

ABSTRACTION > FIGURATION > ABSTRACTION

A 10-Week Painting Course

Exploring the space between observation, representation and abstraction

The 10-Week Structure

The course is divided into two distinct but connected parts.

Weeks 1–5: Structured Exploration

The first five weeks provide a guided introduction to key methods, processes and ideas involved in both abstract and figurative painting.

Week 1 — Colour, Material and Intuition

An experimental introduction to colour and materials.

Participants will work intuitively through collage, colour experimentation and painterly processes, exploring:

- Colour relationships
- Texture and surface
- Material qualities
- Paint application
- Scale and composition

The emphasis will be on experimentation and discovering unexpected visual possibilities.

Week 2 — Colour Theory and Painting from Collage

Participants will explore the principles of colour theory through practical experimentation.

Activities may include:

- Making and using a colour wheel
- Exploring complementary and contrasting colour relationships
- Developing paintings from collages and colour studies
- Considering the emotional and spatial effects of colour
- Preparing coloured grounds as starting points for further painting

The focus will be on understanding colour not simply as something descriptive, but as an active and expressive element within a painting.

Week 3 — Figure, Space and Abstraction

Working from a dressed model posed alongside coloured and draped fabrics, participants will explore the relationship between the human figure and the surrounding space.

Drawing and painting will be used to investigate:

- Figure and ground
- Interior space
- Colour relationships
- Simplification
- Distortion and abstraction
- The possibility of allowing the space around the figure to become as active as the figure itself

This session will consider how observation can become a starting point for increasingly abstract forms of visual interpretation.

Week 4 — Scale, Simplification and Composition

Building upon the previous sessions, participants will be encouraged to expand and develop their ideas.

There will be a particular focus on:

- Working on a larger scale
- Simplifying visual information
- Developing formal relationships
- Composition and design
- Moving between drawing, painting, figuration and abstraction

Participants will be encouraged to identify and develop the visual possibilities emerging from their own work.

Week 5 — Observation, Natural Form and Developing Ideas

The final week of the structured programme will provide an opportunity to consolidate the ideas and processes explored so far.

Working may include:

- Still life
- Natural forms
- Direct observation
- Further experimentation with abstraction
- Development of individual ideas and visual themes

Participants will begin identifying possible directions for their own independent project.

Weeks 6–10: Developing Your Own Painting Project

The second half of the course shifts towards **supported independent practice**.

Participants will develop an individual painting project based on the interests, ideas and visual language that have emerged during the first five weeks.

Week 6 — Review and Direction

A review and discussion of work produced so far.

Participants will consider:

- What has been successful?
- Which ideas are worth developing?
- What formal or conceptual directions are beginning to emerge?
- How might the work develop further?

Individual guidance will help participants identify possible next steps.

Week 7 — Independent Development

Supported independent working begins in earnest.

Participants will continue developing their individual projects while revisiting technical and practical approaches to:

- Paint application

- Colour
- Composition
- Surface
- Scale
- Drawing and mark-making

Reflection and discussion will remain an important part of the process.

Week 8 — Observation or Independent Project

Depending on individual interests and requirements, participants may choose to:

- Continue working from observation
- Return to the figure, still life or natural forms
- Work from memory or imagination
- Continue developing their independent project

This flexibility allows each participant to pursue the direction most appropriate to their work.

Week 9 — Developing the Project

A sustained period of independent work with individual guidance and critical support.

Participants will be encouraged to take greater ownership of their ideas and to consider how their paintings are developing as a coherent body of work.

Week 10 — Resolution and Presentation

The final session focuses on bringing the project towards a successful resolution.

Participants will review the work produced during the course and select or develop a piece that best represents their individual interests, visual language and artistic development.

Work may be considered for presentation in an **end-of-course Open Studio Exhibition**, providing an opportunity to share the outcomes of the course with others.

Artists and Context

Throughout the course, painting will be explored in relation to both historical and contemporary artists.

Possible artists central to this discussion include:

Henri Matisse · Milton Avery · Richard Diebenkorn · Ellsworth Kelly · Jade Fadojutimi · Pam Evelyn · Rachel Jones · Hurvin Anderson · Christina Quarles

These artists provide very different approaches to questions surrounding colour, abstraction, figuration, space, memory, identity, observation and the material language of painting.

Weekly introductory talks and discussions will provide participants with valuable visual references and contextual starting points for their own experimentation.

What Will You Take Away?

By the end of the 10 weeks, participants will have:

- Explored the relationship between figurative and abstract painting.
- Experimented with a range of painting and drawing techniques.
- Developed a greater understanding of colour and colour relationships.
- Worked from observation, memory and imagination.
- Explored scale, composition, surface and materiality.
- Engaged with important historical and contemporary painting practices.
- Developed greater confidence in experimentation and independent decision-making.
- Received individual support in developing their own painting project.
- Produced a body of work that reflects their individual interests and artistic development.

Most importantly, the course aims to provide a critically supportive environment in which participants can take risks, experiment and develop their own **visual voice**.

Whether you are beginning a new direction in your work or looking to expand an existing painting practice, **Abstraction > Figuration > Abstraction** is designed as both a starting point for further inquiry and a space for the development of an already established artistic practice.

The course is open to anyone interested in exploring painting as a living, experimental and contemporary form of artistic practice.