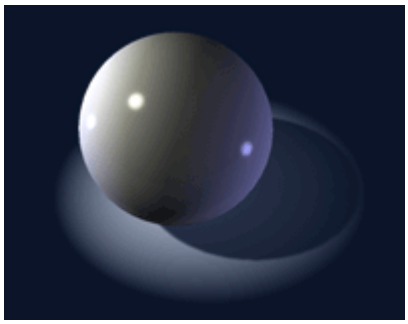
An Introduction to Form

An Art Lesson from Interactive Art School. This and the other Art Lessons are for your enjoyment and a hint of what you will receive in the for-profit 6 Lesson/10 Textbook/ 6 Personal Critique Full Art Course

FORM is the underlying structure of things that we can understand and use to create realistic objects in our paintings and drawings.

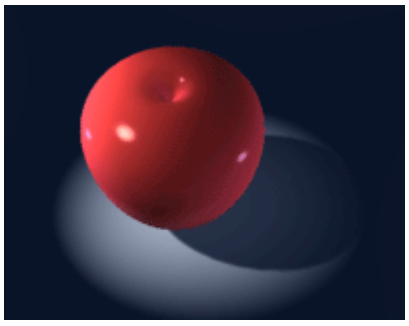
This page a sample of the Interactive Art Schools ON-THE-WEB teaching. One of the school's tools is it's unique use of WEB animation which can make principles clearer than a flat printed textbook or sketches in chalk on a blackboard. So we supplement the course text books with on-the-web lessons and lesson supplements like this (All registered students get 10 text books in their Sign Up Kit).

EXAMPLE 1- THE SPHERE



The sphere animation to the left is small so as to not strain your patience or modem, but makes the point - things have form and are revealed by light and shade, shadows and reflections. Form is the basis of ALL visual objects as the lesson below will show. Study the sphere animation. Make your own at home with a ball and a flashlight or table lamp you can "walk around" the ball.

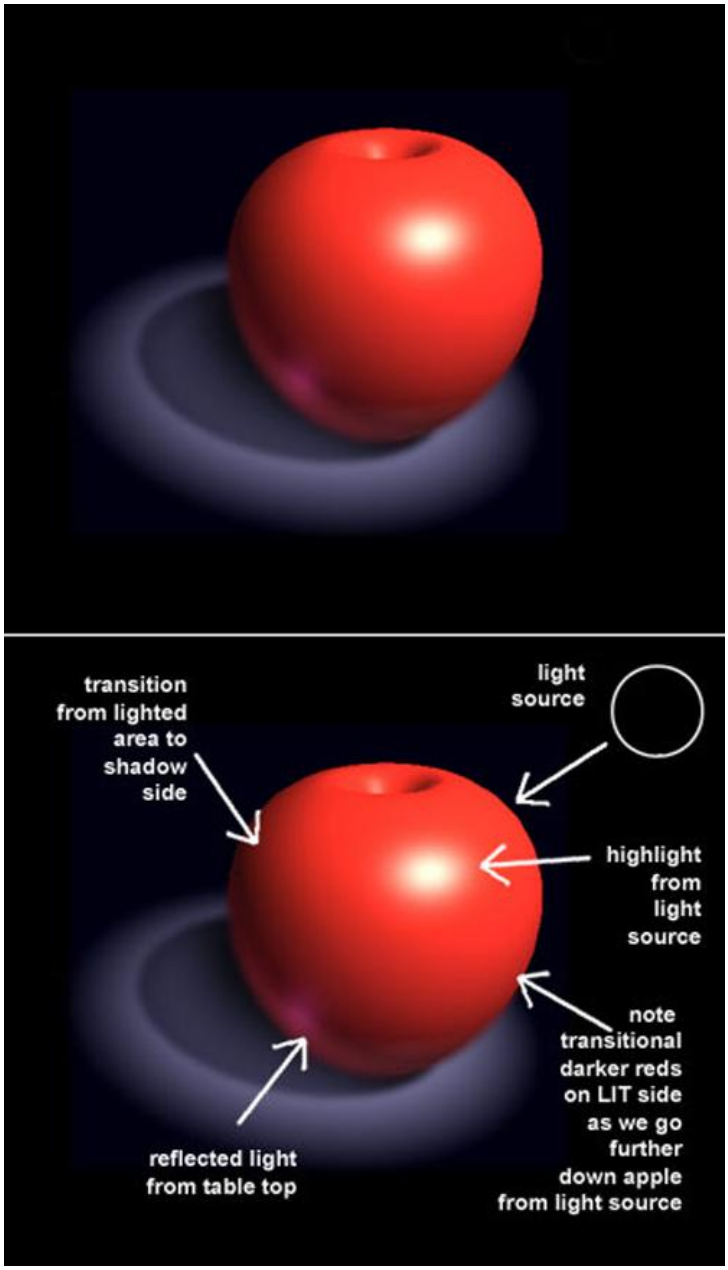
As the lights on the sphere turn, note how the shadows and how the light and shade on the sphere change to reveal the form. In this lesson, we will see how this effect is applied to real-life things . . . see how changing the sphere to red and modifying it's shape a little makes an apple!



The animations above show that a sphere is the underlying structure of an apple - we will look at various forms (cubes, cylinders, etc.) that are the underlying structure of all visual things.

