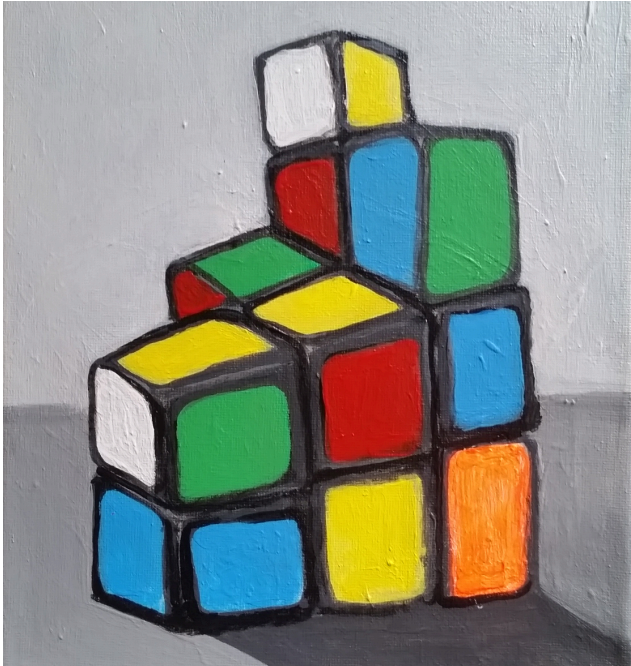


# **Birds of Mars Digest**

## **Number Eleven**

**February 2022**



**The 8 by 10 Series [50—61]**

**“Colorcubes”**

**Paintings and comments by Chris Gentes**  
**Including Photography Lighting Tests**

## **Introduction**

On February 9 *Birds of Mars Digest Number 10* was finished and I had no paintings in progress. I was ready to focus on making paintings in just one hour—a goal I had since September, but that still remained unrealized. I decided to not conduct any music interviews this month, because they would take time away from figuring out how to create one hour paintings. If the one hour painting idea worked out, then I would know that I would have more time to do other things like the interviews, so for now it was worth waiting another month to see what transpired.

By the middle of the month I had finished the first six paintings and had a good handle on the process of actually making these one hour paintings. So I just continued in a similar manner until six more paintings had been completed. Meanwhile I documented everything here. I wrote a lot about the process. Take what you read with a grain of salt, because some things I wrote which seemed like a permanent working process ended up changing later on.

Chris Gentes  
Northampton, Massachusetts

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## **The 8 by 10 Series [50—61]** **“Colorcubes”**

All paintings are acrylic on stretched canvas except as otherwise notated in the main text. Size is either 8x10” or 10x8” depending on whether the painting is in vertical or horizontal orientation.

050 Ten Colorcubes

051 Three Colorcubes

052 Six Colorcubes

053 Five Colorcubes

054 Four Colorcubes

055 Seven Colorcubes

056 One Colorcube

057 Two Colorcubes

058 Eight Colorcubes

059 Nine Colorcubes

060 Eleven Colorcubes

061 Twelve Colorcubes

### **Index for earlier paintings from “The 8 by 10 Series”**

1–24: *Birds of Mars Digest Number Seven* (Apr.—Oct. 2021)

19, 25–32: *Birds of Mars Digest Number Eight* (Nov. 2021)

33–40: *Birds of Mars Digest Number Nine* (Dec. 2021)

41–49: *Birds of Mars Digest Number Ten* (Jan. 2022)

## **The 8 by 10 Series [50—61]**

### **“Colorcubes”**

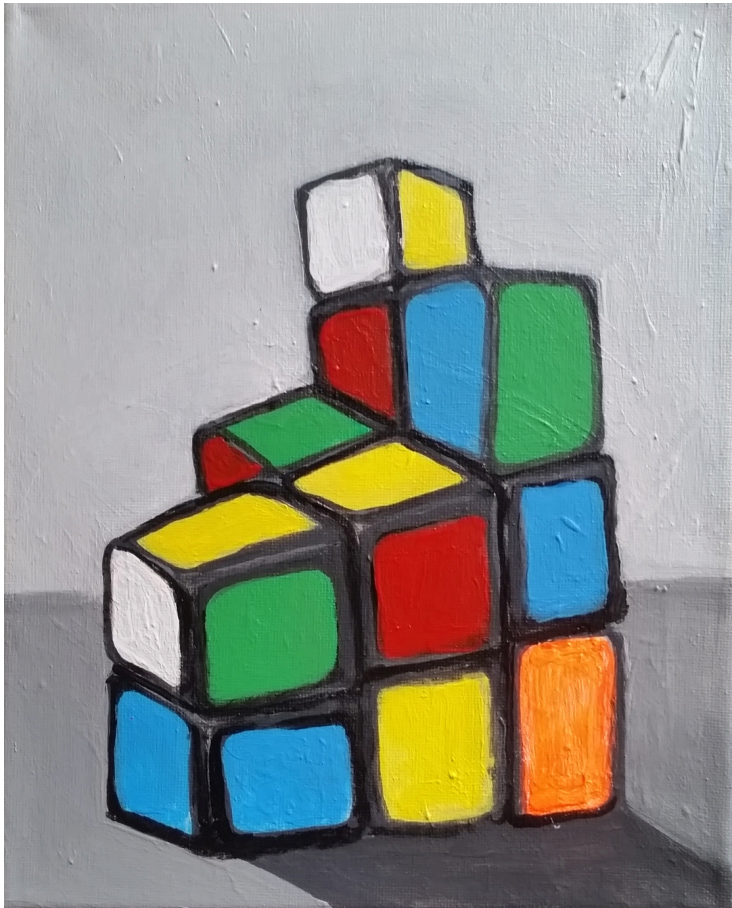
Comments by Chris Gentes

**50 Ten Colorcubes** is the first one in this group of paintings. See *Birds of Mars Digest Number Ten (January 2022)* for more information leading up to these paintings. *“The target time is one hour. So with that in mind I started on this one. The other thing I should mention is that I only wanted to work on one painting at a time, and to have it be finished in one day. So that the one hour to paint the painting would also be in a single day. So it would just be finished quickly like that. The first things I changed to help lessen the painting time of any particular painting was using larger brush sizes and painting less area on the canvas.”*

This is what I wrote as I began this series of colorcube paintings in early February 2022. There is more to the story than I can fit on a page next to the image of each painting in this series. To read more please visit the chapter titled *“Additional Comments on 50-52.”*

Today I’ve finished the first nine paintings so I am writing the comments for these images somewhat as a whole. I took some photos in early afternoon light, but they really didn’t come out that well. I already knew that this was a borderline time of the day to take photographs. They probably would have been fine except for one thing—the neon orange parts looked bad, and not at all what it looked like in reality. It was all scratchy from how the paint had gone on. But from across the room they look ok, so I just left everything how it was and moved on.





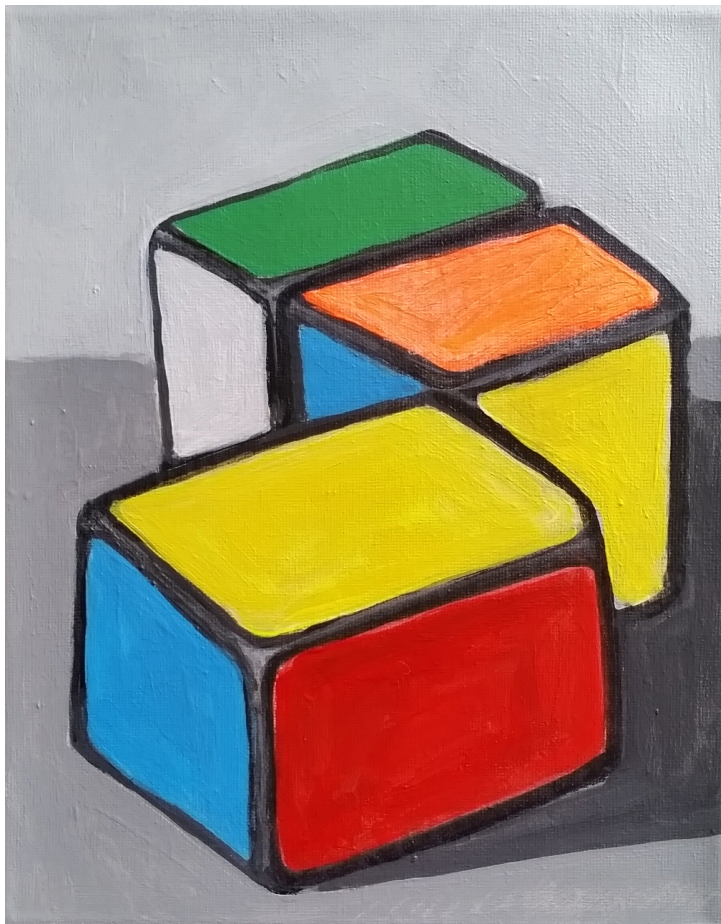
50 Ten Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

**51 Three Colorcubes** was made with the deliberate mindset that it was to take just one hour. The first painting had taken about two and a half hours before I called it quits by eventually deciding to paint over the wooden figure's foot (see "*Additional Comments on 50-52.*") This one had to be done quicker. I decided to make the under-wash (the first coat) with the color paints, not the gray paints like I had with the first one. If speed was of the essence I decided that I should get the colors on the canvas as quickly as possible.

So I did it in that manner, and eventually I painted a bunch of layers in different ways. At one point I may have even been mixing the paint with a titanium white.

As I was working on these paintings I had run out of most of my premixed grays, and very soon I had run out of all of them, and was using paints out of the tiny reserve tubes. So I knew that I would have to get some new paint and mix a new batch of gray paints. And eventually I did that. I mixed a new set of gray base paints. It turns out that it was a good thing that I did that because later on it really was nice to have all of that ready to go with the paint already mixed to differing grayscale values. Particularly since I decided to paint the backgrounds or all of these in various grays.

