EDGES: Found(hard) & Lost(soft)

These instructions are designed for artists working in painting, drawing, photography and any other two-dimensional works of art.

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<td>EDGES: How the edges of objects are painted tells the viewer whether they are in focus, in the distance or close up, is of importance or is separated from another object. As in any element of composition, edges need to vary throughout the piece for interest. Normally the Center of Interest will have the most contrast which includes the sharper (found/hard) edges, because the eye will be drawn to that area first. Other areas around the painting will also include some hard edges to create a pathway around the painting. In other words, hard edges are not just in the Center of Interest.</td>
<td>Combinations of Edges within a painting allow the viewer to move throughout the piece.</td>
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<td><em>Lost</em> (soft) edges blend in with colors or objects next to it and recede away from areas that have <em>Found</em> (hard) edges. Edges in the distance or out of focus tend to be <em>Lost/Soft</em>: Items closer up, at the Center of Interest, or are in focus tend to be <em>Found/Hard</em>.</td>
<td><em>Green on Pink</em>® acrylic by <em>g j countryman</em></td>
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<td>My painting to right shows combinations of <em>Soft Edges</em>: S-1 covers colors of like value that blend with background; S-2 covers softened edges of like values, S-3 softens the pinker color down into the darker color creating distance. <em>Hard Edges</em>: H-1 &amp; 2 are examples of contrasting values with harder edges to move the eye around; H-3 is the Center of Interest with the most contrast of colors, values &amp; hard edges.</td>
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<td><em>Canopy</em>® acrylic by <em>g j countryman</em> to right is a great exercise in working with <em>lost and found edges</em> because clouds blend in, as well as separate themselves from the sky as they move around. I love to paint skies, and when I do, my format is a very low horizon line so the sky dominates. Therefore, any ground that shows up will not compete with the clouds.....so they will be a value close to or in the same range as the lower sky value. In this case, the darker blue values. Notice the blended colors in the hills are softened, not in focus and some of the sky color is dragged into them....this allows the eye to stay within the clouds. The darker values are scattered upward through the clouds: there are sharper edges on the bottom area of clouds and the wispy gray clouds toward the top for closer distance. The majority of the rest of the clouds are blended to create soft edges. The use of edge variation in edges builds depth, contrast and interest.</td>
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### Explanation

**HOW TO BLEND TO MAKE SOFT EDGES?**

**In watercolor:**
- **Wet on Wet:** With a wet surface, allow several colors to blend together.
- **Wet on Dry:** On dry painted surface, a damp brush with just water or a wash with color (less pigment + more water) can be painted over entire area that needs softened. Color of wash can be a color that is shared within the area to be painted over: cool to recede or warm to advance.

**In acrylic:**
- While paint is still wet and workable, use soft clean brush across areas to soften & blend paint slightly.
- On dry surface, a wash/glaze with water + pigment or glazing medium + pigment can be painted across area to be softened. **Remember a Wash or a Glaze is thinned down paint - transparent/translucent!**

**In oils:** Use same techniques as in acrylics but use oil medium rather than water to make glaze.

**In pastels:** Blend with finger or pastel stick

Using a soft touch with the brush across the paint still allows separation of color and value but blurs the edges enough to create depth and an out-of-focus appearance.

### Demonstration

**WHY DIGITAL PHOTOS CAN BE AN ARTIST’S WORSE ENEMY FOR REFERENCE MATERIAL!**

35mm cameras were great to zero in on close areas to sharpen their appearance and at the same time blur the background; but with our new digital photos, everything is equally in focus AND the dark shadows always appear BLACK. When novice artists begin to paint, they try to ‘copy’ everything they see in the photo, and the results are too many hard lines and black shadows. Try Plein Air to see.

The photos to the right are shown what the camera sees and what the human eye sees. Top is the the original photo where everything is in focus. The bottom is the same photo where I blurred out everything except for the tree to show you what the human eye sees when focused on the tree alone...the peripheral vision is blurred...this is basically how one should paint the subject. Think of a circle radiating outward from the Center of Interest (the tree in this instance)...as it moves away from the C of I, the objects around it gradually blur more and more toward the edges of the painting surface.

The artist should then pick and choose wisely a pathway somewhere within the painting by sharpening some of the edges...in this photo: some grasses and pebbles leading to the tree from the bottom edge of the photo towards the tree.