Colour Study

A brief introduction to the beginning stages of the Hensche approach to colour study

with sequential examples and commentary
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Compiled and Edited on behalf of

Henry Hensche
(1899 – 1992)

web article september 2010
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**NOTE:** all jpgs most accurate when viewed at 150%
Hensche jpg attributions as listed, all others are student works
**editor’s note:**

At a stay in our home late in Hensche’s life and reminiscing in melancholy tones, he said that the main problem he had during his entire career of trying to teach people a true understanding of colour painting was that most could only see colour study as “something they had to do while on their way to better things.” He said they could not see the unlimited potential it offered as a completely new art form, a new approach to painting. And as such the majority of his students (especially during the first half of his teaching career) simply hybridized what he tried to teach them on to their preferred forms and conventions, forms and conventions he had already spoken of as outdated or obsolete. The proof of this is easily discovered by simply looking at the works of many of those former students and their hybrid colour tonalism. He said this generally happened because in his mind people did not have enough humility to submit themselves to something higher than their own egos or their own ambitions.

Then there were many from the second half of his teaching career who turned the elementary and beginning colour study lessons into a colour recipe or formula for painting vivid colourful works, very decorative and very appealing to a broad audience of fans and collectors. Unfortunately most of these works rarely approximate nature as Hensche’s works do. This is because they lack that ultimate refinement of colour relationships, the colour relationships that cannot be had through any combination of that vivid colouration.

But those two groups, the coloured tonalist reactionaries and the decorative coloured pictorialists, should neither one be considered the end legacy of Hensche’s teachings. This is only where the individual has taken what they had learned and applied it to their own personal interests in painting, but no one of which is actually representative of what Hensche taught.

This state of things has come about because many have found a way of doing things that they are comfortable with and adept at and most of us will rarely extend ourselves beyond our own comfort zone. But unless we are willing to do this and accept many failures in the process there can be no advancement in the visual refinement of one’s colour or one’s finished works, so are fated as Hensche said, “To simply repeat themselves until the boredom of this repetition causes them to give up painting altogether.”

The simple fact is that most students’ exposure, to the full range of his thinking and ideas on colour composition, was limited or of a fragmentary nature. So in truth what he taught has become so bastardized and so personalized by people pursuing their own tastes or pushing their own agendas that the full scope of what he taught is no longer available to
anyone who might wish to study and understand it. And personal anecdotes, no matter how charming, have nothing to do with the base core of his teachings and certainly nothing to do with Hensche’s higher ideals for reaching the fullest potential of three dimensional colour composition. Yes, people should paint in any way which pleases their own eyes but should do so without thinking as some do that their personal vision is the correct one while saying all others are either self deluded or just plain liars.

In eastern thought one is taught that there are three ages or periods of any true teaching; “the genuine age” where the original living teacher reaches out directly to the individual student in an attempt to clearly communicate his truths. Then “the age of counterfeit teachings” which appear to be true but have actually lost any real connection to the root core of the original teachings, this core having been lost through the original student’s neglect and lack of persistent practice of those original teachings. And then “the ending age” where the truth no longer exists but is taught as anecdotes deemed to be true, and these accepted as true because there is no longer any living standard left to compare them too. So where are we now with Hensche? When former or present students glibly say, “I have already studied colour! I already know how to see!”, then this illustrates why and how we have arrived at the ending age. Because as Hensche said the ignorant and the arrogant always see colour study not as a personal struggle and a lifelong endeavor but just as “something they had to do while on their way to better things.”

September 19, 2010
THE HENSCHÉ APPROACH TO COLOUR STUDY IN PAINTING

A brief introduction to the beginning stages of colour study with sequential examples and commentary

Preface:
This article is an expanded version of the piece previously written for rationalpainting.org and is about the beginning stages of Henry Hensche’s method or approach to colour study as well as some of his other ideas about colour composition in painting. There is also the attempt to disentangle Hensche from a great number of misconceptions.

One is always reluctant to write or post anything at all about what Hensche taught for several reasons, one is that I am not a teacher or a writer, I don’t know enough to be either one. Secondly there is always someone usually quite justifiably who believes themselves to be of superior knowledge and judgment always ready to condemn or be negative or destructive of anything positive that is offered freely to others, (but the reader will have to judge that for themselves). And thirdly and most importantly is that one does not want to assist any charlatans who are teaching for profit to gain a more credible spiel through which to further dupe their paying clients. The words themselves mean nothing, so the student must look to the teachers’ works to see if they actually reflect the meanings and content of those words. If not then the sincere student is the one who loses out and is left to pay the costs and it is for those sincerely interested of all ages that this effort is made here.
Although I have been allowed this space to repost this modified version of the RP.org article, so that everyone has easier access to the materials, this website is not responsible or accountable for its tone or content. The entirety of this article has been compiled and edited by g.t. thurmond for all those interested in colour study but who were not fortunate enough to have studied with Henry Hensche directly. One wishing to see more images of Hensche’s works can access www.thehenschefoundation.org/

Those of you who are actually interested in colour study will have to bear with me, it is not a simple subject and I have made these pages as short as possible without losing their meaning. Being a simple minded person you all must please forgive my poor use of the Queen’s English, but I have tried to be plain spoken and clear so not to confuse anyone. The language is impersonal where practical, but it is difficult to present facts in a void, especially if one is passionate about one’s subject.

Many will find this article very useful while a few others may find the style of presentation or verbal delivery offensive but it has been written for adults, not children or adolescents. My only concern is to disseminate these ideas in a way that anyone who wishes to attempt to study for themselves can have free access and be guided by relevant and accurate information on colour study materials and procedures. This article is about training not painting so the jpg examples in the study sections were chosen for their simplicity and direct ability to illustrate the ideas explained in the text and is written as one would speak; because it is fully intended to be an adequate substitute for live instruction. One should not have to pay for something that the intelligent and self motivated student can read for themselves, do for themselves and if one studies as described can figure out for themselves.

The copy type face is mainly 14 point Ariel and Arial Black in 18-20 point type for headers, san serif to eliminate annoying screen blur and large enough to compensate for the condensation or compression of smaller high res screens and still be easily readable. This article was designed to be displayed as a 10 ½ inch wide word.doc page, with type line and
images at a 7 ½ inch width. As a printed document this would be a 6 inch line on an 8 ½ inch wide paper but at 100% screen display it should display as the larger format. If one can download original 50MB file as word document or PDF then one can enlarge pages and view jpgs to see colour details or read smaller written and typed materials such as in Dia. e, d, and f.

This document will NOT print accurately as displayed. The settings are RGB, not CMYK and the jpg saturations and contrasts do not automatically convert to printable settings where the prints will be correct or equivalent to monitor display.

All jpg examples of studies as well of Hensche’s paintings and class demonstrations have been corrected and balanced as closely as possible but one’s monitor type and/or monitor settings as well as ones search engine or server can often make the CIE-LAB (or equivalent) colours look exaggerated. And since this article is about colour and developing one’s colour perception it is important that the examples give as correct an impression as possible to the viewers eye as the original work would have, or at least as closely as we can make our monitors display them.

Many keep their monitors calibrated with those programs for doing such. Otherwise if you have older equipment your monitor should be set at fairly high contrast or even 100% on CRT monitors and the brightness at 60% or higher for colour clarity as this removes the grey dingy tinge which low contrast settings put over any colouration. The jpgs in this article were corrected to be displayed at a screen setting of 6500K (sRGB ). If your monitor is set at 9300K they will display too bluish cool, if set at the 5000K setting they will display too warm and dull, to reset to 6500K should only take a few clicks on the front of your monitor. If your monitor displays the colour patches below fairly well then the rest of the jpgs should be reasonably accurate also.

All jpgs have been sized for document limitations but are at their most accurate when article is viewed at 150%. A much smaller display will concentrate the colours and they will appear more
saturated, a much larger display will cause the colours to appear paler as the size increases, so please keep that in mind and adjust accordingly. But once again, on most monitors especially CRT types if the screen is set at 6500K, 100% contrast and 60% or slightly higher brightness then display should be good.

**Colour correction patches:**
In the colour patches the top group are 100% saturated colours, middle greys are desaturation of top group, and bottom group is greyscale mode of the saturated colours at top (as one can see desaturation and actual greyscale have little relation to one another), along with pure black and pure white on left margin. It should also be remembered that RGB colour cannot produce any true yellow or orange so is a compromise at best, but these are the limitations we must work under.

if you are interested in best display or colour bias of your monitor and have a Photoshop program or Elements or other type one can copy, save and display this colour patches jpg into that program and do the following - click on your colour sampling tool (such as eye dropper etc) from the tool bar or menu, click sample the lower left bottom section of white, when the display box pops up the sampling circle should be completely buried in the desaturated white corner of the colour vectoring box, if not and if it is out within the box’s displayed colour then that tint will show the colour bias of your screen. Sample the black band at left, the indicator circle should be buried in the desaturated black corner of the box. If you sample the center section of desaturated greys the indicator should be exactly halfway between the previous white and black locations. And in sampling the grey scale of bottom group the indicator should stay in the desaturated strip also with no colour bias tinge.

One can remove any excess screen colour bias by slightly reconfiguring the RGB settings for the monitor or running a program designed for this purpose. I would add that it is not necessary to make any corrections at all, this information is simply for those who may be dissatisfied with how these jggs display or those who are very particular about monitor colour.
For those interested in the other colour patches information the colours in top group are @ 100% saturation and displayed are both RGB and CMY, when sampled in Photoshop they will display on the chromatic bar scale and the percentage breakdown will be displayed in numbers, the results should be as listed here. 5 is @ 255R/100% all RED saturation. 3 is @ 255G/100% all GREEN saturation. 6 is @ 255B/100% all BLUE saturation. 2 is @ 255G and 255B and is 100% CYAN saturation. 4 is 255R and 255 B and is 100% MAGENTA saturation. 1 is @ 255R and 255G and is 100% YELLOW saturation.

One with further interest in the RGB colour model can start here http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RGB_color_model
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Introduction:
I was invited to join the rationalpainting.org Hensche discussion by someone who thought the information on Hensche was being given from second, third or fourth hand sources mostly as negative opinion and that no reasonable information of his exacting ideas had been posted. In looking over those postings one could say that that was mostly true. I am no authority on all things Hensche but had an association with him from the summer of 1969 until a few months before his death in 1992, as student, comrade, and friend. And although having been a student of colour for over 40 years that certainly makes no claim to having a complete knowledge on the subject, however I am willing to freely pass along some of my colour study experience and will try to be as accurate as possible in the reporting of my limited understanding of it. I will attempt in this article to make things clear enough for each of you to teach yourselves how to study colour, which is of course the best of all worlds, one in which you will make your own perceptual discoveries and neither be a mimic, clone, or derivative of anyone else’s vision.

I do not like to start out on a negative point but I thought a brief bit of house cleaning was in order and want to get this out of the way first: In reading through the Henry Hensche posts on RP.org the first misconception that jumps to the eye has been this constant linking of Hensche with a well known teacher in the northeast as I have seen done here and in a generally derisive manner towards Hensche by people who never met the man. Linking Hensche to any other painter than Hawthorne or himself is a clear injustice to Hensche, especially when one has no understanding of what he represented. Just because someone was a former student of any particular teacher does in no way suggest that what that painter or his school does is in any way related to or reflective of what the original teacher’s visual principles or insights were. What they or their assistants
may teach would be a once or twice or three times removed version of their own personal adaptation, by the same token one cannot lay the outlandish colour practices (or verbal statements) of some of his other former students at his door step either. All these people should have their work judged against the qualities their own works display, not in reference to Hensche as the source of your or anyone else’s misgivings. The successes or the failings of others cannot be lain at the door step of the original teacher, whoever that teacher might be.

Another distortion and false assumption is that Hensche taught Impressionism. Hensche did NOT teach Impressionism but rather the visual colour principles discovered by the Impressionists as applied to perceptual development. He did not teach this or any other formulaic techniques. He said, “For lack of a better word we call these impressionist colour principles.” So the sales pitch of the commercial workshops cannot look to Hensche as justification for this error or deception whichever the case maybe. Hensche was not interested in styles or “isms” but only in perceptual development and how to best express ones level of visual refinement through coloured pigments.

Unlike so many today Hensche was not consumed with blind ambition to make a name for himself but put his efforts into his continued perceptual development and his teaching of colour study. I will say here at the beginning that Hensche did NOT teach colour as an adjunct to, or a decoration for academic drawing and values as it is being sold in many schools and workshops today. He fought this bastardized hybridization his entire life and although he also fought the modernists tooth and nail he said, “The moderns have their own thing and they are welcomed to it.”… “It is the academics who refuse to allow any new ideas in that are contrary to their outdated obsolete formulas which always lead to the same predictable results.”

You may ask yourself, “Well if these ideas are so great and have the importance you suggest, why have I heard so little of them before?” And that is a truly legitimate question. The reason we do not find these ideas, ideals, and principles at the forefront of painting today is that few know of this particular strain and
combination of knowledge and many of those who did have already passed away. While many others were trained in it some have yet to fully develop these ideas in their own works. And there are many others who have adapted or hybridized it for their own purposes and others still who have abandoned it altogether. This has happened because it requires such a great deal of self discipline, integrity about one’s visual honesty, and humility before nature as well as these ideas. It also takes an enormous amount of time and effort to become proficient with this approach.

There are more direct routes to simple pictorial representation as well as easier paths to arrive at artistic notoriety and material prosperity. That was not an elitist remark, just a simple statement of practical fact. It is not that difficult to become an “artist” per se’ but can be quite another thing to develop as a painter or to even be a good student and everyone needs to understand with some urgency the necessity of educating their eye and mind to a highly developed colour perception if they wish to someday become a successful painter because the naïveté of personal visual limitations are not a virtue if they restrict the fullness of one’s eventual artistic expression.

There is a great deal of “necessary repetition” in these pages because this is intended to be an adequate substitute for live instruction. Hensche was constantly repeating himself so that one would understand both the meaning and importance of the visual principle he was attempting to teach you. Most of the definitions of technical terms are defined in the paragraph where they are introduced or the meaning is built up as one reads through the entire piece, so I did not feel compelled to make a glossary of terms.

Of course the majority of these terms will not be new to most excepting light key and a few others which will be defined as explained above. One may need to pay attention to the very particular (or peculiar if you prefer) way many other terms are used. Wherever the word colour is used it is in reference to its chromatic content, its particular level of purity or intensity and this should be kept in mind as one reads because it is not in reference to any values. Form plane is very important to
understand in that it means “plane” as used in solid geometry or sculpture; it is a section of a three dimensional form having both surface area and two dimensional shape as well as having a directional movement (advancing, receding, lateral, diagonal, etc). Colour plane is the chromatic content of that surface as previously described.

The colour study approach is a visual comparative process and is deceptively simple on the surface, the major requirements of which are one’s mental, perceptual, and observational concentration, and that is the difficult part. I have laid out the study procedure as Hensche taught it and explained it not just to me but also to many others. I have also tried to insert some brief historical context in order to give credit to where all these ideas evolved from. Hawthorne and Hensche did not pull them out of thin air but were part of an historical progression. As he used to say at the beginning of many lectures, “One has to know where one fits into the history of the ideas in painting.”

So it is for all of us to look upon Hensche openly and without personal preferences and visual biases prejudging everything he stood for before we have any real understanding of what any of that might be. For those who wish to actually do the long term exercises and colour problems and learn how to study colour for themselves I think you will find these pages and examples most useful. The words themselves mean very little and one will never have an understanding of it without doing a great many colour studies over a great many years. As to what he taught Hensche said "no one should believe anything I tell them, you should do the work and test it for yourselves, I could be wrong but none of you can know that until you have studied it for yourself."
Fig. 3  Henry Hensche, self portrait,  1970s
Henry Hensche

Charles Webster Hawthorne (1872-1930), who had been William Merritt Chase’s (1849-1916) final teaching assistant, opened his own school in the sleepy Portuguese fishing village of Provincetown, Massachusetts in 1899, coincidentally, the same year that his future assistant and heir, Heinrich Hensche (1899-1992), was being born in Germany. This summer school for colour instruction was operating continuously from the summer of 1899 until its closing the autumn of 1989 with Hensche being the sole instructor from 1930 onwards. When asked why he had never had an assistant Hensche replied, “Because I would be short changing the beginners”, that being the most important time for the students eventual understanding and development. He believed as Hawthorne did that if one could grasp and understand the fundamental principles of colour study they could learn to see colour well and teach themselves to paint.

Henry Hensche studied painting for 74 years and evolved in his thinking and teaching as his perception and refinement of colour relationships grew, finding over that lengthy period all things in colour to be relational and without absolutes. His journey was a complete traversal of the stages of perceptual development in painting through the centuries, from the dark contrasty value painting of the old masters, while at the Art Institute of Chicago, to his first exposure to colour through Hawthorne’s Cape School when he was 19 which routed his transitional development through tonalism and coloured tonalism on up through his full development as a colourist which according to him took until the winter of 1960 to accomplish.

Henry was incredibly honest and brutal with his self criticisms, the unevenness of his works over the years testify to the integrity of his struggles and self evaluations and his unwillingness to settle on anything short of his ideal visual goal or to indulge in derivative subject matter or visual clichés. And he as well as Hawthorne thought that one should not despise
beginners for their crudeness which may in turn be far more accurate and truer to nature in its genuine honesty and crudeness than others are in their formulaic, smug, and self perceived precision. Hensche’s goal was recognition and expression of the observed essentials of one’s subject, a fully developed poetry, not endless tedious prose generated by countless detailed minutiae. He was a visual revolutionary; he was not an academic with a copyist mentality.

