

AN ART LESSON



by Miles Mathis

First published December 23, 2021

As usual, this is an opinion. Also a review and a memoir.

This paper was brought to you by several things coming together. The first was my finding that painting above online while searching for information about a work for sale at Ebay. The second was my reading Alex Jones' [strange video](#) posted yesterday on his favorite art in Austin. The third was my returning to the [ArtRenewalCenter](#) for the first time in years. Some of you may know I used to write for them long ago, when I was just starting out as an art counter-critic. I reviewed several of their Salons in the past, though I haven't done so in years. I gave up in frustration, to be honest.

But before we get to that, let's hit Alex Jones and his art recommendation. To be fair, there isn't much art worth looking at in Austin, or at least there wasn't when I left twenty-one years ago. It has been run by the Moderns all along, and the "high" point was once Laguna Gloria in wealthy west Austin, run by a small cabal of New York wannabes or rejects. There you could see the usual promotion of talentless and revolting children of the families, trying to shock or disgust you with their maladies and symptoms and disabilities. Just as I was getting out of Austin, these same people, or others like them, found piles of new dirty money somewhere to open new and larger town and college museums, also more of the same. Lots of non-art being heavily sold as fascinating and relevant, when it clearly wasn't. These

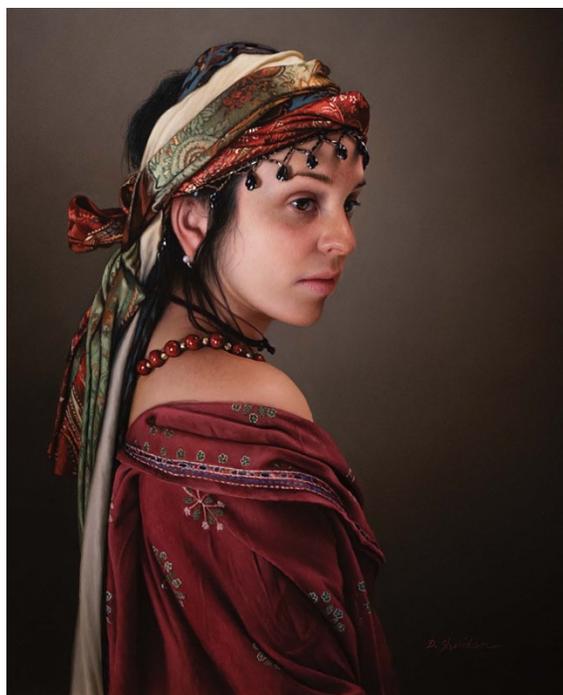
museums are of course poorly attended by real people, drawing only the phony academics and other posers who stole the field of art a century ago and who have since embedded themselves further in the fabric, like bloated ticks. So if Jones' favorite local art turns out to be a concrete bridge, we can't blame only him. Compared to the crap on display at the local museums, that may truly be the most artistic thing he has seen. We can only pity everyone involved.

I used to teach workshops, but haven't in about two decades now. Again, I quit in frustration. The only students that showed up were retired folks who wanted to get out of the house, and who I couldn't get to take my "secrets" when I gave them up. Although they were loaded, I couldn't even get them to buy the proper paints and brushes, despite providing a list. They would invariably show up with cheap junk from Michael's, and then not understand why they couldn't do anything with it. I still deal with the same sort of people, who email me begging me for advice or recommendations on Covid or other topics, but then ignore me and go get vaccinated or something. They then write back and beg me to cure them of the vaccine. You see how it is.

Anyway, let's drop all that and return to the lovely painting under title. It is by [Franz Rumpler](#) of Vienna, a minor artist who just happened to be painting at the perfect time, when even minor artists could produce these little masterpieces. He painted it in about 1885, and it seems to be the best thing he ever did, though his portrait of his mother is also quite strong. We are told he was very prolific, but few of his works made it to the internet, so it is hard to say.

We can tell just from this one painting that Rumpler was part of the Naturalist movement that was especially strong at that time in places like Vienna and Stockholm. For more of this style, also see Parisian artist Bastien-Lepage, who is said to have invented it, and British artist George Clausen, whose *Girl at the Gate* may be the ultimate later example of it.

I want to use that painting under title as my hook here, because I consider it to be a little bit of perfection. Also because it may not be obvious why I say that at a glance. Also because it is so different from contemporary realism, of the sort promoted by the ArtRenewalCenter:



That is by Duffy Sheridan, it is 22 x 18 inches (so, smaller than you think), and it won first place in the figurative category last year. Fred Ross invented and founded ARC, and he is the primary judge every year, along with a couple of art critics he handpicks, as well as one artist-judge. Sheridan is Fred's favorite artist, and he owns many of his canvases. You will say it looks just like a photograph, and that is indeed the problem. It is a big problem for several reasons, starting with this one: we already have cameras, so we don't need paintings like that. If the painting looks exactly like the photograph, the painting is redundant. It is a lot of work for nothing. The photo is worth something like \$20, but the painting may sell for \$50,000 or more, depending on the artist. **And yet they look exactly the same.** The painting contains no beauty or expression not already contained in the photo. So the artist hasn't done anything but copy.