Let's analyze the "anatomy" of the apple closer -below is an another image of the apple, generated as a 3d computer graphic model for our study. Below that the same

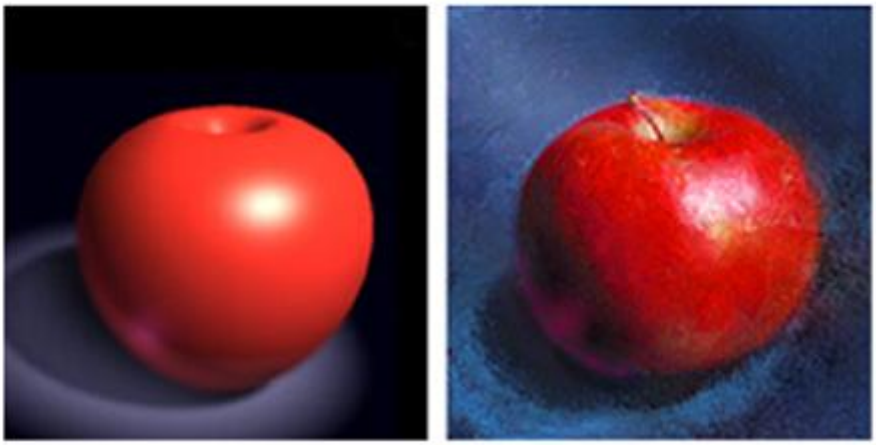
image has some notes on the same image showing the visual structure of an apple. Later - we will use the basic form models of various forms to show the underlying structure of all things and creatures.



All the above is done in 3d Computer Graphics (also called CGI or Solid Modeling) - both the animated demonstrations and the still images showing the basic principles of form. How does that relate to your painting an apple you might be saying right now? Here's how:

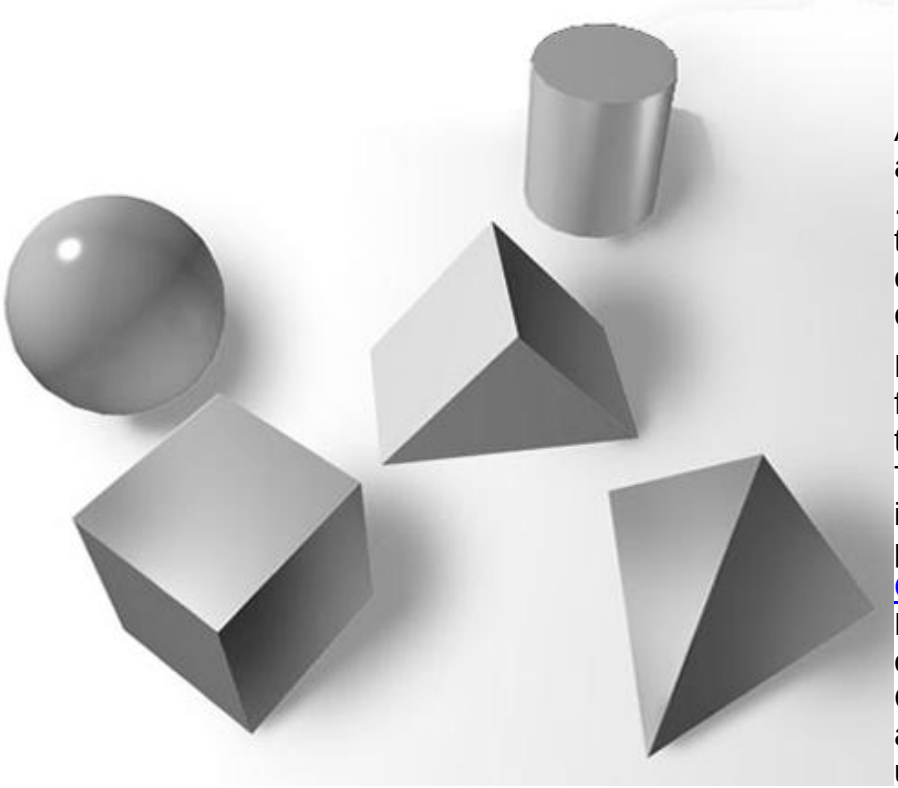
Note how all the concepts of reflected light. highlights, shadows, color reflected from the tabletop into the cast shadow from the apple on the tabletop are PAINTED into the oil painting of the apple

The painted apple uses the principles demonstrated in the 3d model apple:



- Light source causing highlighted whitish area
- Hot red light struck side
- Transitional reds as apple turns from direct light to bottom of apple
- Transition from hot, bright lit area into darker deeper, cooler transitional red as to dark shadow side of apple
- Reflected light from blue tabletop turns dark shadow side of apple lighter and more crimson red (cooler)
- Added to the painted apple is the "local color" – the variations in the skin of the apple in yellower areas, striping gives apple even more realistic look.

EXAMPLE 2 - Some Basic forms:



All objects in a picture are based on form ...some more complex than others (like clouds and water, etc.).

Let's start using these forms by seeing how they underly a figure. The painting below left is my copy of a painting by Theophile Gericault in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. To its right is my analysis of the underlying forms of that figure. The muscles and surface colors are then added to the underlying form to create a real/solid figure.

The head is basically a sphere as are the top muscles of the shoulders. The arms and legs are basically cylinders. Note how the light and shade define the form. Study the cast shadows affecting the form from one basic form onto another basic form.