Hensche looked at the history of painting as a series of perceptual developments over the centuries as well as the progression of the means of expression. As such there was in the beginning traditional value painting being limited to earth pigments, blacks and white and an occasional blue used in strong value contrasts. This further evolved into a more refined value tonalism where fine gradations of values gave a truer representation of the subject in its lighting than had been possible through earlier higher contrasts, although the pigments available for the painter’s palette were still quite limited.

But after the discovery and invention of the new more intense pigments such as the cadmiums in the 1800s the colour revolution began (Barbizon in France, Turner in England, the Impressionists, and Post Impressionism, and Fauves), eventually evolving to the use of a full chromatic spectral scale of pigments used as contrasting colours, often in compliments in an attempt to reach the luminous quality of the out door light.

After 1900 the visual shock of all this new colouration began to wane and what developed in the mainstream both in Europe and America was local colour tonalism, local colour meaning the named colour of any object or surface such as red vase or green grass. Chase would be a representative of this vision, a value painter who uses the different local colours of area or object to represent that subject while modelling the form gradations of the subject from light to dark with the values of each object’s or surface’s local colour. This is what the majority of academic painters did and still does today.
At the same time coloured tonalism began to develop as well, Sorolla would be representative of this visual classification in which completely different colours for the light planes and shadow areas are observed from the subject, each being dependant upon the lighting situation or light key for their colouration and not simply that object’s local colour, as example a white dress in sunlight might be bright pink light planes and medium blue shadow notes. However within the pink or the blue the form gradations were made with value changes of the mass note of colour, therefore still a somewhat limited perception in the modelling of the forms although far closer to the actuality of what one sees in the light than are representations made from value based local colours.

[Someone had asked the question about Sorolla’s palette “being more somber indoors” but as a colourist for lack of a better word it’s not so much a matter of what people call a subdued palette (a palette consisting of somber pigments) as it is mixing the more somber notes of colour from ones regularly laid out palette. The same 15 pigments being present on the colourist’s palette at all times not unlike a piano in which all the keys are always there in the same arrangement but various expressions are to be found within the combinations one puts together. Although indoors is much lower keyed than outdoors the same fundamental principles of light key and definite form plane colour changes apply, therefore the full range of pigments are still needed to express those complex compound colourations.

To further answer the question, we could say that for all his blaze of colour outdoors what is interesting is that indoors Sorolla’s ladies, although still shown in colourful attire, would have an almost monochromatic tonal value head perched atop their colourfully clothed bodies within colourful room interiors. With all of his beautiful colour this is something he did not manage to accomplish which was a portrait in full colour where the values are subjugated to the colours. But to see a good representation of a head done strictly from a colourist’s perspective is rare, even today.
I know some dislike a statement like this but as with all painting the end result is an interpretation of the subject, it is “the language of light being translated into the language of coloured pigments”, its paint not reality, relational and not absolute. That being said I have always felt the relationship of Sorolla’s indoor monochrome heads to be a little jarring when found within their more colourful surroundings. In his outdoor portraits he managed enough coloured reflections on the flesh to hold the value oriented head within the light key to a much higher degree.

A grandson or grand nephew of Sorolla’s showed up at one of Hensche’s class demonstration paintings, in their discussion Hensche asked how Sorolla came about his level of outdoor colour perception. The man told Henry that Sorolla had done hundreds and hundreds of small colour studies in which he learned to state the large masses of light and shade with enough chromatic strength to represent outdoor lighting effects and these he adapted to his fine draughtsmanship and easy brush. He developed to be a very fine coloured tonalist, his value variations within the masses were the only thing he did not develop into true colour changes.

Eventually this coloured tonalism evolved through the ideas of Hawthorne and Hensche into full colour painting in which the light key dominates the local colour and all form changes are made with observed colour contrasts (all explained later in more detail). This is where value is subservient to varied intensities of observed colouration. In any particular study or painting the main masses of light and shade as well as in all observed colour variations no plane or form change can be a repetition of the same colour nor can any adjacent note be a simple value change of its neighbor especially in the volumetric modelling of the forms. Chase was a value tonalist with colour added, which by Hensche’s definitions would be called a coloured tonalist, although Chase would be on the lower end of the chromatic scale because his colours, generally local colours, are subjugated to his values; while Sorolla as explained earlier would be on the higher chromatic end because his values were generally subjugated to his colours.
On the other hand Hensche In his highest development totally rejected values as the basis of visual representation because he had developed observed contrasting chromatic changes as the basis, for Hensche light key always trumps local colouration. As he stated many times, “Nothing can be seen outside of or apart from its illumination, its lighting situation, its light key”, which Leonardo had already observed, “when any colour is illuminated by its corresponding light the colour far from being diminished is actually enhanced”… and that “one need only look upon white buildings at sunset to see that the sun and sky illuminate with the characteristics of their colours and all surfaces are transformed into the unexpected”, or Pissarro remarking that, “it was the scientists who showed us that the local colour of the object and the colouration of the light are two distinctly separate things.” Hensche’s observational approach to colour was of a nature of the unexpected as the norm; and of having no predetermined systematic formula with which to express it.

He often said, “There is no beauty until it is perceived by the mind of man, and the level of one’s perceptual development determines the quality of that beauty.” He taught that what we see is dependant upon how we see; colour is perceptual and not conceptual, physical processes not mental machinations. What Hensche taught was a lengthy series of progressively more difficult colour problems from beginning to end requiring roughly 20 years to traverse, and that is if one took no side trips. The beginning of that series of problems was the use of vivid over colouration to deprogram visual perception from its accumulated habits of conceptualizing and filtering and distorting what it had seen as opposed to actual perceptual seeing. These colour practices attempted to eliminate the biases, opinions and filters so that there were no barriers between the external stimuli which enters the eye and what registered within the perceptual areas of the brain (nor to create any colour formulas to express that uncontaminated vision).

It was to be all trial and error on every paint statement, he admonished everyone not to have formulas or colour systems because that blocked out the genuine and unique surprise and
truth of nature and made one’s work predictable, quickly stale and eventually boring. Instead he insisted that “One should paint as if one were a blind man just having received his sight.” And in that spirit he often warned about allowing any new set of concepts to reprogram the perception, one was not to swap the dullness of values for spectral vividness as many did and have done, but were to develop in a way that left one’s perception completely open to the exacting colour combinations that were there before the eyes whether they be bright and vivid or somber and luminous.

Even though extremely difficult to condense I will try to clearly delineate his study procedures along with this glimpse of him in as succinct a form as possible. The differentiations of tonalism, coloured tonalism, etc are of course the briefest sketch and are not meant to be anything other than a note of explanation and clarification. These are how he described the ideas briefly in his explanations to students as to how what they were attempting to do was different from what had come before, these perceptual differences which he pointed out constantly will become clearer as I flesh out the colour study procedures and progressions. He and what he taught are difficult nuts to crack with words, as he used to explain the visual is not the verbal or we would all be writers instead of painters.

Hensche said, “There is study and there is performance, and we should not confuse the two, study is done for perceptual development, our performances show us where we are in that development, and we must have both…. ”

The study approach was and is a logical and sequential way to go about visually analyzing both the colour and the structure of the subject so the student at what ever level of development could advance from a somewhat easily seen general truth to a more complex and specific one. And by so doing have a more complete understanding of what constituted the whole of the subject (its structure, volumes, rhythmic plane changes, etc) so that one was not simply making a superficial likeness of the subject but also had some bit of comprehension of its actuality. Here at the beginning I would add that I am not trying to sell
these ideas to anyone, simply trying to explain how what Henry Hensche did was different from what others have done. I will start with two of his most important colour study principles – “light key vs local colour”, and “colour masses and colour variations vs grisaille and values”. 
Fig. 4  Henry Hensche, self portrait, about 1960s
Light key vs local colour:
This is the most foundational principle of what Hensche taught, the idea that each local colour (defined as an object’s named colour seen at close hand under a steady white light) seen within our field of vision was almost always modified from its named colour by a great number of variables. Some of these being the kind of day (sunny, grey, atmospheric, etc) or time of day (early morning, mid day, late afternoon, dusk, etc) or seasonal angle of the light, (or types of artificial lighting), atmospheric conditions, humidity, dust, etc. Any particular combination of these variables and their collective effect upon that observed local colour during the short and defined period of study is the light key (being more complex than this but I am not trying to write a physics manual although one cannot escape the general physics of it).

This is of course why green trees at a distance are blue or at sunset are orange or at dusk are deep violet, these physical modifications brought on by the light or lack of light and other combined conditions. The upshot of all this is that local colour as a simple reality is almost nonexistent, although most people believe they perceive local colour as such. In other words perception does its best to erase all these modifications and maintain a steady state of comprehension not just with white but with all named local colours, when in truth the light key changes are usually fairly conspicuous especially if one has set themselves the task to see those differences.

Hensche believed that even with the light key modifications, if painted to its refined relationship, that one could still recognize the local colour of each one of the objects as modified, because all have been affected in the same manner. So the impression upon the eye was that, even though none of the colour notations contained any of the objects actual local colour, in the overall relationship each was still recognizable as such excepting that now it was a truer rendition of the subject by having taken all the light key modifications into consideration. For example, a white block in relationship with other objects done outdoors on a grey day will still appear as a white object within that scene even
though the 3 planes showing to the eye may be a pale lavender on top, the lit side plane being a light mid tone green, and the more shaded plane a medium blue violet. Even so the effect was to truthfully show a white object as modified. One did not look for local colour in an area but were instructed to look for the colour in each area which best represented the light key in that area. Once again in the Hensche approach to colour study light key always trumps local colour.

What Henry’s method of study allowed one to do through constant observational scanning (in which all colours were quickly compared to all other colours) was to reset the perceptual norms. This had the result of not allowing previously conditioned perception to erase these light key modifications but to clearly register them. This was done by training the eye to a level of sensitivity that allowed one to see these light key modifications not only at a distance in the larger landscape but also at a very short distance, as in a still life set up out doors or a head 4 feet away from the eye or in whatever subject or whatever lighting. This was done through specific comparisons of every mass colour note as well as every major and minor colour variation as constantly compared to one another (this I will attempt to describe and explain in further detail in the next post called doing a colour study).

As each colour note was lain into its proper area it would of course affect how the colours adjacent to it appeared to the eye, in turn each of those were slightly modified to bring and keep all notes in a balanced relational harmony that represented the light key in each area. For example cadmium scarlet out of the tube, although having a specific intensity is neither a light colour nor a deep colour in isolation but can stand as a light or deep within a relationship where the perception of it is modified by its surroundings, this being true of all colours. So regardless of a colours specificity, which is an unchallenged physical fact, how things are perceived is completely relational. This being true because no colour can be removed from the lighting (modifications) under which it is being perceived. Light key trumps local colour, always!
The eye is very sensitive to all colour changes, it is the visual perceptual areas of the brain that must be re-trained away from biological presets as well as accumulated biases and personal preferences and this could be done through extended and persistent comparative colour study. This is a long term and often difficult task to modify the perception from its pre programming, but even more difficult to keep it from reprogramming itself with another bias (such as overly vivid colour, or “fruit salad colouring” as the late Englishman Harold Speed called it). Perception’s auto default setting is to perceive in black and white, it is for survival because colour camouflages dangers. But we all have the capacity to expand our colour perception from the average persons 25000 or so colours to 10 or 20 times that number, but as with all capacities it requires training and development to reach its individual potential. It was through Hensche’s specific colour study problems that this was attempted, and accomplished for some individuals to a greater degree than others. So in turn each student ends up painting according to the capacity they have developed or unfortunately to the reprogramming biases they preferred. Even if one studies in the right way there is no guarantee of success. That is totally dependant on the character of the student.

(A brief note on a further definition of light keys
excepting in the negative, what a light key is not. Generic light effects are not true light keys. We all make a great many generic effects for a great many years before we are ever capable of making an actual light key because that is determined by the refinements of colours in relation, which is not about vivid contrasts in most cases. A sunny effect, or grey day or warm coloured late afternoon are all generic effects until they are carried to a finer relation of colouring than the stark, raw or vivid. These could be called the precursors of light keys, the germination of one’s perception towards an apprehension of true light keys. Yet colour schemes, colour effects, raw contrasts, these are not indicative of true light keys in that they are not a refinement but are general and foundational generic colouring and if adhered to as being considered a light key will usually only lead to decorative or illustrative pictorialism. While
it is of necessity in the beginning that we all work from an easily seen and bold general truth in order to finally perceive a more complex finer one we also must work from a generic light effect in the beginning until through perceptual refinement we eventually develop the abilities to go beyond the general and the generic.

That was not intended to sound negative, it is rather an explanation of the difference between the true light keys one observes in nature (in one’s subject) wherein the colour combinations used to express it make one’s eye think of nature first and paint second. In the other generic effects, the eye and mind automatically think paint first and maybe nature second or third or not at all. If the overwhelming impression upon the eye is one of coloured pigment then we have not studied long enough to reach the necessary colour refinement to be able to express and represent true light keys. So just as one must train themselves in the beginning through strong vivid colouration one must also quickly develop beyond that stage of perception as well as develop beyond that type of execution and representation. As will be said many times in this article we must start from the savage, the vivid, the robust colouration to throw off the shackles of visual concepts, but we also must be careful not to get hung in any of these overcoloured developmental stages or else we will never fully perceive the complex colour relations of true light keys, if we mistake generic light effects for light keys and push our perception no further then we will simply become decorative illustrators and never reach our true potential as colour painters.)
Fig. 5  Henry Hensche, self portrait, about 1940s
Colour masses and colour variations vs grisaille and value changes:

In making colour the foundation of visual representation (in opposition to academic drawing values) Hensche’s teacher Charles Hawthorne’s contribution to the evolution of colour painting was that he replaced the generalized grey scale masses of light and shade with distinctively different colour masses observed directly from the subject, these colour masses in their relationship established both the light key as well as the major form volumes of the painting. This approach to painting (both in the masses and modelling variations) is based upon colour contrasts not value contrasts. His observed mass colours were stated with chromatic strength and then modified and refined several times to get their visual relationship as close to that of the subject as possible. This created a specific and stable foundation for the colour modelling of form planes to hold true to nature. By having this mass colour note for constant visual comparison (to both the subject as well as the smaller notes lain upon it) any smaller form modelling variation notes which violated the observed light key would be obviously incorrect and would either be correctly restated or removed.

In value painting the value can be absolutely correct and the colour still be totally wrong, in colour painting in both masses and variations if the colour is correct the value is automatically correct without ever having taken it into consideration. Values are extrapolated from colours; colours are not extrapolated from values. So in this approach to colour study the grisaille is seen to be obsolete since the student can study the actual colouration directly by examining each component within the lighting colouration of the observed subject. These observations to be analyzed component by component and layer by layer, a dissecting of the light to understand the spectral makeup of the subject.

There being no reason to translate the colours into black and white and greys before they are retranslated back in to colour. If one would think about that for a moment one can see the arcane foolishness of it as pertains to colour. It is an antiquated system
where pictorial representation is based on drawing values instead of colour. In reality what we see is colour, there is no greyscale or values operating either in the physics of light or in the perception of mind, they are simply another conceptual limitation left over from a time in which there were few actual pigments with which to express the visual.

At the start of a study colour notes are exaggerated or emphasized in order to bring them to the full attention of perception, one intentionally overshoots the mark and through constant scanning and comparison of subject to colour notes one slowly brings the colours back to a relational actuality. For the student to begin the other way, of attempting to “paint what they see” (as the old saying goes) one usually stops short of the necessary intensity to accurately represent the light effect because in the beginning one does not actually comprehend the complete effect of what one sees because one cannot see beyond the present level of one’s perceptual development, to go beyond that individual level of perception to a higher level of comprehension requires a logical and progressive study approach that allows one to grasp much more information about what is before the eye than just the superficial likeness of the subject.

As an elementary example of all of the above, we have a medium bright red 6 inch cube sitting on a pale blue cloth, backlit in clear sunlight middle of the morning, we are facing the oncoming light, as we observe and compare these colour planes (the 3 visible planes of the block, the one of the table cloth in light, as well as the area of cast shadow upon the table from the block), the strong lighting has negated the possible use of the local colour red to make the block’s form planes in that the glare off the top light plane now appears to be a light pale yellow, the shadow plane appears by comparison to be a mid tone purple and the half light plane appears to be a medium dull green, the blue cloth in its lit area appears to be a light mid tone pink while the cast shadow upon it appears to be a deep mid tone blue violet (as a side note: perception of appearances is reality when painting the light, all relational and without absolutes, colour is not a decoration for forms but is form itself,
one may draw objects through greyscale but one colours light).

This is another example of how the lighting effect, the light key tends in most situations to dominate local colour, and how that obvious colour masses and colour variations are a direct perception of that effect, while using grey scale and values is simply an avoidance of the colours which are there before the eye. Your reference point is your palette colours, pure, intense, and a clean white as baseline. when held up against the subject one can see how “off” the subjects notes are and adjust accordingly, or standing at the easel we were to hold the black handle of the painting knife to be seen at arms length up against the note out there in the subject to see how luminous it was at that distance from the eye, and dozens of other tips to keep a person on the road to a higher refinement of perceptual development, and for all of the people who seem to think that Hensche means painting with raw tube colours here is a Hensche quote, “I know a student is finally making real progress when I see them moving into the realm of colours which have no name.”

One starts raw for strength and then seeks through scanning and comparison the somber luminous quality of those colours in that light. Those are the beginning stages of study progressing possibly to the intermediate stage. The same fundamental principles and procedures are employed towards a higher perceptual development but it all becomes much more nuanced, individual and possibly aethereal depending on whether the student or painter is interested in expressing a form of objective reality or is drawn to expressing the light itself.

