

Painting Process

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Some painters reveal the process of their work on the actual surface of the canvas. Someone like Pollock is a good example, Robert Motherwell is another. Picasso and Chagall and all the abstract expressionists also fall into the category of painters for whom the process is evidenced by the work. Then there are others like Dali or Chuck Close before whom we must ask: "how the hell did you do that?" If we were to try and break down the visual content of expressionist products, we might say that the strokes on the canvas and whatever other evidence of "work" are the syntax of their visual language. That is to say that the brushstrokes tell us about the chronological order of events which led up to the painting product in much the same way that syntax tells us about the order of ideas in verbal language. Taking apart the syntax tells us what, happened, where, how and to whom. Breaking down the brushwork on the canvas tells us about where the painter started, what he did next, what kind of mind he was in, what are his feelings about the subject and possibly even more detailed things like what hand he was using, what kind of brush, what paints and thinners, what his general movements were etc...



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