

## DEAR ERIC COLUMN - APRIL

Dear Eric,

I have your landscape video which I really enjoy. Here is my question: is there a specific method to learn how to create the differing values? *Victoria*



Victoria,

I think what you are really asking is how to become sensitive, as an artist, to the varying value shifts that happen in a landscape. As you seem to imply, there is more to it than just simply looking at photo references, and you are entirely correct. Photo references tend to run the lighter values together-such as the ground and sky- so that they are indistinguishable, creating a lack of depth; or the darks become so black that they lack a sense of reflected light. Both are to be avoided.

The best option is to go on location and squint- this gets rid of extraneous information- at the subject before you, then you will, with time, be able to see how the values line up in relationship with each other. This last point is very important: in relationship with each other. I try to determine what is my lightest light, my darkest dark, and then compose all my values between those two goal posts. I may group some shapes that are close in value into one value to keep the composition simple, and thus strong. Eight value shifts are ample; however, it is a good exercise to limit the value range to three or four. It will require a lot of simplification, but your composition will benefit and you will be on your way to understanding the discipline of design.

Even if you are unable to paint on location, simple observation and a few notes can be very helpful to determine the value relationships.

Keep your brush wet!

Eric



*AWS Gold Medal of Honor Award*