At the further reaches of Hensche’s colour researches was the development of visual perception to the degree that he could see the actual volumes of light (described as large balls or boulder type forms) as they passed through his field of vision and how this colouration affected its surroundings. And there are hundreds of other points in between dealing with what he called three dimensional colour composition which utilized focal planes, focal areas, and focal points, as well as peripheral vision to maintain exacting relationships of colour form volumes.
holding a unified relationship to the prevailing light key under which the subject was being observed. And ultimately to the colour modelling of the volumes of light itself, an attempt to paint the actuality of what we see, which is not individual objects in isolation but rather one large luminous mass of light itself seen as colour variations, this being the ultimate goal of what he called three dimensional colour composition “light as form itself.”

Many of his students were never exposed to the full range of these teachings or failed to grasp the significance of the highest development of his visual perception, either from not having a long enough association with him or not having pushed themselves far enough in their own colour researches. One cannot see exactly what he did until one’s perception begins to near that level also. This is why one sees such a wide variety of perceptual development and colouration in the works of his former students and their students.

**Fig. 6**
Hensche colour block studies below of same set up from about 1970 (construction bricks and old bottles), showing high keyed atmospheric effects in both morning light (top) and afternoon light (bottom), both done with painting knife. Both examples of how light key generates a form plane’s colouration and tends to modify or even overwhelm local colour.
Fig. 7
Hensche outdoor still life colour studies from 1940 through 1970, showing his progression from emphasizing colour as form to emphasizing colour as light. All oil on masonite panels, painted with knife

Here are a few examples of Hensche's visual perceptual development from beginning until late in life, for anyone who has studied painters like Velasquez, et.al. one will recognize that youthful ideal of attempting to portray life as an absolute objective edge, and later in life to have discovered that reality is much more luminous and aethereal than one originally expected and so moving away from hard forms into the volumes of light and atmosphere.

Hensche said that had Velasquez continued as he had started out no one would have ever taken notice of his hard edged copyist visual level, and that is where one starts as a painter by being a copyist, this both sharpens ones skills as well as ones observational abilities but one must endeavor to develop perception to a much finer degree. That which we are able to see at 20 has little affinity with what we should be able to see at 40 if we have studied to directly develop visual perception, and I am not speaking of technical skills but rather of a refined perception.
One may think that blurring an edge with a brush is equivalent to making 6 or 8 colour plane changes at an edge (where it unites with the background and surrounding air) but it is far, far from it and is only a self deception to think they are the same. One makes an edge or loses an edge through delicate colour shifts which model the form changes, not through technical smears. By the same token the copyist’s cut out rendition where an outline makes the object, figure or head look like it is stuck on the background and not part of a continuous whole is just as visually inaccurate, contrary to most popular belief.

That type thing is not realist painting but simply another symptom of the copyist mentality imposing concepts and filters upon what enters the eye. Hensche may have started in that same academic place as everyone else but he managed to outgrow the visual limitations of its superficial aspects through hard work and endlessly seeking the full depth of visual reality. Having done so he gave his students a “20 year head start” as he put it, meaning that they did not have to pass through what he considered to be the outdated and obsolete developments but could train themselves as colourists from the start.

7a, 7b, 7c
Fig. 8
Henry Hensche, 1920s on left, 1930s on right, indoor still life

Fig. 9
Henry Hensche, 1940s, 1950s, indoor still life
Fig. 10
Henry Hensche, 1960s, indoor still life

Fig. 11
Henry Hensche, 1970s, indoor still life, as can be seen in these examples his colour range was extensive, he set up visual problems for himself, colour compositions, these were not just pictorial representations, these type examples from early until late in life can be repeated for landscape and portrait as well,
**Fig. 12**
as an example of his full journey here is 1920s and late 1970s seen together

**Fig. 13**
Henry Hensche, late 1950s or early '60s, with outdoor portrait of Richard Goetz, the colour jpg on right is of the colour study set up shown in background of b/w photo. In his right hand the photo shows his painting knife from that period.
COLOUR STUDY:
I am not a teacher, simply a student of colour painting and claim no expertise excepting to have had some 40 plus years experience of this subject, so everyone reading this description of doing a colour study should know that no one is being talked down to, I am simply trying to put it all in the most elementary terminology possible so that there will be no confusion or misunderstanding, so that if anyone is moved to attempt a study they will have as much information as possible so as to facilitate a positive outcome. It should be stated here once again that the outward simplicity of the study approach belies its effectiveness to radically alter one’s perception of colour.

And a note of caution to those who will actually tackle colour study for themselves, if you follow this process with integrity most who see your studies will not be very accepting of them. Hensche said, “Most people will accept almost any type colouration as long as the drawing is of the conventional sort.” Most do not have a developed perception and will only look to see how well your work conforms to the conventional or the cliché types of drawing they are accustomed to and not finding it will reject the studies as not worthy of further attention. But knowing this from the beginning is actually very liberating in that one can study for one’s own perceptual development without looking for the blessing or approval of others, which one will not receive regardless. So this article is not written for the collectivist mentality but for the self motivating individual who does not need some group’s approval in order to continue to work with dedicated effort. Henry said, “We may learn in the group but one develops in isolation.” If that idea does not appeal to you then right now is the time to make your escape.

Fig. 14
student colour studies from the late 1960s, on the right are large form plane divisions showing the major variation stage, on the
left beginnings of the minor variations, all studies were done with a painting knife, which both saved time and kept colours undiluted, although it takes some time to learn to use it well.

Materials and equipment:

basic spectral palette with necessary earth pigments added

large tube of a good safflower or linseed titanium white and
1. cadmium yellow
2. cadmium yellow deep
3. cadmium orange
4. mars orange / orange ocher
5. cadmium scarlet
6. cadmium red,
7. cadmium red deep or purple
8. quinacridone red
9. quinacridone magenta
10. quinacridone violet PV19
11. manganese violet PV16 (also called mineral violet)
12. indian red,
13. mars violet, or hematite violet
14. ultramarine deep or french ultramarine
15. cobalt turquoise blue
16. cobalt teal or phthalo turquoise green shade
17. oxide of chromium
18. raw umber
19. raw sienna
20. mars yellow or yellow ocher

Palette should be laid out as listed in Dia. b below, either right to left or left to right and always in the same arrangement, there is a logic to this that soon makes itself apparent while painting. When new pigments are added later on they should be added where they fall in this rough spectral arrangement. Transparent oxide yellow, oxide orange, and oxide red are all 3 good pigments to add later as are cadmium lemon, perylene red and paynes grey (not as a darkening agent but as a mixer for greens and violets). Do not waste money purchasing a lot of colours which are easily mixed from the recommended palette of pigments, such as premixed tube greens like cadmium greens or permanent greens many of which are not permanent anyway. One can also put together a modern organic spectral palette but there I would proceed with caution, all of them are fine for toss off studies but for long term work that one intends to keep there one should be careful.

(pigments and permanence):
In one of the posts on previous rp.org HH page someone asked why use cadmium and not organic, firstly the cadmiums have the tinting strength when needed outdoors, stability and strength especially when hit with titanium white. But the main reason for using them is that many organics are fugitive in tints higher than mid-tone. This may sound contrary to ASTM but they have changed the traditional testing parameters and this has allowed a number of class 2 pigments to be reclassified as lightfast, which they are as full strength and deep mid-tone but will fade in high keyed tints. Especially prone to fading is PV 23 dioxazine found in many mixed violets and purples. Arylides, diarylides (excepting HR70), naphthols, most if not all azo and
monoazo as well as some benzimidazolones and even some anthraquinones in tints above midtone cannot withstand the first 350 hours of exposure to direct sunlight without fading to be classed as class 2 pigments let alone the 700 hours to be class 1 and never come close to the 800+ hours to be considered completely permanent.

linear quinacridone PV19 (dupont 1958) is the only modern violet that is completely stable and lightfast, all quinacridones are stable excepting possibly PR122 which is marginal in high tints over long exposure times, the copperthalocyannines are stable except in extremely high pale tints (where they will often oxidize and turn powdery looking) but be very cautious of many of the organics especially if the majority of your work is above mid-tone. If you don’t believe this information then do the testing for yourself, which will show the same successes as well as the same failures each time. Unless you test the pigments in the tints, and forms you actually use them you cannot know how they will hold up over time. One must look for the pigment numbers as to content and not depend on brand names as any guarantee of quality. The site below is an excellent resource for information on most paint pigments and brands.  
http://www.artiscreation.com/ColorCharts.html

Fig. 15
A recent pigment test, 800 hours direct sunlight exposure, panels are 6 inches by 24 inches, made up with knife and center of each section was covered and kept from exposure to sunlight. Those wishing to do their own simple tests can find information here http://www.handprint.com/HP/WCL/pigmt9.html#ASTMtests reference is watercolours but the same procedure works for oils.
Palette pigment arrangement:

Dia. b

arrange your palette as shown below using the order as listed in spectral sequence from the list

put out about 4 or 5 inches of white and about 1 inch of each of the other colours, should be a good range.
leave about 1 inch of space between each colour so they will not contaminate each other, by keeping your mixing areas separate you will get cleaner brighter colours on the study

Colour and temperature:
This is a topic that cannot be left out of the discussion yet is difficult to place in proper relation to other topics; so I am taking the opportunity to place it here with the discussion of palettes and their mixing areas (Dia. b). There are many colour formulas based upon this theory of contrasting temperatures so one must pay special attention to what should be a study aid but generally quickly becomes a formulaic trap. The warm cool dichotomy is easily a misnomer in that the vast majorities of these so called temperatures are relational and are warm or cool only as visually contrasted with their surroundings and never an absolute in themselves. It is simply for the sake of verbal convenience that we call certain pigments cool and others warm, much like the idea of local colour being simply the name of a surface hue. As
our pigments lay there upon the palette they too are local colours of themselves.

Many cool colours when placed upon a clean white surface can often give the impression that they are warmer than the white, and almost anything placed upon a warm earth note will appear cool. The importance of being aware of this is that when mental limitations are put upon the eyes and later in one’s development one sees a blue light plane they are hesitant to simply make it blue because the formulaic concept of “lights are warm, shadows are cool” has short circuited the perceptual loop of scan-see-perceive-mix-scrape; we must not limit perception with mentally imposed artificial constraints! One needs to look and see with their own eyes and not listen to people who are selling them a partial truth, but one must educate themselves if they are to know that difference.

Hensche said “you cannot make all the warm colours with just warm pigments and you can’t make all the cool colours with just cool pigments. One must see the cool notes within the warm and the warm notes within the cool.... The earth reflected in the sky and the sky reflected in the earth.” The visual impression upon the eye can be one of warm and cool colours but it is this luminous aggregate which Hensche describes of all the colours striking the eye simultaneously which leaves the full impression of the light key as having warmth or coolness. So the large truth of the light key must never be sacrificed to a smaller one based upon an adherence to that which is observably contrary to visual logic.

One should have a sufficient number of pigments on their palette to avoid the colour formulas presented through the limited palettes of commercial workshops; this includes both those promoting the 7 or 8 bright pigment warm cool formula as well as those promoting the three primary colours with greys, white and black added for a value formula. Many teachers are sincere in their offerings but should understand beforehand the inherent limitations that their teaching devices will have upon the student and their future development. In an attempt to make it more simplified and user friendly one has actually set the
students mind to years of future confusion or at the least many visual limitations. It is true that one has to start somewhere but as the late Englishman Harold Speed said; every obstacle should be placed in the path of any aspiring painter because it is only those who are willing to confront and overcome those obstacles that have any real chance of success. So long term making it user friendly may be more detrimental than helpful.

Many may have wondered about this warm cool dichotomy that is generally presented (intentionally or unintentionally) in a formulaic context as if this were the preferred or only colour temperature solution for all observations, but this is far from the truth. Where light key observations are concerned there are 4 major possibilities and potentialities that will present themselves to the eye. The 4 potential temperature schemes are; warm light planes and cool shadow notes (this is the most commonly occurring pair in many light keys, but is also the one most readily formulized), cool light planes and warm shadow notes (this occurs with less frequency and can have a very delicate visual quality), warm light planes and warm shadow notes (often seen in various types of grey days), cool light planes and cool shadow notes (which is the rarest of combinations but will make itself evident if one seeks to paint under some very specific light keys).

As with all aspects of one’s observations the light key determines the temperature relationship of the colours. The current light key being observed affects all colours similarly and imparts certain characteristics to all those colours in aggregate as well as separately; whether it be coolness or warmth, or a certain overall tonality of lightness or deepness etc. The light also often tinges every note with an overlay of that light keys predominant part of the spectrum or an obvious reflection of the sky. This does not mean a false or decorative colour scheme is presented to the eye such as a thousand shades of yellow or blue. This added spectral component does not make everything appear “schemey” as value variations, but is as if the blue light placed upon the yellow or red object has become green and purple. It does not become simply 2 more shades of the original
blue, one might say this is obvious common sense, but as with many things often needing to be spelled out for the beginner.

As part of our visual analysis of our subject’s colour masses we scan and make reference of these 4 possibilities, noting the predominance of one or the other. The usefulness of this visual tool is in having continuity among the masses so the illusion of light and shade are logically consistent. But regardless one must still see the secondary or subservient cool in the warm and the secondary or subservient warm in the cool. I only mention these as devices for helping beginners to understand the full range of potentialities of what is being observed. After one’s eye is trained to a higher perception these type things can be discarded in favor of direct perception in which there is no longer any verbal analysis of warm cool or of any other visual aspect. One will simply scan, perceive, mix, and scrape, scan, perceive, mix, and scrape, scan, perceive, mix, and scrape.

too much emphasis on verbal mental concepts such as colour temperature is much like the overused phrase “light and colour” which separates into different mental concepts and categories that which in reality is one in the same. We perceive light as colours of various intensities, as long as we hold this psychological state of mind that they are separate we fail to either understand or to see. Particle waves of light are colours and are perceived at various intensities depending upon their amplitude and duration upon the eye. The amplitude of the energy driving the particle waves generates a colours level of intensity and the duration or length of time that this stimuli remains upon the cones determines the level of its perceived brightness, vividness, purity, or somber and glowing qualities. This is what earlier painters called “colour sensations” as they intuitively understood that colour is as much psychological and perceptual as it is physical.
Fig. 16
Below is Henry Hensche’s outdoor painting and class demonstration palette, about 1970, with yellows, greens, and earths to the right and reds, violets, and blues down the left
Fig. 17
Hensche working on a study with painting knife and hand palette upon which one can see the spectral layout of the pigments
Fig. 18
Henry doing class demonstration study in his back yard
Fig. 19
Hensche finishing class demonstration behind his school, a large brown glass jar of the famous Hawthorne painting medium is seen at the other end of the table.
Fig. 20
Below is a small 11x14 hand palette with the colours arranged with vivid spectral pigments to the left and earths and somber pigments to the right,

Boards or panels:
(all measurements in inches not CM) 1/8 th, 3/16ths or 1/4 inch masonite/hardboard or 1/4 inch of any smooth plywood or panel that can be sanded smooth before and after gesso, the cheap paneling at any lumber yard or construction supply store like lowes etc, or even heavy stiff cardboard are all fine for doing block studies and quick starts on, one should make dozens and dozens of these and very few will be kept. It will be helpful for you to spray your water based gesso with a little dammar retouch varnish to keep it from absorbing the oil out of your colours and making them gummy and dull, if you are using oil based gesso then this step is not necessary. Cut up for sizes
16x20, and maybe a couple of 20x24 for later, small boards are too small to really make colour comparisons so 16x20 is the preferable size for the near future. A 4x8 foot sheet of anything can be cut into 12 - 16x20 and a few smaller ones, if you use canvas you must gesso it enough times to eliminate virtually all the texture (all those little dimples become cast shadows which changes both the colour and the tone of every note lain upon it), yes, Hensche used canvases and brushes for his class demonstrations but colour studies were done with the knife on panels/boards

**Equipment:**

**Easel**, a good portable outdoor type, the metal ones will serve you longer and not come apart when rained on, you want an easel that will easily accommodate a 20x24 panel, studies are not sketches and one needs room to work,

**Palette**, standard wooden hand palette of a comfortable size and shape for your stature, one too large will beat you to death both in weight as well as catching the wind like a sail, you may want to make your own by choosing a type that is comfortable in your hand, but remember it needs to be large enough for those 3 mixing areas described in diagram above.

Preparation and care of your palette: if one has a new raw wood palette it must be coated with linseed oil 6-10 times, each time it should have a good layer and allowed to sink in (warmed oil penetrates more quickly). This should take several days at maybe 3 coats a day with a few hours in between. The oil should be wiped down at end of each day so no surface build up, and after the final soak-ins the palette should be wiped down and left to dry for several more days. This is to keep the wood from soaking the oils from the pigments making them too stiff and gummy to use.

Cleaning the palette: palette should be gently scraped with knife and then wiped down with a soft cloth until surface has a clean sheen to it. If some paints have dried on a little, which they will,
then use a little mineral spirits to wipe them off. The first few months of using a new palette one should oil it out every other day, later this should be done every time thinners or solvents are used to clean it or when it seems to be drying the paints.

Before cleaning one can carefully remove any paint that is still useful and arrange it in same sequence as was on palette into a metal or glass pie pan, then the paints are covered with water, this keeps them fresh until the next day so is an efficient use of pigments.

**Caution:** Do not ever leave your palette (or any of your other materials) sitting in the open sun, it can warp as well as dries out your expensive paints so is also wasteful of materials.

**Boards/panels,** as described above, it is best for one to make their own panels, its less expensive but more importantly you are investing yourself in your work, canvas boards or stretched canvas should be avoided unless one can gesso it enough to completely get rid of the texture

**Pigments:**
full chromatic spectral range as listed previously (although HH only allowed half that number and a little white to the beginners, expanding to some of the others as they developed an understanding of those few). For himself he rarely ever had more than 15 on his own palette, adding Indian red and chromium oxide for grey days outdoors, so 50 colours on the palette are completely unnecessary if one actually knows how to use the 20 listed. One must also remember that the earth pigments are their own unique “colours” and are not to be used as dulling agents, ever. They have a luminous quality unique to each of them that cannot be mixed through other means.

