

## STAGES OF CREATING A COMPLEX STILL LIFE COMPOSITION IN PAINTING

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**Abstract:** This article provides a step-by-step explanation of the process of creating a complex still life composition in painting. It analyzes every stage, from selecting the components of the still life and arranging them compositionally, to creating a pencil sketch, building volume through light and shadow, enriching textures, and applying final touches. Using a thematic still life featuring pomegranates and grapes, the article thoroughly describes compositional structure, methods of achieving realistic representation, spatial relationships among objects, and artistic solutions. The article serves as a practical methodological guide for art teachers, students, painters, and artists engaged in painting.

**Keywords:** painting, still life, composition, light and shadow, texture, pencil sketch, realism, proportion, contrast, pomegranate, grapes, color tone, artistic depiction, creative approach, step-by-step technique

Creating a complex still life begins with selecting objects appropriate to the theme. The objects should vary in texture (smooth, rough, glossy, absorbent), shape, and color. The more interestingly the artist arranges them, the more meaningful and aesthetically expressive the artwork becomes. It is essential to determine the main focal point of the composition - the object that captures the viewer's attention. Other objects must complement or direct the viewer toward this focal point. The light source also plays a significant role in defining the composition. Before painting, a pencil sketch is made. The artist must carefully determine how the objects will be placed on the surface, their proportions, shapes, and perspective. The main task at this stage is to establish compositional balance. Visualizing each object through basic geometric forms (cube, cylinder, cone, etc.) helps achieve accuracy.

Light and shadow are used to create volume. A complex still life contains many objects, each with unique shadows, illuminated areas, and reflected light. The direction and number of light sources (single or multiple) must be considered. Linear or cross-hatching techniques are typically used, gradually deepening shadows.

Color application breathes life into the artwork. First, general color tones are applied in thin and light layers - this is known as the underpainting stage. The artist decides which color temperature (warm or cool) will dominate the composition. The detailing stage is the most expressive phase of the work. The surface qualities (texture), color transitions, clean edges, and highlights are carefully defined. For example, the shine of glass or the smoothness of silk is achieved through specific techniques. At this stage, the artwork gains depth, spatial coherence, realism, and emotional impact. Now, based on the theme, the following describes the creation of a complex still life featuring pomegranates and grapes.

The first stage: Determining the placement of the composition. Before drawing, the layout of the composition, its general proportions, and the locations of the main shapes are established on the paper. Using light graphite strokes, the approximate positions of the pomegranate, basket,

and grapes are marked. The goal is to clarify the spatial arrangement and achieve harmony in proportions. The balanced placement of the central objects - the pomegranate and the basket - is especially important. The lines are drawn lightly because they will be refined or removed later.

The second stage: Refining the main shapes. At this stage, the initial sketch is developed, and the contours of each object are clarified. Cracks on the pomegranate's surface, the weave of the basket, and the arrangement of grape clusters are defined. The volumetric structure of each object is drawn more precisely. For instance, the calyx of the pomegranate is depicted naturally. The angle and interwoven structure of the basket's fibers are represented accurately.

The grapes are arranged in groups, with attention given to distinguishing those in the foreground from those further back. Spatial relationships (near-far, higher-lower) are clearly expressed, giving the composition greater realism.

The third stage: Creating volume with light and shadow. The light source is identified, and each object is given highlights and shadows accordingly. This stage adds depth, dimension, and naturalism to the drawing. Illuminated parts of the pomegranate are drawn more softly, while shaded areas are darkened gradually. The weave of the basket changes with light - upper fibers appear brighter, while lower ones appear darker. The translucency and volume of the grapes are achieved through reflections and soft transitions between light and shadow. Contrast begins to emerge, making the drawing visually engaging. Light and shadow also help reveal the objects' surface qualities - smoothness, roughness, or glossiness. The fourth stage: Detailing and enriching texture.

At this stage, the drawing is enriched with fine details. Tiny cracks on the pomegranate, the texture of its surface, the intersection of the basket fibers, the glossy highlights on the grapes, and softly illuminated areas are carefully rendered. If a background is included, it is worked in harmony with the composition. The texture of each object is depicted realistically. This stage requires creativity and precision, as detailed work dramatically enhances the artistic quality of the still life.

The fifth stage: Final adjustments and overall refinement. The final stage involves reviewing the entire composition. Each part of the drawing is harmonized, contrast is strengthened where needed, and unnecessary lines are cleaned. If shadows are insufficiently deep, they are intensified; if highlights are weak, they are refined. Every object is considered not in isolation, but as part of the whole composition. The level of completeness is determined at this stage: all details must be proportionate, balanced, and aesthetically pleasing. The artwork gains a professional, finished appearance.

Conclusion. Creating a complex still life composition requires not only technical skills but also compositional thinking, observation, and the ability to analyze color and light. Selecting appropriate objects, arranging them harmoniously, and correctly determining proportion and spatial perspective are key factors in producing a successful artwork. Accurate light and shadow create depth and volume, while detailing enhances the visual appeal of the still life. The example of a thematic still life with pomegranates and grapes illustrates essential methodological steps: establishing the drawing foundation, refining forms, analyzing light, applying textures, and completing the final refinements.

These methods serve as a practical guide for painting students and help lay the foundation for producing high-quality artworks in the still life genre.

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