

TOP 25 ARTIST MISTAKES

(and how to avoid them)

by Nolan Clark

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Author

Nolan Clark

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**Top 25 Artist Mistakes
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The artist is so eager to get started with the drawing or painting that they quickly sketch out the initial outline work onto the paper or canvas freehand. As their freehand skills have not been developed yet, their initial drawing work is skew and not to scale.



It doesn't matter how good you shade or paint the artwork from then on, the final artwork will always be skew and out of proportion. So the end result is you could have a photographic looking artwork that just doesn't look right to the viewer.

There will always be that something bothering them and the chances of you selling that artwork will be slim to zero at best.

The Solution

Although there are times when you can do this and get away with sketching in your initial outlines freehand, for example if you are sketching out a general landscape en-plein air (outdoors). More often than not you will not be able to get away with a skew initial drawing. There are however a few things you can do to overcome the problem:

1) Freehand Sketches

If you really do want to do your drawing work freehand, then first practice your sketch on a spare piece of paper. Ensure the paper has roughly the same proportions as your canvas / final drawing paper. It doesn't have to be the same size, just the same proportions. Then do a few sketches of the scene.

When doing these sketches, keep the angle of the paper parallel to the scene you are redrawing otherwise you will get what is called a parallax fault in your sketches.

You will find that the first drawing you do may end up pretty skew and out of proportion. Look at the drawing carefully so that you recognise which areas of your drawing are skew and out of proportion. Then do another sketch or two of the scene. Subsequent drawings will become better and better. Do this until you feel confident you will be able to redraw the scene correctly onto the canvas / final drawing paper.

Then once you have redrawn the scene onto the canvas, stand back to look at the drawing from normal viewing distance. You will be amazed that you may still have areas that are skew and out of proportion. Go back and fix them before continuing.

Drawing freehand takes a lot of practice as you need to develop the eye / hand skills first, but once mastered, you will not be sorry you did take the time.

2) Freehand with a Proportional Divider

A proportional divider is the most handy tool you can get when it comes to freehand drawing. It allows you to redraw a scene accurately onto your canvas or paper with the knowledge that all your proportions and angles are 100% correct. Once you have used a proportional divider a few times, you will actually find that using it to redraw is just as quick as, if not quicker than, doing freehand sketches.

Using a proportional divider also helps to train your eye / hand to see the proportions and angles correctly, so soon you will actually find that you only

need to use it to get the most important dimensions plotted out onto the canvas. The rest you will be able to freehand in accurately.

A proportional divider is also very compact so doesn't take up much space if you are venturing outdoors.

3) Grid

Easily one of the best methods to ensure your initial drawing work is accurate is to use the grid method. Invented by the ancient Egyptians, this method does take a little effort to get your head around. Once you understand the concept however, it is as easy as pie to redraw even the most complex scenes.

The secret to using the grid method is to choose the correct size grid. If you choose one that has too many blocks you will go squint trying to redraw your scene. On the other hand if you choose a grid that is too large, then you lose a lot of accuracy in your scene.

Another tip when using the grid is to keep your finger pointing to the block on the reference photo you are redrawing. That way you don't need to find the correct block every time you look back and forth between your reference and drawing.

4) Printouts

My favourite way of redrawing a scene that I need 100% accurate (when working from a photo) is to print out the photo to the same dimensions as my canvas. Many software programs allow you to print out a photo over multiple pages, which you then tile together to make one large image. You can then transfer your main outlines directly from the tiled print onto your drawing paper or canvas.

The final artwork is only as good as the
initial drawing.

The artist will paint the scene exactly as they see it despite the fact that the scene will not make a pleasing painting.



The painting may look good as far as the actual painting techniques are concerned, but the painting as a whole won't have the wow factor and will often be outright confusing to look at.

As an example, take a look at the photo below:



It looks like a perfectly good scene to paint. You have a family heading out for a picnic in the park, the kids are all excited because even Grandma and Pops have come along today. What an awesome memory to capture on canvas.

The problem here though is that the figures are all so spread out over the width of the scene that your eye doesn't know where to look. There is no definite focal area in the scene. If you had to paint this scene it will be very disturbing to look at.

The Solution

Use your Artist License to move the figures around to form a closer knit group like this:



All that was required here was to move the lady at the back, into the group, so that we closed the “holes” separating the group.

Where previously the trailing lady tended to draw your eye out of the scene because she was so close to the edge, there is now nothing to look at in that area so your eye will move back inward towards the grouping of figures. They now form the main focal point in this scene

As the figures are now closer together, you get a sense that they are happily chatting away where before they were all walking too regimented / single file to suggest that they are chatting away.