**Painting knife:**
A palette knife is not a painting knife (see jpg for knife and hand position of grip, one can also use knife in opposite traditional position and scrape with outer edge, but will acquire more control and dexterity using it as pictured). This is of course a
personal preference but Holbein has the best ones and the thin
Italian ones break easily (note: the edge of knife becomes very
sharp as a result of scraping on abrasive paint particles, so be
careful or one can self inflict a severe cut, one should fold a
cloth or thick paper towel several times into a 2x2 square pad
that when held lightly in palm and between thumb and first 2
fingers the 2 halves open like a birds beak into a 2x4 surface,
one lays the knife in that open fold and closes the towel pad and
drags the knife out, this cleans the blade so next note is not
contaminated with last colour mix.

Dia. c

Knife is held lightly but firmly, like pointing a brush. The index
finger is the key to the controlling of the paint thickness and
shape of the stroke. Once you develop the right touch you can
lay pigment on wet in wet and never disturb the soft paint
underneath, but this takes a lot of persistent practice.

The question is asked, “Why do I have to use the knife, why
can’t I just use my brushes?” The first half of the answer is the
knife moves pigment around more efficiently and colours are
undiluted by mediums and because the blade is more easily
cleaned than the brush the next note is unpolluted from the
residue of previous colours. The second half of the answer is
that you will be constantly trying to draw with that brush instead of developing your colour properly, trying to make a finish or wanting to make a picture instead of a simple study. As Hensche admonished, “Until your colours are true you have nothing to draw with.”

There is also a perceptual and psychological issue here which most are totally unaware of, when the brush is held anywhere near the ferrule like a pencil or pen in the writing position the verbal areas of the brain activate and block or interfere with the visual perceptual areas, this is proven fact and is one of the many reasons why so much of what we see in painting looks like illustration instead of painting. There are many reasons for the brush’s long handle; it’s not just a decoration.

**Dia. d**
Handling and using the painting knife, the angle on the blade is made by scraping it back and forth on a fine whet stone at the most natural and comfortable angle for the user’s hand. Never use an electric grinder as this will heat up the blade and make it both brittle and to lose its spring temper.
Blocks and simple objects, painted coloured blocks of wood or bright bricks or any very simple shaped non-patterned objects, small white or coloured bowls or cylindrical cups etc, blocks of plain wood and so on. It is best to start with easily seen clear chromatic colours, this helps to develop our full perceptual understanding of the range and potentiality of each of our pigments as we attempt to mix the colour planes we see, but also good to have some black, grey, and white blocks as well.

Small portable table, for set ups outdoors (about 3 feet high or thereabouts and 2 ½ to 3 feet across),
Some ground cloths, of different plain colours (no patterns for now), bright and vivid as well as dull and somber ones. The plain table top is ok for some studies, you can also use cardboard or coloured matte board as ground colour to cover table under blocks, keep it simple and easily seen, all colours are good, not just bright ones, earth colours and greys for contrast are all good, pale high keyed ones as well as dark ones, as H said “there is nothing that is not coloured, we discover this fairly quickly when we study in the right way”

Doing a colour study:
In every place the word “colour” is used it is in reference to its chromatic content, its spectral content, this must be constantly remembered, this discussion is about chromatic/colour contrasts not value contrasts. As stated in the introduction the definition of form plane is very important to understand, it means “plane” as used in solid geometry or sculpture; it is a section of a three dimensional form having both surface area and two dimensional shape as well as having a directional movement (advancing, receding, lateral, diagonal, etc). Colour plane is the chromatic content of that surface as just previously described. There is an extended demonstration jpg as well as several other sequential study statements which will be interspersed as examples and clarification.

The written description here is of a block study, but the first demo jpg sequence (FIGURES A-F) is not of blocks but the principles are illustrated the same way. The black and grey block study, as well as other block studies will be shown to help clarify also. In doing a colour study one seeks a large general truth first; a foundation to build the later more specific truths upon so they will hold their place, a later colour note can be correct and still appear false if its foundation is untrue.
For our colour studies we are working outdoors because “the eye is brought up to colour outdoors” in full spectrum lighting and where there is chromatic intensity. Outdoors we are forced to make far ranging and often dramatic contrasting colour choices. There are as many colour changes in one lighting situation as the next however many are of a delicate subtle luminous nature; unless our eye is trained from a position of strength outdoors we will not develop a precise discriminating perception. We must have this ability to see exacting colour shifts no matter how small or else when we encounter those somber relationships indoors we will fall back into tonalism and simply be making value changes which causes a monotonous repetition of our colours. Our work will have neither vitality nor variety especially within the subtle passages of colour.

**Making a start:**

Let's start with the set up:

How to prepare,

You have a small table about 3-4 feet from the eye. The table is either plain wood or painted med. grey or covered with a plain single coloured un-patterned cloth. (One should start with coloured blocks and move on to other material in the near future)

You set up the blocks in an arrangement where they are easily seen, maybe one laying flat and another standing on end etc.

The light is coming towards the eye, meaning the table and blocks are back lit or preferably ¾ back lit, so that the 3 planes showing on each block are lit in bright and medium light and half light planes and of course the shadow plane which should be easily seen, as well as the open areas of the light plane and the cast shadow shapes upon the tabletop.

If possible, set up where the light will NOT be interrupted (by any
nearby buildings or trees causing some shadow to be cast across your table) for at least an hour.

We have our panel at eye level on the easel, the board is not in direct light but is turned so that it is in solid but luminous shadow or have a white umbrella casting shade on the board (if direct sunlight is on white board the bright glare can give one welder’s blindness/snow blindness and can actually sunburn your eyes). You are wearing a hat with sufficiently long brim to shade the eyes from oncoming sunlight or glare (and shading the nose from sunburn), you are wearing grey or neutral clothing so that it will not reflect unwanted tints onto the white board as this causes beginners a great deal of visual confusion, just as a white shirt will reflect too much light onto board and cause us to make our notes too dark because we are trying to compensate for the glare.

**Fig. 21** Set up to commence first statements on a grey day study
colour analysis:
how to begin colour studies, the layout and scanning

on the board use a non-photo blue pencil or very light coloured pencil to do a rough constructional layout of the positions of the blocks (and where the light and shade plane divisions break on non block objects) as well as the lay of the cast shadows upon the table, don’t fuss over it but get the general positions and related proportional sizes, fill the board surface space with large shapes as shown in the jpg examples, do not put small objects in middle of board and leave a lot of empty space, the larger each note shape is the easier to make comparisons for development of the colour masses (do not sketch with charcoal or graphite pencil, this will dirty the white of the board and contaminate any light colours which get mixed with it).

Now that we are standing comfortably at the easel looking directly at our set up we start to scan the entire area of table and blocks, allowing everything to enter the eye at will, no resistance or opinions within the mind, simply look and see. We want to get a “first impression” of what is there and allow the eye to fall on the most obvious colours, and then scan some more.

After a minute or so of looking over the entire set up allow the eye to fall upon the colour plane that is most obvious to you, there is no order in this, it can be any plane at all, light, half light, shadow or cast shadow. The important thing is that the colour in that area has struck the eye as being a definite colour, a “positive colour” as Henry called them. We start each observed area with that colour note which is most easily seen, most obvious colour to one’s eye. The one you can say unhesitatingly “that's yellow”, or green, or purple etc, the one that can be called a primary or secondary or tertiary colour without contradiction between your eye and your mind. An easily named colour if possible, (even though we clearly understand that this is not all there is to the colour of that area or plane, but it is the most obvious chromatic shift in that area).
The first statement of the masses:

We should always keep in mind that at this point we are composing to the light and not to the objects, seeing one large mass of light or mass of shade seen in large relation to another large mass of light or shade. If the impression upon the eye is one of yellowness or orangeness or blueness or whatever, that is the major colour component in that observed area so we start with that pigment, that tube colour, just a spot, maybe 2 inches square or a small patch set into the middle of its corresponding area on our board. Then we go to the next most obvious and repeat this process until we have a small spot of pure tube colour in the middle of each plane or shape area as quickly as possible. You may NOT repeat colours, no 2 can be the same, we are looking for the one note of colour that is unique to that area and no other! It is a judgment call, you have to make a definite decision (actually forced to make a bold decision), so make it and do it quickly! Visually and not verbally or conceptually, all the while understanding that that one pigment note is not all there is to each areas colouration.

We are dissecting the colours of each area, taking them apart and looking to see what the chromatic components are that make up each one and which combined make the total colour in each area or form plane. We are actually dissecting the light itself because we do not see objects at all; we see the light that has been reflected from that object. So we are taking the wave lengths apart to see which ones dominate and which are subservient to that dominant one in each area or colour plane or form plane change.

And we do this for each and every colour for years until this visual analysis becomes unconscious, automatic and second nature. There is no damned colour theory or any other voodoo involved as is taught by many today. There is only comparative observation of each colour note to all other colour notes and to the overall light effect! Colour theories are empty concepts and of little use, we must observe without those visual biases if we are to recognize what is before the eyes.
First restatement of the colour masses:

Now after we have stepped back a moment and looked over what we have done and have a clear vision of the spots of colour we have laid in as the first statement we return to the easel and look at the first note we laid in. If it appears way too deep then it should be qualified, adjusted with a little white added to it there on the board and mixed in to an homogenized note of colour and spread out to fill in a little more space of its area shape (but not to the margins, leave some white edge between all areas). We do this for every note up there until we have gone through each mass note and have adjusted each of them for depth and intensity (being very careful to not over lighten them or wash out the vividness of the pure note of colour). Now that we have consolidated the mass colour notes we are ready to look for and decipher the next colour component in each mass area.

The colour study demonstration seen in FUGURES A-F is of a glass wine bottle, a terra cotta pot, some shells and rocks on a weathered wood table backlit in early afternoon sunlight on a clear day,
FIGURE A1
this example of the first 10 minutes of a start shows what
Hawthorne and Hensche meant by “colour spots” or “spots of
colour”, initial notations put up quickly for immediate
comparison to the subject and to one another.
FIGURE A2
As seen here our starting notes are to be “opposing colours” as Hensche called them, where the chromatic strength of each note stands in oppositional colour contrasts to each other. It is the intensity or richness of each colour not the differences in values which make this effect upon the eye.

And it is important that one cover the board and consolidate one’s masses into single colours and proportionally correct shapes, this is the only way to make accurate comparisons for further development.
Fig. 22
Further examples of student block studies showing first overcoloured statements outdoors. Hensche said that in the beginning one should go at it like a “savage”, being as bold and direct as one is capable of being, and that this is where one gains perceptual strength to carry through to later stages.
Fig. 23
the group of block studies below was done under artificial lighting indoors, the fundamental principle of every plane being a different observable colour is the same, this is simply another light key to work under esp. during prolonged bad weather
Further restatements of the colour masses:

Time to go around once more and restate the original study colours with another observed chromatic component from each area of the subject. Once again we scan each note area, both on the board as well as in the subject allowing the eye to easily dart from one to the other, not thinking in verbal analysis but perceiving colour sensations, we do not stare, we keep the eye moving and look back to each area from another to see what is hovering there in the light. For example, if we laid in a pink or blue note on the table top in light and now we are looking it over and it seems to also have a light magenta as part of it, we mix that component to its correct intensity with a bit of white and lay it into the blue or yellow or pink and scrape it in and mix it well with that areas original pigment, we do not leave broken colour sparkle, we mix the note down and flatten its surface as we consolidate it into a single new compound colour which should be some closer to the actuality of the light observed in that area.

Then we go to the next note and look for its next most obvious component and add it there and so on until we have done this to every mass area on the board, making as accurate observations from our subject as possible. Remember we are looking for the large general truths which best represent the light in all areas (which collectively when refined will be the light key under which we have observed our subject).

We are NOT looking for small colour details and even though many of these will jump to the eye they are to be ignored until its time for those small minor colour variations to be added in their areas. In the beginning we are looking for a colour impression left upon the eye by the aggregate of all these smaller notations. We are looking for the large masses not for minor details. One does not bring the kitchen cabinet drawer pulls to the worksite the day the concrete foundation is being poured for the new house to see if they are the right ones, very bad timing to say the least, certainly there is no place to put them.
Caution: even though you may think you can see the next, the third component in an area after you have added the second do NOT do it now, do all of the rest and seek the third only when it is its turn to be studied. The colours must be brought up simultaneously, none ahead or behind another. The relationship upon the whole of the board must hold as a single unit, no area above or behind the other. So every note must be brought to the same level of refinement as all others each time during the mass stage as well as the major variation stage and all renegade notes which will not comply must be made to do so. If we fail to do this any real progress in later stages will be less than their potential refinement.

If the second round of statements is complete and has been corrected as well as one is capable then we go on to the third pigment addition following the same pattern of scanning, observation, and mixing of the next chromatic component in to each area wet in wet, (each adjusted to proper intensity and depth with a little white). We do this as many complete rounds as one thinks they can make an improvement in the large colour masses of light and shade. 5 rounds would be excellent, Hensche said that usually after the third round one had reached the end of their seeing ability for their present level of perceptual development and might not be able to see anything further. But that pushing oneself to a couple of more rounds of comparisons would teach us more even if what we had already done well was destroyed by the addition of those later erroneous notes because of our visual confusion about what we were actually seeing. He knew to train a student well meant them knowing what not to do was as important as knowing what to do.

After adding the second component and spreading it a little further and then the third it is now probably a good time to clean up the form plane shapes just a bit so that all the colour masses are in simple proportion to one another, do not get into over drawing them, its not necessary and is also a waste of time in that it takes time away from developing the colours while the light is moving and the key changing, so dissect colours, seek out each component and mix them in thoroughly, and flatten the paint. You should attempt 3-5 restatements, looking for the next
colour that will make the mass more accurate in relation to each of its neighbors. Even though we are refining the notes they are still to be stated more coloured than we think we see them, we are after the strength and shock of the light, that is the first component of any light key, the vitality with which it hits the eye.

One should set up different combinations of your blocks and objects, often adding maybe a dull brick or raw wood block to the mix, or a dull cloth under vivid blocks or a vivid cloth under off coloured blocks. You should spend about an hour on one of these, from sketch to final 5th restatement and at that point close up the edges and clean up the proportions and smoothe your paint a little to get rid of ridges. General craftsmanship is not that important in these first ones but will become very important later, so here is the place to get in the habit and discipline of doing this each and every time.

You are not to take anything further than this far for a while, several weeks or even months of masses only (several dozen of these would be about right at 2 or 3 a day), attempting all the while to reach a higher refinement of all the colours so that they are a closer representation of the light key one is working under in each. Major colour variations, minor colour variations as well as colour modelling of the form volumes are yet to come. But your colour masses should have this stark and clean effect as pertains to the colour relationships of your blocks and objects as well as your table top and background (which should also be kept simplified). These colour contrast chromatic masses are the root of all else, if the foundation is not strong the house will fall because it will only be a house of cards.
FIGURE B1
This next section of 3 jpgs are examples of what was described above, the entirety of these first 5 jpg images should span roughly 1 hour of work time.

RESTATEMENT OF THE MASSES
FIGURE B2

FURTHER RESTATEMENT OF THE MASSES
FIGURE B3
Once again it must be stressed as to how important it is for further development for one to consolidate the mass colour notes in to single colour notations and correct proportional shapes. One should also smoothe the paint to eliminate as much texture or excessive paint as possible, especially at margins of shapes where later edge development is to occur.
Some restated and refined outdoor block studies of the same set up of white, black and grey blocks on a light grey cloth seen in different light keys, this student has exercised a great deal of technical control over both their colours and shapes.
Comments and additional information:
Before continuing to the next stage of this study I would interject here that no matter how long one has painted in other ways (or what high opinion one might hold of oneself) everyone starts colour study in this same crude vivid chromatically saturated manner, everyone. The purpose of this stage is both to deprogram the perception of its biological presets and biases, as well as gain some experience with the full potentiality of each pigment's strength and variety of combinations. And it is a stage that cannot be skipped or avoided without important repercussions later on in one's development, the importance of this stage cannot be overstated and without a clear understanding and ability at this level one will most likely never become a colourist at all.

The intermediate and advanced students start in the same pattern of approach excepting that they often use compounded (2 pigment or 3 pigment mixed) colours for the original statements as well as compounded colours for component additions instead of the raw and overcoloured single pigment statements. Their perception is at a more refined level as well as their mixing skills but they initially state every mass area with a chromatic strength that best represents the light key. And many of their colour adjustments and refinements are carried out through single pigment additions to each area as well.
Fig. 25
This jpg (of a large black block, med. grey block, milk glass bottle, yellow gourd and shell on a weathered wood table in atmospheric afternoon sunlight) is an example of what has been described above, the first 2 images are initial masses as well as first restatement, the 3rd and 4th images are the major variations as well as the beginnings of the minor variations. And yes the colours inhabiting the empty spaces are the impression left upon the eye of the light hovering between the objects and background as well as the halation around the bottle against the black block. This image helps explain the fundamental colour study principles better than all these many pages of words,
Fig. 26
this jpg below is an example of a student taking the overcoloured approach up into the major and minor variations, dealing with the subject only in terms of strong chromatic contrasts representing the light effects of each as well as the form volumes of the objects.
Fig. 27
attached below is jpg of part of an old handout for colour students, the line diagrams were an example of how one should think about breaking up the larger forms into colour masses, major colour variation divisions, minor colour variation divisions, as well as pointing out the edges and high light areas that would require close attention to perceive the colour. The somewhat geometric arrangement was to assist the student in dividing the forms in a logical manner in order to keep the colours separate for comparative study as well as to understand the form volumes. Hensche said, "Every colour note has a specific shape, if you are not seeing that colour’s specific shape then you are not seeing the colour either." As a beginner the colour is problem enough, so until one had some experience in seeing the exacting shape of each colour the shapes themselves were kept in somewhat geometric planes (so the eye would not get lost and could logically find its way back to where it left off). After some perceptual development and experience perception of the shapes became more organic and eventually one could see the specific colour as well as the natural shape of the note. the outdoor diagram is of a large clay pot, wine glass and 2 gourds on a round table seen against a board slat fence in a back lit situation, the indoor diagram is of a corner set up of large ceramic pot, metal cup and small bowl, lit by spotlight.
The fact that every visible thing is part of one volume of light and atmosphere is most obvious outdoors where there is more glare. The masses are more luminous and color changes more distinct. Edges acquire a great deal of importance and require careful study.