There is so much to the story behind how these paintings came about. Much of it is in the different chapters. The story intermingles. At a certain point in time I began to think of the first three paintings as a group within the larger series.



51 Three Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

These following comments were written at a very early stage in the process of creating this painting. A lot of what is written here has become obsolete and/or irrelevant based on what eventually happened. It pertains to what the painting looked like at that time, but not what it ended up being. For example, the whole “upside down” thing is no longer relevant. And the comment about the photo, well this isn’t that photo. To read more about the creation of **52 Six Colorcubes** please see the chapter “*Additional Comments on 50-52.*”

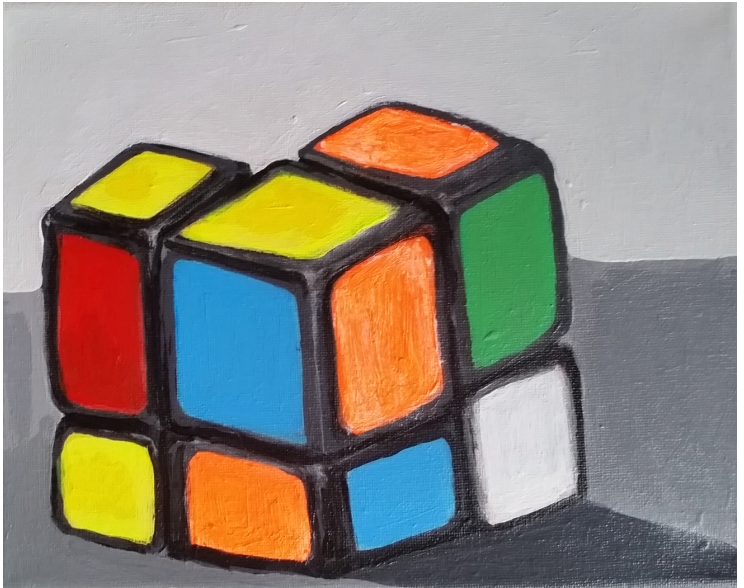
This one was originally upside down because that is how I took the photo, but it caused vertigo looking at it that way. So, even though that was my intention initially—to deliberately have the painting upside down (even though it really wasn’t since that photo was that way), I ended up showing it this way. The viewer could always flip it around upside down somehow if they wanted to.

So initially I called this one “Upside-down Colorcube” because it looked upside-down in that original photo. But then when I flipped it around I realized that the name still worked, because now it was upside-down compared to how it used to be.

This painting was originally very different from how it looks here. It went through quite a few changes.

Anyway, this is the third painting in this series. I started this after having had the experiences of painting the first two paintings. In doing that I had learned that with this painting I was going to leave out the wooden figure from the start. So this painting is unique in that

way. At some point while doing this one I also had the idea that whatever needed to be finished with these paintings could be done at the same time. While working on this painting I also had a few realizations about how the importance of choosing what to paint is. If painting a painting in under an hour is the goal, then whatever the painting ends up being has to be something that can be painted in an hour.



52 Six Colorcubes. 8x10". Acrylic on Canvas.

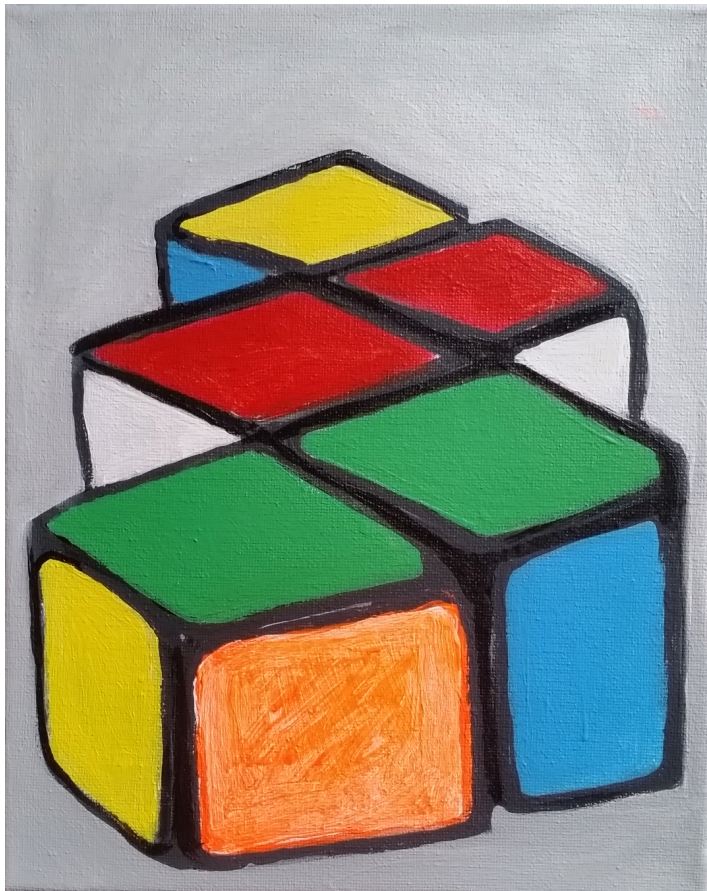
**53 Five Colorcubes** and the next two paintings were made concurrently, each step of the way. This is an idea I got after having completed the previous three paintings. So with these three in mind as a group of paintings to be created together I decided on the images. I wanted to make more colorcube paintings so I looked through some photos I had already taken and picked three I liked.

I prepped the canvases and on this one I made a pencil drawing of the cubes and that took ten minutes. That left only fifty minutes left to finish the painting. I was offtrack right from the start.

I decided to paint the color areas next, but I still had to paint the outlines. I hadn't saved any time making that drawing, because now here I was painting the outlines, and on the other two paintings that was done already. So if I skip making a drawing I can save ten minutes is the takeaway. I ended up realizing that I have to learn to draw with paint and the paintbrush. An hour for a drawing with a pencil is an eternity. If I could learn to paint as if drawing that would be the way to do it.

Then I added colors, and the grays, white and blacks were done. All of that (not counting the drawing) had taken 30 minutes. That was the first coat. Then I went ahead and started the next painting. And then the one after that. Then a lot of other things happened. Most of which can be found in the chapter called *“Additional Comments on 53-55.”*





53 Five Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

On **54 Four Colorcubes** I started with painting the black outlines of the cubes. Where it was a dark gray I tried to dilute the paint so that it went on transparently, creating a dark or mid-gray shade. I did this instead of making a pencil sketch. I took my time so the form would be correct. Plus I would already have paint on the canvas, which I didn't on the previous painting. I still had to do that on that one and had already used up ten minutes. This painting had a painted form in ten minutes.

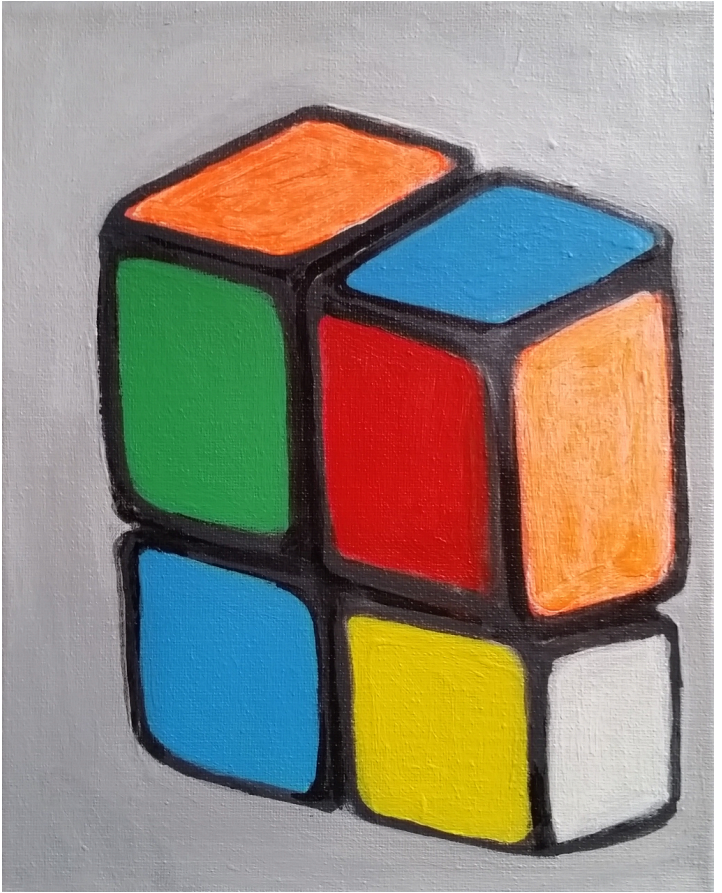
Then I was adding color and as I did that, for some reason, I also was painting cubes of color around the borders. I eventually painted this out, but it can be read about in the comments section. So the first coat was done in 30 minutes. I had decided on using a magenta instead of a red, and that went on very transparent. So I paid close attention to that to see what happened.

The sap green and cerulean blue paints went on fairly opaquely. The yellow was translucent as usual.

Eventually I found out that the neon orange paint is difficult to work with. It is very transparent, but also very opaque where it cakes up thicker. So while the orange parts looked ok in reality, probably since the brain was compensating for the aforementioned variance in tonal value, in the photo it looked like a 'mistake.'

I would recommend reading those other chapters if you are interested in all of the minute detail involved with creating these twelve paintings. This one ended up taking over two hours—double the target time.





54 Four Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

**55 Seven Colorcubes** began in similar fashion to the previous painting. I painted the outlines of the black plastic part of the colorcube with black paint. That took ten minutes. Then I painted in the color parts and then painted in the white parts, and then the background with various shades of grays. I also worked on getting the black parts to the cube a little better defined. In a dim light they look alright.

