

This month's critique is a piece by

Sherry Telle

I am like many other CP artists I know. I attended art college, got married, always worked in an artistic field in some capacity, but I didn't start working on my art until the kids were grown. I had been using colored pencils and water-soluble pencils for illustrations for quite some time, but it didn't occur to me to use them for fine art until I saw some pieces in The Artist's Magazine several years ago. I was so amazed I had to try!



I have always been fascinated with light and reflections, and love the play of light off of my Swarovski crystal pieces. I took several pictures of the butterfly in the glass case I keep it in and wasn't that happy with the lack of color, as it was a dull day.

I took an abstract ink painting on Yupo watercolor paper I had been working on, and put it behind the crystal butterfly to see what happened, and I loved the colors. It was a tricky piece for me, as the reflections are nearly as bright as the subject. I played around with the composition and thought I had it working well, but now I am not so sure. I also have a tendency not to leave enough white space in my pieces and this one is no exception. This is the first piece I used a burnishing technique on, and my first still life, and it was a learning experience for sure.

I turned the finished piece into a grayscale to get a different perspective and was pleased with the results, but I am concerned because I had to do that to clearly see the composition. My questions are: Does this composition work, and is there enough white space?



Flight of Fancy, 10"x10"
Prismacolor, Luminance and Polychromos on light blue Stonehenge

First, I have to say how much I love your ink abstract painting, Sherry. It's wonderful. I have no ability at all to do anything abstract, so I admire artists who can do both tight realism and abstract work. The intricate work on the crystal is beautifully done, and your ability to recreate an ink painting in colored pencil is pretty cool!

Negative Space

Let me address your question about white space. Here is one of my paintings, "Helium." I think it's a pretty pleasing composition, even though it breaks a rule or two. (The interest-grabbing window frames at the top drag your attention away from the subject. But I included the window frames to bring your eye up to where the "out-of-frame" helium balloon must be.) There is very little "white space" in the

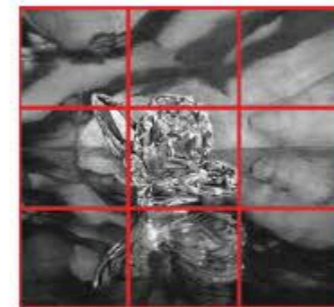
composition, but there is a lot of negative space (the red area). You don't need white space in a composition as much as you need negative space. Negative space is the space around and between the subject(s) of an image. Elements of an image that distract from the intended subject are not considered negative space.



No white space at all – negative space, though.

Composition

In this image, I've both reduced the saturation to grayscale, and also divided the canvas into thirds. I do feel this piece has a lack of a strong subject. The crystal gets lost in the interesting background, making it hard to know exactly what the subject is. Also, the crystal sits square in the middle of a non-square image. Sometimes dead-center works, but only when there is a very clear, very strong subject matter.



If I were to compose an image from your reference photo, I would probably cut some off the left side and quite a bit off the bottom. This places the crystal in a more pleasing space (according to the rule of thirds) and now all the major lines of the background either point to the subject or frame it.



Suggestions

If I were to make suggestions, it would be to:

- Crop the piece on the left and the bottom.
- Blur the background considerably.
- Up the contrast (making darks darker still and highlights on the crystal a brighter white).

Thank you very much for volunteering, Sherry!

Visit Sherry's graphic design website, TelleGrafix, at www.tellegrafix.com.

