



Brush Strokes



By Mary Baumgartner

February 2009 Vol. 2 No. 2



CRITIQUE IT - THEN SELL IT!

Do you know how to critique your own art? How do you know someone will want to buy it if you don't know what makes it good?

Having the ability to discern some of the qualities that cause a piece of art to become marketable will go a long way in keeping your art fresh, your abilities sharp, and your prices high.

First, ask yourself the question, "Does the painting have a center of interest and a way to get to it?" The best way

to describe this adventure is shape, place and focus. The lightest lights against the darkest darks should lead you to the focal point. After that, the lights in the painting should lead the viewer around and around and back to the focal point so the eye never leaves the painting.

Connecting shapes, making shapes within shapes, and adjusting values to keep the painting in harmony will keep the viewer's eye in the painting. Look all through your painting and see if there is good balance between the color, temperature and style of the painting. How many values have you used? Are there at least five? Many artists try to put too many colors into the art without the color being spread around. Repetition is important in a painting but even repetition should be tempered. The painting should have warm and cool temperatures and some areas of compliments next to each other to create a little tension.

Having too many unessential elements can cause a painting not to have unity. On the other hand, every square inch of the painting should be interesting and have a purpose. Backgrounds, foregrounds and negative spaces should be balanced with a resting place that also is entertaining.

"Is this painting only interesting from up close, or can I get the same feeling about it if I stand 20 feet away?" Some paintings are meant to be viewed from a distance but paint with viewing distance in mind.

You have to remember that you may be educating the people who view your painting and who might be eager to move on to the next work of art hanging in a show. Stop them dead in their tracks both with subject matter and with color. The painting above started out as a herd of elephants around a watering hole in Africa. They were photographed from the tent nearby. The browns and grays of the elephants were extremely boring when the painting was finished.

I had an "Ah-ha" moment and zeroed in on the shapes of the heads and tusks and the way they intertwined and created a better painting that is already in limited-edition print. The name of the painting is "Zambezi Tuketela," and describes a rogue elephant living near the Zambezi River in Africa.