But this is a problem for a far larger reason, one that has affected art history and the history of realism. As you know, realism was thrown out over a century ago and replaced by Modernism, and one of the reasons given for that was that realism had gotten stale. By about 1880 people were sick of it, mainly because it had gotten *too* real. Sheridan isn't the first to paint like this, you know. Ingres was doing it by 1800, and doing it with far more flare, depth, and ambition. And when realism began making a comeback around 1990, many attacked it as “copy art” because they saw it coming out of photorealism



—the only realism allowed during the postmodern period—and were afraid it would spin out as it has at ARC. This photorealism was achieved by projection and other tricks, making the paintings produced very hard, tight, and emotionless. That lack of emotion was considered a plus during the postmodern years, but it isn't what any of us emerging in the early days of new realism wanted. We avoided projection expressly to get away from all of that hard, tight, photorealism. We didn't want that look and assiduously avoided it.

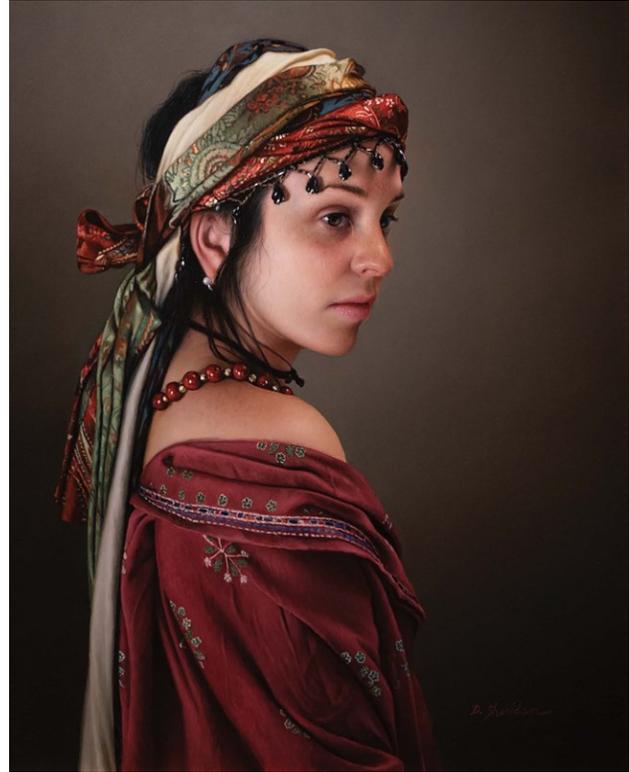
I know that many of my readers who are not artists won't follow me. They will say something like, “Miles, your paintings also look very photographic to me. Aren't you striving for the same thing? Maybe you are just jealous that Sheridan does it better than you do”. And that is indeed the belief of many, including, I would assume, Sheridan, Ross, and most of the artists at ARC. Which is why I am here, and why I led with that painting under title.

But before we dive deep, first a caveat. Almost none of you have seen my paintings in real life, so you don't have a clear idea how photographic they are or are not. What you have seen are small webimages, taken with digital cameras and uploaded to the internet. Any time you shrink an image down and compress it and **turn it into a photograph**, you are going to make it more “photographic”. And there is also this: photorealistic work looks *better* online, while painterly work looks far *worse* online. The photorealistic painting is trying to look like a photo, so turning it into a photo helps it, for obvious reasons. The painterly work is trying NOT to look like a photo, so turning it into a photo hurts it.

For most people, one image of a person is pretty much the same as any other. They don't really understand why one portrait is great while another one isn't. They are blind to the hierarchy from Titian to Pino, say, and really can't see it. Their only method of judging is “how much like a photograph” it looks. If you can't tell it from a photo, it must be great, they think. Because most people are blind to that hierarchy, and can't see differences, and don't know anything about art, it makes it pretty much impossible for an artist to be an artist. If you come along and produce a charming little portrait like the one under title, no one will notice or care. You won't be able to get ahead in your own field, because that field will be inundated with the photorealists most people are impressed by.

Although I think Fred Ross had the best intentions when he first got interested in art, his influence has been completely detrimental to realism, and it is because he is a rich non-artist. His story is that he saw [Bouguereau's *Nymphs with Satyr*](#) at the Clark Art Institute and was so impressed it changed his life forever. It is hard not to be impressed by that story, since the painting is indeed impressive, and since we have to cheer when art affects someone so much. But when Ross now rails against Modernism, I have to see it as ironic, because in lording it over realism, he is acting exactly like the Moderns he hates. I have shown my readers that sin number one of Modernism was that it put non-artists in charge of art, elevating clueless critics, writers, and gallerists over the artists themselves. Artists lost control of their own field, and it has been ruled by non-artists ever since. Well, Ross is doing the same thing at ARC, where the Salons are judged by non-artists. That hierarchy is inverted, so the hierarchy of winners is inverted every year as well. The worst paintings get the top prizes, which ends up affecting the whole field. The realist galleries are full of the same sort of work, since the gallery owners are the same sort of people that Ross and his critic-judges are: well-intentioned connoisseurs with no eye for beauty, subtlety, restraint, or expression.

If you still don't see what I mean, let's put the two paintings side by side:



I could have used any number of almost unknown paintings from the past to make my point, but I happened to have that one up as my screensaver this week, and it will do as well as any. I suspect that for the new realist, it will look sort of washed-out, underpainted, and blah. That is because they have become accustomed to the overpainted, overcolored, and garish. They have lost all conception of restraint and subtlety. They have lost all conception of mood, and the use of color and line to create it. Because it is the restrained color and subtle line of that work that makes it a gem. Along with the model, that color and line is the primary cause of its mood. And the creation of the mood is what allows the artist to *express himself*.