OUTDOOR STILL LIFE

(Fig. A) Mass divisions

(Fig. B) Major variation divisions

(Fig. C) Minor variation divisions

(Fig. D) Concentrated study of edges
(Fig. A) INDOOR STILL LIFE
Masses - two great passages of light and shade.

(Fig. B) Major variations - building blocks of form.

(Fig. C) Minor variations - creators of harmony, space, and depth.

(Fig. D) Edges and linear accents bring the full life of aerial perspective.
A question about pigments:

One may have observed that “when I add white to it the colour naturally changes but often goes in the wrong direction. Does this mean I picked the wrong colour for that mass area or its component restatement?”

The answer is a definite maybe, this is part of it, coming to an understanding of what each pigment does and is capable of doing and this can only be done through trial and error. Many coloured pigments are totally different in character in mid-tone and tint than they are in full depth, for example mars violet, Indian red, and mars orange are all 3 completely different colours from deep to mid to tint. Mars orange for example is a warm medium brown in full strength but in pastel tint it is a rosy yellow or a yellowish pink with a definite shift often to the cool side, however you want to describe it. This is why the early months are dedicated to pure colours adjusted with white only, and the next adjustment to each area of mass or variation is a similar intensity of tint to the one its laid in to and mixed with, which makes another different colour shift totally unlike either one seen separately. Through this effort we are building our colour vocabulary, our store of visual knowledge that will allow us to instantly recognize most of the components of any colour we see in the future and put them quickly on our study.

There are an infinite number of combinations and if one has integrity this search never ends because one will always seek the unknown and never settle to working from a formula based on things we have seen before. One will only be visually satisfied to discover the new, one will surely run across “old friends” but there are always new acquaintances to be made. One often runs across combinations never thought of or never seen even after many years of colour study, this is part of the journey of discovery for which there can be no formulas or visual restrictions. Which again is why we must train ourselves away from any thought of values and greyscale and replace that thinking with an ability to dissect the light itself in order to discover its components in the area we are observing and to
understand how that colour relates to all other areas. We must see in the colour contrasts presented to the eye and perception the actual physical presence of the light.

We first look for the tendency or colour shift of each area (the first impression of blue or red etc), secondly we attempt to ascertain that component’s intensity (as compared to each of its neighbors and to the overall scene before the eye), this will show by those comparisons the depth or luminosity of that colour as well as its purity or intensity. Part of each colours intensity and depth is caused in the eye by its colour contrasts with its neighbors, so it is never just one colour that is responsible for its own intensity but is also affected by everything next to it, and everything within ones field of vision will effect how each one appears and how it is seen. I am juggling a lot of words here in order to get you to thinking in colour and the attributes of colours as they strike the eye. We will now continue our study process.

**Major variations:**

Examine your set up and compare to your study, scan and observe the different colour impressions one gets from each area, each colour mass both on set up as well as study board. One will immediately recognize that the top area of a mass note is chromatically different from the lower half, or that the back half of the table top is completely different from the near area. After making these observations try to make a colour decision as to the 2 or 3 most obvious colour plane differences in each mass of both light plane masses as well as shadow plane masses. Allow the eye to fall upon those which are most obvious to you, those which leave the impression upon the eye as being “positive” colours.

Now just as we did in the first statements of the masses begin the major variations with the most obvious colour plane and add the next chromatic component we see in that area, adjust for intensity and depth with a bit of white to be similar in those
qualities to the note that it is to be lain upon, add it loosely and wet in wet (the study should still be wet from mass development in previous session, after some practice the masses and major variations will be one session of maybe an hour and a half). Keep each pigment mixture confined to its prescribed area of the mass note. Now make the next observation and continue in this manner until one has traversed the entire study and divided the masses into these new compound colour divisions.

The colours should be slightly overstated but not raw as the original mass note’s pigments were. Keep your colour shapes somewhat geometric (if in doubt keep them as in line diagram jogs e and f above) for an orderly progression. Do not let colours overlap and do not smear edges together or be slack or lazy on this account. Keep each note separate so that it does not contaminate its neighbors and paint flatly, no broken colour. Briefly knock down ridges and excess paint at general border of these new notes with edge of knife.

We should have been making constant and continuous overall comparisons of every colour on our study to every other colour on the study, no two should be alike. This is an ongoing task that is in play regardless of what stage of development or restatement we are engaged in, this cannot be lost from our visual concentration even for a moment, difficult in the beginning but second nature once the eye and perception have been trained to do so.

**first restatement of the major variations:**

After we have gone over our entire study making 2-3 major colour variations for each mass step back from the easel and let the eye rest a moment, then return and compare all the colour notes on your study to one another and compare them as well to all the major variations areas on the subject. Look for the most obvious glaring flaws, and yes, they will present themselves to the eye. With these most obvious flaws in mind step back to the easel and restate every major variation colour note that we just made starting with the most obvious outlaws. Just as we did
last round we are adding the next most obvious colour component to the observed area, adjusted for depth and intensity to comply with those qualities already present on the study. Skip no notes, restate them all, even those you think correct because as these other colours are corrected the entire relationship will shift to some degree and each note will require some adjustment.

Once again paint flatly - smoothe paint ridges at edges - do not overlap pigments at edge of another area - keep notes loosely geometric in shape - and do not smear edges together to get a look of finish, this would only be a false finish.

Second restatement and consolidation of the major variations:

We should have been making careful observations and comparisons as well as careful mixtures for each note applied to the study. It is now time to travel around the major variations once more – adjusting each area’s shape and colour very carefully for chromatic depth and intensity and its relationship to its neighbors. No two major variations should be the same colour, or be a simple value change of any adjacent note, nor should a note’s neighbor contain a similarity of colouring as no two colours in nature are the same.

We are seeking the variety and strength of colours embodied in the light being observed with which it constructs visible forms and depth in space. This restatement is very important for the future development of any study as well as the further development of our vision, and contrary to many I would say that the relational accuracy of these major variations is the most important stage in a study or painting’s development both for its structure as well as its light key.

So once again traverse every note on the study making acute comparisons to the subject and adjust each variation according to the chromatic shift which we have observed within its
corresponding area in the set up. As one might guess with this many pigments now in each area they could no longer be vivid and raw in chromatic intensity, and you would be correct, each area should by now be expressing the luminous and possibly somber relationship of the light key falling upon our set up, our subject. When we have made this last restatement we step back and make another overall comparison and restate any renegade notes which do not comply with the overall colour harmony or unity which should by now be developing in the study and as noted above should be the overall light key we have been observing.

This sequence should have taken about an hour or so somewhat like the masses and their restatements did before. Time for some housekeeping, one should clean up the proportional shapes of each colour note to be more exacting, as well as consolidate all the pigments in each separate area into a single new compound colour.

This study description is as one begins, the intermediate and advanced students would have made all the above adjustments both as single pigment additions but also through many compound mixed colours, having more experience with how the pigments react to one another they are less prone to get muddy or non descript colours from over mixing pigment combinations.

Attached jpg C1-C3 are of section of study described above,
FIGURE C1

MAJOR COLOUR VARIATIONS
FIGURE C2

RESTATEMENT OF MAJOR VARIATIONS
FIGURE C3

CONSOLIDATION OF MAJOR VARIATIONS
Fig. 28
this jpg is mid afternoon sun and haze study of large gourd, goose decoy, grey enamel pot and rocks in full light. images showing sequence of first statements, adjustment of masses, major variations and the beginning of some minor variations, most stated as compound colours as one would at intermediate level of study
At the end of working on our major variations and taking care of the housekeeping of cleaning up colour shapes, consolidating all those pigments into a single new colour for each area or plane, and smoothing paint especially at colour shape boundaries, it is probably a good idea to set it aside a few days and allow it to dry a bit. Part of the reason for this is that if one is not accustomed to painting wet in wet one will soon get nondescript or unintended greys instead of accurately refined notations of colour. The other reason is somewhat similar, we
do not want the smaller more mixed and refined variations to be tainted by picking up unintended pigments from underneath.

So the study has dried a few days, it is now time to take it up once again and attempt to develop the minor colour variations. After laying the board flat on a table and very carefully scraping off any protruding ridges or offending textures of paint with the painting knife we spray the study with a light coat of dammar retouch and are ready to take it to the easel.

**Minor colour variations:**

The minor variations are much more closely related, not only in proximity but in the character of their colour as they are all more specifically modified by the effects of the light key. Each is to be uniquely different in their compounded chromatic content yet each harmonizes with all of its neighbors. A conundrum that is only solved through trial and error and a lot of close scanning, observation, and comparison of all colour notes to each and every other colour note. No two can be the same colour and none can be a simple value change of any of its adjacent neighbors.

As one should be able to tell by now the process of evaluation and comparison and mixing and stating and restating of the colours is the same technical approach at each level of development, but it is the size, number, and variety of notes that we are comparing which multiply exponentially. So unless one has some competence with the 15 or 20 mass divisions one will not have any success with developing the major variations, and by the same token unless we have developed a great deal of competence with the 30-60 separate major variations then we will certainly not succeed in developing the several hundred minors variations to any degree of accuracy or refinement.

Step to the easel and begin by observing and comparing the set up to the study, while scanning in the mass stage one had to suppress the seeing of all those many variations as individuals in order to see their aggregate effect as a single notation of
colour. Even now we must be selective as we attempt to see only the 3 or 4 most obvious colour shifts within each major variation area or shape in our subject.

Once again we must make definite chromatic decisions about each area and the variations it contains. Patiently and with a focused visual and mental concentration begin to mix the minor variations that you see, one at a time, and work on adjacent notes within each major shape if possible and then go on to another, but try not to jump around and dart from here to there, be as orderly and logical as possible. These notes will of necessity have to be 2 or even 3 pigment mixes as a compound colour, also adjusted if necessary with a bit of white for proper intensity and should be of the same luminous character as the note they are being lain upon.

Of course there will be slightly deeper and slightly paler areas of each major variation but hold these chromatic contrasts as closely to ones observations as one is capable for your level of development. A beginner will of course be cruder and more raw or vivid, an intermediate or advanced student will of course be able to see and mix variations with a higher degree of relational accuracy, this all takes time, practice and dedication, about 20 years of this might suffice if one is really paying attention to what they are doing.

Slightly overstate the new colour as compared to the larger note it is being lain upon to allow its chromatic shift, ever how slight to be detectable in relation to all others. The eye can become cone fatigued during this work as well as simply tired so walk away every 10 minutes or so and rest the eyes, then step back and begin comparisons once again. Do not hurry these variations, do not rush but do not dawdle either, see and mix and scrape on in correct area and as correct shape as possible. Make constant and continuous overall comparisons of every colour note to every other colour note on board, no two should be alike.

When you have made a complete round of your study (which may have taken 2 or 3 sessions over as many days depending
on the length of the light key and ones speed at mixing and application) one should have on the board a beautiful and somewhat coloured mosaic effect of separate, distinct but harmonious notations of colour. We should have laid notes flatly but now is the time to go back and flatten and smooth as many paint ridges and textures as possible (for reasons previously stated). This should be done at the end of every session or in the evening before paint sets up, this simple bit of craftsmanship is not to be neglected and is an integral part of your visual development.

First restatement of the minor variations:

Compare all notes to all other notes both on study and in set up, no two should be alike. Pay close attention to those notes which seem more off than others, also give extra attention and study to the highlight areas on objects and table top as well as where shadows break into light planes. Pay special attention to reflected lights where light has bounced off one surface into another, do not let these notes fool the eye and allow one to make them too pale which will cause them to appear to jump out of their proper area in the shadow notes. scrape, scrape, scrape,

Second restatement of minor variations:

Step away a few feet and look at the study, once again the offending notes from last restatements should stand out to the eye while all others will hold their proper place and stay within their own mass area. Step back to the easel and restate these renegade notes which have violated the harmony and unity of the light key, do this with as much comparative accuracy that you are capable of mustering within yourself, don’t settle for “that’s close enough.” Hell No! Its never close enough, you must push yourself to fix it or fail! Do not be precious with it, show some character and attempt to move perception to a higher plateau even if you ruin this particular study at this far point. It’s only a board and some coloured grease, what is there to lose, and certainly more to gain! True colour study is a full
contact sport, not a pleasant armchair diversion.

In every study Hensche said, “Each variation must carry its specific colour to the eye when viewed at a reasonable distance yet not violate the mass which it is a part of.” Must NOT violate the mass, the light key, so our original colour masses are still in control to govern or police the types and qualities of the notes lain upon them even at the end. This is why it is so important to get the masses in as close a relationship that we are capable of before moving on to the major variations, and those as refined as possible before attempting the minors. Our success or failure is settled almost as the first note hits the board, just something to think about.
FIGURE D1

MINOR COLOUR VARIATIONS
FIGURE D2

RESTATEMENT OF MINOR VARIATIONS
FIGURE D3

REFINEMENT OF MINOR VARIATIONS
Fig. 30
as in this students late afternoon light key a colour study starts with the large masses of light and shade represented as strong colour contrasts, “opposing colours” as Hensche called them. They are a foundation of the large general visual truths upon which to later establish the more refined and specific visual truths. Unless these early stages are refined to proper colour relationship the later notes will not hold their place and instead of visual order there is a chaotic and disjointed look, so the early stages are not just about getting the white of the board covered

Fig. 31
here is another example of a study as developed by an intermediate student, with compounded complex colouration used at every level of development, images are of first statements of the masses, restatement of the masses, further restatement and consolidation of the masses, and the beginnings of major variations.
set up is old dark copper jug with iron handle, ceramic wine bottle, grey enameled pot and some rocks, on a weathered wood table with tight slat fence as background, the vine foliage in back is treated as another compositional object and stated as such, the white rock was changed to a brown one so as to force differences in that and the colours of the bottle, this is in late afternoon sunlight with a touch of moisture in the air.
Fig. 32
Achromatic jpg of the 4 colour study examples for your comparison, this will be touched on again later in more detail

Refinement and finish:
I will not say much about this idea of finish as it is dictated by the subject, the lighting, and what one has meant to express or emphasize in that particular work, so it becomes fairly personal, although ones visual perception and craftsmanship are always the main ingredients in the final outcome of one’s study or
painting. Henry said that finish was simply rectifying all of ones technical mistakes and visual errors, as one might guess that road is never ending so we must stop at a place of visual unity and say time to be on to another study or painting.

In response to some especially foolish people who whine, “But working like that looks so unnatural!” these are people who do not understand the difference between “study for perceptual development” and “the making of pictures to sell to tourists.” The ones who actually do the work will soon realize that colour study and shape control of the notes all becomes very fluid with practice and perceptual development and the stiff stilted look brought on from keeping the note shapes very controlled or geometric eventually disappears to a great degree as we come to recognize the organic shape of each colour note.

As one’s colour qualities become more refined in time a high degree of naturalism appears in the work as one’s accumulated study knowledge is applied to one’s individual compositional arrangements. Henry said, “There is no Hensche method of colour study! But if there were, it would be colour masses and colour variations.” Easy to say but many years of development and study are required in order to be able to do it with any real degree of refinement.
FIGURE E1
This amended composition is to show how the addition of a few simple objects can enhance the visual effects of both light and spatial depth in one's study.

FIGURE E2  Further study of edges:
To repeat, one may think that blurring an edge with a brush is equivalent to making 6 or 8 colour plane changes at an edge (where a form unites with the background and surrounding air) but it is far, far from it and is only a self deception to think they are the same. One makes an edge or loses an edge through
delicate colour shifts which model the form changes through separately laid planes of very specific colours and shapes. (FIGURES E1, E2, and E3 being a crude and simplified example of this important visual principle in colour study.)

This is never accomplished through technical smears; these specific colour modelling refinements are visually superior to all superficial brush techniques which deal only in generic effects such as do alla prima sketches. Colour study is neither an esquisse nor a pocade; which are simple performances neither of which develops perception to a higher degree of refinement.
FIGURE E3

MAKING A FINISH
Colour modelling of the forms:
As stated in the introduction colour modelling of form changes is Hensche’s contribution to painting just as Hawthorne’s was the introduction of colour masses as the foundation of pictorial representation, visual ideas which contributed to making greyscale and values obsolete. They were both the first to develop these ideas as teaching tools for the refinement of colour perception. The revolutionary aspect of the Hawthorne/Hensche approach to colour study is that it is no colour theory or formula. It is rather an approach to study that is totally trial and error, based on having no formulas, colour biases, pre-conceptions, colour systems or known solutions. It is to seek new solutions, individual solutions during the eye’s search and discovery of colour sensations within our subject seen in its lighting environment (within the prevailing light key). What is discovered is that it is the divergence of chroma, these distinct differences in each colour held within the light key which creates harmony and unity. A unity within diversity brought about by very disparate colours. A colourist does not dull down their pigments to create a false harmony by traditional values and grey scale; but instead uses colour contrasts whose visual characteristics are determined by the prevailing light key.

