

# WALDORF CLEARING HOUSE NEWSLETTER

On The Origins of the Shading Technique  
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On The Granite By Goethe

Stories and Poems By Helen St. John

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ON THE ORIGINS OF THE SHADING TECHNIQUE

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Extracts from "Rudolf Steiner's Indications for the Glass Windows"  
by Assia Turgenieff.

... Only in 1916 were the circumstances right that I dared to approach Dr. Steiner with my Black and White problems in the silent form of a pair of drawings. I showed Dr. Steiner a "Madonna on the Stairs" as he called it. "The child is quite Russian", he said. "But this aura is like wire. I will show you how you should engrave it with the direction of the strokes." And with random strokes in all directions he redrew the picture on a sheet of paper. "In the direction of the strokes it concerns me that it comes into intensive activity; I mean that it shines from the inside out; that is what I seek in contrast to the extensive illumination from outside."

Yet when the rendering was finished, Dr. Steiner looked at it for a long time and said, somewhat disappointed, that this way of drawing was not the correct one. He did not know how one could reproduce spiritual impressions of light in artistic work. He wanted to think it over. So I did not make further progress in the art of shading. In feeling it remained a distant goal, the "intensive", "the shining from the inside out".

In the expectation of receiving new indications I repeatedly brought my drawings to Dr. Steiner, among others the picture of a child in bright light, lying on straw. Yet again it was not pleasing. "You needn't make this straw so naturalistic. You could use it to bring out cloud-like etheric streamings, so that one does not rightly know what it is. Study the color movements in the painting of the small cupola (of the old Goetheanum). One should seek what is around and between things, what leads into the etheric.

And Dr. Steiner drew soft interweaving forms, with the direction of the strokes following the movement of those forms, roughly in the following way:



"What lies between things" - these words carried a prophecy in them, a picture not visible, towards which only the sensitivity could grope.

At the end of January Dr. Steiner met me with a drawing-block in his hand, and as he so often showed others what he was just working on, he stopped also with me. It was a drawing of the Kabiri (of Samothrace, seen in the production of Faust), which he had modelled earlier for the Faust performances. "Photographs of models are always a horror", he said. "I have sought here how one can reproduce the plastic in drawing", he added.

That in this sketch his artistic activity had found a way already for the drawing became clear to him only later.

In relation to illustrative art Dr. Steiner said to me once, that works where the content is related to the realm of the purely soul aspects, should be reproduced only in color. On the other hand the black and white technique is suitable for such works which call on the Spiritual and Soul realm. He would have liked to see his Philosophy of Freedom illustrated in black and white.

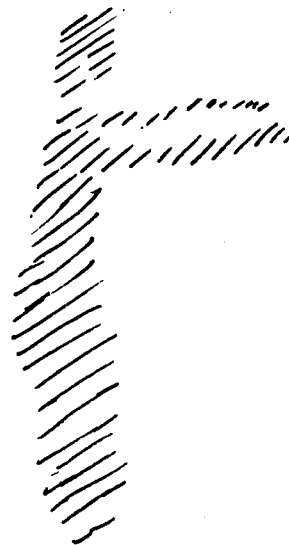
Some attempts at composition which I brought to him prompted him to say that it was good to use such symbolic motifs as the Apocalyptical Beasts; one must do that already, but one should not go completely into the symbolic, but release it into pictures, hide it, as for example he did with the four beasts in the drawing of the red window.

"Understanding is a bad dog in the Artistic", he said at another time. "Certainly you must have had a thought, an idea. But then you must leave it, forget it and only work out of the feeling. You should never know beforehand how the picture, the composition will look when finished. First make a figure, and then you must concentrate on it completely; then comes the second figure, and then look how it relates with the first, and so on; finally you have a composition. You must await the composition, never imagine it and fix it".

Again one stood hopeless before such words and could only listen to them inwardly. And yet the composition in his pictures was so completely regulated, so logically and mathematically built up.

Soon after Dr. Steiner gave me the diagonal shading technique, I saw one of the drawings he made for Miss Maryon. Much became clear to me from the scarcely indicated sketch. Since it was lost, I can only reproduce it here from memory:

It showed a woman who was inclining herself towards a group of children. Only a shadow - but already the whole form and movement was there. And yet, one had the feeling: the form can change, bend itself further, stretch the hands out further. It leaves the onlooker free. It also leaves the artist in full freedom able to change it, until the completion of the whole picture, to seek the formation. A firm contour would not have allowed for this. It belongs also in the first experiences which are made through these methods. An artist who from the beginning fixes his picture in contours takes away thus the artistic element, and weakens his own activity. Through the contourless seeking of form he has the possibility, till the picture is completed, of forming his work as it arises in the element of becoming. "You must make a surface, and direct on it your whole feeling and attention and then the next surface," Dr. Steiner said to us often during the carving of the architraves of the Goeth-eaunum," and curiously, excitedly wait to see what arises as a dividing line between the two surfaces. You should never predetermine these."