To be even more specific, what Rumpel has done as a matter of color is use a Whistlerian palette, with a trio of shaded-off tones to create a subtle mood. Yes, these guys didn't just accidentally do what they did. They were interested in **subtlety** and **mood** and **restraint**, and said so. Conversely, the contemporary realists aren't interested in subtlety and mood, so of course they never achieve it. They are interested in hitting you over the head with as much color and detail as possible, to the point of making you puke from an ugly excess of realism.

The skirt and scarf of Rumpel's child are just barely blue-grey, and the bodice is just barely violet, and even the white is toned off, not being too aggressively white. This is so those tones don't overpower her subtle northern skintones, which are primary. SHE is the primary object here, not the clothes or

background, so everything else has to be painted and colored to *support* her. The pale orange of the flowers was chosen for the same purpose: to complete the tonal triad and to allow the oranges in her skin to shine, as a parallel. The tone for the background is chosen last, but even it is chosen to complete the tone-poem. The same applies to its roughness, which was also not an accident or oversight. Given the figure, the background *had* to be painted like that: nothing else would work.

But far more than technique is going here, which is why this painting is so fine. It exudes a whole other quality than the Sheridan, doesn't it? Why? Because the child is emoting like crazy, and Sheridan's girl isn't. You will say neither one has much expression in her face, so what am I talking about? There is something real about the child, which is why Rumpler chose her. She has a sadness and an earthiness, like a real peasant child. I don't know if she was a real peasant child or if she was an upperclass child in costume, one who was sad from being neglected. It doesn't really matter. The emotion is there and Rumpler captured it. Conversely, Sheridan hasn't captured anything, because he wasn't trying to. He was more interested in the clothes. His girl is very pretty and there is no denying it, but if she is expressing anything it is a modern female self-satisfaction, one I find off-putting.

Sheridan's color scheme isn't jarring, which is more than we can say for most: it is just a red-green two-tone that does match the girl's skin. But beyond that it isn't doing anything. No mood is created. Same for the lines. Nothing is wrong, but nothing is especially right, either. There is no real composition here, just a straight photocopy. And yes, you can *compose* a bust, even one from the side. Meaning, if you want to, you can create much more movement of line in the drapery, hair, shoulders, etc.

Rumpler's child isn't attempting any grand composition, but notice how much more complexity we do have. Given the two arms and the rumpled natural feel of the pose and treatment, we find a subtle interweaving of verticals, horizontals and slants. Contemporary realists almost never achieve this, because they aren't even aware it is a possibility. They get all their lines from the photo, so they aren't composing to start with. Or, they aren't *looking* for these things, so they don't find them. I have to believe they choose compositions to *avoid* these complexities, rather than to create them. For instance, if you snap a bunch of photos of a model, with or without thinking a lot about composition beforehand, you can then pick the photo you want to paint from based on . . . something. You either pick one because it has an interesting combination of complex slants that helps you create your mood, or you pick one because it doesn't. Contemporary realists seem to avoid anything like this, I suppose because it confuses them. Anything that isn't sunny, clear and antiseptic just looks soiled and outdated to them, I guess. Anyone actually expressing anything real is dismissed as an anachronism, someone who possibly needs therapy and a dose of pharmaceuticals. The only expression allowed in contemporary realism is a Modern forced angst, of the Odd Nerdrum type, where the artist is going all-out to be weird on purpose. It is either that or a catatonic stare. There is nothing in between.

I will be told that is the way of the world: I am just complaining that the past is the past and the present is the present. Is it Sheridan's fault his pretty model is living in the present, and looks like it? It is hard to find innocent and sad little peasant girls in native costume in downtown Phoenix, Arizona.

But that isn't it. The mood I am talking about still exists. There are good models out there, and I know because I have found them. Plus, the mood I am talking about doesn't just come from the model, it also comes from the artist. Both Rumpler and his model are expressing there, since he is expressing through her. So his personality, depth, and character are also shining through. The painting is a sum of all the choices he made concerning model, dress, pose, light, color, and everything else, so you are reading him in everything there. That is a portrait of him almost as much as it is of her.

Again, you will say, “Well, people had more depth back then, what are you going to do, outlaw art?” No, because again that isn't what is going on. Art is not impossible, and it still gets done occasionally. The problem is almost nobody recognizes it when it does get done. I picked out some nice works in the ARC Salons in the past, but they had normally been buried and passed over for prizes. Their creators have generally not gone onto to stellar careers in realism, because they have been lost in the piles. To put it bluntly, subtlety doesn't sell.



Let's pull another one from a recent ARC Salon. That's by Jeremy Lipking from 2019, where it won first place in portraiture and was bought by Fred Ross for \$23,000. It is 16 x 12 inches, just so you know. Far smaller than you think. I have praised Lipking before and he has done some very nice work. But honestly I find that one sort of distressing, since he has done far better work. The technique is fine and the color is restrained, so what is my problem? My problem is that he has emptied her of all expression, seemingly on purpose. Why? Why would he do that? Why put her in that dead cloak and face her forward like a zombie? What is most distressing is that I feel him moving in the direction of [Bo Bartlett](#) here, since Bartlett is known for that blank, square pose. He eventually bombed out altogether, doing tiny portraits of Obama and painting blue sky. He may be a Pfizer rep by now.* A quick jog over to Lipking's website doesn't calm my fears, since none of his best works are up and I don't see any great new ones. You will say he could say the same about me: nothing much new on canvas. But I have moved on to bigger and better things. Has he? Please tell me he has. Tell me he has written the great American novel or found a cure for cancer or something.

