italy; Francis van Bloemen, Horizonti; Peter van Lint, Studio; and so, of many others. This society has been dissolved intirely, for some years past; though it is reported, that Raphael himself gave the first hint of it.

CASTING of DRAPERIES. By this term is implied, the distribution of the folds; and draperies are said to be well cast, when the folds are distributed in such a manner, as to appear rather the result of mere chance, than of art, study, or labour. In that manner or style of painting, which is called the Grand, the folds of the draperies should be great, and as few as possible; because their rich simplicity is more susceptible of great lights. But, it is an error, to design draperies that are too heavy and cumbersome; for, they ought to be suitable to the figures, with a combination of ease and grandeur. Order, contrast, and variety of stuffs and folds, constitute the elegance of draperies; and diversity of colours in those stuffs, contributes extremely to the harmony of the whole, in historical compositions.

CHARGE, or CHARGED, is a term used by artists, to signify any thing that exceeds; such as exaggerating the outlines, in order to shew a superior degree of skill, and by that means exceeding the bounds of a regular simplicity. Yet, (De Piles observes) there are charged outlines that please; because, they are above the lowliness of ordinary nature, and carry with them an air of freedom, with an idea of a great taste, which deceives most painters, who call such excesses the grand manner. And although, to such persons who have a true idea of correctness, simplicity, and elegance of nature, these excesses may seem superfluous, as they only adulterate the truth; yet, one cannot forbear to commend some things that are overcharged, in great works, when the distance from whence they are to be viewed, softens them to the eye; or when they are used with such discretion, as makes the character of truth more apparent. It is worthy of being remarked, that in the antique statues, which are allowed to be the rule of beauty, nothing appears charged, nothing affected; nor is there any thing of that kind, in the works of those who have always imitated them; as Raphael, Domenichino, Nicolo Poussin, and some others.

CHIARO-



CHIARO-SCURO, is the art of advantageously distributing the lights and shadows, which ought to appear in a picture; as well, for the repose, and satisfaction of the eye, as for the effect of the whole together. As to the meaning of the word Chiaro, (translated clear or transparent,) it implies not only any thing exposed to a direct light, but also, all such colours as are in their nature luminous. Scuro, (translated dark or darkness) not only implies all the shadows directly caused by the privation of light, but likewise all the colours which are naturally brown; such as, even when they are exposed to the light, maintain an obscurity, and are capable of grouping with the shades of other objects. Of which kind, for instance, are deep velvets, brown stuffs, polished armour, and the like; which preserve their natural or apparent obscurity in any light whatever. By the Chiaro-Scuro, objects receive more relief, truth, and roundness; and it particularly signifies, the great lights, and great shades, which are collected with such industry and judgment, as conceals the artifice. The distribution of the objects forms the masses of the Chiaro-Scuro, when, by an artful management, they are so disposed, that all their lights are together on one side, and their darkness on the other.

CONTOUR, or **OUTLINE**, is that which terminates and defines a figure; and a great part of the skill of a painter, consists in managing the contours judiciously.

CONTRAST, is an opposition or difference in the position of two or more figures, contrived to make a variety in painting. Thus, in a group of three figures, when one appears in front, another shews his back, and a third is placed sideways, there is said to be a contrast. A well-conducted contrast, is one of the greatest beauties of a painting. It is not only to be observed in the position of the several figures, but also in that of the several members of the same figure. If nature requires the painters, and sculptors, to proportion the parts of their figures; it requires also, that they contrast their limbs, and their different attitudes. One foot placed like another, or one member extended or depressed like another, excites our disgust; because, that symmetry deprives us of the pleasures arising from variety, and makes the attitudes appear too frequently the same. As we may observe in Gothic figures, which, by want of that judicious contrast, always resemble each other.

CORRECTNESS, is a term which implies a design, that is without a defect in its measures, and proportions.

