

Picture Study

From the Artist's Standpoint

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IN an Art course, pictures are studied not only for the purpose of forming an appreciation of their final beauty and an understanding of the story they may suggest, but also for the purpose of learning the various principles involved in their production.

After the various principles and methods that the artist has employed to get an effect have been studied and are understood, the picture becomes doubly interesting. The difficulties with which the artist had to contend become apparent: our appreciation is all the greater when we realize with what determination a problem has been attacked and see how successfully the difficulties have been overcome. Much knowledge is gained when a picture is considered from the standpoint of the artist who produced it.

While taking up a picture with a class the teacher has an opportunity to make the pupils familiar with the meanings of the more important technical words and phrases which are used in describing pictures. These the pupils will afterwards use in describing their own productions. The following are suggested, but the teacher might easily add a dozen or so more: composition; line (in composition); local colour; sky line; horizon line; rhythm; chiaroscuro; atmosphere; transparency; vibration; opaque colours; accent; reflection and shadow; action; impressionism; nocturne; mosaic; mural painting; conventional compositions; *genre* pictures; classical landscape, etc.

Our next consideration is what to study. It will not be necessary to append a long graded list of pictures for study in the various forms. Many such lists have already been made out. It might be well to suggest, however, that many of the "Old Masters" contain many errors, and much may be learned by a critical study of these. The subject becomes intensely practical, too, if the productions of the pupils, such as still life studies and simple landscapes, are studied in the same way. It might be well to suggest also that a course in picture study should include examples which illustrate the various technical methods of painting, as well as examples of the more important schools of painting.

Concerning method much has already been written. The writer has at times found it very instructive to study only one or two principles in a lesson, illustrating these by a large number of pictures by as many different artists.