The little girl is still running off ahead suggesting the excitement in the air. She forms a great secondary focal point in the scene.

Isn't it amazing how such a small change can alter the entire atmosphere in your painting?

Let's look at another example of when you would use your Artist License.



What a lovely scene to paint.

More often than not however artists will simply paint the scene as is. The end result is that you will have a lovely sunset with two black blobs on the water.

Although you will know that they are two boats, one towing the other, it will simply be an okay painting to look at.

We don't want okay paintings, we want stunning paintings!

To get a stunning result though, we will need to use our Artist License to illuminate the two boats like this:



Wow, what a difference! Suddenly the whole scene has come alive. In the previous photo, the sky was the focal point because that was the most interesting thing to look at. Now however, our focal point is definitely the two boats as we originally intended.

Now suddenly the scene tells a much more heartwarming story too – the two kids were out fishing and got stuck so the Dad had to go and fetch them.

If these two photos were turned into paintings and displayed side by side, which one would you buy? I know which one I would.

Never be afraid to move, change or remove things in the scene you are painting, especially when it comes to improving the impact of the focal point.

The artist doesn't know about or use lost and found lines.



The artwork has no depth. All the objects look like they are next to each other.

This is a very common mistake among amateur artists, yet such an easy mistake to fix. Before we look at the solution however let's first see what lost and found lines actually are.

What are Lost and Found Lines

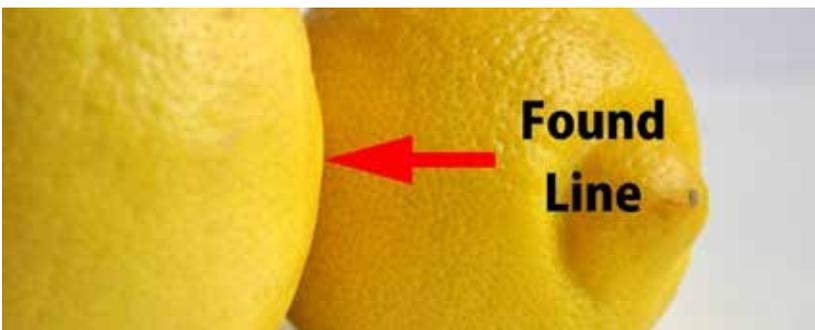
Take a look at the photo of this rose, it has many lost and found lines:



A found line is when you have a hard edge / line in the scene. You get hard lines when:

- there is distance between two objects
- there are two colours next to each other
- there is a sharp angle change on the surface of the object.

Here you can see examples of these:



Distance Found Line



Colour Change Found Line



Corner Found Line

A lost line on the other hand is where you would expect to see a quick change in tone or colour, but don't. Let me illustrate:



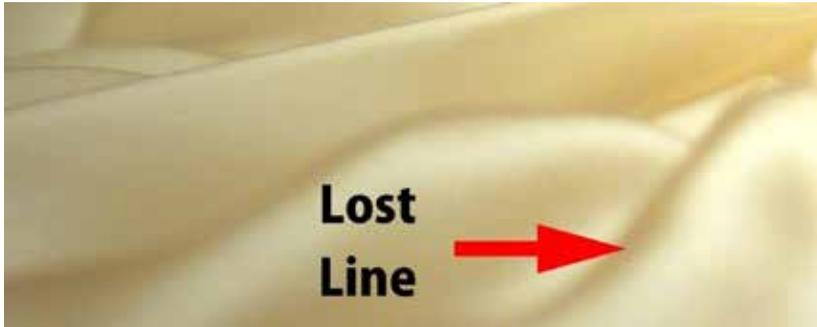
If you look at the area inside the blue circle we would expect to see at least 4 found lines in this area (where each tomato ends), but look closely and you will see that the only found line we see is on the right hand tomato. It is very difficult to impossible to see exactly where the other tomatoes end.

We know they end, but we just can't see their edges. These are called lost lines.

Lost lines happen when:

- 1) You have a gradual angle change between two angles.
- 2) Where objects meet in such a way that the light can't get in between the objects.

Here are examples of these:



Gradual Angle Change Lost Line



Obscured Light Lost Line

Now that we know what lost and found lines are, let's look at how they can help us in our artworks.

The Solution

By using lost and found lines in our drawings and paintings correctly we are mimicking the effect that light has on the objects in nature. This adds an extra dimension to our artworks because the

If you have enjoyed the book so far, you can get the full book here:

<https://www.createspace.com/5030235>

The entire book consists of the top 25 artist mistake and how to avoid them. The full book is over 100 pages of rock solid information that will help you to take your art to the next level and beyond. This is the information that every experienced artist wishes they knew when they were just starting out as it would have saved them years of trial and error.

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