Another thing that scares me is the crows I now see in Lipking's backgrounds. They remind me of the little rising smoke Bartlett uses in his background to indicate the end of the world, and that also signaled the end of his career.

I also did a quick search on my old nemesis from the Santa Fe market, circa 1990, Dan Gerhartz. He and I emerged at the same time and the same place, at galleries almost across the street. He was at Linda McAdoo and I was at Jan Ballew, and I think Jan had once worked for or with Linda. We were

doing painterly figuration, and for a very short time our work looked kinda similar, in around 1992-3, say. That was back when we were in our twenties, but we very soon diverged. This is now featured on his site:



He got looser and more colorful and became a born-again, and I . . . didn't. I remember talking to him on the phone in about 1998, and I could tell he wasn't too impressed by me. He asked me what I was trying to do, and I thought, "If I have to tell you, it probably isn't worth saying". What I was most trying to do was never ever paint anything like that.

I remember that Gerhartz painted a very pretty thing called *Coffee* back then, and [it won a prize at the big Prix de West show in Oklahoma City](#). One of the old landscape painters of the Southwest scene (Cyrus Afsary) pooh-poohed it, calling Gerhartz a flash in the pan, and I can remember taking great umbrage for Gerhartz. Gerhartz was certainly never just a flash in the pan, but I now see that that old guy was onto something. I now look back on *Coffee* and see how it was just one small puff of air from unwinding into treacle, as above. Even then I liked the pretty girl more than the cluttered background or fluttery brush. I wanted to borrow the model and give her far more weight in the picture. Gerhartz had a huge talent and could have slapped himself into something far greater, but he didn't. I was actually trying to warn him of that when I talked to him all those years ago, but he was trying to warn me of the opposite, I think. I think he saw me as naive or backward in some way, and didn't appreciate my experiments or my browns or my utter contempt for the market. He wanted to get ahead as fast as possible, and developing a signature style was the first part of that. Quang Ho and some of the others at that time saw what I was up to without having to explain it, but Gerhartz never did. He saw only my

weak spots (how I differed from him) and was blind to the strong ones (how I differed from him).

Perhaps he was trying to warn me I would never make it in the market doing what I was trying to do, and I have to admit he was right there. The galleries wanted a lot of superficial work, delivered quickly, and I wasn't willing to provide it.

Also interesting is what he says in that short interview I just linked. I had never read it until now. After being praised by the author for being a phenom,

Gerhartz says it's all relative. "Compared to others I'm just a hack," he says. "John Singer Sargent was painting circles around me when he was 21."

It's curious to see him calling himself a hack, isn't it, as if he is fine with it and wants nothing more. It sort of explains a lot. You will say he is just being modest, something I should try, but I don't see it that way. I had a long way to go at that age and still do, but I was never a hack. It bothers me a lot that I wasn't able to find a way to live up to my potential, and I admit it. But at least I was never a hack. Meaning, I never painted for a market, or pursued a popular style in order to be popular. I painted exactly what I wanted to, and assiduously avoided caving to expectation.

What I was doing is what I think he should have been doing: backing out of Sargentolatry and Schmidolatry with all possible speed, and moving toward Titian, Velazquez, and other old masters of far more depth. [Richard Schmid](#) his mentor had already dissolved into treacle, with his little Victorian coffee tins and piles of flowers, but Gerhartz was determined to follow him. Just as others were following David Leffel into a different sort of tininess and still others were following Pino or Blokhin or god knows who else. Now all that is over, I guess, and the new crowd is following Ingres and Bouguereau and the projector-god. They are no longer tiny, but they are still mostly meretricious.

You will say that Gerhartz's subjects don't fit my critique above, since they aren't either full of Modern angst or catatonic, but he still wins prizes in these contemporary realist competitions. That's true. He inhabits a now endangered third line, where we also find Mike Malm and a few other hold-outs: a line defined by bathos and forced nostalgia. They paint in the land of overcleaned and pressed nylon peasant costumes, backed by ebay candelabras, suns that are always setting, and crosses. You can almost hear the violins playing, or plastic Irish harps.

To be fair, Gerhartz can still crank out a very pretty still life:



That's Gerhartz at his best, I would say, with many very lovely features. Though now that I look closer, I don't think it is recent. But I still find it mannered, with those cutesy paint pulls like on the top edge of the paper and on the base of the cup. Those, I must tell you, are the sign of the hack, sort of like paint drips or swirly vignetting. Those things have no real point and are only a sign of the artist losing his mind—a sign of the fall.

