

## Why Color Pyramids?

I want to respond to a critique of my color pyramids, by a fellow artist and friend who found them rather cold and mechanical. Computers, geometric design and perfect edges can be just that. Here's my defense.

I agree with your assessment of the cold and mechanical nature of such designs, for the computer cannot begin to replicate the feel or touch of a hand. Such is the nature of the beast. I continue to do hand painted watercolors, but they're motivated by a wholly different set of criteria.

Let's start with my paintings. As you know, you seldom find any recognizable subject matter in my watercolors. I used to paint plein-air, but was never comfortable with replicating what was "Out There". This was, for me, more like taking dictation. I don't like being dictated to, so found greater joy by engaging in a conversation. Ever find at the end of a good conversation the question, "How did we get on this subject?" for it evolves as one thought suggests another and ... There is great risk-taking as one takes a hike without a trail, but discovery abounds! As does getting lost or experiencing total failure. Ah, but I'll take such risk, for it's my path and not a worn and predictable road paved by convention. Beware the lonely path, however, for there are few bystanders to cheer you on. Instead, you hear the few observers ask, "What is it Ralph?" "Hell! Even my.... can do better than that with a toothbrush!"

Back to the Color Pyramids. These graphic designs are a direct result of Albers' influence. In his series of "Homage To The Square", Albers seats related colors in the same or similar format as a vehicle by which he can focus on color, not form. He wants us to actively engage in a creative act of experiencing color interaction. His colors are generally related as arrays, or a linear family of two parents with any number of children. I too wish to focus on color interaction, but found a single array too limiting. I needed a format which would accommodate a greater range of visual phenomena and interaction. I have chosen the color matrix as my source of colors. I further recognized how a modified matrix or cross could provide an invaluable palette from which to choose color relationships. My squares are actually composed of triangles, allowing for additional possibilities in this pyramidal format.

And so, armed with these concepts and an incredible graphics computer application, "Illustrator", I am able to execute endless numbers of color studies in hours. A similar handmade production would have taken at least a year of pure drudgery. In other words, my computer has taken the place of a dozen or more apprentices, all engaged with the craftsmanship portion of the process.

For those for whom art is primarily craft, I confess that these color pyramids require none. For these same folks who praise the work of those who replicate a photo, they should award first prize to a flatbed scanner, for it will not only perfectly duplicate, but will do it in seconds. Literal, unfeeling and fast! Now, that's craftsmanship! No thank you!

And, so in conclusion, here is a graphic description of the process involved with these color studies. I see these studies not as precious stones, but rather stepping stones, each assisting my crossing to unknown shores.