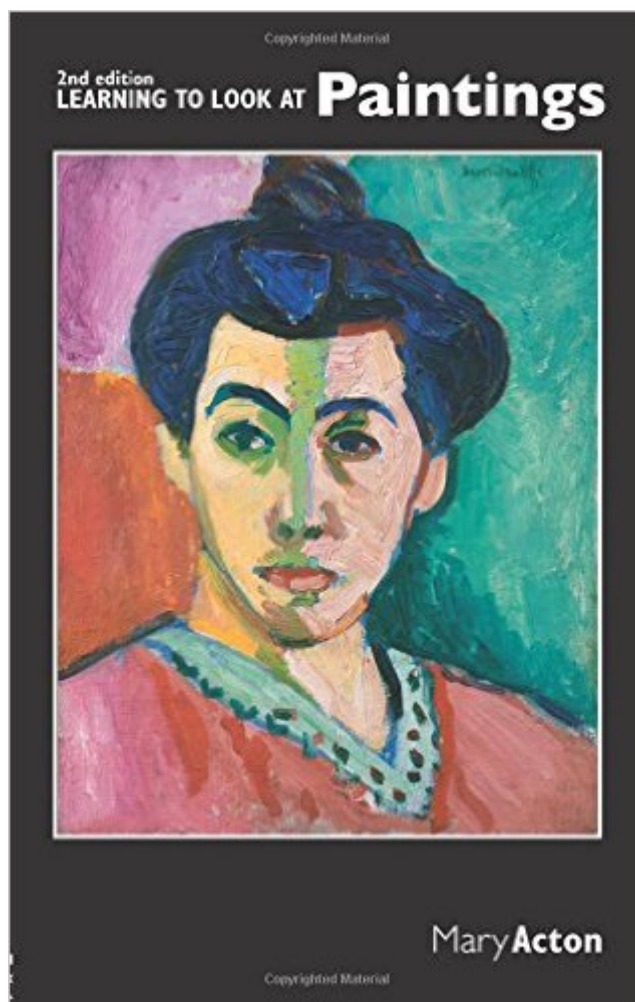


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# Learning To Look At Paintings



## Synopsis

Learning to Look at Paintings is an accessible guide to the study and appraisal of paintings, drawings and prints. Mary Acton shows how you can develop visual, analytical and historical skills in learning to look at and understand an image by analysing how it works, what its pictorial elements are and how they relate to each other. This fully revised and updated new edition is illustrated with over 100 images by a wide range of Western European and American artists, ranging from Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Botticelli to Picasso, Matisse and Rothko, and now includes modern and contemporary artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Anselm Kiefer, Tacita Dean and Marlene Dumas. In addition, Mary Acton presents new examples highlighting the survival and revival of painting in recent years. A new introduction situates the book in the wider context of recent changes in the approach to Art History. A glossary of critical and technical terms used in the language of Art History is also included, with an updated but still selective reading list.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I enjoyed this book on the principles and elements of design. I think she selected exemplary pictures to illustrate her point. I especially enjoyed the chapter on "subject matter". The only drawback of this book was having to flip back and forth from the reading to the painting. Also, she talked about some of the paintings color combinations that were printed in black and white. In the paperback version some of the details of the paintings were lost because they were reproduced on a small scale. Overall, though I would recommend this book to anyone interested in learning about design elements.

Composition, space, form, tone, color, subject-matter, and other pictorial elements of the plastic arts are considered and their interrelationships explained in this handy introduction, with over ninety well-chosen illustrations, some in color. The author, an experienced art teacher, has also included illuminating essays on drawing and its purposes, looking at prints, a handy glossary of art terms, and references for further reading. Highly recommended as eminently suitable for an Introduction to Art course, and for anyone else interested in learning to see more in paintings. (The "score" rating is an unfortunately ineradicable feature of the page. This reviewer does not "score" books.)

Mary Acton organizes her technique of appreciating art well. Breaking the parts down to Composition, Space, Form, Tone, Color and Subject Matter, the reader is taken on a systematic course to discerning a work of painted art. With plenty of examples to illustrate her points, and the clear, straightforward manner of writing, it is easy to understand and follow. I have 2 issues with this book -- neither of which targets the writer. (1) I appreciate the handy size, making this book very portable, but it is too small to properly show the works of art. Reproducing master works on offset printing with any appreciable quality is already a tremendous challenge without the size compromise. And more grievously, (2) there are only 29 color pages, with 1 image per those pages. For a book on Art, that is woefully under par. Mary discusses points on color against black and white images, many of which lack contrast data, especially in shadow regions, rendering her notes impossible to grasp. I had to refer to other books and the Internet to supplement this publication. Frankly, at the prices that Routledge charge for their books, I'd expect more than what I got. Yet, the content more than made up for the production shortcomings. So much so that I also ordered Mary's other book -- Learning to Look at Modern Art. I'd recommend this to anyone who is interested to learn how to better appreciate art. Just keep the Google Images page open. ;)

Excellent discussions for understanding techniques used by artists in their paintings. Anyone interested in learning what the masters were trying to accomplish through the use of paint should find this book interesting.

A painting should "speak for itself" but here the author speaks for it. She is giving extensive analysis which is usually mostly conjecture, saying more about the writer than the painting itself. She also refers to pages in her other books over 20 times, suggesting we need to purchase it as well. The content is subjective and includes comments about how a viewer "should" experience a piece. "so

great is our involvement that we are made to feel that we are being invited to sit at the empty space in front of the line of the table cloth in the foreground" ?I am too rational to understand comments like: "the artist creates the spaces between the flowers, so that you feel they might still be growing in the ground..." "How is it that the composition does not slide off to one side?" "It has the effect of creating the feeling that he is surrounded by air" ?The book is filled with over analytical comments. "It is the theatrical light, artificial light, heavenly light which only reveals what the spiritual dimension of the story requires you to see." ?"The light shining on the white marble... is used to dissolve the forms as much as to lend a feeling of solidity." ?"The colours are all opaque, and the dark green has the effect of throwing the white flower forward so that it is almost hovering in front of the picture plane." ?Objective observations regarding composition, colour, tone etc... are interesting to the average viewer. Comments like just those above should be by the artist himself or herself on how and why the work came to be. There are references to colours in black and white plates, which are not useful at all, because they are in black and white! Very disappointing.

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