

# CREATE A COMPELLING PAINTING –

**Bringing good reference to this workshop can set you up for success.**

It's challenging to make outstanding art from mediocre reference. Choosing a good subject is the first step to creating a compelling painting. These guiding principles will put you on the right track.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD SUBJECT?

### LOOK FOR WILDLY UNIQUE!

Get attention with your art. In the digital age we are bombarded by so much visual stimulation that everything soon looks the same, which translates as being easy to dismiss. You want to keep the viewer engaged. While *you* know the story behind your painting, consider how a complete stranger will view it. Find a way to put your subject in a new context or view it from an unconventional angle or use creative color to set your painting apart. Look for interesting shapes, angles or curves. Consider how your space will be divided and where your center of interest will be. Come with reference for several subjects that you can choose from.

## LIGHTING

### YOU WANT BRIGHT LIGHT & STRONG SHADOWS!

Good lighting is an extremely important factor in creating a compelling painting, whether it is a portrait or not. Many beautiful photographs use soft, diffused lighting, but these don't usually make the best reference for a painting. Look for images with highlights and shadows that create interesting shapes. That is what makes a painting appear 3-dimensional. You want images that have an exciting value pattern.

## IMMITATION

### IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ORIGINAL.

Copying is one way to start out when you're learning to paint. If you're working from a successful photograph or painting, your odds of success are greater. And you will learn from the experience how your work differs or is similar to your reference. The point is to learn — and it's difficult to learn everything at once.

## DETAIL

**MAKE PRINTS** — Even if you use your tablet for reference. It's difficult to paint detail that you cannot see in your reference. If your image is not sharp, look for another that is. **Exception:** if your intension is to make a soft-focus painting you will be working with value shapes, not detail.

- Make a **8.5 x 11 inch** color print of your image (cropped the way you plan to use it and filling the page) or consider 13 x 19. It may be counter-intuitive but larger paintings are easier to paint!
- Print a **black & white** copy to see only the value pattern.
- Also print some that **enlarge the features**.