



Contemporary Painter Syllabus

**Our courses work on a modular basis and reinforce one another. Understanding and applying the different styles you learn in these modules will ensure the development of each student's techniques and individual artistic style.*

The study of contemporary painting is more fluid and open than classical painting. It starts in late Impressionism (1900-1910) to abstract/neo-expressionism, including artists such as Monet, de Kooning, Pierre Bonnard, Matisse, Picasso and Lee Krasner. This then leads on to contemporary painters such as Frank Auerbach, Jenny Saville, Peter Doig, Marlene Dumas, Gerhard Richter, Louise Bourgeois, Cecily Brown and Max Beckmann, to name a few. The main difference between the classical and contemporary styles is the vibrancy and high saturation (chroma) of the contemporary palette, looseness of the paintwork, and of course the subject matter.

Students at Berlin Art Class who wish to study contemporary art can immediately experiment with vibrant color and work in the alla prima (one touch) technique, which allows paint to be applied in a free and expressive manner. In applying this technique, students are encouraged to draw from their own quick sketches as a template for the painting. Students may also use photographs, newspaper clippings, art books or simply their instinct as reference materials for starting their work.

Quick sketches of color and composition, which leads to planning for larger, more resolved works in painting and drawing is a fundamental part of this artistic aesthetic philosophy. This method is tried and tested by very accomplished artists such as Diebenkorn, De Kooning, Motherwell, Louise Bourgeois, Marlene Dumas, etc. Students are shown how to use and develop approaches to contemporary painting and how to continue their practice at home.

Those who are ready to commit more time to learning the Contemporary Painter's approach are advised to take the Contemporary Painter package offered by Berlin Art Class, which runs over a six-month period. By the end of this time, students will gain a sound base from which to research, practice and grow in the contemporary approach.

One suggested path for contemporary study is also described below:

Module 1: Underpainting/Wash Technique in 1 vibrant color.

Students first study underpainting: working with one tone and linseed oil to create a full value study. This teaches the student how to create form and light with oil in a way that is both quick and viscous. Student brush work, understanding of values and ability to create form improves

greatly with this technique. Four paintings should be created in this method before progressing to the grisaille approach.

Module 2: Multi-colored underpainting wash technique in 3 vibrant colors

In module 2, students create at least 2 paintings using the underpainting/wash technique in three vibrant colors.

Module 3: Understanding the grisaille technique (white plus one color in 6-9 shades)

The grisaille builds on the techniques described above, but on top of the quick underpainting students work with white to create the values. This develops the student's value system, blending ability and approach to form. Transparency and opaque surfaces also come into play. Students create at least two paintings using this technique.

Module 4: Exploring the full palette with grisaille and underpainting

Bringing together the techniques learned in the first 3 modules, students will create 2-4 paintings on a connected theme of their choosing. These will be completed in the full palette and based on sketches made in pencil/charcoal.

Module 5: Critical Self-Assessment and Evaluation

Based on the 4 canvas and drawings produced in Module 4, we study and reevaluate which techniques need to be improved upon. We will also discuss contemporary themes in painting and discuss how to research and develop ideas and sketchbook work. This stage prepares the student for a rich studio practice and/or a high standard of portfolio creation. Students will create 2-4 paintings on a connected theme. These will be based on sketches made in pencil/charcoal and then transferred to canvas for painting upon.