

Technology and modernity as partners

João Barcelos

www.joaobarcelos.com.br

Let us start with an example that, at first sight, might appear does not have anything to do with the meaning of the title. Suppose we take a book from a shelf (we also assume that the shelf is well organized). After using the book, we have two options. Or we go back with the book to the shelf or we leave it elsewhere. In the first case, there is only one possibility, and in the other, there are many. In fact, there are so many that it may be possible we do not remember where the book was left.

The tendency to disorder is a law of nature and is well known from the everyday life. To keep something organized, we need to spend energy. If we leave it to follow a natural course, the tendency is the disorganization.

However, this does not mean that all positions for the book out the shelf are bad. Some of them may actually be as, for example, to leave it on the floor or forgotten in the weather, but others might not. Let us then suppose we would like to find a good position for the book out of the shelf. In this case, we will spend more energy than to keep it organized in the shelf. It will be much more because there are lots of possibilities.

This is the point where I would like to reach. Many times there exist other good alternatives and or we do not see them or we do not care about them. This happens because we generally get used to keep what we always do. Usually we are not open for new possibilities.

Using this reasoning in the painting

When we paint from nature, we choose certain theme. Lines and forms are there, and also the colors (it might be that lights and shadows at that moment are also pleasant for us). What we do is to put these forms inside of a composition, adjust colors between lights and shadows, and look for a good harmony among everything. Making analogy what was said above, this procedure is similar to go with the book to the shelf (of course, with a little more complexity). With no doubt this is a good attitude. Follow the nature is always a good way to make a good painting.

However our now intention is not to follow the nature in a strict way. Let us then suppose we are in front of a certain landscape but we do not want to follow those lines and, consequently, those forms. This is something similar to look for another good position for the book out of the shelf. However, the complexity is much bigger. We do not exactly know which lines will lead to another good composition. We should simply try. Since we do not have much sense of direction, we will succeed or not. Since the negative possibilities are so many, it might be possible we will not succeed.

It is at this point we can use the technology in our favor. The same technology that entered in the artistic life to say, for example, that for more clever the artist was with his hands, he would lose if he tried to compete with a Nikon lens or with the Photoshop resources. Many people remain living without care that these resources exist. This does not change the situation. They exist! The fact they do better what was a privilege of the artist, it does not means we have to treat them as enemy. It can be the contrary. With certain ability they can be our partners. It is important to keep in mind that there exists something that just the artist is able do, and the technology can help us in this job.

The technology as partner

Let us consider the landscape below. As one can see, it is a nice night view from Paris, the Arch of Triumph.



Figure 1: Paris at night – Arch of Triumph

This scene, in the way it is, would lead to a nice painting. However, as it was said, we are not interested to go back with the book to the shelf. Our purpose is to see this same theme with other lines and forms. So, in order to avoid to walk with closed eyes (and in the dark), I used Photoshop filters and obtained, almost instantaneously, many examples (the resources of our days are really fantastic). I kept two: one that I liked and another I left to show why I did not use it. Figure 2 is the one I liked.



Figure 2: This is the image I used.

We observe that in this change of lines we continue to identify the Arch of Triumph, which was my initial purpose (it could not be, but it was). Cars disappeared. In their places emerged other interesting forms. Observe the red spots that replaced the cars stop lights. I confess I would not have had this idea if I had looked for these lines for myself. Trees were also replaced by beautiful greenish forms (that can stay more beautiful in the painting). The beam of blue light is not straight any more. It acquired an elegant sinuous movement (that I intend to make it more elegant). These without speaking in the white spots that are replacing the public light bulbs (I will care in order they become less white).

Considering my comments, it is clear I do not intend to make a simple copy of the image above. The distortion generated by Photoshop put in my mind new lines that, as was said, I would have not been able to think about them without this technological help. Now these lines are there and I can leave my feelings follow from them, deviating here and there for alternative short cuts. This position will become clear during the next steps till the final painting. Before doing this, let me show the other image I had spoken (please see the next figure). I found it run away from my initial intentions (the lines of the Arch become much distorted – this is just an opinion – it might be someone does not find it).