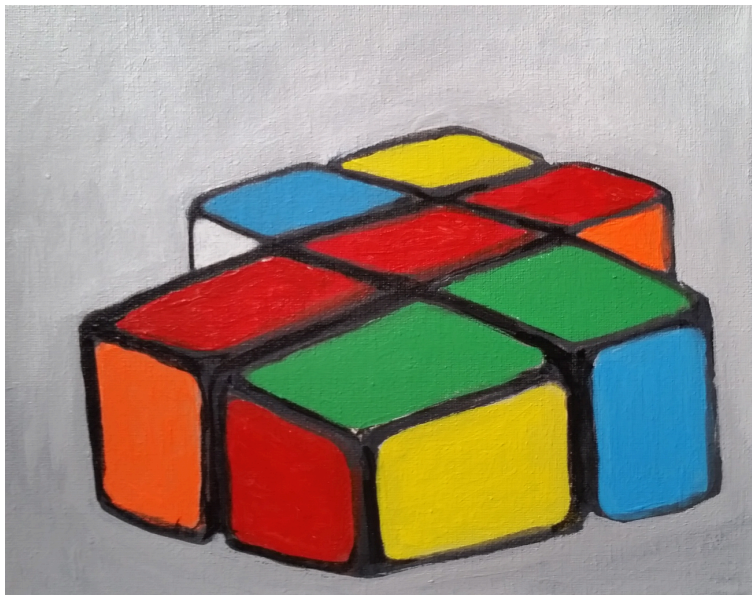
Initially the background was a light gray, but it had a dingy look to it that I found aesthetically disquieting and strange. I wondered if perhaps this slight variance was what was making it look dingy.

I eventually made it lighter toward the cube and grayer toward the edge of the canvas and that helped how it looked.

I am looking at this now after all twelve paintings in the colorcube have been completed. I can remember what I had been thinking at the time of painting this one. I really didn't have a good impression in my mind as to what was happening with the cubes. I knew there was a highlight sometimes on some of the edges—a lighter gray line where the plastic bends at the edge of a cube. It is a slightly rounded edge.

I was aware of how where two cubes come together there is a little notch where the corners taper off. The background can be seen in those locations. This interested me. I was thinking about how to get a similar effect where the cubes met in the middle.

I spent time looking at other artist's paintings online to see how they tackled this. For the most part they just painted it all black and maybe put one little highlight. Nobody seemed to do much more than that. I was just kind of guessing at what to do. Eventually, while painting the last three paintings I had somewhat of a plan for how to paint the black parts of the cubes.



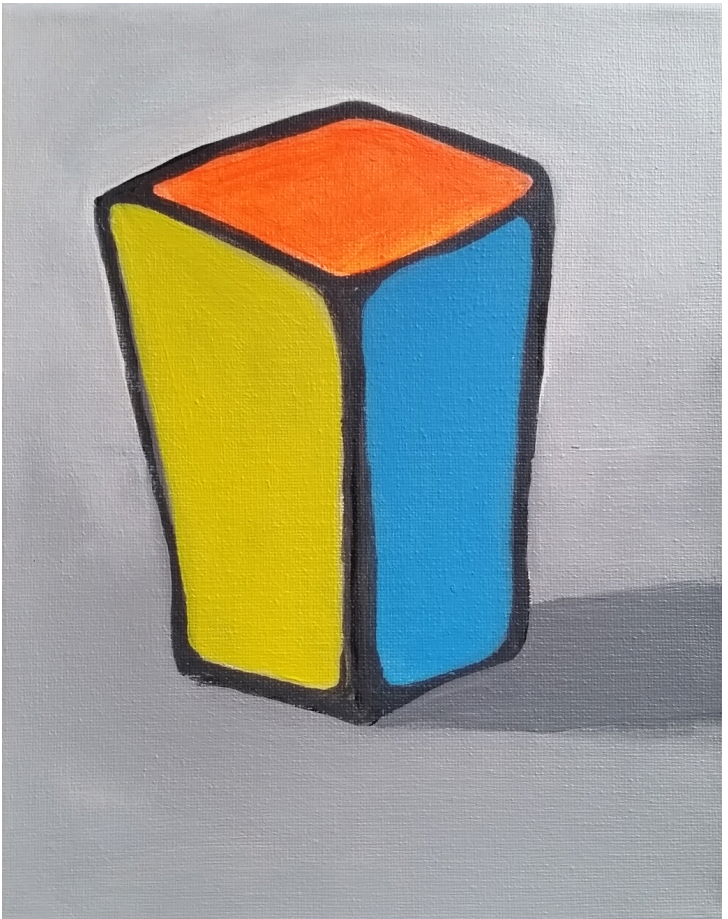
55 Seven Colorcubes. 8x10". Acrylic on Canvas.

**56 One Colorcube** is the painting I made once I had thought of the idea of having each painting have a different number of cubes. And I also got the idea to just make the painting from imagination. It is just a cube. I kind of didn't need a photo since I wasn't painting all of that minute detail. Plus they were just cubes; they'd look the same if it was a photo or not.

So now I had a real pathway to getting one of these paintings done in an hour. I knew what not to do. Don't paint in gray where there will be color, unless you want the color there to be dimmer. Don't do a drawing, just paint it. That's the drawing. Color seems brightest directly on canvas. Do that the first time. Use bigger size brushes to paint the backgrounds. It's quicker. Don't use any brush smaller than a "0".

So I approached the painting in this manner. Later on, synchronistically, I was watching some lectures about Richard Diebenkorn and within those there was mention that a lot of his painting were made from imagination—landscapes that seemed like real places were all from imagination. So it was weird listening to the lecture describing that while at the same time I had decided (separately) to do that.

There were a lot of other synchronicities regarding the creation of these paintings and some of the things I learned about in the various lectures I was watching, but that is sort of just how things are, so I'm not going to spend more time writing about it other than point out that is how it usually works out.



56 One Colorcube. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

**57 Two Colorcubes** was done in steps over the course of five days along with the previous and the next painting. They are a group within this series. They were painted from imagination. The only known thing was how many cubes. This is how two cubes came out of my imagination. This height, width, and direction.

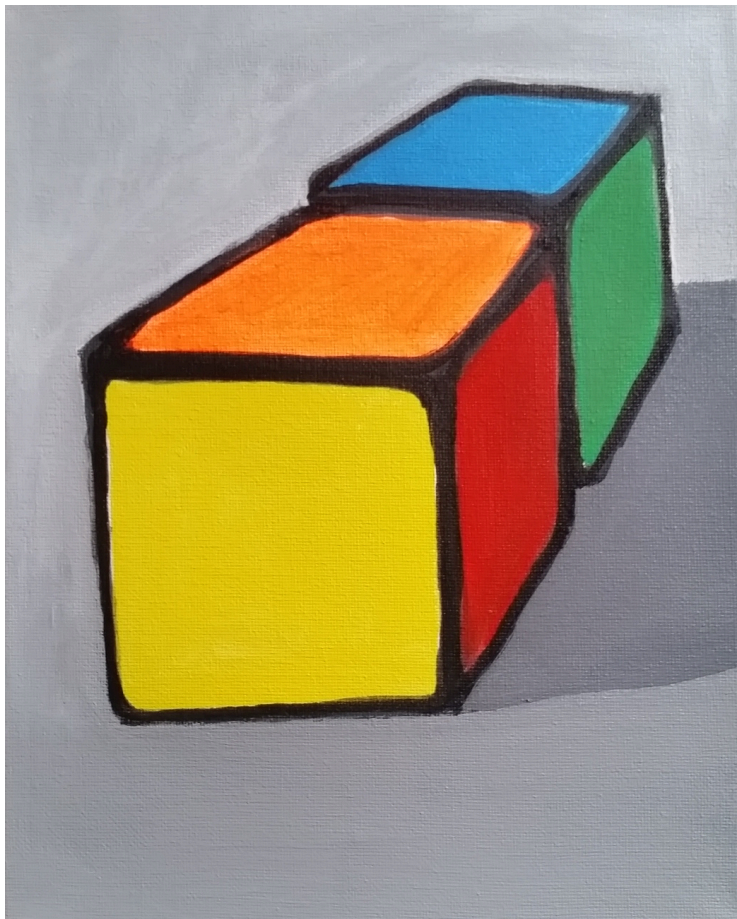
I am sitting here now looking at this paintings on the wall, and I am thinking that it would be better if the green and the blue areas were lighter in value so that in a dim light they would stand out more. But then when I see them in a bright or normal light they look fine. I think for the next group I will focus on using a lighter shade of green and blue to see if I can get those parts to stand out better in a dim light.

Part of me is thinking that I should go back and rework these older ones, but I'm not going to do that. If it only takes an hour to make a painting, then I will just make a new painting of whatever I am thinking of changing. These paintings are like haikus in that respect. Short poems. No need to re-work one forever. With a new idea move on to the next poem.

Here's a haiku about this painting:

Five colors, gray, black,  
Red, blue, green, yellow, orange.  
No purple or white.