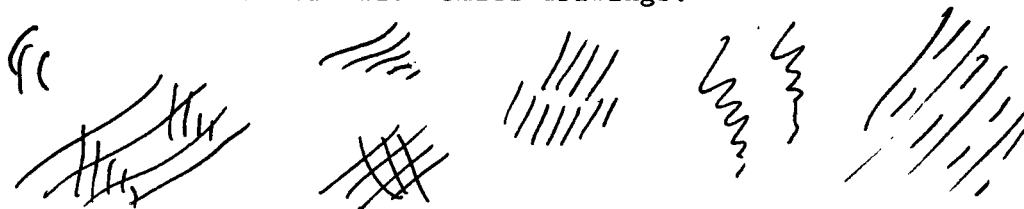


In a related sense this advice can also be applied to drawing. A denial of the fixture of the line brings with it an element of the unexpected which comes to meet one in the work; so to speak, an Unknown, that straightway demands greater awakeness and inner activity. It brings with it - if one really succeeds in working in this method - a feeling of the disturbing rigidity in the artistic work of intellectual imagination from calculating, and concentrates consciousness on an activity in feeling itself, which works with the contrasts of cold and warm, light and heavy, and out of this inner groping establishes the forms, not preconceiving but creating them.

"Only in your heads are you sentimental" said Dr. Steiner to the eurythmists. "The heart already knows the correct way". But the heart has above all to do with the rhythmic system. A kind of rhythm, rhythmical lawfulness into which one comes by the shading technique and makes it possible to incorporate the rhythmical element as bearer of the individual life ever newly arising.

"In the stroke lives the Ego, the character. It must be as varied as possible, for it has the characterising element. One can prove for oneself how much richer the shadows are when they are done in shading and how enrichingly it works even on the formation when it is limited to one shading direction.\*

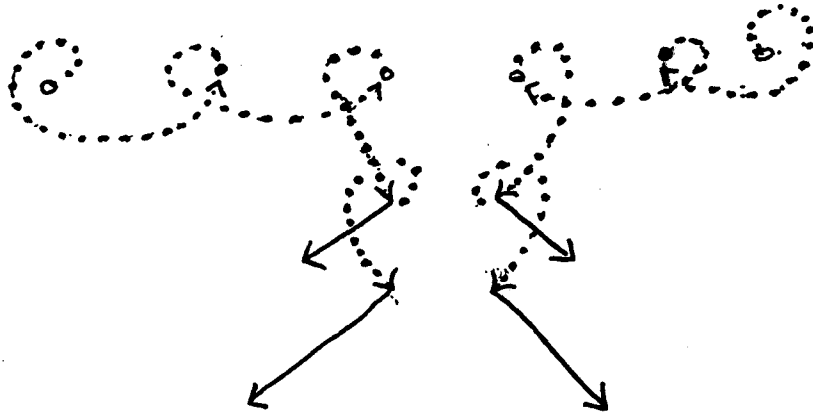
To get more concrete indications for the diagonal shading I brought two more drawings to Dr. Steiner. Then he spoke on the shading method and clarified it further more with small drawings.



"The strokes never go with the form - they must have nothing to do with the form. You see how with yours the strokes, even if quite gently, bent with the plastic forms. These are mistakes. One must learn to shade quite independently of the form. So never make bent strokes, otherwise one comes finally to the line, but the line is a lie in the artistic. You may certainly use the line in building up a drawing - but no more than an architect uses a scaffolding to build a house. When the house is finished then the scaffolding is taken away. So you may not start with the line, and at the end of the drawing every trace of the contour must vanish. The strokes must be quite clearly visible, free and characteristic. .

There must be the utmost varied character in the strokes; it depends on making them as different as possible - lightly, firmly, narrowly or broadly-placed, etc., That gives rise to the artistic. When you gradually want to darken a surface, in my opinion if you can't get it any other way, then you can also cross them, but quite diagonally, never at a right angle. But try to achieve that you narrow the strokes, putting new strokes between the strokes, so that the stroke direction always remains the same. In this way you free the artistic from the line: for the Line is never beautiful in the Artistic".

To be clear about it, I showed him during a eurythmy rehearsal of eurythmy form which he had just drawn. Here everything was in lines and it was artistically beautiful:<sup>1</sup>



"You only think it is beautiful", he replied. "It is only beautiful when it is run in space, that is, in Time. (Compare form drawing). A line is artistically correct only in the caricature; for the caricature is purely intellectual. Only in this art is intellect, and so the line is rightly in place".

