

TIPS AND TECHNIQUE FROM J.C.LEYENDECKER

J.C. Leyendecker wrote home to Chicago describing the work he was doing in the **Académie Julian** under **Benjamin-Constant, Jules Lefebvre, Adolphe William Bouguereau, and Jean-Paul Laurens:**

"Thoroughness is the principle upon which the French Art Schools have won their success. It doesn't take long to discover that style and dash will not make a drawing or painting go here as it will an illustration back home."

"Serious work —getting right down to the foundation principles—is the demand which is laid upon every student over here. If I learned anything it was that a picture is really only valuable for the thought behind it. There is little talk of 'handling' and of the catch tricks of the trade, and much emphasis upon a deep and serious significance in everything attempted."

Students are accepted into the program without an entrance portfolio, but instead they are evaluated after attempting a study from life:

"Three models pose at the same time in each room, and the new pupil takes his materials and begins work upon the subject which attracts him. But some time in the first week the professor comes around and takes a first look at the beginner's study. That is an important moment, for if the teacher does not approve of it the nouveau is assigned to work from casts instead of from life."

"The mornings are devoted to class study from models and casts, and the afternoons to composition work. The subject of the composition is announced in the class, and it is briefly explained by the teacher. The students are not allowed to consult with any authorities bearing upon the subject, but must make their composition wholly from the meager data given them by the professor."

"The pupil is at liberty to do his composition in his own atelier or combination lodging-room and studio. Saturday afternoon is looked forward to as the great occasion of the week. Then the compositions are brought to the classroom and the teacher passes from one easel to another giving his criticism to the pupils, who crowd around him, clambering upon chairs and stools to secure points of vantage from which to view the pictures."

THE LEYENDECKER METHOD

"My first step is to fill a sketch pad with a number of small rough sketches about two by three inches, keeping them on one sheet so you can compare them at a glance. Select the one that seems to tell the story most clearly and has an interesting design. Enlarge this by square to the size of the magazine cover, adding more detail and color as needed.

You are now ready for the model. First make a number of pencil or charcoal studies. Select the most promising and on a sketch canvas do these in full color, oil or water with plenty of detail. Keep an open mind and be alert to capture any movement or pose that may improve your original idea.

You may now dismiss your model, but be sure you have all the material needed with separate studies of parts to choose from, for you are now on your own and must work entirely from your studies. This canvas

will somewhat resemble a picture puzzle, and it is up to you to assemble it and fit it into your design at the same time simplify wherever possible by eliminating all unessentials. All this is done on tracing paper and retraced on the final canvas.

Your finished painting may be any size to suit you, but is usually about twice the size of the reproduction. As a rule, I start work with a round or flat sable using a thin wash, with turps as a medium. Keep shadows very transparent, and as the work progresses, apply the paint more thickly on lighted areas, adding some poppy oil or linseed oil if necessary, and using a larger flat bristle brush for the heavier paint, but still keeping the shadows thin and vibrant. When the work is dry, apply a quick drying retouching varnish either with a brush or an atomizer. Sometimes because of prohibitive model rates or other reasons, one is forced to use photography, but try and avoid it if possible.