COSTUME, is an Italian word, which signifies custom or usage; and the term implies, that a painter, in representing some historical passage, action, or event, must not only be exact in describing the particular fact, but he must also represent the scene of action; the country where the action has passed; whether it was at Rome, or Athens; whether at a river, or on the sea-shore; in a palace, or a field; in a fruitful or desert country; observing to distinguish, by the dresses, customs, and manners peculiar

peculiar to each people, whether they are of one country or the other ; whether Greeks, Romans, Jews; or Barbarians.

DESIGN, implies the representation of one or more human figures or animals; or some parts or members of either ; or a scene taken from nature ; a plant, fruit, flower, insect, or piece of drapery, all taken from the life ; in order to be inserted in some part of a picture ; and in this sense it is called a study. It is also taken for the outline of objects ; for the measures and proportions of exterior forms. Design consists of several parts ; of which the principal are, correctness, good taste, elegance, character, variety, and perspective.

DISTEMPER, is a preparation of colours, without oil, only mixed with size, whites of eggs, or any such proper, glutinous, or unctuous substance ; with which kind of colour, all the antient pictures, before the year 1410, were painted, as also are the celebrated cartons of Raphael.

DRYNESS, is a term, by which artists express the common defect of the early painters in oil, who had but little knowledge of the flowing contours, which so elegantly shew the delicate forms of the limbs, and the insertion of the muscles ; the flesh in their colouring appearing hard and stiff, instead of expressing softness and pliancy. The draperies of those early painters, and particularly of the Germans, concealed the limbs of the figures, without truth, or elegance of choice ; and even in their best masters, the draperies very frequently either demeaned, or encumbered the figures.

ELEGANCE in a design, is a manner which embellishes and heightens objects, either as to their form, or colour, or both, without destroying, or perverting truth. It appears most eminently in the antiques, and next, in those painters who have imitated them best ; the principal of which is Raphael. De Piles observes, that elegance is not always founded on correctness, as may be evident from the works of Raphael, and Correggio ; in the latter of whom, notwithstanding his incorrectness of design, his elegance in the taste of it, and in the turn which he has given to his actions, must needs be admired ; for, he rarely departs from elegance.

EXPRESSION principally consists, in representing the human body, and all its parts, in the action suitable to it ; in exhibiting in the face the several passions proper to the figures, and marking the motions they impress on the other external parts. Frequently, the term Expression, is confounded with that of Passion ; but the former implies, a representation of an object agreeably to its nature and character ; and the use or office it is intended to have in the work and passion, in painting, denotes a motion of the body, accompanied with certain airs of the face, which mark an agitation of soul. So that every passion is an expression ; but, not every expression a passion.

FRESCO, is a kind of painting performed on fresh plaister, or on a wall covered with mortar not quite dry, and with water colours. The plaister

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is only to be laid on, as the painting proceeds; no more being to be done at once, than the painter can dispatch in a day. The colours being prepared with water, and applied over plaister quite fresh, become incorporated with the plaister, and retain their beauty for a great length of time.

GRACE, principally consists, in the turn that a painter gives to his objects, to render them agreeable, even those that are inanimate. It is more seldom found in the face, than in the manner; for our manner is produced every moment, and can create surprize. In a word, a woman can be beautiful but one way, yet she can be graceful a thousand. Grace is neither found in constrained, nor in affected manners, but in a certain freedom and ease between the two extremes.

GROTESQUE. This term, which is now familiar among all the lovers of the art of painting, was by the Italians appropriated to that peculiar manner of composition and invention, observed among the antique monumental paintings, which were discovered in the subterraneous chambers, that had been decorated in the times of the antient Romans. And as the Italians apply the word *Grotta*, to express every kind of cave or grot; all paintings which were in imitation of the antique designs, discovered in those subterraneous chambers which for ages had been covered with ruins, are now called *grottesca*, or *grotesque*; implying a style, in which the imagination, and the wildness of inventive fancy are principally exerted, without any strict adherence to nature, truth, or probability.