A freeing from the intellectual conceptual life bound up in our consciousness, demands however an intensification of consciousness, a training which can only be "ACHIEVED THROUGH WORK". "Kunst (Art) comes from Können (to be able)" was the favorite phrase of Dr. Steiner. "Fifty times you must paint the picture, then it will be right", he encouraged an artist who throughout possessed artistry and technique. "You must carry out a form so long, till it is so fluently instinctive as bringing a spoon to the mouth. Only then are you free for the artistic" was his advice to eurythmists.

As a guiding maxim, Rudolf Steiner often applied to all departments of art the sentence from Goethe's Prose Aphorisms ('Sprüchen in Prosa'):

'He to whom Nature begins to reveal her open secrets feels an irresistible longing for her worthiest commentator, Art.' 'The Beautiful is the manifestation of secret laws of Nature, which without it would remain eternally hidden,' says Goethe in another passage.

If we try to penetrate to the secret, natural laws of light and shade we find an essential difference between these and the law of color. This tendency to flow into forms and movements can be seen not only in the colors of solid forms - flesh - color, for example, or color in plants - but also in the transient phenomena of the sky. But if we see an illuminated face slowly moving in the light, we realise at once, from this simple study, that light and shadow have nothing to do with form. Their effects only become visible; they reveal the objects, but they themselves belong to a world that has nothing in common with forms, that in fact does not 'follow the form'.

If we penetrate further into the nature of these two elements, light and shade, we find, in the first place (as is known from the simplest optical experiments), that light has a tendency to expand, to appear larger, but that shade has an inward, diminishing effect.

The expanding quality of light may be described as a tendency to escape, to become lighter, to strive upwards, while the dark can be felt as a contracting, coagulating force that drags down into weight or gravity.

If anyone tries to feel this duality in himself, and to analyse it, he becomes aware that the left half of his body is more related to the expanding forces, and the right half to the forces of contracting. The inner gesture which sets up a relationship to these two forces - the gesture of a living, mobile equipoise - reveals in man himself the diagonal direction from the top left-hand to the bottom right-hand side.

The stroke carried from the top right to the bottom left (for the spectator) which brings about the interplay of light and shade, whether the artist is working from the light into the shade or the reverse, is in harmony with the "secret laws of Nature". It is the task of art to interpret these laws.

In the central motif\*of the Goetheanum we find the polarity of light and dark, and their comparison, distinctly presented for the first time.

\* The statue of Christ, the Representative of Man, with Lucifer above and Ahriman below.

1. This eurythmy form is inserted arbitrarily by the translator to illustrate what was being discussed.

This articles is used in the training course at the Waldorf Institute of Southern California and the translation is still subject to alteration and annotation.

The last seven paragraphs are taken from Valerie Jacobs - "Black and White Drawing".

## ON THE GRANITE

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

(Written in 1784 and intended as part of a "Novel of the Universe" which was never continued)

The granite was renowned already in antiquity and has become more so in our own age. The ancients did not know it under this name. They called it Syenite, after the town of Syene at the borders of Ethiopia. The immense masses of this stone inspired the Egyptians to design immense monuments. Their kings erected granite obelisks in honor of the Sun. At that time, because of its red-speckled color, it was called the "fiery many-hued" stone. The Sphinxes, the Memnon statues, the colossal columns of the Egyptians still excite the admiration of travelers.

Later this stone was called granite because of its granular texture. It had to endure a few moments of humiliation before attaining the esteem now accorded to it by all observers of nature. For the immense dimensions of the obelisks and the marvelous variety of their grain induced an Italian scientist to assume that these monuments had been formed by the Egyptians out of an artificially produced liquid mass.

But this opinion was soon swept away. The renown of this stone was finally established by many excellent observers. Every excursion into unknown mountain regions confirmed the earlier experience that the granite was the highest as well as the deepest rock formation; it confirmed that this stone, which one learned to study more thoroughly and differentiate from other kinds, was the primeval foundation of our earth. Above it all the other most manifold had been built up. The granite rests immovably in the innermost intestines of the earth; its high ridges rise upward and their summits have never been reached by the surrounding water. That much is known of this stone, but little more. Mysteriously blended from known components, it does not permit us to derive its origin either from fire or water. Its mixture, manifold and yet uniform, varies in innumerable ways. The position and relationship of its parts, its durability, its colors differ in each mountain range. Also the masses of each single mountain change from step to step and yet, if viewed as a whole, are ever the same.