For quite a number of years now there has been a great fallacy propagated by many contemporary pleinairists and especially at a number of the academies that colourist painting is the age old academic value and linear drawing approach with “colour added”, usually saturated local colour. However these are just other forms of tonalism where colour is used simply to decorate academic drawing and value under-painting, a way of “dressing up” the painting, a decorative skin that is pulled over a black and white structure, a colour tinted grey scale.
But the visual world does not colour itself this way. There is no black in the colour spectrum. Whether in somber low light, or in cast shadows, or in her vivid chromatic displays, nature prefers to clothe herself in luminous, glowing, translucent and fluid colour. What Hawthorne and Hensche taught was NOT colour adapted to academic painting. Nor was it an extension of value painting, it was rather a break with the past, especially the idea that the student must learn values (and drawing) first before they can learn to see colour, and proving over and over again that grey scale was not helpful and actually a positive hindrance to one’s perceptual development.

Hensche not only made the visual breakthrough into colour modelling of the forms but also developed a way to teach his discoveries to others through a progressive series of increasingly difficult colour problems. As he used to put it, “I have given my students a 20 year head start”, and he did it outdoors through the use of simple still life objects seen clearly in strong light first and later in more complex and atmospheric lightings. As was said previously the eye is brought up to colour outdoors in full spectrum lighting and where there is chromatic intensity. There are as many colour changes in one lighting situation as the next however many are of a delicate subtle luminous nature, if our eye is not trained from a position of strength outdoors then when we encounter those somber relationships indoors we will fall back into tonalism and a monotonous repetition of our colours. Our work will have neither vitality nor variety especially within subtle passages of colour.
Fig. 33
Early stages of form modelling in an outdoor light key
THE LIGHT KEY: The light key is the prevailing light and atmospheric condition and colour quality of the lighting environment at the moment of observation of one’s subject matter. There is nothing that can be seen outside of a light key, it is the one predominant visual truth about each and everything we see and perceive. This is true whether in natural or artificial lighting conditions. All visual materials are relative and relational and there are no absolutes in the realm of observed colouration. This field of relativity is in constant flux creating visual patterns of fluid movement. Although painters had studied outdoors for many decades before it was not until the middle of the 1800’s that the complexity and infinite variety of colour light keys were discovered and more accurately interpreted by Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Claude Monét (1840-1926) and the other Impressionists through the use of the new and more intensely coloured pigments. However the weakness in their approach was their technique of broken colour. Tiny touches of paint re-creating light keys where there was much dissolution of form volumes (like atmospheric haze or fog) was a plus but where form volumes were most apparent and an integral part of the structure of the scene it was a negative as these forms appeared to be unstable.

CEZANNE'S COLOUR PLANES: Cézanne hoped to resolve this flaw, “…where everything slips away in these paintings of Monét’s, nowadays we must inset a solidity, a framework,…” he achieved this through his experiments in colour plane recession and colour modelling of form volumes through distinct colour plane changes. Through his intensive observations he discovered that all form changes as one goes around an object or a plane’s recession in space were distinct colour changes and not simply value changes of the local colour or a value variation of the adjacent plane’s colour. His discovery that “every form plane change is a distinct colour change” is a visual truth that is practiced by very few painters. Through the visual discoveries of the English and French painters the ideas for a new approach had been propagated but it would be up to others to bring these disparate ideas into a unified coherent whole with a means for its practical application to representational painting.
HAWTHORNE’S COLOUR MASSES: It was Cézanne’s experiments with colour planes and colour modulation for aerial recession and visual depth which was to eventually bring form back to the light key. However, Cézanne was rarely able to maintain his light key throughout his modelling of forms. Hawthorne set out to resolve this colour/form contradiction and it took him 15 years to discover a practical solution. The root idea had been around for centuries, starting a painting with the major shapes or masses was a traditional practice but it was then either by the use of grey scale or in the case of the Venetian tradition red earth value scale.

Charles Hawthorne’s contribution to the evolution of colour painting was that he replaced the generalized grey scale masses with distinctively different colour masses (observed directly from the subject) that in their relationship established both the light key as well as the major form volumes of the painting. This approach to painting (both in the masses and modelling variations) is based upon colour contrasts not value contrasts. His mass colours were stated with chromatic strength and then modified and refined several times to get their visual relationship as close to that of the subject’s light key as possible. This created a specific and stable foundation for the colour modelling of form planes to hold true to nature. By having this mass colour note for constant visual comparison any smaller variation notes which violated the light key would be obvious and would either be attenuated or removed. In value painting the value can be correct and the colour still be totally wrong, in colour painting in both masses and variations if the colour is correct the value is automatically correct. Something one should think about and closely consider.
Fig. 34
The major form changes shown as large colour planes
HENSCHE’S COLOUR MODELLING OF FORMS:
Colour modelling of the form volumes is not separate from light key but is an extension of the light key as it affects every single form plane with its particular combination of modifications and effects. Hensche’s contribution to painting was to develop the colour modelling of forms within the colour masses of the light key. He accomplished this through the use of an unrestricted palette of roughly 15-20 pigments and utilizing what he called “visual analysis” as well as “visual logic”. He made constant comparisons of every colour note to every other colour note in his subject and within his composition and made constant restatements of all colour variations until their shape, size, proportion and colour quality were in a seamless relationship to his refined masses.

As observed from the subject each form plane change was to be painted as its distinctively different colour yet remain in harmony to the whole which had already been established with the colour masses. Hensche said, “every single minor variation when viewed from a reasonable distance must carry to the eye its obvious individual colour difference for its plane change, but it must also hold (visually remain) within its own mass area.” His approach employed definite form plane changes (to be done as illustrated for beginners in Dia. e and f until they developed the ability to see the exacting shape of each colour) and were stated as colour contrasts not value contrasts. Through this approach Hensche was able to bring form/volumes back into harmony with the light key, the very thing which Cézanne had sought his entire adult life as a painter.

[There has been a great deal of discussion in recent years as to the origins of the strict and geometric shaped colour modelling of the forms, many saying that it was an invention of and the influence of Charles Miller during the decade he studied with Hensche, but this is an absolutely specious assertion yet still presented as if the strict modelling of forms was not what Hensche taught. When Miller, Britt and others arrived in Provincetown to study with Hensche in June of 1963 this is exactly what he taught them. And this method of approach can be traced back and confirmed through living ex-students both from the 1950s as well as the 1940s]
and anyone with eyes can see it in many of the Hawthorne mud heads from the 1920s, and one can find examples of objects being left in this so called “chunky” state of development throughout Hensche’s works. Once again this false assertion is simply more distortion presented by those who do not wish to study as he actually taught or by those who still believe traditional academic drawing should take precedent over colour modelling as the primary means of expression in representational painting.]

One of the main reasons for this strict study of colour plane modelling (sculpting visual form with definite plane and colour changes) is for the student to come to a perceptual understanding of form and form volumes as colour itself, and to realize that our perception of form is generated by colour stimuli, colour contrasts, not dark and light values. Through this process one also discovers the potentially infinite variety of colour variations held within each separate light key. “not that you would want to put all of them in each time”, as Hensche said, but to learn and have that ability “so that the choice may be yours”, so that one is not laboring under personal visual limitations but will actually have the visual range to fully express the essentials of that which is before the eyes.

This form modelling in strict colour plane changes is a type of drawing which in its refined state is predicated upon the use of each individual colour’s actual shape and its proportional size as related to all other colour shapes. This type drawing has nothing to do with the traditional linear or value kind. Historically the word “form” has meant traditional drawing but in Hensche parlance it means form volumes, visual forms, and volumetric form through colour relationships. True form in painting is drawing with colour shapes to generate visual volumes not by using a linear perimeter and filling it in like a child’s colouring book. The study approach is sculpting with colour planes and generating visual volumes through colour masses; this gives a sense of weight and stability to both form and space and is visually more powerful than the practice of simple or superficial pictorialism of objects which is easily accomplished without this other level of effort and concentration.
In nature (meaning any observed subject) there is a singularity of volumes, space, and lighting. Learning to see and paint light keys clearly is the basis for creating convincing volumes and modelled forms whether the subject be the figure, the landscape or still life. Hensche’s visual analysis encompasses many ideas not touched on here such as focal planes, aerial recession, rhythmic flow, focal areas, plane recession, volume and form movements, shape control and colour plane drawing, intervals of movement and many others which are necessary to understand and master if one is to become an accomplished colourist. These ideas are utilized in a constant evaluation of the colour composition. One “sees all” just as a symphonic orchestra conductor “hears all”, all of the individual notes simultaneously while never losing sight of the whole of his musical composition.

We study the ideas posted above separately and then in relation to each other until we no longer have to consciously bring them to mind but have them continuously operating as part of our field of visual awareness. Seeing, perceiving, visual analysis, pigment selection, mixing, and application become instantaneous and intuitive, spontaneous and energetic. There is study and there is performance, without study the performance will generally be a poor one, whereas without a performance we have no way to evaluate what we know and how we are utilizing our knowledge at this moment in our development, so both are essential.

**Fig. 35**

In this student’s morning backlit sunlight study is an example of modelling the form volumes through colour plane changes; this sculptural or “chunky” effect comes from holding the planes as separate entities in order to visually understand each ones distinctive colouration and how that one colour relates to all other colours in the study. And within that one study’s overall relationships there will be colours which will appear deeper or lighter because of their chromatic/colour contrasts and not because they are necessarily deeper or lighter in value. Having positive or negative intensity spikes (where we have made some notes too deep or too light) is as bad as having colour spikes (such as an overly vivid or raw colour showing amongst refined ones), either visual characteristic will cause these notes to jump
out of relation or look like a hole in the board (because they will violate the visually unified surface of the focal plane as well as the light key). Such renegade notes must be attenuated or removed.
Colour modelling of form is much like working with the minor variations excepting that it is approached with much more discipline and visual concentration over a much longer period of observational comparisons within a study. It is not as much about emphasizing the color as light as it is an emphasis of colour as form and form volumes (but still held within the overall control of the light key). As said previously when most people have used the term “form” they meant objective drawing, when Hensche used the term he meant form as volumes (sculptural forms) and the interrelatedness of their movements, a sculpting with colour plane changes which taught the student to comprehend the light and the forms as solid volumes within a three dimensional space. Once trained the eyes can reach out and feel the weight and volume of a form almost as if touching it with one’s hands. This is something one has to discipline themselves to over a long period to have a visual understanding of. This study of colour modelling if pursued long enough leads to the visual realization that light itself is form and has volume.

One must always keep in mind that no two colours in nature exactly repeat and are generally quantifiably different in their chromatic and spectral makeup. In our modelling studies we should not repeat colours. The axiom to remember here is that every form plane change no matter how small is a distinct colour change from all others within the field of vision and is never just a simple value variation of any of its neighbors. Each of these colour notes are held separately to its own allotted space and applied as the shape and proportion as observed in the subject, or made a somewhat geometric shape indicating the form change on object surface or recessional plane showing depth. By following this procedure one can easily compare and restate the colouration of each note because each occupies its own space in the studies mosaic of colour notes.

One is not dealing with generalities when one models but with specific notations of colour which will need to be mixed separately on the palette as a compound colour note containing multiple pigments. Each distinct colour plane is multiplied by as many small variations as one can perceive and mix as colour
notations and each represents its small plane change either of a form or flat recessional plane within the composition.

In speaking about the modelling of colour plane changes, their proportions and numbers Hensche said, “we start with the major colour divisions within each mass area, then we break those down into approximately one inch variations and later those are broken down into half inch variations and then quarter inch and then eighths of an inch, and then sixteenths and 32nds, and 64ths, then 128ths” as he finished with a long laugh.

His point was that one does not blend colours into a generic generalization or use a brush smear to make a form’s edge turn in space. To make forms turn or to recede to the distance or laterally, one makes definite and distinct very specific colour mixes based upon one’s close observations of the adjacent colours in each area and are painted as a sequence of small minor variations. Every form within the field of vision is unified by the light key; the light and air are one seamless piece and must be painted as such. This often requires thousands of distinctive minor colour variations. He said, “You might not always need so many variations but you must be able to see them and know how to make them so that the choice is yours.” Once again, visual limitations are no virtue when they are out of default instead of choice.
Fig. 36
Strict colour plane changes applied to a study observed under north light, the same modelling principles apply indoors or out.
If we train our visual perception to its full potential we will see these modelling plane differences easily and distinctly and learn to mix them accurately, this in turn imparting a finer character and depth to one’s works. Attached below are several other examples for some further clarification. This is a topic where words cannot replace the visual examples as any adequate explanation. As with all the other stages of development within a colour study the work must be done first in order to actually comprehend the words which attempt to explain it. Words are very hollow things when compared to actualities.

**Fig. 37**

jpg example is of an indoor winter study under indirect early afternoon light from a west facing window. Set up is of a faceted aluminum coffee pot, a ceramic wine bottle, an old Chinese ginger jar, and 2 small gourds.
As one can see in comparison to the explanatory text this student has followed the study approach to a high degree and has developed this study to a beginning level of refinement in only 4 sessions through both compound and single pigment colour notations. The fourth state has been posted separately in larger form so one can see the distinct modelling plane changes in colour notations.
Fig. 38
The beginning of colour modelling of the forms outdoors
Fig. 39
The beginning of colour modelling of the forms indoors
Fig. 40, Fig. 41, Fig. 42

Three more examples of colour modelling of the forms below, this student has begun to make the minor colour planes on the figure and all seen as a strong colour silhouette against the large shadow note. In the second study the modelling has been carried to a high degree of refinement as can be seen by the many colour form changes as well as the fine colour statements of the light “halating” from brightly lit areas into deeper coloured areas. At bottom the student has attempted to model the light as well as the forms. A great many colour studies for each of these students to have arrived here from the vivid and raw beginning stages of colour study, that is where we start but as seen here the serious student soon develops their perception to a level beyond the crude and general visual truths.
This student’s example below shows the study process, developing from the large colour masses to the beginnings of the minor variations and the early stages of refinement. As can be seen from this first statement, establishing the light takes
priority over establishing the form, and as the variations and modelling progress the form appears as part of the light. Light and form are not separate from one another, that is a visual truth that takes about 20 years of dedicated colour study to fully comprehend and to consistently demonstrate in paint.
All of the study materials above both as information and examples are enough to carry a student of colour for about 10 years worth of regular and consistent study. Until one becomes proficient as well as observant and perceptually developed to the point of being able to make a bold start then refined into a consistent light key and for all the modelling colours to hold within that light key the main axiom to remember at all times is colour masses in relation and coloured shapes in proportion.

And no matter at what stage one must always be willing to take the study back to the previous level of development when one is obviously failing. The minor variations are consolidated and restated as major variations and then one remolds all over again. Or major variations are consolidated back to the large masses that are to be restated to a finer colour relationship to the light key and then structural forms generated once again by the colour restatements of the major variations.

We must never be “precious” with a study but steely eyed and clear minded in our determination to make further progress regardless of time, effort or costs.
Some general notes about colour study:
First of all, this is training, not painting. This fact should always be kept in mind and that we are not making a picture we are developing visual perception.

The colour study novice says, “When I look over at the set up I can already see that the block looks like a medium pink on top and a pale blue on the end and a violet on the side, why can’t I just make that? Why do I have to make it scarlet and blue and purple out of the tube?” This is a very relevant question that no one ever likes to hear the answer to, especially those who were proficient in value painting before coming to colour study. Aside from the necessity of learning the characteristics of a large number of new pigments on the palette there is the fundamental principle of learning to see and think in colour contrasts (and NOT in value contrasts). But more importantly is the principle of deprogramming perceptual biases which applies to all regardless of how proficient one was in other systems, the fact that one can ride a horse does not mean that one is able to drive a car or fly a plane.

This is the place where people either break or never break the hold which value concepts have on their thinking and perception and if not they will at best be a coloured tonalist and will never reach the fullness of their perceptual abilities and certainly never comprehend Hensche’s highest development. Two weeks out of one’s life doing 25 or 30 of these raw statements and then 30 or 40 more in the next few weeks of single pigments only modified with a little white is extremely valuable especially if only skipped because of ego and false pride. Hensche said one must be humble to really learn about colour, well this is where we start, with some humility.

The first thing to remember about one’s colour study is that we are not making bright colours for the sake of bright colours
(Hensche did not teach a style, an “ism”, or mannerism of some ism), prettiness is the perpetual enemy of the beautiful, one is not learning to paint in pretty colours one is investigating one’s own perceptual abilities by dissecting the colours, dissecting the light, dissecting ones own perception to see exactly where reality or some truth in nature might be found. As I have said a great many colour studies are required for each student if their perception is to arrive at some semblance of visual truth where colour becomes structural to the composition. The vivid and raw beginning stages are where we start and that stage is very important but a serious student soon develops their perception to a level beyond the crude and general. If they do not then what they produce will be no more than a decorative use of colour.

Always keep colour notes flatly laid, do not fall into the bad habit of broken colour technique as it quickly becomes a barrier to further progress. Restate the colour masses of light and shade at least 3 times and preferably 5, adding separate single pigments adjusted with white to correct chromatic intensity rather than adding compound mixtures which tend to go grey quickly.

Always rub down the large notes in each area with the flat of the knife blade to consolidate the pigments into a single new colour, a large flat note is more reflective of the light and is the only way that one can accurately compare one colour to another and make further adjustments with any accuracy within the relationship.

Keep the paint at the edges of adjacent areas flat or you will not be able to see or develop those crucial areas later if there are ridges and bumps casting shadows on one another and distorting the actuality of the colours. Especially with form edges one should never rely on techniques but develop ones general craftsmanship to a level to where no technical trickery is needed to express ones vision, edges are done with intentionally laid colour changes, not with arbitrary brush smears.

Draw by the shape of the individual colour note and not by the
shape of the object, every mass and every variation has its own unique shape and those need to be seen as much as the colour does. If we are not seeing the shape of the colour then we are not seeing the colour either. And one may have been struck by the glaring absence of the word “drawing” in this discussion. That is because one should not be concerned about overly accurate drawing in the traditional sense when it is the colours in relation and the shapes in proportion that are the task at hand. Until the colours ring true with the luminous glow of the light key you have nothing to draw with. Do not try to use drawing to correct bad color. It may appease your feelings but you will learn nothing from it and you will have taken a wrong turn on the road to understanding colour in nature.

