

### UNTYING THE KNOTS

Dear Eric

**Eric, what makes an effective composition? There are so many "rules" out there, that I am all tied up in knots before I even start painting!** *Karen from Hawaii*

Karen,

Good question, and it can seem somewhat overwhelming -enough to make one not want to paint- to try and figure out which compositional theory should be followed, and which ignored. I can empathize with anyone new in this business of painting who is trying to make sense of it all.

I have found all compositional theories may be violated. Yet there are still three objectives I try to meet, and I find that if I am able to so, I probably have a good painting:

First I try to catch the eye at a distance. This boils down to a simplified value pattern consisting of large interesting shapes. For a shape to be interesting, it is best if it is interlocking like a puzzle piece, rather than geometric like a square or circle.

Second, the viewer's eye needs to be able to travel around the picture plane We want the viewer to have the full experience of the image and not be stuck in one spot, called a "bulls eye".

Finally, we then need to draw the viewer's attention to an Area of Dominance and hold it there as long as possible. We want them to get the full impact of our visual statement.

I think, in time, we can sense if our paintings are meeting these three objectives A superb way is to look at the painting in a mirror; the reversed image fools the mind so that patterns are realized before the subject's identity is. This is only momentarily, but it is long enough for the subconscious to make a judgment.

For more on this, I would recommend DVD #6: Creating an Area of Dominance of my "Painting Loosely from Photographs" DVD series.

Keep your brush wet!

Eric