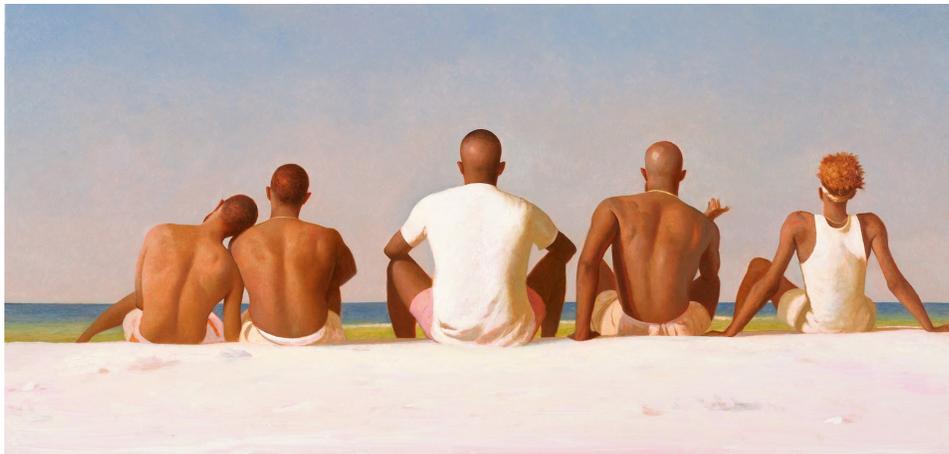
And this shows you why you should never develop a signature style. Gerhartz developed this pretty-pretty style early on, and possibly no one has ever had a prettier one. He makes even Schmid look clunky. He took it as far as it can be taken, and then took it way beyond that. It works great for flowers and vases, as you see, since if you are looking at the paint rather than the painting, who cares? What else are flowers and vases for but to turn them into pretty paint. But suppose you want to paint something with more gravity, even if it is a pretty girl. Suppose you want people looking at her and how you feel about her, instead of at the paint? Well then, your pretty-pretty style isn't going to fit that painting, is it? Instead, your style is going to usurp it, turning it to treacle. A brush flitting around and pulling on edges for no reason is just going to look silly. Keyed-up color is just going to look silly. And your looseness is just going to look flabby and out-of-place and self-indulgent.

Which means you have to match your style to your subject. The old masters knew that, most of them, and they were capable of tightening or loosening a brush, using more or less color. They knew when to use detail and when to avoid it. They knew when and where a graceful elision was appropriate and where it wasn't. In word, they understood restraint.

Gerhartz's style limited him from the outset, though he seems to have never noticed it. He topped out with *Coffee* at age 32 and it was all downhill after that. The only time he seems to have realized it is

when he went to literature for a subject. The problem is, even when he did, it was still for the pretty-pretty and the mawkish. He chose to paint “Hind's Feet”, from *Hind's Feet on High Places*, a 1955 Christian allegory by Hannah Hurnard. I had previously thought his painting was from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, since the central character Much Afraid is also a character there. But it turns out it is even worse than that, because this much newer book is really quite spooky.** Regardless, Gerhartz gets it all wrong, since Much Afraid supported on the path by Sorrow and Suffering is supposed to be hideously ugly, with a deformed face, twisted hands, and club feet. [Gerhartz makes her into a pretty blonde](#).

And if we keep studying his newer work, we find that like Bo Bartlett, Gerhartz is now painting BLM subjects. Bartlett is painting [black boys on bicycles](#), since I guess nothing proves blacks are equal like seeing them on bicycles. [He is also paintings rows of black people from behind](#), some of them gay, because nothing proves blacks are equal like seeing the backs of their heads. I guess he bussed these five guys in from Harlem or somewhere to his private island off the coast of Maine, because that shows how incredibly interested in diversity he is.



As for Gerhartz, I think he also got a memo from somewhere, since he is painting black and white girls holding hands as they walk into church, and other very poignant things of that nature. Nothing wrong with that subject you say, and I would agree if I could convince myself he came to it on his own initiative. But we know he was prompted to it by *The New York Times* or MSNBC or Don Lemon or *The View*. Making it. . . propaganda.

Although I am all for civil rights, I just can't convince myself any of this BLM stuff is real. Why? Because it came out of nowhere. When it arose in about 2015, race relations were not in a bad place. We had just had a black President and almost everyone was fine with that. I don't recall anyone saying Black Lives *didn't* matter. Those who didn't like Obama—and I was one of them—didn't dislike him because he was black. We disliked him because, like all other Presidents, he was a big phony reading from teleprompters and doing the bidding of Goldman Sachs and the Pentagon. The entire BLM movement has obviously been scripted by the CIA, like almost everything else, and the 2021 Nobel Prize just confirms that with big exclamation points. BLM wasn't created to improve race relations, but to torpedo them, and that was necessary to keep eyes off more important things, like the upcoming Covid genocide.

So finding Gerhartz selling this kool-aid is just another strike against him. I don't know if he is as compromised as Bo Bartlett, but I have finally considered that possibility. “Hind's Feet” is another clue in that direction, see the second footnote below.

But I will try to stay on subject. I was including choice of subject in this lesson, reminding you that art isn't just technique. It is also what you choose to paint, and how you choose to paint it. You can't do anything with a bad subject, so your first order of business as an artist is to find a good one. Most artists spend way too little time on this. It is very difficult in the Modern world, since all depth has been drained out of our culture on purpose. And if you go to the past for subjects, as with literature, most of the good ones are also considered to be tapped out. The figure and the nude is a subject that can never be tapped out, in my opinion: there is always something new to find since there are always new people in the world. My nudes don't look that much like any nudes that came before them, which means finding a new treatment can't be that hard. Just stick with what you like and paint it faithfully. However, I do have some advice in this regard. I warn you against using the figure or the nude as a still life or landscape. A human body is not a prop, like a vase or a flower or a chair. Nor is it a landscape, to be used for a scenic effect. It is not a mannequin for drapery and is not just another reflector of light in a grouping. All those treatments are Modern and as such they must fail. They may look clever for a day or two, but you will never be remembered for them. You will be justly forgotten. All great artists have treated the human figure with dignity and honor, seeking its essence in some way.