When Hensche was asked what he was looking for when he began a charcoal drawing of a head he answered, “The colours.” Just as in his paintings he studied the colour plane changes in order to see their exacting shapes within that lighting, that light key. He was thinking in colour even as he made each specific plane shape or area a grey note. This is why his drawings have a luminous quality seldom found in others’ black and white works. He said that careful study of the form changes through drawing exercises assists the student in being able to quickly recognize the shape of a colour, this meant one could concentrate on colour and not have to think about drawing, this being the manner in which that knowledge was applied to colour painting. He set this in opposition to what he called “drawing with paint” which is a superficial pictorialism where coloured pigments are used to produce traditional drawings as paintings.

A colour painter should not obsess over traditional and linear drawing when one is composing to the light through colour shapes. If one wants to obsess over something let it be composition and compositional balance and arrangement. Even a modest painting well arranged is far superior to one well drawn but clumsy and unbalanced in arrangement.

Do many quick starts and then consolidate the notes and put them aside and then do another and another. In a day or two come back to these, set them up again and restate the colour
masses again, making better comparisons to the set up. Then when you graduate to the major variations do the same with them, observe and restate as many times as you think you are seeing more chromatic components within them and have the courage to add them to their proper areas on the study. Studies are not paintings and one should not be precious with them. We work on them until they improve or until we ruin them. Either way lesson learned.

The masses in proper colour relationship should reproduce the light key under which the study is being done. If they do not, then restate their colours until they do. Do NOT go on to any further development until the masses are a decent representation of the light key. The major variations should be restated to hold in the light key and one does not go on to the minor variations until the majors are correct in relationship.

In the beginning one should do dozens and dozens of vivid starts, and dozens more of multiple restatements and refinements before going on to any variations. Colour study is sequential and progressive, the next level of development being built upon the last, so no previous stage can be skipped and no future stage left unattempted, or else the entire journey will have been wasted time.

As I have said a great many hundreds of colour studies are required for each student if their perception is to arrive at some semblance of visual truth where colour becomes both structural and compositional. The vivid and raw beginning stages are where we start but a serious student soon develops their perception to a level beyond the crude and general. If they do not then the paintings they eventually produce will be no more than a decorative use of colour.

We need to do back lit, full light, and gray days in all light keys as our studies. The world is not always a sunny day with vivid colors but is rather somber and luminous in the majority of its effects and we must understand, perceive and attempt them all if we are to comprehend the true nature of colour relationships. It does not make a damn if we can draw well or know values, until
we are proficient with colour contrasts that can reproduce the light key in the mass stage and form volumes in space in the major variation stage, and then create rhythmic form movements and spatial recession (horizontally, vertically and in depth from the light source) with the minor colour variations then we are not painting in colour. We are not painting at all!

If the colour is correct the value is automatically correct without ever taking it into consideration. The opposite is NOT true, a value can be absolutely correct and the colour still be totally wrong! So the sooner one purges the concepts about values from one’s thinking the sooner one will see colours as colours. And especially do not fall into the category of colour hybridization (a form of tonalism) where value analysis and traditional drawing are used to cover one’s lack of colour perception; commercial illustrative picture making in all its forms is not colour painting.

This is a crude and simplified colour study demonstration illustrated by FIGURES A - F, but it touches on all the major points in sequence which we need to understand to get started. When we arrive at the development illustrated in the last frame we have arrived at the beginning of our search, not the end but the very beginning. It is from here that we develop a finer vision upon which to build a finer painting. If one is interested in superficial pictorialism, then that can be had through much less effort than can colour study and colour perceptual development. Unless the search for knowledge is more important than producing a product to sell, then one should do something else with their time and efforts.

Hensche said, “Look to a painter’s highest development as your model of study.” And at his best Henry Hensche composed through colour contrasts only. What he did NOT do or teach is the academic traditionalism with colour added, with color as an adjunct to drawing or as a decoration for values that is being sold to painting students in many places today. This last point must be understood from the start and one’s mind must be separated completely from that type of thinking and analysis if one is to do colour study in the way he prescribed and that
these many pages have attempted to describe.

So use your own eyes to see what you see. Do not be influenced by others' works but only by nature and her works. Otherwise we will simply be mimics of clichéd subject matter or derivative of someone else’s vision and never come to know the uniqueness of our own perceptual abilities. We must be logical thinkers and logical seers if we are to develop our colour abilities, there is nothing romantic about hard work, and mental discipline is required if one is to as Hensche said, “study colour in the right way.”

We start with the shock of the light which we represent by strong colour contrasts, and through extended refinements of the chromatic content of each and every note (from the largest to the smallest) we develop the refined and delicate quality of the entire volume of light as modified by the many variables acting upon it. We begin with an easily seen general truth and work our way up to the more difficult and specific ones in a logical, sequential and progressive manner.

For one who is working consistently, even daily, this simple demo sequence shown in FIGURES A-F sets forth study development that should take 2-3 years for one to become proficient at each stage and continue to develop at the end. It is not a road map to a quick picture. We only go as far as we are proficient in our colour perception at our present state of development but then we push ourselves to a finer relationship in the colour notes by making even more concentrated observational comparisons and attempting those compounded mixtures. Win or lose one must push the boundaries of one’s perception; if we stop half way then we will have totally failed in the attempt.
FIGURE F
Colour study demo start and finish

Fig. 44
Achromatic jpg of study demo start and finish
Fig. 45
Some extended colour studies which the student has carried out in the manner described in these texts, light keys are - late afternoon in autumn, late morning sunlight, late winter grey day, and early afternoon summer sunlight, all are knife on board.
Fig. 46

Previous 5 Colour Studies Achromatics:
For those who may be visually jarred into disbelief seeing studies done in all that colour I have posted this achromatic of the previous colour jpg. These extended studies were done according to Hensche’s colour contrasts approach and with no consideration of values whatever. yet if one will make an honest visual evaluation and comparison of these greyscale images (not desaturated, as that gives false greys, but actual greyscale) they will see that all values are as they should be, as Hensche said, “when the colour (chromatic content) is correct the value is automatically correct.”

None of us actually see in black and white although many perceive in b/w contrasts or colour tinged greyscale. This because of biological presets as well as personal preference (for conceptual systems), and often perceptual biases as well. But none of us should ever think of our own vision of things as the ideal, as we all know that would be the height of perceptual ignorance. There is always something more, this being obvious whether in life or in painting.
**Colour study applied to the landscape:**

Hensche said, “I spent the first 20 years of painting studying the figure and head, the second 20 studying still life and the next 20 years were spent studying the landscape and, excepting for anatomical knowledge, the landscape is the most difficult of all problems to understand and to fully resolve in colour, the late afternoon grey day being the most difficult of all colour problems.” When the study procedure (of colour masses and colour modelling of the forms through the major and minor colour variations) is applied to the landscape one treats all the initial forms as solids for the purpose of the large masses, through them the structure is developed that will support all the smaller colour notations and have them hold their place in the composition. After one has developed the ability to construct forms in this manner through colour planes and eventually acquired the ability to see each colours organic and natural shape then the stiffness of holding notes in separate planes will dissolve and a naturalism will develop on its own.

That naturalism comes from a level of colour and shape refinement as well as from insight into the natural rhythmic form movements embodied by trees and the roll of the land in general. It does not come from the addition of extraneous details where traditional drawing is substituted in the place of one controlling the shapes of the colours and through their proper proportional placement. We are not making leaves we are studying the colours of the large and small forms as seen in the light key. Colour study is not superficial picture making.

Some say that figure study is necessary to do landscape well but this is an absurd statement. The landscape has its own unique set of rhythmic relationships, form movements, volume movements and plane recessions which can only be discovered through a disciplined study of the landscape itself. To impose even the idea of the alien forms or rhythmic movements of humans onto trees would at best be counter productive, just as doing the reverse of applying landscape rhythms to the figure and calling that visual truth would also be absurd. There is a
visual logic to every type of subject and common sense would tell us that each should be observed as its own.

**Fig. 47**
In this student’s example of autumn trees at sunset one sees the masses as solid colour shapes and the beginning of the development of the major variations and their form movements which can bring a sense of grace to even a simple composition.
Fig. 48
Below are 2 brief study demonstrations of the same subject on a grey day and at bottom is sunset, you will see the emphasis on the large colour silhouettes for the upright planes and the flat recessional notations for the ground plane, in a landscape the colours of the ground plane must physically support the upright plane of the trees, if they do not then one senses as well as sees the visual instability.
Fig. 49
Fig. 50
In this student’s colour study of 4 sunny day light keys of same subject (morning full light, mid-day, late afternoon, and dusk all on one 20x24 panel) the landscape has been reduced to its most elementary colour planes indicating the structure of the forms as well as the lighting on those forms. Having the other keys there on the same board for comparison to the landscape and to one another also allows one to see and study the extreme differences in the contrasting colours’ variety from key to key.
**Fig. 51**
Mid day autumn landscape study showing student’s visual analysis of the colour plane shapes of the forms as well as their interrelated movements, the colour spots and smaller colour shapes also show distance of each plane from the eye.

![Image of a landscape with autumn colors and interrelated movements](image)

**Fig. 52**
A student’s start and finish of sunlit willows by a marsh in high autumn, the colours’ plane movements being part of the design.
**Fig. 53**

Colour structure, form volumes, colour plane recession, and rhythmic movement of forms, all eventual topics for the intermediate and advanced students of colour and colour contrast painting, in these jogs the student has taken all of these things into consideration as well as the other aspects of study previously discussed, all as applied to the landscape,

strict colour studies of large willows by a lake, seen in the light keys of the passage of a summer day, from sunrise until sunset.
2 other studies from the same series of 40 light keys of same subject, **Fig. 54** spring morning in full light and **Fig. 55** spring sunset. What one learns from doing this type of study series is that light keys and colours are infinite in type and variety as well as visual qualities.
Fig. 56
An important question and general notes:

When does over colouring end? And how do I know when to end it?”

This is a question with no easy answer as it is predicated upon each individual’s perceptual development, so let us start at the start. In the beginning our study colours are "raw" (tube colours), then with our first modifications we make "overcoloured" notes (which is a small refinement by adjusting the intensity or depth of the raw colours with a bit of white). Then we develop our ability at mixing closer refinements to make "positive" colours (more like each area or plane in the depth and intensity we are seeing but still obviously a named colour, it is no longer a pure bright red but still obviously a red).

This use of what Hensche called “positive colours” is the developmental level and the area of colour we remain in the longest but even then that is not all we use. There has to be a kind of “accuracy of equivalency” built up between what we are looking at and what we are painting on the board, the colours have to describe the subject, be an obvious representation of the subject and not just be a pile of brightly coloured colours. So as we advance in perceptual development we learn to mix those compound colour adjustments (previously mentioned in text) which make each colour note more luminous and atmospheric. We know that our positive colour can still be named but that pigment is not all that is in there, it is simply the notes major chromatic shift.

Through further comparative study one discovers a great variety of what are called "off" notes (not as clearly positive, off from positive), they are NOT “neutrals” they are off colour notes and are compound luminous colours requiring several different pigments to mix them but they are never grey or muddy or nondescript. There will always be some chromatic shift to them that can be seen no matter how "off from positive" they are.
Then there are the "somber" notes, the colours which have "no name". By themselves they are not a positive colour at all but nebulous, but do NOT mistake these notes as neutrals either, they are all still very specific in relation, very specific in which way the somber or nebulous is shifted (towards green or red or blue) which we cannot necessarily see until it is lain next to another colour. So in relation they “appear” as redness or blueness etc, and we can only figure these out by mixing and painting and modelling trial and error.

In everything we look at there are all 3 types; positive colours, off notes, and no name colours. It is our job to refine our notes to the level that the positives are exacting, the off notes are exacting, and the no names are exacting and all in proper relation. In doing so the positives will become a bit less positive and after we get further into refinements we realize that everything is dependent on everything around it as to whether it “appears” positive or not. We always try to start a work from a position of visual strength, which is through observation of whatever positive colours we see in our subject. Then we attempt to see what the chromatic shift is in the other colours and exaggerate or over colour that tendency a bit so that they show as positive in the start on our board as our first statement; knowing full well that they are not that coloured in actuality and that we are going to refine them into a light key relationship.

Once we have reached a decent level of perceptual development and can mix most of what we are able to see in our subject, if we were to take our finger and get a bit of almost any colour (one could say 80% of them) off our finished refined work, got one colour on one fingertip and stuck that note on a white board we would have to look and think a good while before we could say exactly what it is made of. What is a positive colour after refinement is only positive in relation and not in isolation, which can often appear to be grey or mud in isolation when only compared to white. But these are NOT what value painters call neutrals, these very specific notations are not generalities, “neutral” always connotes the generic. The off and no name colour notes are never generic, they carry the complete specificity of the light key as observed on that specific plane.
This requires acute observations and even more acute mixtures to represent that plane correctly; the generic will not do the job.

In reality anything one can mix is “a colour”, no matter how dingy it may appear in isolation, it all depends on the relationship it is inserted into and what it is laying next to too. A specifically mixed midtone grey can appear positive green or even positive violet if laid next to other specific mixes that make its colours blush to the eye. This is extremely complicated as words; all one can say is that constant comparison is the key. these are things that no one can teach you and must be seen and figured out for yourself, you see a colour and you do your damnedest to try and figure out what it is and how to make it so that it stays where it is supposed to and says to the eye what it is supposed to be describing.

The bright colours are used on the board as the start so that we have an obvious basis for comparison that is about the light, and colours are about the light because they are light. Then we compare each to each and each to their counterpart in nature and try to decide where to push it, which way to push it and how much to push it. After we have adjusted them all through compound pigment restatements and achieved a balance and a semblance of the light key then that moment is where refinement really begins. We know how to start strong and positive and then through constant comparison are able to mix a new colour that is slightly less positive and more like the actual note we are looking at; by being able to do this we are coming closer to the luminous actuality of the light and not just having to throw a bright colour into an area as a place holder.

As was said, at the start of a study we work from a position of visual strength, which is through observation of whatever positive colours we see in our subject. Then we attempt to see what the chromatic shift is in the other less coloured colours and exaggerate or over state that tendency a bit so that each shows as a positive colour at the start of our first statement; what we are seeing contains positive colours that will stay positive, also the off notes as well which are not so obviously
coloured, and there are also no name somber notes which are not very coloured but have a subtle shift of colour in them.

In a single study relationship where they are all there in large numbers all 3 types should carry the same consistent luminous visual quality (a similarity of intensity just as in the observed subject) whether the overall light key of that particular study is pale or mid tone or deep. And within that one study's overall relationships there will be colours which will appear deeper or lighter because of their chromatic/colour contrasts and not because they are deeper or lighter in value. Having intensity spikes in which we have made some notes too rich or too light (such as overly vivid or raw colours showing amongst refined ones) will cause those notes to jump out of relation or look like a hole in the board (because they will violate the visually unified surface of the focal plane as well as the light key) and all of these renegade notes must be fixed or removed.

just as Hensche says, "Cézanne talks about most colours in nature being somber and luminous and not being very coloured, and that is true, but they are made out of light and not paint, with paint we must exaggerate to some degree in order for our limited painting to look like unlimited nature”, this is what the late Englishman Sir Alfred East called “legitimate exaggeration” and that is the limitation we work under. We are doing an interpretation, a representation of nature, “we are translating the language of light into the language of coloured pigments”, so we must never lose sight of the fact that it is not nature it is paint, but we also must never lose sight of the fact that we are trying to make the viewer see nature instead of paint. And that is where talent and skill are no substitute for perceptual development. It is a long process, this is training more than painting and there is no substitute for the hours spent at the easel looking and mixing and comparing,

So the original question was, “when does over colouring end? And how do I know when to end it?” For those who have made a personal “style” out of over colouring it will never end because they have reached the end of their perceptual development by making a strategic choice to stay there. For the rest of us we
will know that it has naturally ended on its own when we are able to refine a relationship with all 3 colour types ("positive", "off", and "no name" colours) without any of them looking out of place as they give the impression of a unified light key and by all holding their places in their respective colour masses no matter how many variations are used. The test of our study’s visual success is whether the impression it leaves upon the eye is one of nature or one of paint.

**Colour study as applied to the head:**
The fundamental principles of colour masses (generating visual form volumes and light key), major colour variations (for structural form and depth), and minor colour variations (for highest visual refinements of form changes) all apply to the head and figure in the same way as has been illustrated in the previous sections on still life and the landscape.

When Hensche was asked what he was looking for when he began a charcoal drawing of a head he answered, “The colours.” In his drawings just as in his paintings he studied the colour plane changes in order to see their exacting shapes within that lighting, within that light key. He was thinking in colour even as he made each specific plane shape or area a grey note. This is why his drawings have a luminous quality seldom found in others’ black and white works, he was not drawing a head he was drawing the light!

He said that careful study of the form changes through drawing exercises assists the student in being able to quickly recognize the shape of a colour, because of this type training one could concentrate on colour and not have to think about drawing, this being the manner in which that drawing knowledge was applied to colour study of the head.

Along with this type drawing study Hensche also thought that anatomical study in clay was essential to doing a good head (Hawthorne thought it to be unnecessary). It certainly is helpful to a great many, but one can also say that to do so is no
guarantee of success just as not doing it is any certainty of failure. Hensche’s point was that, “one must learn to see three dimensionally before one can paint three dimensionally” and working in the round benefits many with this perceptual development.

