

Reflected Lights

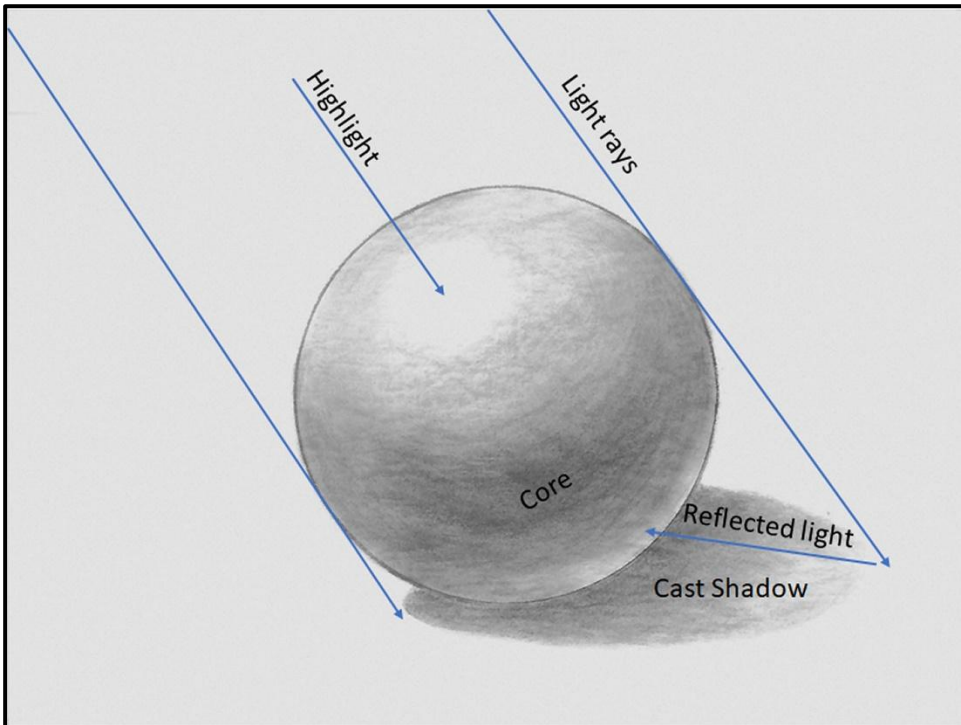
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Have you ever felt frustrated having worked so hard on a painting and find it still looks somewhat flat or not quite finished?

You check off your list that you have established a good center of interest, your objects have at least 3 values, the blending is well done and not over blended, the background is supportive, the light source has been established and so on. Have you included any reflected lights?

With an understanding on how reflected light works, and knowing how to paint it, will make your subjects appear more three-dimensional. Light is a very complex issue and reflected light is only one aspect of it. Reflected light tells the viewer that the object doesn't just stop at the shadow but gives it the appearance that it continues on around to the back adding dimension.

Light always travels in a straight line unless it is interrupted. The direct light is the primary light. Reflected light is an indirect light that comes from a source other than the primary light. It bounces back from the environment in a straight line and lights the shadow side of objects. Reflected light is never as strong as the primary. For example, the light of the moon is the sunlight reflecting off the moon and back to us. The lighter, shinier, or smoother the reflecting surface, the greater the amount of light it will reflect.



Light from the primary source that does not fall on an object continues past it into the environment, and some of this light is bounced back as reflected light. Most curved or rounded objects will have some reflected light within their shadow side.

Reflected light will come in the same shape on the basic form as other lights and shadows; on a book it would appear in a straight line, on an apple it would appear in a crescent shape.

The center of interest of your design and the objects within that area will have the strongest light.

That light should be a warm light that will draw your eye to that area. The reflected light needs to be a cool light, like the light from the moon. It should not draw your eye but help define the shape and form of the object.

You also may find that reflected light can help with lost edges; objects that are receding into the background that are close in value, temperature, and intensity as the background.

What color and value should a reflected light be? Reflected light is a combination of the local color of the object sending the light, the object receiving the light, and the quality of the light source. The temperature of the color should be on the cool side, the value must be darker than the highlight and the intensity should be low. I usually

start off with a medium value of a cool white in the blue or gray family and add a touch of the casting color or the color of the object receiving the light. On the apple I added a touch of the darker red to a powdery blue for a soft lavender but on the yellow lemon I added a touch of the darker yellow shading color to a medium cool gray. The reflected light on the lemon is next to a warm brown background and the lemon is a warm color so you don't want to go too cool in your color or it will bounce back at you and compete for attention.



This is a picture from a non-passing MDA board. Please Note: The problem with this board were the blueish grapes. They were too cool for *their placement in the design* with a warm background.



As you are placing a reflected light on an object that is sitting on a surface and you can see where it is making direct contact with the surface, it would not be able to go underneath that area because it would give the appearance of floating. If you have a cluster of grapes and the lower grapes are resting on a surface, the reflected light would not go all the way under the grapes but the reflected lights on the above grapes may flow further under. That would give them the appearance of hanging.



You want to keep your reflected lights soft and lightly fade them away. Don't create any harsh lines. There are different methods to achieve reflected lights. I personally like to dry brush. It's much easier to control and it allows a little bit of the background to filter through. It gives the appearance that it is resting on top.

Another point I want to make is; you shouldn't put a reflected light on everything and you don't want to make them the same size or value. That can create a spotty appearance and lose that natural look. The ones on objects closer to

the center of interest area can be a little more apparent, and those further away should be more subtle. Always keep your primary light source in mind and keep your reflected lights on the shadow side. They should support, and not compete with, the light side of your objects. I must reemphasize; reflected light is never as strong as your primary light source.

The use of reflected lights is a valuable addition to your art. They can create a delightful bit of variance to an otherwise uninteresting area. Remember that you are the artist and it's your prerogative where to add reflected lights but there are some rules that need to be followed for them to appear natural.



The reflected lights on the beets are apparent since they are located in the center of interest area yet still allows your eye to be drawn to the highlight area. Notice how cool they are and give the appearance that the beets continue on around to the back.



In this design the reflected lights on the vase brings some interest to that rather boring area. It really helps to give the appearance that the vase is round and squatty. The reflected lights on the rose petals allows the warm pink color to fall back towards the cooler shaded side. This also makes it look like the petals curve down and catch a light flowing in from behind.



On translucent fruit, such as raspberries, the light acts differently. Some of the highlight can pass through and some of the light gets trapped inside. This can create a haziness in each droplet. This is what happens inside water drops. Still, some lights can be reflected lights. It looks like the reflected light is under the raspberries but there are more droplets that we cannot see that are holding the raspberry up off the surface. Because raspberries are shiny and wet

looking, they catch the light and produce little highlights on each droplet.

