

## Painting Transparent Objects – by Sue Pruett MDA

In the Master Still Life category there is always a glass object included in the composition which is required to be painted as transparent glass. In the Certified Decorative Artist and Accredited Decorative Painter categories there is a container of some sort. The applicant can interpret that container as solid or transparent glass. Below are some tips to help you understand how to paint glass.

Transparent objects like glass, water, and water drops are easy to paint when you understand how to create the illusion that the object is indeed transparent. Just like anything else we paint transparent objects need both light and dark values to create the three-dimensional form and effect.

**Color of Glass** - There is no one color of paint that can be specific to painting glass. The color is relative to its surroundings; therefore the color of a clear object is determined by the background color, value and temperature, and what is directly behind the glass. The background can be a wall, surface, cloth, and so on. When objects behind the glass show through the transparent object that conveys to the viewer the object is transparent, or translucent. Glass can also be affected by colors of objects sitting next to or around picking up reflections and shadows from neighboring objects. As you can see in the photo below the transparent part of the wine glass is a cool gray from the cool white background.

When liquid is added in the glass, the color of the glass (in that area) changes to the color of the liquid. Liquid can be clear or opaque. Dark liquids can appear opaque depending how the light is directed along with the strength of the light source.



**Color of glass is relative to its surroundings.** The photo below illustrates an excellent example of how the glass is influenced by the background color and value. On the blue background, the dark values start with a darker blue continuing to black in the darkest areas. The light values appear white when in reality would be a very light blue and then continuing to a cool white. The lower back-lit light source adds interest and drama.



### **Distortion is an attribute of glass**

Notice the distortion on the glass objects in the background. The amount of distortion is determined by the thickness of the glass or the distance between the objects. The thicker the glass the more distortion you will see in the objects behind, also the further away the object is the more distortion you will see. Notice the distance between the martini glass and the drinking glass in the background.

Objects inside the glass like flower stems, leaves, contents, etc. will also be distorted; again the amount of distortion will be determined by the thickness of the glass. Being able to see through objects is one of the benefits to rendering glass and will help with the transparency of the object.

### **Form and Value = Dimensional Shape**

All objects are derived from one of four shapes. These four shapes are: sphere, cylinder, cone, and cube. When value placement is applied to a shape the result is a three-dimensional form. A minimum of three values are needed to start the dimensional process, although five to seven values are desired to achieve a greater degree of dimension in any particular shape or object . Anything can be painted to look realistic by first recognizing the shape, then knowing how to paint the shape to make it appear three-dimensional.

One of the first things to consider when painting any object is the shape. The shape determines where the values will be placed to create the three-dimensional form. Not so different than a solid object, the form is consistent the difference is transparency. What is different about glass, in comparison to a solid object, is how the sparkles of light are trapped inside the thickness of the glass.

Painting glass on dark backgrounds can be very dramatic due to the contrast between the dark background and the light shines. The light values are used to create the form and dimension. On light values backgrounds the darkest values will be more visible, and will be important for building the form/shape and dimension, refer to the photo with the light blue background.



Glass Still Life painting by Sue Pruett MDA copyright 2014  
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