After a time I wanted to try for even more than that, which is why I began to seek the larger subject. Many of the great artists of the past had a subject built in for them: Christianity. I was seeking something that hadn't been hit before, which is why I created the [Shelley Altarpiece](#). I was trying to create a new mythology around a neglected subject. Mark Twain had hit it, but only obliquely, not really seeing the deeper resonances there. In my opinion, there are a lot of untapped mines of that sort out there, that no one has yet found gold in. Which is why I recommend you study history, especially history since 1800. Most of that field has been combed by artists little if at all. Nineteenth-century artists were mostly still illustrating the distant past, as with the Pre-Raphaelites. They weren't looking at their own time, since it was still the present for them. But I see the 19th century as a very rich field for artists seeking subject matter. So much was going on then, and so much of it was paintable. Why leave it all to Hollywood?

If you want a lesson of what to do rather than what not to do, look here:



I mentioned Titian above and those are both by Titian. They may be the two greatest male portraits ever painted. But I have to admit you wouldn't know that by looking at these webimages—which, for webimages, are about as good as you get. I have seen them in real life, and—as with a Van Gogh—you have to see these paintings to understand how good they are. They don't hold up in webimages. The second one is in New York at the Frick, in case you are interested. The other one is in the Louvre.

Just to be sure you are getting it, the ARC Salons are judged from webimages, as are almost all other art contests now. Galleries judge artists from webimages. You judge me as an artist by webimages. But, as I say, that doesn't work. A painting is not a webimage. There is no way for a camera to capture the way light reflects from an oil painting. If there were, there would be no reason to use oil paint. We would just create the images right on the computer. And again, bad paintings look better on the web, and good paintings like these by Titian look far worse. That isn't just my opinion, that is how it is.

But let me give it try. Let me try to explain to you why these paintings are so great. Titian is called the greatest colorist of the Renaissance, but you are probably thinking, “There is almost no color in the first and only a bit of color in the second, so how can that be?” Being the greatest colorist doesn't mean having the most saturated colors or having the most colors or having the most keyed-up colors. If it did then Thomas Kinkade would beat Titian hands-down. It means having the best color harmonies, and choosing the best colors to express the mood. It means using color to the greatest effect, while not overusing it.

The red in the second image is wrong: it is much more red than that. But the point is it is just exactly the right amount of red to set off the skintones in the face. It is exactly the right value and saturation, no more no less. By value, I mean it is neither too orange nor too purple, not too white or too black or too brown. When you see it as an artist, it is like getting a good backrub from your lover: you actually get those shivers. Every other color in the work is like that: perfect. And the background is the same

sort of miracle, being just the right color and tone to pull together that red and that gold and that black and that white and that gray. You may not realize how difficult that is, or how rare, so I can only assure you it is. Most artists aren't even aware the background is that important, and those that do realize it cannot find the value. Creating a color harmony like this is one of the rarest things in the history of art. Sargent did some very nice things, but he never came near either one of these. As he would have admitted.

Most realists will think, “well, Titian just got lucky. The guy was wearing a hat that set off his cheeks, big deal.” If they were painting it, they would just copy the color of the hat and be done with it, never giving it a second thought. If they matched it, success. But that isn't what happened, I assure you. Titian probably chose the hat himself, to start with. But he didn't just copy the color regardless. He tweaked it to match the skintones on purpose. We know he created that red with about two dozen separate glazes, so nothing was an accident here. And he wasn't just seeking saturation with those glazes, or glow. *He was seeking exactly the right red.*

You will say these guys don't seem to be emoting much, even compared to Rumpler's little girl above. They are both looking away with a dead stare. Well, they aren't chewing the scenery, but they are far from a dead stare. In person, you can feel their presence. Somehow Titian has captured them so perfectly, you can almost smell them. It is uncanny. It is something about the eyes and mouths, and these guys just have a weight to them the new photorealistic work never has. Again, it has to do with the artist himself. He has painted not only the men, but his relationship to them, and his feeling for them. And somehow that is tied up in *how* he painted them. Meaning, the technique is so refined it allows for the capture of spirit. It is hard to explain. Impossible to explain. Which is why painting can be so miraculous, and why some old paintings really are worth a huge amount of money.

But you can see how easy it would be for a new realist to dismiss these images. You couldn't say they were underpainted, but without seeing them in person you could easily say they were undercolored. You could say they lacked a certain pizzazz, compared to the gaudy fireworks on display at the ARC salon. A Gerhartz could say they were too tight while many others could say they are too loose. They *aren't* as photographic as a Sheridan, though far more real. Which reminds us that “photographic” and “real” are two entirely different things. A photograph is two dimensional, while reality is three, so if you really want to paint something as alive as a Titian, you can't be photographic. You have to do a better job of capturing that third dimension, as he does. Which of course can't be seen in webimages, which are two-dimensional.

