

## Developing Your Repertoire - The Art of Still Life

**“Learn the rules like a pro so you can break them like an artist” - Pablo Picasso**

As artists and creative thinkers, we often learn the rules before breaking into innovation. In practices of Western art, still life painting was a core part of a genre hierarchy, which helped complete the repertoire of an emerging artist.

### Historical Overview:

- Earliest known still life was discovered on the wall of an [Egyptian Tomb of Menna](#).
  - Over 3,000 years old, afterlife, symbolism, elite class of society
- [Ancient Greek / Roman Art](#) (1st Cent, wall painting Pompeii)
  - We can evaluate everyday life of ancient cultures through understanding which objects they valued enough to paint.
- [Middle Ages](#) (15th Cent)
  - Still life was adapted into religious imagery, manuscripts, paired with religious figures. Used as decoration for borders of an image. i.e. Coins, seashells etc.
- [Renaissance Art](#) (17th Cent)
  - Floral arrangements in vases, artists were interested in capturing realistic character of what they observed, specifically of everyday objects.
- [Modern Art](#) (late 19th Cent - 20th Cent)
  - Still life is taken to another level of visual possibility by implementing new modernist styles. Movements that toyed with this subject were: Impressionists, Post-impressionists like Vincent Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso.

### Terminology:

- **Still Life:** (French: *nature morte*) in art, is a work that features an arrangement of inanimate objects as its subject. These items are composed on a table - include *organic* objects like fruit/flowers or *household* items like glassware/textiles.
- **Repertoire:** a collection of artworks that an artist has or can, its similar to a portfolio -
- **Class Metaphor:** *Rules as techniques - your brain as a tool box - knowledge is a tool - once you understand your tools, you can pull out and apply them in new ways!*
- **Value:** The lightness or darkness of a color, it can be applied to any color
  - + white to lighten / + black to darken
- **Fauvism:** “wild beasts” the style of les Fauves, a group of twentieth-century modern artists whose works emphasized painterly qualities and strong color over the representational or realistic values of Impressionism
- **Composition:** the arrangement of objects and their perspective on a Two Dimensional plane

### Artist & Artwork Examples:

- **Pablo Picasso**
  - *Still Life with a Pitcher and Apples, 1919*
  - *Still Life with Lamp, 1944*
  - *Still Life with Glass Under Lamp, 1962*
- **Abraham Mignon, *Still Life with Fruits, Foliage and Insects*, c. 1669**
- **Henri Matisse, *The Goldfish*, 1912**
- **Paul Cezanne, *The Basket of Apples* c. 1893**



Abraham Mignon, *Still Life with Fruits, Foliage and Insects*, c. 1669 Oil on Canvas, Minneapolis Institute of Art

(LIGHTING / VALUE EXAMPLE)



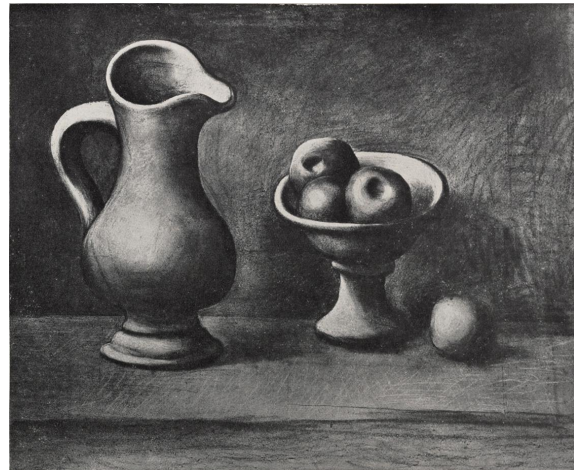
Henri Matisse, *The Goldfish* 1912

(COLOR EXAMPLE)



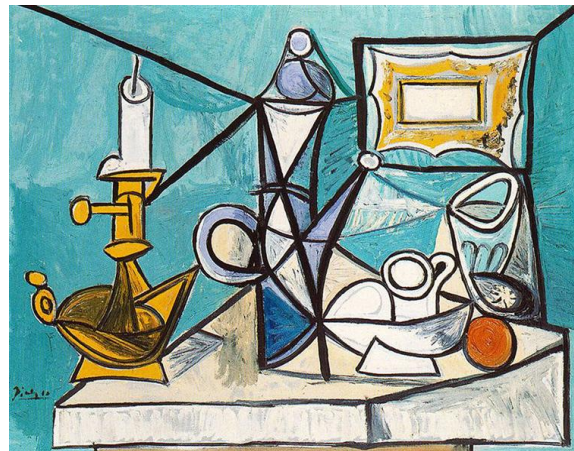
Paul Cezanne, *The Basket of Apples* c. 1893

(COMPOSITION EXAMPLE)



Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with a Pitcher and Apples* 1919 Work on paper

(COMPARE & CONTRAST)



Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Lamp* 1944 Oil on canvas

(COMPARE & CONTRAST)