Hensche also used to warn the would-be portraitists that, “the colouration very often runs contrary to the anatomy of the head.” In virtually any light key the painting of the most anatomically correct head is the one least likely to visually look correct. The light can also very often run contrary to the anatomy of the tree or many other forms. The reason for this is that there is a single volume of light within one’s field of vision, all else are simply colour variations within that large mass volume of light and in a painting this overall unity must be established and maintained, firstly as a focal plane light key.

When a head does not recede back beyond the picture plane (the light key’s focal plane) as an integrated part of the light and air surrounding it but is seen as a separate object from its environment then it has fallen out of its light key. Many technical truths including anatomical ones must be made subservient to or subjugated to the flow of the light or there will neither be naturalism or realism. As Hensche used to say, “the light key is the first and foremost truth to be expressed about one’s subject, without that it’s all a visual lie”, no matter how correct the anatomical planes or the drawing or the form modelling.

As pertains to the colour study principles applied to the head I will let Hensche visually speak for himself through jpgs showing details of some of his head studies and class demonstrations. In figs. 56 – 61 one not only sees the colour study principles as applied but also the individual development and refinement of his vision from the hard or even rigid construction of the head to others which have become part of the light itself.
Fig. 57
Grey day outdoor class demonstration head expressed in its simplest terms of large colour silhouettes and major form plane notations, 1940s
Fig. 58
Indoor class demonstration head, detail, showing the many distinct colour changes representing each form plane change and form movement, 1950s
Fig. 59
Outdoor class demonstration head of bearded man, detail of colour planes, 1960s
Fig. 60
North light class demonstration head, late afternoon, detail, as with the majority of Hensche’s works the light key is the actual subject, 1970s
Fig. 61
Outdoor class demonstration head in full sun light, detail showing colour plane changes in extremely high key, 1970s
Fig. 62
Self portrait, detail of the often delicate nature of his colour modelling of the smallest form changes, 1970s

This self portrait warrants a brief remark about expression in painting, someone asked Hensche, “since everyone studies in the same way, when does this way of seeing and painting become your own?”, he answered, “when you begin to paint your own ideas and figure out you own way to fully express them”
Expression is an illusive idea but most everyone might agree that an intentional or imposed expression is not genuine and is almost as false and damnable as mimicry or mannerism of someone else’s personal expression. Henry said that true expression develops on its own, unselfconsciously as one continues to attempt a higher refinement of visual perception and struggles to find an adequate means to express that higher vision. Individual expression being a natural extension of that struggle to get on the board what one is seeing, the intelligent student devises ways to make that vision appear in the painting as it appeared to them in life.

A brief Hensche gallery:
Hensche’s high level of visual colour refinement is obvious and not debatable. This is easily seen by making comparisons of these various examples of his work below with those listed as studies in various stages of development in the previous sections.

But it must be remembered that he went through the same struggles and study as he prescribed for others and unlike many these days he applied the same fundamental criteria to his self criticisms as he did to criticizing others and maybe more so.

Fig. 63
another sampling of his class demonstration heads and portraits, most of these were done in one session in an hour and a half or two showing how the colour study approach was applied to study of the head, as with all things Hensche whether still life, landscape or head study ultimately the light key is the subject.
Fig. 64
Fig. 65
A sampling of Hensche's Cape Cod landscapes, all of which were painted in his back yard in Provincetown Massachusetts near the Hawthorne/Hensche school
Fig. 66
Henry Hensche, late afternoon landscape, 1960s
Fig. 67
Fig. 68
A final achromatic jpg showing the representative tonalities of Hensche's refined landscape colouration, to repeat once again, if the colour is correct in relation the value is automatically correct without ever taking it into consideration.
Fig. 69
Indoor winter still life composition
Fig. 70
Outdoor Class demonstration study in atmospheric sunlight
Fig. 71
One winter's “grande travail”
Fig. 72
A group of Hensche’s outdoor still life compositions not only showing a variety of light keys but also his wide range of colour expression.
Fig. 73
Henry Hensche, winter still life
Hensche and colour study:
Some final commentary

As was stated in the introduction the intended purpose here for making this effort was further clarification of the early stages of the Hensche approach to colour study for those students who wish to do colour study for themselves, and also to extract Hensche the man from the matrix of distortions which have built up around his name in the nearly two decades since his passing. Although as said previously one is always reluctant to post extended information for several reasons, the most important being not wanting to educate those in the commercial workshop crowd with more ways to deceive their clients.

One can repeat all the words here and still have little or no knowledge of the subject or any ability at painting at the level of refinement necessary to reproduce a true light key. “Yet those students seeking real knowledge will never know the difference and be left in a sea of confusion when the teacher’s words are not to be discovered within that teacher’s works”.

Because Hensche was not consumed with blind ambition to make a name for himself but put his efforts into his continued perceptual development he was able to demonstrate in paint everything he said with his mouth. One understands that there are a lot of interested people but even here one will only go so far in the explanations, the student of colour must do the actual work in order to really comprehend these ideas and to acquire real perceptual development for themselves. Words are hollow things unless they are truly connected to actual demonstrable visual knowledge having been gained through a singularly dedicated interest and hard work.

When what comes from peoples’ mouths is an attempt (intentional or not) to override visual logic through the imposition of concepts and barriers to vision then it is simply art school BS, which I guess is also an artistic choice in many venues. There are many examples of this that could be listed here and one could go even further and say that those who were
not Hensche’s long term first generation students (most of whom have already passed away) have either no real idea what they are doing or saying, or not enough developmental understanding to realize that the exaggeration of colours by the use of pure pigments was purposeful for perceptual development at the beginning stage of study but was not intended as a style or a constant means in itself. It was simply the first lesson, although when a teacher puts a vivid red spotlight on the model what else is the student to do but make the flesh note scarlet.

This is why what Hensche actually taught and stood for will not outlive his first generation long term students, and many already say “good riddance” to which even he might conditionally agree, because if the distortions or academic hybridizations of what he taught are the only examples to be left then let it all fall and quickly. Everyone must pass through an extended period of over colouring but raw pigment was intended as the first lesson, he neither taught people to be lifelong tube pigment colourists as some still do, nor did he teach colour as an adjunct or decoration to academic values and drawing as many others are now doing.

The original purpose of the article for rationalpainting.org was to inform the interested and reasonable. But was also to address the unreasonable, those who will never do the exercises or studies but who still wish to snipe from the sidelines with irrational remarks such as “must be drugs, dementia, diseased eye”, etc, these same clichéd epithets have always been leveled at those who can perceive colour by those who cannot or simply will not.

Even though as students we all pass through it the zealotry of youth is no excuse for the arrogance of ignorance. The light key is the one most important truth about what we are seeing, the total of physical modifications upon our subject's colour as well as our vision. When the light key is disregarded in favor of some feigned absolute objectivity then one is no realist painter but an ideologue imposing concepts upon what they are seeing and blinders upon their visual perception. There was nothing
irrational or illogical in Hensche’s approach and no diseased eye, or drugs etc. Very ignorant people say these things from fear of the loss of certainty, but these copyists do not comprehend that it is only the existence of uncertainty that allows us to grow and develop. Growth comes not from a blind acceptance but from a questioning of every system, a questioning of and an overturning of all the supposed absolutes. Otherwise we remain in an admixture of ignorance and half knowing.

**Fig. 74**
Henry Hensche, north light still life, about 1960
As we conclude this discussion of Hensche and colour study there are several separate but equally important things here to consider. One is local colour, which one could argue is what it is only as seen at close hand under a steady white (balanced full spectrum) illumination and being otherwise unmodified by its surroundings. That would certainly be an accurate baseline description of a particular local colour if observed at close hand would it not? However any and all modifications away from white light including an objects distance from the eye, the lighting situation and atmospheric conditions all change the visible chromatic content of that baseline colour note to one degree or another. Does it not? And one could possibly even agree that the flesh note of the middle forehead plane seen in direct morning sunlight is different in hue than that exact same flesh note seen at sunset, or in moon light or inside a semi darkened room.

So to think or say that any baseline local colour is that exact hue/colour in all places or for even an hour is also contrary to simple visual logic and even a painter's common sense, is it not? To say that local colour remains the same and only its value changes (with distance or lighting) would be the height of visual ignorance. Would it not? Any common sense observation of that local colour in different situations would easily prove the academic local colour values theory and formula to be wanting in many respects, and to some will be seen as obviously false when compared to the actuality right there before the eyes.

Hensche would often hold his hand out to his side and say, “any painter who cannot paint the difference in the colour of flesh here” (and then he would move his hand back about 6 inches and say) “and the colour here, is not much of a painter!” He also stated that the way to judge the quality of a portraittist’s heads was whether or not they fell back beyond the picture plane into a three dimensional space occupied by light and air and preferably by means of colour recession.

His point was to develop the eye and perception through comparative colour study so as to be able to see and mix that particular colour note for that particular spot of forehead flesh
accurately as observed in each of those previously mentioned lighting situations (as well as accurately perceive all other colours within the field of vision seen within that particular set of modifications and at any distance). His initial point being that there is rarely a situation where the baseline local colour actually “is as it is” without environmental modifications. So from that standpoint local colour is nonexistent in any absolute form, “so one cannot paint local colour with that same colour of pigment.” He wanted the student to take in all the visual information simultaneously, in other words this is not a yellow pot with a blue light on it it is simply a specific note of green colouration, it is not a white horse illuminated by the sky it is a blue horse, and that is the simple reality of the visible physics of the moment.

In its simplest terms, Hensche started the student at the high end of chromatic intensity in order to emphasize what was most drastically different about each object and each plane of each form within that lighting. Then over time had the student work their way back into the actuality of the present and very particular lighting situation (of a true light key). The reason for this over colouring was his belief that people who were trained in tonal value systems first, like he had been, would never push the chroma high enough to reach the luminous quality of outdoor light effects. Whether one agrees with his method or not this seems a simple enough explanation, does it not? The fact that this simple idea is distorted to high heaven through ignorance or incompetence is neither the fault of Hensche nor his method of study.

In Hensche’s highest development there was nothing random in what he did; his German logic would never have allowed that. And Henry would be the first to say that we must take it all apart piece by piece and see exactly what is there and exactly why it is there. This can of course not be done from looking at a jpg of his work, as on the web the majority of which are set at 20% higher saturation than his paintings (many of which are earthy, somber and luminous). And its obvious from looking at many of his former students works or their students works that many do not completely understand or comprehend his highest development
yet many are out lecturing and teaching others as if they did, as if the vivid colouration of his first lesson is an end in itself.

This is why the sequential framework for how to approach a colour study was compiled, so that the reasonable can do it for themselves by themselves without someone standing over their shoulder yelling "that's not GREEN enough!" or influencing them in any way, if one does the exercises consistently over time then many of the larger issues will be resolved on their own simply through constant comparison of all observed colouration. And with a developed competence comes a certain confidence to trust your own vision.

I will be the first to say that Henry Hensche passed through his own chromatic progression, peaking at his perceptual best in the late 1960s, from the mid seventies his concerns were more poetic than factual, not meaning that he did not make acute observations but he allowed himself his own idea of emphasis and as such became more saturated in many of his notations (to quote Sir Alfred East, "...through a long life of dedicated work he had earned the right to express the ideal", at least his version of it). By the early 1980s he had begun to exaggerate his notes even further out of simple inability to see them well enough especially in low lighting. Many of the works by others that one sees today, especially on the web, were influenced by this period and that situation. But instead of doing the long term studies and exercises that develop perception beyond the early stages many of these people chose to become a mannerist of his late phase and decline. For what it is worth that is the general story and I leave it for reasonable people to decide for themselves where the fault lies for the misconceptions or distortions about his work and what he taught.
Fig. 75
Henry Hensche, winter still life, late 1960s
It would take volumes to explain where Hensche was going with all these ideas about colour and in the end would be only words, without a high perceptual development we cannot grasp it and even then it takes years of colour study to even understand his words let alone the delicate rendition of his ideas and ideals embodied within the works from his highest period of development. Aside from things mentioned at the beginning of this text such as focal planes, peripheral vision, rhythmic flow of the light, etc, there is also compositional editing, selective arrangement, colour schemes, compositional emphasis and dozens of other ideas about what he called three dimensional colour composition.

Simply put it is contained in Sir Alfred East’s remark, “selecting from nature’s abundance only those things best suited for the purpose at hand.” This ability to judiciously select and express only the essentials of one’s subject, this “power of selection” as Henry called it, is the very thing which separates the visual poet’s verse from the copyist’s droning prose.

Hensche was a phenomenal teacher because his eye was not fooled by a person’s technical skills. He was able to look past them and see what the student actually knew, what they really understood and how they applied visual principles. He could see what they saw because he could recognize one’s exact level of perceptual development because he had been through all of them himself. Henry said, “The only difference between a beginner and an advanced student is the quality of the first notes to hit the board”, the level of difficulty for each one to carry it to a higher refinement of colour relations is about the same, maybe even more so for the student who can get close to it from the beginning, because the colour nuances of light keys can be very problematic to decipher. Hensche’s approach to the systematic study of colour is beyond rational, it is logical and sequential always pushing towards an unattainable ideal embodied within his philosophy of beauty, the level of eventual development all dependent upon the self discipline and character of the student.
Once the serious student completely understands the procedures and processes, and has made some perceptual progress, then it's time to become even more serious. There is no time to pause for a self congratulatory moment because no matter how far we have come, when compared to how far there is yet to go we actually know very little. And if one studies with honesty and humility this “awkward state of affairs” continues for a lifetime, so one must be prepared to become the perpetual student of colour.

For what follows our initial understanding is more of the same efforts, excepting that now we have to make even closer observations, be even more refined in our mixing and achieve even more skill with our paint application. We must also become very disciplined in our colour shape and edge control because these are our refinements of drawing in colour study as well as in colour painting. Even when one is doing all these things well we must continue to push ourselves so that they might be done at an ever higher level of visual perception and physical control, and on and on and on.

In colour study the initial excitement and fun sometimes become periods of a sort of purgatory in which you think you are drowning; depression sets in, "not going to do this anymore! Waste of time! Not getting anywhere! Will never be worth a damn at this! Waste of hard earned money!" But the serious student of colour keeps pushing with even more concentrated efforts. And then, without notice, suddenly you have a breakthrough onto another level of perception. A new plateau of vision opens and the whole world looks completely different!

But one must never be content to stay on any of those plateaus, ever. We are to do it all over again and again, the same pattern of pushing our perception. It is a test of character and resolve, this is where talent becomes irrelevant and strength of character is everything. So have at it! we all started out set up in the corner of the kitchen or by a window in a dorm room, someone's backyard or city apartment rooftop and kept plugging away at it, learned how to make frames and sell a piece or two to buy more paints which allowed one to be able to
continue to study colour; because the quest for visual knowledge trumps all else.

And always remember that visual limitations are no virtue when they are out of default instead of choice and the choice is not ours unless we have acquired this colour knowledge to the fullness of our abilities, understood its wide ranging implications as well as applications and can apply, modify or reject them in a logical and intelligent manner when applied to one’s individual compositions.

Do not mistake what I am saying; Hensche colour study is not the road to a “mental” type of painting but eventually leads to one of intuitive realization and the expression of deep human emotion. If carried far enough it will become visual poetry, the eventual quality of which depending upon the emotional depth of the painter and the reach of one’s knowledge, Hensche called it “the art of seeing.” It is a cumulative and progressive knowledge and as different from modern commercial pictorialism as symphonic music is from 3 chord garage band rock and various other musical clichés. We cannot know if we have the capacity for symphonic colour and form unless we push ourselves to find our limitations through the disciplined study of it, it is not the kind of knowledge that can be acquired through osmosis, wishful thinking, or in a brief workshop.

If we dedicate ourselves to colour study with humility, whatever one’s level of eventual development it will still show more integrity and perceptual knowledge behind it than the many visual clichés we find in the art magazines, web sites, and gallery ads which have currently proliferated ad infinitum as artists jostle one another for a more favorable position in the public eye. It is important for everyone to be able to make an honorable and decent living from doing what they love to do, but there is a big difference between being a commercial success and just being commercial.

A cliché approach leads to a cliché result. We must attempt not to repeat this commercial illustrative pictorialism which we find rampant today throughout portraiture, pleinairism and so called classical realism (academicism). We as well must avoid the copyist mentality displayed by many others. All these visual platitudes must not be further compounded by other visual
platitudes. This can be avoided and new visual horizons established if we would attempt to learn a new way of seeing, a new approach to painting.

Since most aspiring painters are draughtsman first one must keep in mind that what we actually see depends on where we look, how we look, and is affected by whatever visual biases we may bring to that interpretation. To this one might add that drawing is a wondrous thing in itself but as Hensche said, “The draughtsman’s truth is not the colourist’s truth”, they tend to work at cross purposes. Colour is THE tool of the painter’s trade; it is line, plane, form, volume, depth, emotion and a thousand other things including drawing.

Without a highly developed visual perception, a cultivated visual perception of the full range of colour in all of its drama and refinements, the painter will always fail to reach their full potentiality. It takes 20 to 30 years to make a colourist. As the years pass, if one studies with integrity the task does not become easier, the level of difficulty actually increases as we continuously attempt to push beyond our present plateau of personal limitations. So from that standpoint we will always remain beginners, never become the master artist, simply remain a student of painting.

These descriptions of the early stages of Hensche colour study have not been presented as the only way to see and paint, but have been presented as his totally different approach to both seeing and painting. Not everyone has the capacity or even the desire to become a colourist, but we all have the capacity to expand our understanding and perceptual abilities, which in turn improve one’s work as well as one’s insights into visual reality. This approach to colour study and colour painting is neither arbitrary nor absolute, it avoids both extremes and one’s eventual development is totally dependent upon the student’s personal discipline and character, which often lead Hensche to lament, “‘talent is abundant, but character is rare.’”
Fig. 76
Henry Hensche, his final self portrait, late 1980s