

**AN ESSAY ON THE
STUDY OF NATURE IN
DRAWING LANDSCAPE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649191277

An essay on the study of nature in drawing landscape by W. M. Craig

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

W. M. CRAIG

**AN ESSAY ON THE
STUDY OF NATURE IN
DRAWING LANDSCAPE**

AN
ESSAY
ON THE
STUDY OF NATURE
IN
DRAWING LANDSCAPE.

BY W. M. CRAIG.

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE PRINTS, ENGRAVED BY THE AUTHOR.

The Rules of Art are few and simple. SIR J. REYNOLDS.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO.
Spoken Printing-Office.
1793.

NC
795
c88

Director
Low
4-7-48
62275

5

TO

RICHARD COSWAY, ESQ. R. A.

SIR,

I do myself the pleasure of inscribing this little Essay to you, because it is written to enforce a position which you have always powerfully supported, both by your advice and example,—I mean the necessity of adhering closely to Nature.

I am conscious, notwithstanding, that it may seem impertinent to offer you any thing on a subject which you have already so perfectly investigated; yet you will, I am convinced, regard with pleasure an attempt, though feeble, to open the mind of the dilettante artist to a perception

10-4-48 L.M.

of the true principles of the art, which the prevailing tide of fashion has nearly overwhelmed.

For the rest, I know you will do more than justice to any merit that may appear in my performance, and will view its imperfections through the medium of that friendship with which you have so long honoured me.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient and devoted servant,

WILLIAM MARSHALL CRAIG.

AN ESSAY, &c.

To imitate Nature has generally been considered as the object of the pencil. This, however, having lately been much controverted, and a distinct manner of practice having resulted from the negative opinion, it may be necessary to give the subject some moments consideration. It is argued, by some, that general, and not individual nature is to be imitated; and a late celebrated artist rejected even this.*

It appears a matter of some difficulty to ascertain what is meant by general nature, and, consequently, how it is to be imitated. Were it proposed to select, from various individuals of a species, those parts which

* "Painting is, strictly speaking, no imitation at all of external nature."

See Discourses to the Royal Academy.

might be esteemed the best, and thus give a perfect example of the kind,* we should commend the method: but this is not a general representation—it is a collection of individualities. Again, if we suppose that abstract ideas are meant to be represented,† the attempt will appear truly ridiculous. The operation of the human mind in forming abstract ideas, is, to reject whatever is peculiar to one of a species, and to retain only what is common to the whole: hence the impossibility of painting abstract or general resemblances of nature must be evident. For who, that is at all acquainted with the practice of the art of which we treat, or even who that has, for a moment, reflected upon it, would think of sitting down to paint a flower or a tree so, that the tree shall possess every thing that trees have in common with each other, without being

* Il pittore deve essere universale e solitario, e considerare ciò che esso vede, e parlar con seco, eleggendo le parti le più eccellenti delle specie di qualunque cosa che egli vede.

Leonardo da Vinci, *Trat. della Pittura*.

† The artist first quoted says, speaking of painting drapery, it should not be any particular kind of drapery, but merely drapery.

oak, ash, beech, elm, or walnut, and that the flower shall suggest strongly the idea of a flower, being at the same time neither a rose, a pink, an auricula, or a daisy, and being of a general colour inclining neither to blue, red, yellow, purple, or brown. This is, surely, too ridiculous to require further comment; and yet upon such a principle has the present prevailing mode of drawing been established.

Whoever truly loves the art must hear, with regret and indignation, what is unfortunately too true, that, amongst many practitioners in drawing, a certain set of signs has been employed, as by agreement, to represent, or signify, certain objects in nature, to which they have intrinsically little or no resemblance. This is, doubtless, the general imitation-so much talked of, and general it certainly is; for, as we shall see in the conclusion, these signs are as much like one thing as another.

Such is the melancholy truth; and this disease of the pencil has spread, unresisted, its noxious influence,