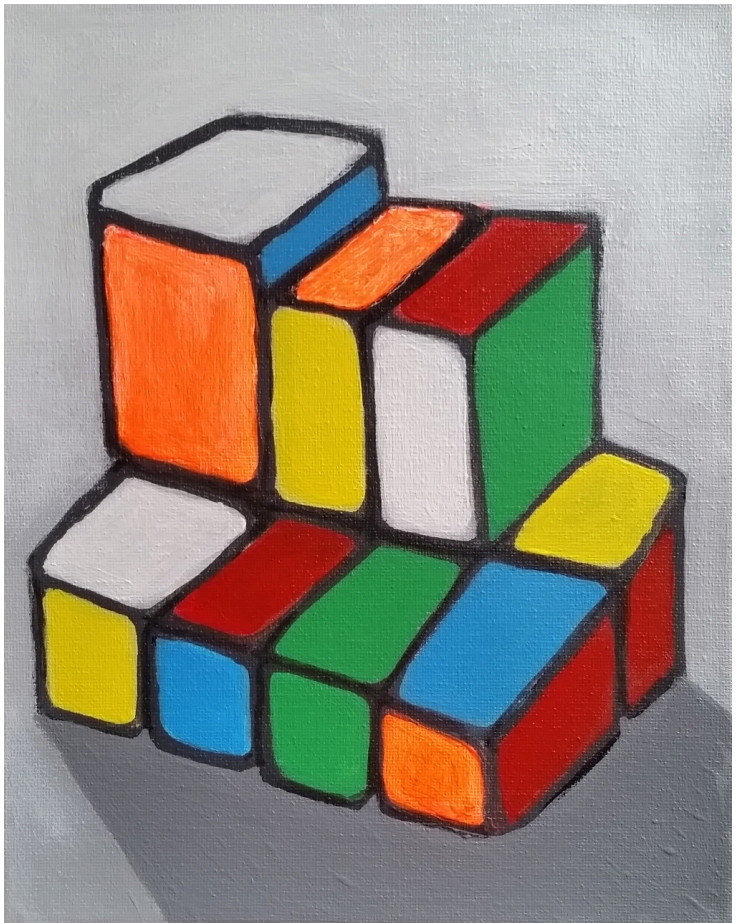
57 Two Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

**58 Eight Colorcubes** was also from imagination and part of the third group of paintings within this series of colorcubes. All I really was thinking here was that I needed eight cubes. I had just painted one and two cubes, and now I had to paint eight. This is what happened. Then everything else happened which is documented in some of the chapters later on in this digest. Probably more information than anyone would want or need to read about. But in some ways it is what happened, and as such, may be of interest to someone whom would like to learn more about the process of creating paintings and being an artist. This is just me at one point in my life as an artist, and it is just a moment of time. Things were different a month ago and things will be different a month from now. None of it seems to actually matter.

For this second group of three paintings I ended up painting the background a light gray and then I made the shadow a dark gray. The difference between the two is there, but it isn't a sharp contrast. It creates a nice effect.

For the second three paintings I decided to have no shadows and make the background a light gray, lighter toward the top. The first group has a very dark gray shadow, a dark gray ground where the cubes are sitting, and a light gray background. The shadow reads one way in a dim light and a totally different way in a bright light. I'm always thinking of how to make a painting look good in both lights. As mentioned I plan to put everything I've learned into the next group of paintings. And I am confident they will take just an hour. This paintings in this group took 72 minutes each. Still more than an hour.





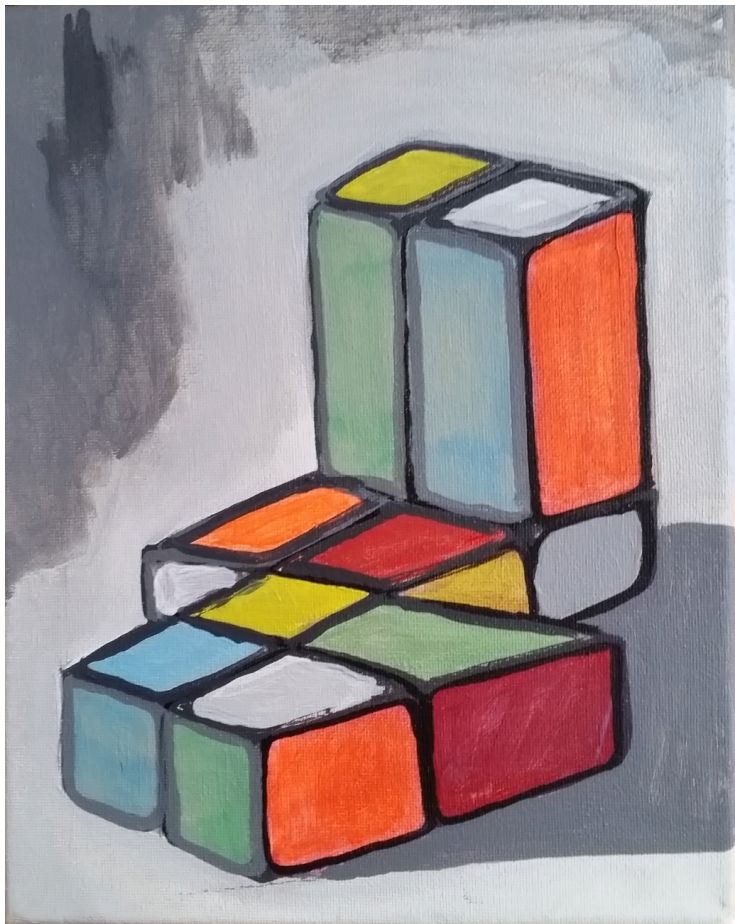
58 Eight Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

**59 Nine Colorcubes** is the first painting in this the fourth and final group of three paintings within the larger series of twelve colorcube paintings. I decided to make some studies—sketches of nine cubes in various arrangements. I picked one I liked and painted the outlines on the canvas with a light gray. Then I did what I said I wasn't planning to do. I painted in gray. I made the whole thing look gray. That took fifty minutes.

Then I went back and spent 17 minute adding color. And where the gray was it looked a certain way that might require a lot layers. But I also mixed blue and green with white to get lighter shades for the cubes facing the light. It was kind of a mess and I was already over an hour for painting time.

But I also had a painting that I could just put dark outlines on and it might be considered finished. The background was mostly done. It just needed the form to be defined better. The next one I am going to just make the outline in light gray and then add the color. Also I want to figure out how to make an opaque version of the neon orange because it doesn't photograph well when it is put on in a transparent manner.

Eventually I got the idea to glaze over some of the cubes with purple and other cubes with white. Then I painted the black parts of the cubes—where the color stickers are. In the direct light I used a light gray and in the shadows black. For the other sides I used a dark gray. I liked how it looked overall. I felt I really was onto something.



59 Nine Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

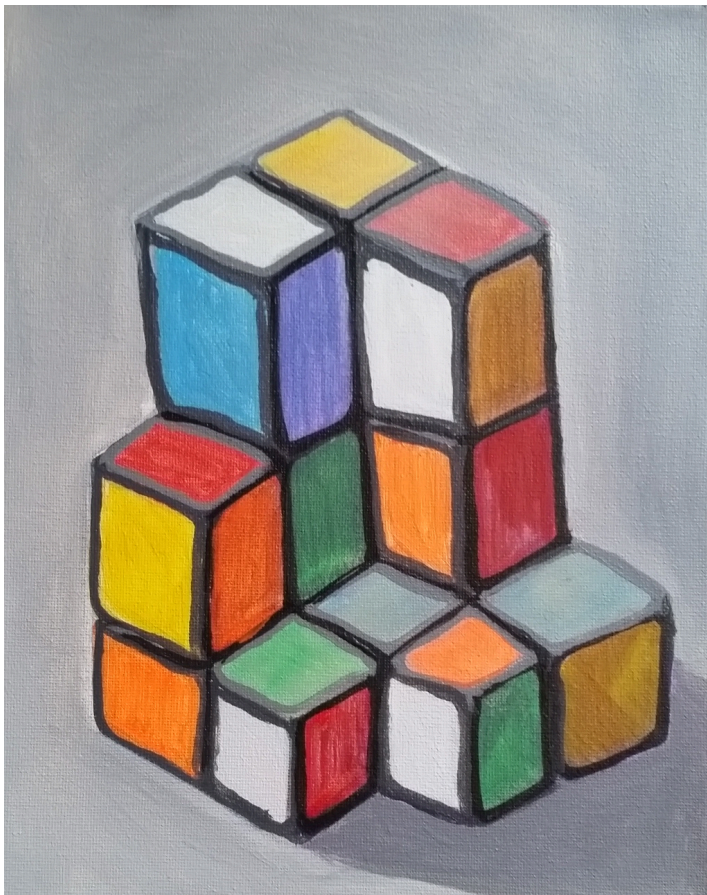
I began **60 Eleven Colorcubes** knowing that I had a good plan in place to finish it in an hour as long as I just stuck to the plan. A lot of the details about what happened can be read about in a later chapter in this digest. I'm going to give my impressions of looking at this painting now that all twelve of the colorcubes are finished.

How many colors? How many shades? How many glazes?

There is a blue side to a cube and next to that a purple one. That was originally a blue cube that I glazed over with purple. It created a nice new color. The tonal value is slighter darker than the blue. Below this purple cube is a green cube that I also glazed over with the purple. It decreased the chroma (brightness) and darkened it slightly. The green cube below and to the left of that one I glazed over with white. It effected the chroma and also lightened it.

Those two orange-brown cubes were originally yellow cubes before I glazed over those with purple. I ended up with a nice new brown color.

I outlined each of these colors in either black, very dark gray, or dark gray. Where the sides of the cubes face the light I painted the edges dark gray. In reality these areas actually look darker. The highlights are closer to the gray paint I used here. I didn't add the corner highlights. I just wanted to paint something, as if by formula, and then look at it later to see what had happened. That is what I am doing now. This painting is a study in that respect. It gives me ideas moving forward.