You will say the painting is also two-dimensional, so what's the difference? The difference, as I keep telling you, is that paint on canvas can do things photographs can't, but only if you let it. If you are projecting or copying photos, you obviously can't do that. You have to be trying to capture that life effect beyond what the photo can tell you.

What's more, as I have also said before, you have to understand that in capturing that *je ne sais quoi*, you are ultimately capturing yourself in every painting. To get depth into a painting, **you have to supply it.** So if you aren't deep, you have a problem. **A shallow artist will never create a deep painting, no matter how much technique he learns.** That depth is actually more important than the technique itself, and is more valuable because more rare. Which is where Van Gogh beat the odds. Technically, he was pretty clumsy, but he had an astounding depth which he was able to get into the paintings anyway. Or at least some of them. See *Starry Night*, which really is as great as they say.

New realists will again say something like, “Well, I am either deep or I'm not, so what's the point? I

have to get ahead in the market somehow, and can't be taking lessons in depth, can I? What is a lesson in depth, anyway?" This paper is a lesson in depth, my friend, so pay attention.

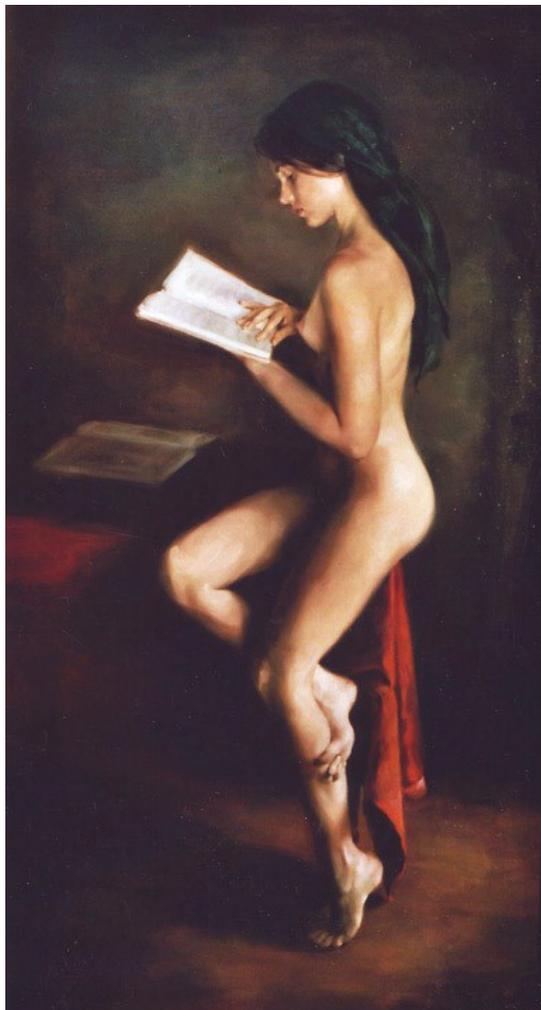
You *can* get deeper with age, and some people used to do it, back in the day. You don't have to start out as hack and dissolve into a weenie. If you want to get bigger, there *are* ways to go about it, but the first step is wanting to. You have to spend as much time grooming yourself as grooming models or studying technique. Which means instead of watching CNN in your spare time or playing videogames, you read real books. You study history. If you want to have the depth of those guys in the past, you have to immerse yourself in their times. You have to really make an effort to get into their heads, and feel what they felt. You are doing that not just to borrow their technique, you are doing it because you are seeking a richness the modern world no longer has. So you read what they read, and read what they said about what they read. As far as possible, you throw off the entire modern regimen of falseness and shallowness and fakery, not as a nod to nostalgia or in order to sell to conservatives, but in order to discover some truth, both in the world and in your art.

I knew that before I turned 30, which is precisely how and why I diverged from my comrades in the Southwest art scene. I was looking for something beyond the Victorian coffee tins and flowers in vases and flashy paint strokes, which is why I ended up creating the Shelley Altarpiece, among other things. It is why I pursued Tristan and Isolde and Joan of Arc and other things. And it is probably why I eventually gave up: not only was the market not ever going to include me, there was simply no way to do what I wanted to do. The sort of work I had in mind would require hundreds of hours of model time, dozens of models, a large studio with assistants, and many other things that weren't within my means. Although the smaller Tristan and Isolde things were a success, in my opinion, the large one wasn't. It simply couldn't be done from a few photos.

When I first moved to Taos, Walt Gonske and some other of the famous local guys came over to "see my studio". Problem was, they really were there to see my studio, not my art. Realists don't actually care much about art, but they are keen to compare studios. Meaning, they wanted to check out my space: the actual room I painted in, the high ceilings and north light, the fancy easels, and all that. But they were very disappointed, since none of that existed. I was painting out of my bedroom on an easel my dad made for me from scrap from the university art department. The ceilings were low and there was no natural light. I think they were shocked: why was I trying to paint like that? Because I had no choice. I couldn't afford an expensive studio, which generally has to be special-made for an artist, with a high north window. I was paying about \$700/mo there, and the reason for that is that I had always refused to paint for the market. I never once painted a vase of flowers or a colorful landscape or anything else the clients in the Southwest were looking for. I had also refused to paint male corporate portraits, for reasons you may understand since you know me pretty well. Because I refused to be a hack, I had doomed myself financially and was lucky to make rent each month. And, as I have told you before, I lived in Taos—once a big art town—for 14 years with no representation. I haven't had any representation nationwide since 2003, because I am not willing to prostrate myself before the contemporary market, which has only gotten worse every decade.

