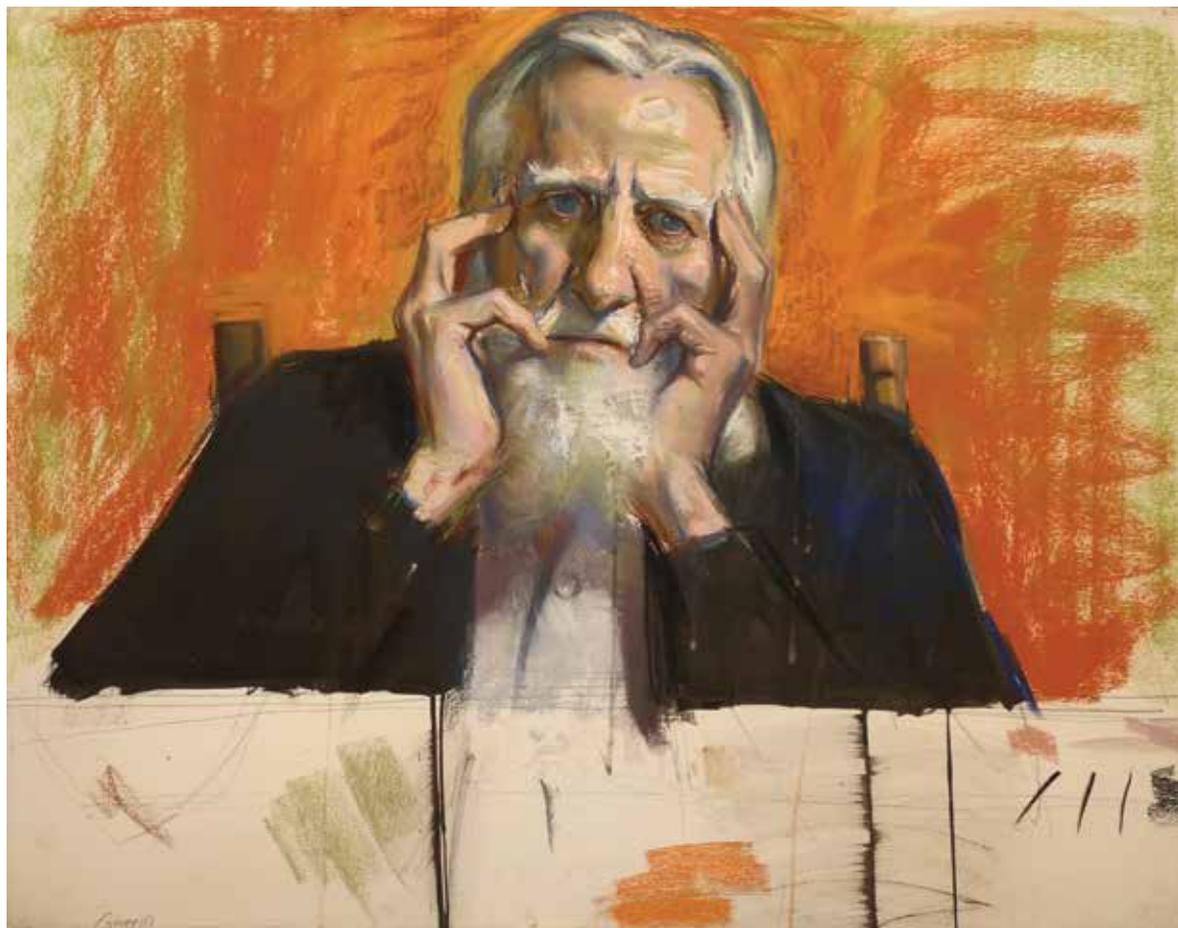


# DRAWING AS PAINTING,



# PAINTING AS DRAWING

Far from being distinct disciplines, drawing and painting overlap in countless ways. We explore the relationship between them to see how artists can use painting strategies to improve their drawing, and vice versa.

BY DAN GHENO

Some historians, critics and artists are fond of putting drawing and painting into separate, stiffly defined categories. For many, the medium of painting is defined by its wetness, color, and paint texture, whereas drawing is defined by the dryness of its tools, surface, and pigments and by its use of line and value.

Some of this separatism can be attributed to critics such as Clement Greenberg, who in the 1940s and 1950s fervently advocated *medium specificity*. This theory, first promulgated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, argues that any piece of art, from a painting to a symphony, must hold true to the essential nature of its materials for it to have artistic validity. Greenberg advocated stripping painting and drawing down to their essence—not much more than a two-dimensional, non-objective use of pigment on a flat surface, devoid of any external, objective, illusionary, narrative or psychologically symbolic purpose.

The theory still holds sway. Even today some realist and expressive figurative artists, who pursue the three-dimensional and emotive elements that Greenberg detested, tend to downplay the importance of the drawing process while painting. The worry is that emphasizing drawing within the painting process and leaving traces of drawing visible on the painted surface dilutes the power of the painting medium's essential nature.

On the other hand, many figurative artists understand the importance of combining drawing and painting mentalities, believing that there is immense symbiotic strength in combining the two forces within one image, whether “painted” or “drawn.” This article will investigate the practical methods and techniques these artists have utilized over the ages to harness the drawing mentality and its use of line, value and shape to better control the painting process and give painted forms more volume and structure. We will also look at how artists have applied painterly methods to their drawings to give their dry work a more spatial, realistic quality or a looser, more expressive feeling.

## DRAWING AS PAINTING: *Pastel*

The medium that most obviously blurs the line between drawing and painting is pastel—to the point that many artists and academics argue which term to call it. If one must force pastel into a category, I usually encourage my students to think of it as a dry form of painting. This helps an artist think beyond the stylistic preconceptions that come from the presumption that drawing is primarily a line-based medium.

Too often pastel artists arbitrarily limit themselves to simply building up color through a weave of hatched linework. It is certainly true that juxtaposing lines of color next to each other is one of pastel's unique strengths, as we can see in Degas' (1834–1917) *Nude Woman Drying Herself*. The viewer's eyes mix these individual colors and re-create the prismatic sensation

OPPOSITE PAGE  
**Passion**  
by Dan Gheno,  
ca. 1995, pastel,  
20 x 28. Collec-  
tion the artist.

BELOW  
**Nude Woman  
Drying Herself**  
by Edgar Degas,  
ca. 1890, pastel,  
21½ x 28.  
Collection  
Philadelphia  
Museum of Art,  
Philadelphia,  
Pennsylvania.

Degas used the pastel medium in a variety of ways. Sometimes he massed shapes broadly, as he also did in his oils. Other times, as in this piece, he built up his tones through stroked colors and values that merge optically in the viewer's eye.