60 Eleven Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

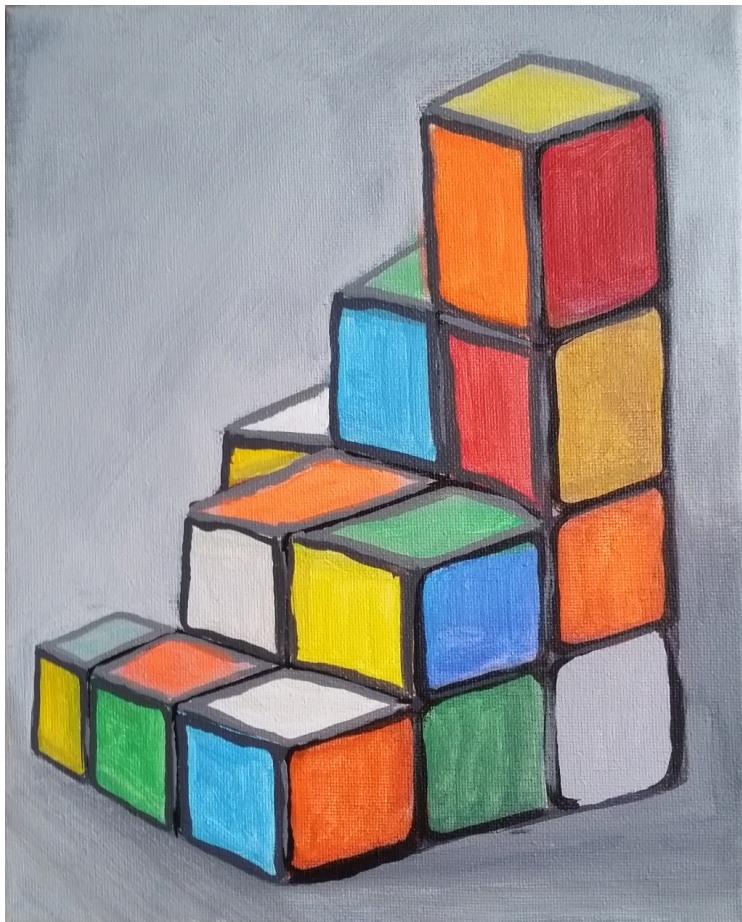
**61 Twelve Colorcubes** was made in under an hour. I had achieved my goal. It only took eleven paintings. But I had learned a lot. I now had proof of concept. It could be done. I could make a fairly decent painting in an hour.

The thing that annoys me the most about these paintings is how the colors aren't smooth, even and opaque. They are uneven, scratchy and transparent. So for future paintings I will either have to be prepared to paint multiple layers of a color until it is nice and opaque. Or I might have to mix the paint with white, gray, or another color to get it to a consistency where I will only need one or at most two coats of paint.

The thing that I like most about this painting is how I defined each side of each cube with a different dark gray or black paint. I painted these parts quickly, but I can now see that for future paintings I could paint these parts more carefully to create a more realistic look. I almost went back to some of the earlier paintings from this series to do just that, but decided to just wait for future paintings to try those things. The idea is to move on to the next painting.

I'm going to do some glazing studies next. Just to see what the results are. Reference paintings. I will find the colors that go on the most opaquely and those will be my go to base colors. Then I will see what happens when I glaze over these colors with the transparent colors. I will then have a lot more colors to choose from, and also I will have a chart of how to get to them with a simple glaze. There is so much to painting that it can be daunting.





61 Twelve Colorcubes. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas.

## **Additional Comments on 50—52**

See *Birds of Mars Digest Number Ten* (January 2022) for more information leading up to the creation of this series of paintings.

This chapter includes all of the writing I did as the paintings were first being painted. At first this text was with the photos, but there were so many extra pages of just text that it was getting confusing, so I decided to move it here. Also, I am starting the next paintings and would like this to all be organized better to document the process.

This next section contains the initial writing about these paintings. Much of this changed, but I am leaving it in this form to demonstrate the mutability of the artistic process in action.

50 First Colorcube is the first one in this group of paintings. The target time is one hour. So with that in mind I started on this one. The other thing I should mention is that I only wanted to work on one painting at a time, and to have it be finished in one day. So that the one hour to paint the painting would also be in a single day. So it would just be finished quickly like that. A few things I changed to help lessen the painting time of any particular painting is to use larger brush sizes and to paint less area on the canvas.

After a day of painting I had clocked in 145 minutes—almost two and a half hours. That was way more time than I wanted to spend on a painting. So I stopped and thought about it overnight.



The painting wasn't near completion. It was of the foot of a wooden figure on a colorcube. There was a lot that still had to be done before it would look good. I had to finish it quickly. Eventually I decided to paint out the foot (even though there were a few nice shadows) and just paint the rest of the cube. I had to move on to the next paintings already.

51 Foot & Cube was made with the deliberate mindset that it was to take just one hour. The previous painting of the cube had taken about two and a half hours before I called it quits by eventually deciding to paint over the foot and clean up the edges. This one had to be done quicker. I decided to make the underwash (the first coat) with the color paints, not the grayscale paints. If speed was of the essence I decided that I should get the colors on the canvas as quickly as possible.

It is a color cube. There is a lot of areas with color. So I did that directly. The first coat is always somewhat transparent, even using the darker paints. It took about twenty minutes—the amount of time to cover the canvas with the areas of color. So that meant that if I can paint one coat on in twenty minutes, then in an hour (my target time) I could paint three coats. Three coverings (coats) in an hour. Now I had something to think about and work with. A finished painting would be three coats. That would take an hour. I had something concrete to think about. I could now look at this painting in progress and know that if I put two more coats on it, refining it as I go, that it would be done. There wasn't anything else to do outside of that. Nothing to guess about. It was what it was.

I started keeping notes of what each pigment was doing for each coat. I started by figuring out the tonal values of all of the colors after just one coat of paint. The paint goes on a little bit transparent so it is lighter than when after several coats are applied and the paint takes on its actual appearance. Then I

painted the second coat and once again determined the values of each of the colors now that a second coat had been applied. The transparency was now mostly lost and the marks of the brush where the paint had gone on unevenly (almost impossible to correct) were becoming obscured. I had information on five pigments, two coats over a white background. And each had a look of its own. The first coat had marks from how minute amounts of paint beaded up together due to the unevenness in the brush hairs and how it was applied. That could make textures that could be glazed over if planned for, but otherwise I don't think it looks good. Three coats.

I had to think of an end result and how to get there in three steps. So that is the next step. Plan ahead for the desired end results. One might be to apply an area of opaque paint of a certain value. Apply three coats if the paint will give the final desired value. Otherwise mix with white or black (or lighter or darker color) to reach the desired value. If there is more or less of an intensity of the desired color, a mix with a gray or a color that will mute the original color.

If, on the other hand, a lot of brushstrokes are desired perhaps just one coat of a transparent paint would do the job. That might be something for the second or third coat depending on if you want to glaze over something, or glaze over that coat with the brushstrokes.

Other thoughts I had included choice of subject matter—the size of the object in real life related to the size of that object on the painting.

I finished the second coat and then I spent time thinking about what that meant. All I had to do was sit down again for twenty minutes and the painting would be done. So I did that. I discovered a way to put the final coats of paint on. It has to do with mixing slightly with unbleached titanium to lighten slightly

and make more opaque. Then painting that over the previously painted coats. Then when that dried I glazed again with the original pigment and it gave it a nice look. Things like this I'm going to have to figure out and they will have to be second nature. This should be relatively easy since now I know that I will be painting three coats. I will have quick go-to plans that I will be familiar with.

The other main thing of interest is how this involves changing how I think about making a painting. For example right now I am sitting here realizing that I made a painting in one day. Something I wanted to accomplish many times over the past six months, but hadn't put together a way to do it. That is how it is to be an artist sometimes. There is a lot of time spent figuring out processes. And it could be different for each artist so there really isn't one right way to do it. Plus each artist will change over time, so what works today might not work tomorrow. It ended up taking 70 minutes for this one—the last session took thirty minutes. That is ok. I know that this system and way of thinking about it should be good.

The next day arrived quickly and it was time to make the next painting, 52 Upside-down Cube. I was still wrapping my head around the concept of making the paintings in just one hour. I was wondering how this would evolve and what the future paintings would be like. In the back of my mind I was getting the notion that if it didn't work out after a month—in other words if the paintings didn't look good—then I might just have to forget about the whole notion of painting and being an artist in this manner. It might turn out that isn't any reasonable return for the effort being put into it.

I was talking with a young person and they said that if they want some art they find something online and print it out and hang that on the wall. Of course, that is something I used to do,

but it might also have been a page from a book or magazine. But they were inferring that the younger generation aren't interested in art in the manner in which I am making it. In a way that doing such a thing, being creative and making art—painting a picture, was an unnecessary thing to do. Even for a \$20 painting. So there is apparently, within the culture, pockets of people with no thought or intention of buying original artwork.

But I am continuing along in this manner to see what happens. Irregardless.

Well, this one went similarly to the previous one. I painted in the colors for the first coat—that took thirty minutes. Then I had the rough form. For the second coat I spent more time fixing up the form and adding details, and putting on second coats of paint in the color areas. I was glazing on the colors with the paint straight out of the tube. The paint went on translucent, as mentioned previously. I suppose I could mix the paint with some kind of white to give it more opacity and I could save time with the multiple layers of the transparent paint. I would just need one basic layer. I could then glaze over that to add more chroma (color intensity). It seems that if I glaze over a color that is already there that is uniform with the same color the subsequent coat looks uniform. So that is something to test on future paintings.

Everything is about making the paintings quicker.

Once I had these three paintings together I looked at them for a long time. I realized that this might work out if I had a way to really make the paintings look finished. That would have something to do with the design. Something had to look like I had deliberately done something. Then I thought that now that I had three paintings of a color cube and they were all somewhat similar that I could do that unknown something to all of them at the same time and that would unify them. The other thing was

that they all kind of looked good together. So It felt like I was on the right track. I just had to unify all of them somehow. And it had to take as little time as possible.

One other thought in my mind was that if I kept doing this—kept limiting myself to one hour, that something would get painted And eventually that something would become refined within this time allotment. Eventually I should get better at working with these parameters. It may be that wanting the paint to be opaque is the wrong way. It may be that I will end up building translucent layers and that will make it look like art. Maybe that first coat of color should be painted with this in mind, and that the subsequent layers will also be transparent.

