

artist should be a law unto himself, and perhaps the "born artist" may be allowed to be his own law-maker, although that freedom often leads even him into absurd eccentricities; but he to whom nature has been less kind will do well to make use of the leading-strings deduced and formulated from the masters old and new by careful critical analysis.

The would-be trimmer who is not a born artist may, with advantage, put himself through a course of self-training in something like the following way. Let him lay a piece of white paper, a direct square, say 7 x 7 inches, on a dark background, and study the effect. It is not satisfactory. Uniformity and equality are the predominating elements, and uniformity and equality are inimical to pictorial effect.

If he will now cut a strip, two inches wide, from one of the four sides of the paper, and again lay it on the black, he will at once see why, almost "with one consent" and in all ages, pictures have been rectangular, either upright or horizontal, and be able to join the ranks of those who condemn the present fashion of mounting lantern slides in direct square, instead of rectangular mats.

Nature abhors straight lines, as she used to be said to do a vacuum, but it is nevertheless desirable to see straight lines in all her masses, and infinite variety and complication of curves, and to recognize the predominating feeling induced respectively by the three classes into which they arrange themselves, upright, horizontal, and angular. The upright line may be seen in the mountain, the stately oak, and the modern sky-scrapers of our American cities and castles of the older countries, and is expressive of aspiration,

strength, and stability; the horizontal, in the horizon itself, the sand on the seashore, and the sweep of the prairie, impresses us with a sense of repose; while the angular, typified by prevailing wind-bent trees and ridge-roofed buildings, conveys an idea of instability, and may never be satisfactorily introduced without a sufficient support of some kind. How easy it is to find such a support may be learned if the student will draw a line of three or four inches in length, and at an angle of, say, 45° to either of the boundary lines, or sides of the picture represented by the 7 x 5 pieces of paper. The lines seem unstable, conveying the idea rather of motion than of rest, but of motion that would be destructive rather than constructive. If now, however, a dot heavier in color than the line, although less than the diameter of a pencil, be placed at about the level of the lower end of the line, and well in front, near, for instance, the point that would be touched by the upper end of the line were it to fall, a change for the better will immediately be seen. The line, though still at an unstable angle, no longer conveys the idea of instability; it has been supported, and the eye now rests on it with the same impression of continuance as on the upright line. A similar effect will result from the addition of longer or shorter and correspondingly lighter or heavier lines placed at opposing angles, giving support, balance and contrast, all of which are essential to good composition or true pictorial effect, but it must always be remembered that the balancing, supporting, or contrasting matter must never be *equal* in size, color, number, or other quality to the lines to be balanced.

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