GROUPE, is the combination or joining of objects in a picture, for the satisfaction of the eye, and also for its repose. And although a picture may consist of different groupes; yet, those groupes of objects, managed by the Chiaro-Scurò, should all tend to unity, and one only ought to predominate. That subordination of groupes, creates that union and harmony, which is called the *Tout Ensemble*, or, the whole together. By a predominant groupe the eye is agreeably fixed; and by means of the repeses caused by a spread of lights and shades, neither the effect of the other groupes, nor the effect of the subordinate objects are hindered.

LOCAL COLOURS are such as faithfully imitate those of a particular object, or such as are natural and proper for each particular object in a picture. And colour is distinguished by the term Local; because the place it fills, requires that particular colour, in order to give a greater character of truth to the several colours around it.

LINEAR PERSPECTIVE, is that which describes, or represents, the position, magnitude, form, &c. of the several lines or contours of objects; and expresses their diminution, in proportion to their distance from the eye.

MANNER, is that habitude which painters have acquired, not only in the management of the pencil, but also in the principal parts of painting,
invention,

invention, design, and colouring. It is by the manner in painting, that a picture is judged to be by the hand of Titian, Tintoret, Guido, the Caracci, and others. Some masters have had a variety in their manners, at different periods of life; and others have so constantly adhered to one manner, that those who have seen even a few of them, will immediately know them, and judge of them without any risque of a mistake. The variety observable among artists, in their manner and taste, arises from the manners of the different schools, in which they have received their instruction; or of the artists under whom they have studied; for, young painters, feeling a partiality in their own choice and judgement, to those masters which they have imitated, it prevails with them to prefer, what they have long accustomed themselves to admire. Yet there are many instances, among the great artists, of painters who have divested themselves, of that early partiality to a particular manner, and have altered it so effectually, as to fix on one abundantly more refined, and better adapted to their particular genius; by which means they have arrived at excellence. Thus, for instance, Raphael proceeded, and acquired a much more elevated manner, after he had quitted the school of Perugino.

ORDONNANCE, is the placing regularly the figures, in respect of the whole composition; or the particular disposition of figures as to the different groupes, masses, contrasts, decorum and situation.

OUTLINE, is that which traces the circumferences of objects in a picture. The outline is to be drawn as thin and fine as possible, so as scarcely to be discerned by the eye; and it ought to be observed, that a correct outline may excite pleasure, even without any colouring, but no colouring can afford equal satisfaction to a judicious eye, if the outline be incorrect; for, no composition, no colouring can merit praise, where the outline is defective.

PASSION, in painting, implies an emotion of the body, attended with certain expressive lines in the face, denoting an agitation of soul.

PASTICI, is a term, by which the Italians distinguish those pictures, which cannot be called either originals or copies; being the works of some artists, who have had the skill to imitate the manner of design, and colouring, of other eminent masters, sometimes borrowing parts of their pictures; sometimes imitating their touch, their style of invention, their colouring, and their expression. Several painters, of considerable reputation for their own original performances, have made themselves remarkable in this way. But none of them more than David Teniers; who hath so successfully counterfeited Giacomo Bassan, as to deceive the most judicious, in many instances, at the first sight; though, upon a closer inspection, his light and easy pencil, and a predominant grey tint, which is observable in the colouring of that master, will shew a perceptible difference, between his pencil and colouring, when they are carefully examined, and compared

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with Bassan's. For, although Teniers understood the union of colours extremely well; yet, Bassan was superior to him, in the sweetness and vigour of his tints. De Piles recommends it to all persons, who would not wish to be deceived by the Pastici, to examine their taste of design, their colouring, and the character of their pencils, with the original masters from whom they were taken. Teniers, Luca, Giordano, and Bon Boullongne, are those who have appeared with the greatest reputation, for imitating other great masters; and beside these, many other artists have employed themselves in painting the Pastici.

SITE, in landscape, signifies the view, prospect, or opening of a country, derived from the Italian word Sito, situation; and it is in use among the artists in painting, as being more expressive.