So there are still a lot of options to test out.

This whole process of trying to deliberately paint a painting in an hour has been very interesting. There are a lot of different parts to it—things that happened that I had no way of anticipating. But all of them moving toward what I believe will be an eventual accomplishment of this goal I have set out for myself. This is part of the process of being an artist at this time for me. Forging a new methodology for creating art. An artist sets up a parameter to do something—even if they don't even know this is a parameter. Just choosing the size of the canvas becomes part of this process. And in choosing the criteria for making this art, the artist has set a certain path irregardless of whatever else they might do. It is kind of like physics. The physics of the environment where we are determines what we can do. If I go to a field with a soccer ball and kick it around, that ball will behave according to certain principles of physics. If I kick the ball it will eventually stop rolling. This has to do with physics of the environment where I kicked the ball. Potential energy and kinetic energy. Whatever happens is what happens. Words can be invented to try to describe this.

Anyway, the point I am making is that in deciding to work toward a methodology of making a painting in just an hour I am creating the ‘physics’—the conditions. The paintings in this digest are the experiments. What I am writing about here is what happened during this process.

There were five stages to the creation of the first three cube paintings.

1. First painting worked on
2. Second painting worked on
3. Third painting worked on
4. Three paintings worked on as one
5. Final touches

[A lot more ended up happening after I wrote this part about the stages.]

Now I had three paintings that I had stopped working on after the intended one hour had been reached (the times went a little bit longer.) As mentioned elsewhere this was my intention, but I still had worked on them longer. The first cube had taken over two hours, and the other two about 70 minutes each. But they still didn’t look done. There were still things to fix.

And some things on them didn’t look right. I got the idea to spend another hour to work on them as one—bring them all to a state of completion. This is after I showed them to a few friends.

The takeaway was that one of the important things regarding all of this may seem obvious, but it seems to not be said. That first most important thing is that if one wants to paint a painting in an hour that one would have to pick a subject which can be painted an hour. It seems obvious, but it wasn’t for me. In making the paintings of the cubes I had initially included part of the figure of one of those little wooden drawing models. Part of the foot. It made sense to me. I had taken the pictures and knew what it was.

But when I showed this painting to my sister J., she didn't know that it was the foot of a wooden figure. There was no context for her to know that was what it was, and I hadn't painted it realistically enough for her to otherwise know. To her it looked like a finger on a colorcube. Once I explained that it was the foot of one of those little wooden drawing figures she got it. Also, it didn't look realistic enough, but there didn't seem to be enough time in an hour to do that.

She also suggested that another way to take less time for a painting would be to use fewer colors. Ultimately I would need to do the minimum maximum of what needs to be done to finish the painting. Unessential redundancy would be removed from the process.

Anyway, as mentioned, that is where I was with all of this at that particular moment in time.

These three paintings took longer than an hour each to make, but I still had to finish them. There aren't many collectors interested in paintings that don't look good, even if they are documents of an artist's process, particularly if they only show a failed process. As interesting as this all may be, it doesn't make for art that someone would want to put on their walls.

The first thing I did was to paint out the foot of the wooden figure on two of the paintings. It wasn't working for all of the reasons already mentioned. Now I just had part of the colorcube—something that I could paint quicker. The subject matter now matched the time allotted. The addition of the wooden figure had extended the time past sixty minutes. This is something I had demonstrated already to myself. I had to change the parameters. The subject matter has to be something that can be painted in an hour.

That is the first little nugget of truth that I had found in all of this. I suppose that in math it would be called an axiom. But

whether it is the actual truth or not isn't really known. It seems true. It seems like a true statement.

*To paint a painting in an hour conditions have to be such that it is physically possible to paint that painting in an hour.*

The subject matter has to be one that can be painted in an hour within the manner in which the painting is being made.

This seems obvious and it is, but it has to be done.

So as I sat down to finish the first three cube paintings. Then I started adding color everywhere. I was fixing the colors of the little stickers that are on the cube.

Since I had already created the parameter of the 5x7 inch image I could see that I had made that central image larger. This was something that had happened without my awareness while I was painting. I was in some kind of a 'zone; where I wasn't keeping that criteria in mind. I had just been focused on what I was painting, not where I was painting.

But here now I could just paint in from the edges with white on a large brush and I could cover those parts of the painting that had strayed out. So these were things I was now doing on all of the paintings one after the other. What I was doing didn't require much other than doing it. I had created a new set of parameters and was just doing that. Eventually these are things that I will do as I am making the painting the first time around. Or if not, then I will know how to correct them like this. Eventually this will be part of the toolkit of how to make a painting in an hour.

So once that was done I had a better handle on the whole thing. Here were three paintings all basically uniform. Parts of a color cube. The images size on all was roughly centered and about the same area was covered on the canvas. Around 5x7 inches.



So now I have a good sense of the whole process. I also realized that I could make three paintings of the same image. This seemed like a good idea I could also paint the three paintings knowing now that I would finish them together as one. So that gave little extra freedom. I know that each painting didn't have to be finished at once. How a specific painting looked was related to the other paintings within that mini-series. All of this is new. I didn't know this a week ago.

Now I have an approach to these paintings. Make three per subject. Focus on choosing a subject that can be painted in an hour—using whatever technique the subject calls for. Something that could be painted in an hour.

If I had documented more with photos this would make more sense, but I didn't, and now the paintings are done, and this is how they ended up looking.

What ended up happening is that on three occasions, separated by at least a day, and at one point two days, I worked on all three paintings together as a group. On one day it was for an hour, and on two other days, a half hour, so splitting this time between each painting, there was a total of 40 additional minutes put into each painting.

I'm not quite calling this group done. I am going to start a new series of paintings now, zoomed in images of the cubes, ignoring the wooden figure for now.

*February 14, 2022*

I wrote most of the above yesterday and since then I have done a lot more painting, most of which is in the chapter called "Comments on 53-55". These are the next three paintings that I started right after everything that happened before here happened. All of that can be read about in detail in that section. To continue the story here all that needs to be known is that I now have six paintings which all look somewhat similar and

there are a few things I am going to do with them collectively as a group to improve upon all of them. The paintings in the first group took about 110 minutes once I adjusted the process, and the paintings in the second group took 30 minutes for the most part by taking into account what I had learned by making the first paintings.

*February 15, 2022*

I'm going to type this here to indicate that more happened with these paintings, but I am going to write about this in the chapter called "February 15, 2022."

*February 16, 2022*

Today is the day I got the idea to enclose the cubes of the paintings. To see what they looked like before I made this decision, refer to the chapter on the photography lighting tests. But today I enclosed the cubes and roughed in how they will look and I knew instantly that this is a good decision. I am going to now start with 56-58.

*February 19, 2022*

Well, I'm back here writing again. To find out what has been going on check out the chapter with the comments about paintings 56-58. Meanwhile, what is happening now is that I am going to finish these three paintings as a group.

*February 20, 2022*

On this day I had three groups of three paintings. Each group had been started together and then all of them were worked on together and now I am working on each as a group again. If I had taken photos at this point it might have been interested to demonstrate the process involved, but in a way it doesn't matter.

I was watching some videos about Lichtenstein, Diebenkorn, Rothko and Thiebaud. A lot of what they did as artists I am doing as well. It just happens that way. There is a lot

I could write about all of this since it is relevant, but I will leave it here for now with just a mention.

Meanwhile my plan was to finish these three paintings as rapidly as possible. I decided to make a decision regarding the backgrounds and just do that on all of them. So for these three I painted a dark gray shadow, a medium gray ground and a light gray background. For the other two groups of paintings I did something else.

*February 21, 2022*

What is interesting about these paintings is that in a dim light the darker values all blend together and it has a certain look. It is a look that is ok, but there are things I would make differently, hindsight being twenty-twenty. But just now, while writing this, I have put these paintings in some bright light. The tonal values of the grays are in bright light so they read properly —ie, the way I intended them to. They look good. So while my thought before going to bed was to paint change them somehow because I didn't like how they looked in the dim light, now I see that they look fine so I am going to leave the background on this one and the other six how they are. The last and final step is to put some final color on these paintings. Some last touch up colors. Then they will be done.

Anyway, I just focused in and finished these three paintings [50-52]. I spent seventeen minutes on each adding color and fixing the outlines and the background. Then I was done.

So I did that and now they are done. Since the whole point of all of this documentation is to, in part, help figure out how to make one of these paintings in less than an hour, I am now going to list how long it took to make these three.

50—274 minutes

51—197 minutes

52—192 minutes

This is the actual painting time more or less. I didn't include the time it took to take the photos I originally based them on. I also didn't include all of the time spent looking at them and thinking about them. I also didn't include the time I spent making the related 12x12" color study.

I also didn't include all of the time I spent making the lighting tests and writing all of this documentation in the digest.

I'm looking at these three paintings and I really like them I feel that they came out really good all things considered.

## **Additional Comments on 53—55**

*February 14, 2022*

This afternoon starts the next series of paintings, 53 Colorcube, 54 Green, Blue, Red, and 55 Reds. [Please note these titles changed eventually.]

After having completed the previous three paintings [50-52], I decided to try the following process of creating these next paintings. I would make three a week, and if everything went according to the intended plan that would be three hours.

So having learned from the ‘mistakes’ of the previous three paintings I was ready to make another three paintings of the colorcube. I found some good images in some of the photos I had previously taken so I didn’t need to take any new photos. Then I set those up in a grid for when I was going to start painting. Then I named those and numbered them and now I am typing about having done all of that.

All of that, the inception of the idea based on a decision (to make three new colorcube paintings), until now was about twenty minutes. I had decided on that earlier today, and then I sent about working on those paintings by looking at the photos.