So, as you are beginning to understand, I couldn't remain in the Realist market any longer because I began to despise it and all the people in it. As you see, I have come to despise it more with each passing decade. It gets harder and harder to say who I despise more: the Moderns or the Realists. No, I still despise the Moderns more, but as you are seeing, in most cases the Realists are actually Moderns in a slightly different garb. They have no problem with Modernity, they just want to be free to project it and copy and it and get top dollar for it. They don't want to have to shit in a box or throw rocks on the floor to get famous: they want to do it while seeming to paint.

You will say I never got near painting like Titian, my best works only being a bit tighter than Sargent. Which is true. I never had the model time to attempt a Titian style. You can't paint something like that with one or two sessions, or from photos. Even Sargent had something like 85 sittings per head with his best early works (see Marie-Louise Pailleron), and a Titian would require double that. I never had more than a couple, so if I was going to get any depth in my paintings, it had to be through sheer willpower, like Van Gogh. I couldn't do it with a stunning three-dimensionality, so I had to try to do it with model choice, pose, color harmony, composition, and brushwork. Like Van Gogh, I had to love my models with a fierce passion, and try to paint that passion. Sometimes it didn't work and sometimes it did:



Nude Reading

66 x 34 inches

It all worked out for the best, since my destiny was elsewhere. But I can't help looking back with some regret at what might have been.

*That was just a joke and a guess, but as you know I am a good guesser. [Bartlett is actually giving out](#)

[vaccination buttons](#). No really. How did I know? [This is how](#).

**Hurnard and the publication of this book have the usual red flags all over them. [She was a Quaker](#), which is enough by itself to blow this whole thing as project, but I will continue. Although born in Colchester, she lived in [Israel](#) for 50 years. The book was published by the Christian Literature Crusade, which is just another Intel front, arising originally from the Keswick Convention and the Higher Life Movement in 1875. We have also hit these people before, since, like the Quakers, their job was infiltrating Christianity and inverting it. One of the ways they do this is through their strange idea of “entire sanctification”, by which certain persons blessed by God—for reasons not really explained—can achieve a sinless life. As you see, that conflicts with one of the fundamental tenets of Christianity, which tells us only Jesus was capable of that. Two of the major and original [authors at the CLC](#) were W. E. Boardman and Ken Adams, obvious spooks with Jewish markers all over them. Same for [Stuart](#) Blanch, who came out of the [Royal Air Force](#), ending up at Oxford. He later became the Archbishop of York. Strangely, at CLC, they post a pic of Blanch as a young officer, not as Archbishop of York. That is obviously to fool their naive readers, most of whom would or should balk at an Anglican Archbishop being involved in things like entire sanctification. His bio is the usual slop: born to a farmer who died when he was five, he was allegedly dirt poor and couldn't afford university. So of course he was immediately hired by the Chancery, City of London, working for a top law firm. He moved from there to the RAF where he became a flight lieutenant between the wars. We may also assume he was Intelligence. W. E. Boardman's real name was Smith, and he hid behind his mother's name. Which tells me he was probably of the Smith bankers of Nottingham and the Titanic fake. His wife was an Adams, tying him to Ken Adams. Boardman was allegedly born 10/11/1810. Aces and eights. The Boardmans of the peerage are also Grays, later becoming Barons, which tends to support my guess. Boardman's mother was also a Saltmarsh, linking us to the Nevilles and through them to the Stuarts. Hurnard based her 1955 book on *The Pilgrim's Progress* from 1678, but I get the same sort of bad feeling from that. It sells grace over works, which is not a good sign to start with. This was about a century after the Council of Trent, which ruled in favor of grace over works, but did so for obvious venal reasons: to sell Penances. You will say I mean indulgences, but I don't. Penances were also sold, and even when money didn't change hands, the rite of penance gave the priest direct power over the sinner, by assigning him tasks. You can see the room for corruption there, I hope. At any rate, this is a big can of worms and obviously will require another paper and lots more research. For now I will just say that *The Pilgrim's Progress* throws up all the usual signals. Like what? Like that his mother's maiden name is not given at Wikipedia, and that he lied about how poor his family was. Her name was Margaret Bentley, which is a red flag. As is the fact that Bunyan refused to name his wife. A quick peek at [thepeerage.com](#) gives us a [Margaret Bentley](#) of the 1600s who married a Thomas Bunyan. Her grandson is named John Bunyan. Lundy tries to hide these people by stripping them of dates and places, but they are there. It looks like John's cousin Richard married into the Bernard baronets, linking him to the St. Johns and the [Cromwells](#). This links us directly to Oliver Cromwell. They never tell you that, do they? Here's exactly how: Richard Bentley married the daughter of the 2nd Baronet Bernard, and her grandmother was Elizabeth Cromwell. Elizabeth's grandfather was Sir Henry, brother of Sir Oliver Cromwell.

So we just have to ask ourselves this: do we continue to believe Dan Gerhartz doesn't know any of this, and just chose to paint Hind's Feet based on an innocent recommendation of his wife or preacher, or do we see the usual play afoot here?