Figure 3: This is one of the images I opted for not using.

Since this was an experimental work, I preferred to take a small canvas (30x20 cm). I started by following my habitual steps, i.e. I did a drawing containing the main lines (Figure 4). After that, by using a diluted mixture in turpentine, I started by fixing the main lines of the drawing, and completed the initial toned (Figure 5). In this stage, I do not use white. I work with transparent pigments (one or another are semitransparent). The pigments I used are: **PG36**, **PB15:3**, **PV23**, **PR170**, **PR122**, **PR101** (transparent), **PY83** e **PY42** (transparent).



Figure 4: Drawing containing the main lines



Figure 5: Initial toned with transparent pigments and very diluted in turpentine.

Now I am going to the final phase. I chose to work with the following pigments: **PR122**, **PR108**, **PR101** (transparent), **PY153**, **PY17**, **PY3**, **PY42** (transparent), **PG17**, **PG18**, **PG7**, **PG50**, **PG24**, **PB15**, **PB29**, **PV23** e **PW6/PW4** (please see Figure 6). Figure 7 represents the moment

where I am going to start this phase. Till this point, the two images, real and distorted, still appear in the easel.

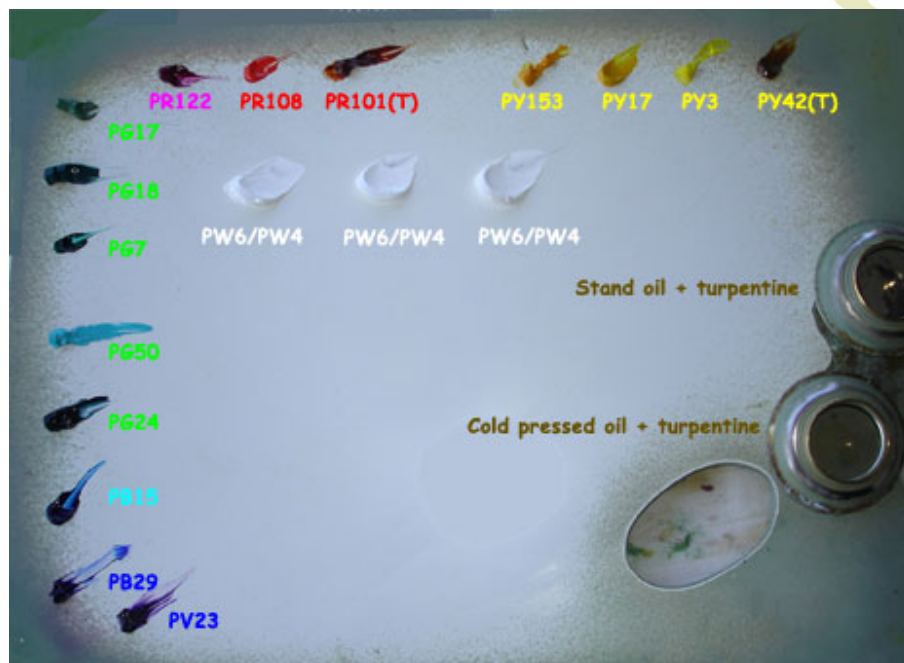


Figure 6: Pigments used in the final phase

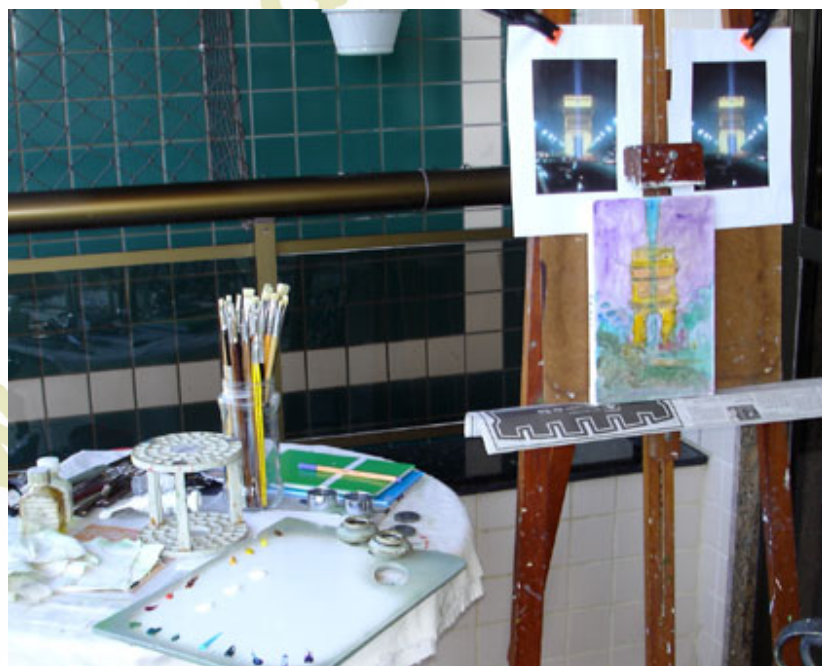


Figure 7: Moment just before the beginning of the final phase

Figure 8 corresponds to an intermediate moment of the final phase. Here, I have looked for definitive colors. There is still lacking the balance of them, as well as the harmony of forms. It was at this moment that I took the photos out of my easel. They had already played their roles, which were to suggest one among the infinite ways that I could follow. Now that this way is in my mind, it should control my final steps. Not always mind and hands obey one the other. That is all right, we have also to look for a harmony inside this conflict also.

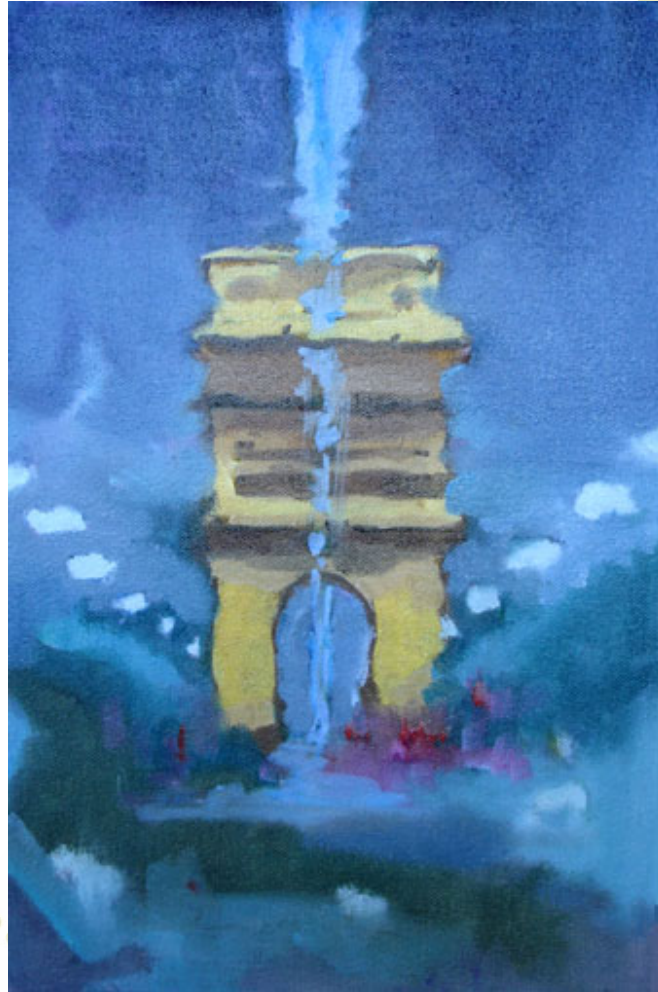


Figure 8: From this moment on I took the images out of my easel.

The painting done is in Figure 9. I always finish a painting very tired. The concentration and the mental effort also lead to a great consumption of energy. Still more in this painting were I was trying something new. It is in these moments that I find funny when I hear someone referring to our activity as a therapy.



Figure 9: Arch of Triumph – oil on canvas – 30x20 cm