However I will mention that earlier today I bought some new paint. Unlike the previous paint I had where I had to use a turkey baster to measure the paint, this paint was in plastic bottles and I could squeeze the paint out the top into mixing containers. I could weigh the paint to get the correct ratios for mixed grays. So I mixed an entire new batch of the seven values I use for making art. I’ve written extensively about all of this in earlier issues of the *Birds of Mars Digest*. So this was just me carrying out the same basic procedures, but just with different paints and a different method of measurement. What it ends up being is that a 50-50 mixture of black (1) and white (7) creates a

very dark gray (2) with this paint. A near white (6) is created with just two drops of black. A light gray (5) with eight drops, and just four drops would create a noticeable intermediate shade between 5 and 6.

The shades are relative and additional mixing is part of the process to recreate specific tonal values. Now I am going to continue working on these three paintings as a group. When I made the first colorcube painting I didn't know it would be one of a group of three, or that I would finish three paintings in tandem. With this group of paintings I already know this, so it will be interesting to see how I end up approaching these paintings with this being part of it. Also, the notion of just making three of these over the course of the week will be interesting as well. That feels like a lot of time. I'll probably start these by gridding off the three canvases and then start putting in the dark lines of the cube—the places where the color stickers are stuck on. If not that, I'll pick a color and start painting in the color areas.

The other thing that is different with these paintings is the new paint that I am using. Previously I had been using a very translucent white paint which I had accidentally purchased. It didn't mix well with other paints, maintaining a translucent quality. When I mix with white I am hoping to get an opaque quality to the resulting mixture. Anyway, I am going to experiment more with a few things regarding the backgrounds. I am thinking more of design now since I have really limited myself in many aspects. But this limiting is in a way a good thing as it will focus my decision making regarding what can be done on the painting in the allotted time. Well, I've been typing for about fifteen minutes. I'm going to work on those paintings now.

I had put the 'first coat' on the paintings. Without going into specifics here at this time, I will say that I kept track of how

long it took to paint each color. I painted each painting one at a time. Then when all the colors had been painted I applied white, grays, and black. So when that was done on all of the paintings I knew that I had put down the first coat because everything was painted.

Next I put them all on the walls and I am getting ready to tabulate how long all of that took.

So I put all of the paintings on the wall, including the ones from the first group [50-52] and now I am going to look at how long it took to paint each and see how the new group compares aesthetically to the first group, and also if there is anything in the first group that could be changed to improve upon them.

It turns out the first coat took thirty minutes for the second two, and for the first one, the one that I did a pencil drawing first, had taken 39 minutes. That first one isn't any the better for having done that drawing. If anything it looks worse. That is probably because I was guessing what I had intended the drawing to be—it wasn't an exact drawing—so I had guessed wrong. Something like that. With the paints I had been looking at the photo and being accurate.

The first three paintings had taken the following amount of time to paint: 50—185, 51—110, 52—115. [It ended up being more time than this.] Meanwhile 54 and 55 have taken just 31 minutes so far. Now I am going to look at all of them to see what the differences aesthetically are at this point, and if it seems if any of them look more or less unfinished compared to the other ones. This is being done in artificial light and I will do it again in sunlight tomorrow.

I forgot to mention, but on one of them I had filled in one inch color squares around the edges to see what that looked like. That one really looks out of place and I have a distaste towards it. I don't like how that looks so I am going to take a photo

tomorrow and then paint the background to match the other ones. That just gave me an idea. Maybe I should take photos of the first group in this night lighting and then compare that with the first photos. I could do a whole things about comparing photos taken in different lighting conditions and seeing what the differences were. I'm going to do that.

Otherwise there doesn't seem to be much difference in how complete they look in this lighting at this distance. It seems like I could paint two more coats in thirty minutes. I could rework them with white to get the form as close as possible and also build up the colors and refine the background. The way I mixed the new paints is really helping with mixing very closely intertwined light grayscale values at this point.

I just added comments in the main text. This is just a note to mention it. I am writing there and then here. All of this is new. In early digests I had always written just enough comments until I had written something about the painting, but now, since there is a more deliberate process in which new discoveries and realizations are continually being made I am generating a lot more text relating to describing this process, hence these comments chapters.

So at this moment in time, this part of the comment section is the focal point. The next step is to put on the second coat of paint in fifteen minutes. This seems reasonable.

I showed all six paintings to some friends of mine. They were all at point where they looked similar enough. There wasn't any real differentiation between them other than the second group of three didn't have any orange squares, and that everyone preferred the ones with the orange squares. But it may be that they prefer those ones because some didn't have orange. Maybe if they all had orange they would have felt differently about the orange. So then there would have to be another test



with all orange paintings. I guess that is the kind of thing one could do if they had the inclination. Also, one of my friends mentioned that they would be better in groups of three because you would get what they were better. That is what I was thinking of doing. Also, someone mentioned how they liked yellow and blue together. So I have a bunch of things to do on these paintings, but it shouldn't take too long. I am also accidentally conducting some photography lighting tests.

Then one of my friends said they liked two of them more than the other ones. One was from the first group and one was from the second group. So I realized that I would be able to make a painting in 30 minutes that was liked as much as a painting that had taken two and a half hours. Once some paint is on the canvas, and the whole canvas is covered, then it might as well be done. So if one were to look at a painting in strictly that manner, an 8x10" painting would have 80 one inch squares on it. If one minute was spent on each square, that would be eighty minutes. This is more time than we have.

Since I am using a 7x5" grid that is only 35 squares. One minute each on these squares would leave 25 minutes for the remaining 45 squares, which will comprise the background. Assuming I painted the thirty-five squares of the image to completion in 35 minutes, I would then have 25 minutes to paint the background.

That would be one approach.

The other thing is that the background where I painted the squares was one that nobody liked. Also I think I know what it is that my friend liked about the two paintings and I am going to make the other paintings more similar in that manner to the first painting. I was thinking about it earlier and the way to describe this is that the outline of the object should help define the form of the object. In other words there should be some

dimensionality along with some outlines somewhere. A thing should go behind or in front of another thing at an angle is another way to describe this. So that means having objects that do this. If a small object it would do that. If a large object it would do that as well. But for now I am focusing on small objects.

For now I am going to think about how at thirty minutes these paintings could be considered complete. The question is now mainly what I could do to improve them. Since there are likely many things I could do, and none comes to mind, I will simply try things until I discover something that looks good, and then just do that on the other paintings. If I wanted one on a black background I could paint the black plastic part a dark gray to see how that looked. There are a lot of things that I could try.

The things that I have to do on these paintings, which I should now think of as all one group since these latest three are basically indistinguishable from the first group of three. The things to do are paint out the background on one of them, better define the outlines to accentuate the dimensionality of the form, and to add neon orange on the newer paintings. Also to think of a scheme for painting the cubes.

Anyway, I am having fun writing about this in this way. I can just type about what happened. The only thing is (I just remembered this) is that I shouldn't type too much otherwise I will have to go back to revise and that is something that I don't want to have to do.

I just remembered that right before I went to visit my friends I had taken photos of the first three paintings in different lighting conditions. First with just the regular bulb, I'm not sure what kind it is. And also one with the flash that is on the camera. I also plan to take some photos tomorrow in sunlight and then compare how the paintings look in four different

lighting conditions. So that will be part of this as well. I will do that tomorrow. For now I am just thinking about how this is evolving.

*February 15, 2022*

I'm going to type this here to indicate that more happened with these paintings, but I am going to write about this in the chapter called "February 15, 2022."

*February 16, 2022*

Well, a lot happened and it is in several different chapters now. For example, I'm about to start paintings #56-58 even though the first six color cubes paintings aren't done yet. If the reader reads the rest of this sequentially they'll eventually get the whole story, so I'm not going to bother to write it out here again. I'll wrap this chapter up when the three paintings in this section have been completed.

*February 20, 2022*

On this day I had three groups of three paintings. Each group had been started together (separately), and then all of them were worked on together, and now I am working on each as a group again.

For the background of these three I decided to just make an amorphous field with a light gray at the bottom that gets lighter toward the top of the painting. So I went ahead and did that. For the other two groups of paintings I did something else.

*February 21, 2022*

I finished the first three paintings earlier today. Then I sat down determined to finish these. I spent an hour working on all three, mostly adding color and defining the cubes a little bit better. Mostly fixing all the mistakes I had made previously. I realized that each paint has to be thought of in terms of whether or not it is opaque out of the tube. It is far better to paint a transparent paint directly onto white canvas to get the full

intensity of its color than to paint over a gray and then try to build up to that color. This is something I will think about when I begin the fourth group of paintings [59-61].

Meanwhile with these paintings finished I was able to tally up how much painting time was spent on each. Over two hours still for each. These three were a lot quicker than the previous three which had taken two to four hours each.

50—274 minutes [4 hours, 34 minutes]

51—197 minutes [3 hours, 17 minutes]

52—192 minutes [3 hours, 12 minutes]

53—135 minutes [2 hours, 15 minutes]

54—126 minutes [2 hours, 6 minutes]

55—132 minutes [2 hours, 12 minutes]

## **What Happened on February 15, 2022**

This section is about the things that happened once the first six colorcube paintings were all at about the same stage.

I've been working on formatting the digest so far this morning. I decided to add page numbers since I had added a table of contents, and that called for page numbers. Then I realized that the page number would look better at the bottom of the page, but meanwhile the document was formatted with a header and no footer. I changed that around. Then I noticed that since I had all of the caption boxes for the photos on the bottom right, the page number could be seen through them as well. So I had to figure out how to make a new style (opaque) for the text boxes to block out the page number on those pages.

I'm going to take some photos now that it is daylight.

Then I'm going to start painting, thinking of these six paintings as one painting. I'll put the best parts of the best ones into the other paintings.