Therefore those who know how man is attracted by the secrets of nature will not be surprised that I have left the circle of my usual observations and turned with a most passionate inclination to this field. I do not fear the reproach that it must have been a spirit of contradiction which led me from the contemplation and description of the human heart, the youngest, most manifold, most restless, most changeable part of creation to the observation of the granite,

this eldest, firmest, deepest, most unshakeable son of nature. For everyone will concede that all natural things stand in a definite relationship to one another and that the investigating spirit will not let itself be excluded from any attainable sphere. I have suffered and am still suffering from the changes in human sentiments, from their restless movement within myself and within others. May I now be granted the exalted peace given by the lonely, silent nearness of great, softly speaking nature. May all follow me who have a glimmer of the same feelings!

In such a mood I approach you, the most ancient, the most exalted monuments of the ages. Sitting on a high, bare summit and surveying the wide landscape, I may say to myself: Here you are resting directly on a foundation which reaches down to the deepest layers of the earth. No later strata, no piled-up conglomerations have pushed themselves between you and the firm ground of the primeval world. You do not walk, as in those fertile, beautiful valleys, across persisting graves. These summits have produced nothing living and have devoured no thing living. They are before all life and above all life. At this moment when, as it were, the inner earth forces of attraction and motion affect me directly and the heavenly influences soar closer to me, I become attuned to a higher observation of nature. And, since the human spirit gives life to everything, a comparison arises in me whose loftiness I cannot resist. Looking down from the completely bare summit and seeing at its foot nothing but a meager patch of moss in the far distance, I say to myself: This same loneliness will be experienced by the man who wants to open his soul only to the most ancient, the most primeval, the most profound feelings of truth.

Such a man would exclaim: Here, at this old eternal altar built directly on the depth of creation, I bring a sacrifice to the Being of all Beings. I experience the first, firmest beginnings of our existence. I survey the world, its rugged and softer valleys, its distance fertile pastures. My soul is lifted above itself and above all other things; it is longing for the nearness of Heaven!

But soon the burning sun recalls hunger and thirst, man's human needs. He looks back at those valleys above which his spirit had been soaring. He envies the inhabitants their fertile lands abounding in springs. These men have erected their happy dwellings on the rubble and ruins of errors and beliefs; they scratch up the dust of their forefathers and satisfy, within a narrow circle, the modest needs of the day. Prepared by such thoughts, the soul penetrates into past centuries. It recalls the observations of careful observers, the conjectures of fiery spirits. This cliff, I say to myself, jugged upward to the clouds in a more rugged, more indented form when this summit stood like a sea-girt island among the ancient waters. Around this cliff soared the Spirit who was brooding above the waves. Out of their wide womb the higher mountains were formed from the fragments of primeval rocks. And, in their turn, the fragments of those wave-born mountains and the remnants of the creatures inhabiting them formed the later, more distant mountain ranges. Now the moss begins to sprout. The shell-enclosed ocean creatures diminish. The water sinks down. The higher mountains become verdant and everything begins to teem with life.

But soon this life is opposed by new scenes of destruction. In the distance rise raging volcanos. They seem to threaten the world with perdition. But the foundation on which I am still sitting in safety remains unshaken, while the inhabitants of distant shores and isles are buried underneath the faithless soil.

I return from those roving contemplations and look anew at the rocks whose presence elevates my soul. I see their masses severed by irregular crevices.



Here they rise upward in a straight, there in a slanting line. Now they are built up in sharp outlines, and then again thrown together in formless clumps. At first glance, I might exclaim: Nothing here is in its primeval condition; everything spells ruins, disorder and destruction. This opinion will be confirmed if we turn away from the living contemplation of the rocks and, retiring to our study, open the works written by our forefathers. In one it is said: The primeval mountains were a whole, as if cast out of one piece. In another: They were separated by clefts into layers and banks cut through in every direction by numerous veins. In a third: This rock contains no layers but appears in masses alternately separated from one another without the slightest regularity. A fourth observer asserts that he encountered distinct stratification in one spot, complete disorder in another. How can we reconcile all these contradictions? How can we find a guiding line for further observations?

This is the path I want to pursue. And even if I should be less fortunate than I wish and desire, my efforts will give others the opportunity to go forward. In the course of such investigations even errors are useful, because they arouse attention and enable acute minds to practice their powers.

At this point, a warning may not be superfluous. One should learn to differentiate the granite from other stones. The Italians still mistake lava for small-specked granite; The Frenchmen gneiss, which they call laminated granite or second grade granite. And even we Germans, who are generally conscientious in such matters, have recently confounded granite with a kind of rock baked together out of quartz and hornstone or with the gray rock of the Harz mountains, a more interpenetrating mixture of quartz and slate.

Translated by ERNA McARTHUR