I just took all the photos for the lighting tests and put those on the appropriate pages. So it turns to what I already knew, morning is the best time to take the photos, with sunlight streaming through a nearby window, with the painting in the cast shadow of the wall of the building. It is interesting to compare those different images and see how different they look. More experiments and tests could be conducted, but this seems to be the main take-away.

Next up is painting. I am approaching these six paintings as one whole, and I am focusing on getting them all to look good.

I was just painting for a few hours. Grays on the more recent group of three. Mostly what I did was paint the background so it was lighter toward the colorcubes. I tried this because the other ones didn't look right. The ones where I had

painted white towards the edges and darker toward the colorcube. That just looked muddy. So I am trying new things. That seemed to work out ok. It looks more artistic. I am going to look at other artist's paintings to see if there is any rhyme or reason to how they do it. I also have a few art books of artists that paint in monochrome so I will look to see how they treat the backgrounds and copy what I think looks good. So it is 46 and 48 minutes still for two of the paintings. The next step is a coat of color. Then trying to get the black plastic parts of the cubes to look right. On the painting that had the color square background that I painted over, I painted that in a mid-gray.

I also did some comparative studies of the grays I had mixed yesterday with some previous charts of grays from previous times when I was mixing other black and white paints to get a range of five grays. I better understand where the grays I just mixed sit in the grayscale spectrum. The grays I mixed are in the ballpark, but not quite accurate. The 4 that I mixed is a little closer to a 3. And the 5 is closer to a 4. The 7 is 7 of course, that is the white paint out of the tube. The 6 I mixed is ok as well. So I am missing a 5 for the most part. The 2 is good, and the 3 I mixed is closer to a 2. A very dark gray. But with all 7 paints available before me I can get to the intermediate shades fairly quickly.

That is about it. I already have accomplished a lot of what I had set out to do today. The next step is to continue working on the backgrounds of all of them—lighter toward the colorcube. And to add color, to add some neon yellow and blue to the 2nd group, and to maybe do some glazing over sides of the cube to show a variance for the ones in shadow. This would involve using transparent paints that I have.

I painted little bit more. I just have to keep painting a little bit more. I am going to go back to the first group of three and

work on changing the background so that it is lighter toward the cube.

Then I worked on them some more and they weren't finished by the end of the day, and it seemed like they were never going to get finished. And that is how the day ended.

The next morning I woke up and knew I had to figure out what to do to get these paintings to look finished. Then I figured out what to do. I knew that I had to close in all of the cubes and make them complete looking rather than have some of the cubes go off toward the edge unfinished. If you look at the photos in the lighting tests you will see how they used to look. Then compare that to the finished pictures and you will see how those ones are all closed. Each cube face is complete.

So once I figured that out I knew that these paintings would look good and that it would be easy and fun to make new ones. It seemed that I had finally cracked the code for making a painting in less than an hour.

So ironically, even though this section is about what happened on the 15th, it turned out that it was on the 16th that a major breakthrough occurred. I finally have a clear idea about what these paintings are just now, in mid-February. Since August I've painted fifty paintings in this 8 by 10 series, and just now I feel like I'm getting an idea regarding how to approach them. All that time working on them, but not knowing what I know now. That to me is the most fascinating part of being an artist, actually to be a person. To be alive and having experiences. Learning from them and then doing new things with that new insight in mind. That can apply to anything.

## **Additional Comments on 56—58**

These are those paintings I did after I really got the first six looking good. After I had figured out a good approach to this series of colorcubes. On February 15 I had a breakthrough and figured out that I should close off the cubes and present them as if they are sitting on a surface. And to not necessarily have them in a block. In other words, they can look like Tetris pieces. Then I realized that I could just make these from imagination. I could just pencil in a square of whatever size I wanted, or a combination of squares, and then just decide the colors and paint them that way. So that is what I decided to do.

I decided to take some pictures of my toy cube a little more deliberately, trying to get it situated in the light in such a way that the reflections were really clear and well defined so that I would have a nice guide to reference. All of this was on my mind as I started this next group. The first six were still not done, but I decided to wait until I really got the look or the reflection on the cube right, and then I would go back and fix the rest of them.

*February 17, 2022*

This text is a jumble. It isn't sequential. I'm jumping around a lot between different sections and filling in here and there. This is where I am at now on February 17. I am about to start these next three paintings. I went online and looked at other people's artworks of colorcubes. I was trying to see how they illustrated the reflections.

Then I decided to make a few studies. Then I finally got started with the new paintings. I planned to make them from scratch—not based on a photo. I would compose them on the spot on the canvas.

I thought that one of them would have one square, one would have two squares and one would have three squares.



Wow, I just got a great idea. Make the paintings with first one square, then two, three. etc. Keep going up.

That means renaming and renumbering everything up to now. That is ok. I'm not going to write about all of that since in a way it doesn't matter. I've documented quite a bit of all of this already. Then again, that is what I am doing.

I was just painting these three paintings [56-58] and it is going well. I worked on them all concurrently and spent about 27 minutes on each one.

I ended up just renaming the paintings to match how many cubes are in the picture, but I kept them in the original order that I painted them in. So the first three are totally different now than they used to be. Now I'm looking at the photos I took of them earlier on and I'm thinking maybe I should have left them that way. Well, at least I got the photos so I can make new ones if I wanted to.

Meanwhile I just painted these from my imagination. The three in this series. Once I got the forms figured out I worked on backgrounds and horizon lines and shadows. I used a variety of grays throughout. Where I am going to put color I left as the white of the canvas. I'll just glaze that in, but for the blue and red I'll probably mix to the color I want and then glaze over at the end of it. Yellow and orange I'll just glaze it.

I'm looking at these in a very dim light and the shading of the whites looks great. I'm going to spend some time looking at them to try to understand what I am seeing. I am going to look at the earlier ones as well.

Find the darkest spots and think of those as black, and find the lightest spots and think of those as white, and then look at how all of the grays fit within that.

Now I am going to work on the first six. Some of those I'm changing so that they have a certain number of squares. I won't

go into all of that here. In the end I'll know how long it took to work on each painting because I am keeping track of all of that. It was initially meant to be 60 minutes per painting. For this group I still have more than thirty minutes each to add color and then finalize everything. That seems like enough time since I will be mixing some of the colors with white so they will be more opaque.

*February 18, 2022*

Today I worked on all of the first nine paintings together. I was adding the colors. I was looking for how to approach this so I started with a color study of one of the blue paints I have. "Brilliant Blue." I painted on a 12x12 inch canvas that I found in the studio—one that I had previously gridded off into some interesting sections.

Then I took the time to mix the paint with white, then light gray, and then eventually with all of the grays I had mixed, and then eventually black as well. So I had all of the information there before me. Then I looked at that to see if there was anything there that matched the way I wanted the blue to look on the paintings.

That blue goes on dark. It is a dark blue. It is a nice blue, closer to cerulean than ultramarine. I decided fairly quickly that one of the shades of blue that I had made when mixed with white paint looked good. It was the right tonal value too—a mid gray. But it involved mixing, an extra step. I went to look at my paints to see what else I had to work with. There I found a light blue and a cerulean blue. Between these two the cerulean blue matched the tonal value and pretty much looked like the brilliant blue mixed with white. So I decided to use that.

I went through all nine paintings and painted in the blue. I knew that I would outline again with a thin brush and black paint—the final step, so I didn't worry too much about the

corners knowing I would eventually round them off. On these three paintings it was the first color being applied. On the earlier paintings I had already established where the colors were going to go. I listened to a Roy Lichtenstein documentary while doing this which inspired me a little bit because he would talk about color and shapes and composition.

Then I had to figure out how to put on the red so I did some tests. My thought was to make an opaque underpainting of some kind of red mixed with white and then glaze over that later with a red to see how it looked. I was thinking that two step process might be the way to go. I used a magenta as a test. I based that decision from some earlier color studies I had made with all of the reds. I wan't guessing.

Then I went on to paint the yellow parts. On the newer pairings I just put the yellow out of the tube, but on other ones, where I was painting over something that was already there and needed the paint to be a little more opaque I would mix it with white and this seems to work. It wasn't completely translucent like it is out of the tube. So I did that with the "Brilliant Yellow".

By the way, I'm thinking of going back one last time and making a last coat on color on these at the very end. Not a coat, but just adding a little bit of color on top of the color that is already there.

So now I just have to continue with the other four colors. Orange, Red, Green, and White. I'll have to make tests with all of them to find out the best approach. With the Neon Orange it may be that the best way is to paint the cube the shade I want it to be with a gray and then glaze. Maybe it will mix ok with white to make a good opaque base coat and then I could glaze over that to intensify it.

I'll recap everything that happened today. I added colors. On some paintings for the first time and on other paintings

correcting what was already there. Then I worked on the backgrounds some more with the grays. I would just go through them one after another with each color. The red I ended up putting on out of the tube. That worked ok. Better than my other thoughts about glazing magenta over a lightened magenta under-wash.

So now the basic process involves a few things. Filling an area with a color, making a thin outline or border to areas of color, or painting the background with grays, using larger brushes and mixing shades, painting wet into wet at times, other times glazing or opaquely, but basically shaping areas of gradation and shadow and distance. So that is fun.

For these newer three the accumulated times is 50 minutes. All that is left to do is the outlines and the highlights and they will be done. So it seems as if I will be able to make one of these paintings in an hour which is the goal. I plan to finish these nine and then start the next ones.

*February 19, 2022*

So far today I painted again on each of them as a group. Two minutes each with neon orange and then five minutes each with a dark gray on the outlines.

I just have to figure out what to do with the backgrounds. If I should make them with shadows or not. Should I make a horizon line or just have them in space. If they are in space then the painting could be hung any which way, but if there is a shadow and a horizon it kind of implies it would be oriented a certain way.

I don't want to add too much extra time so I'll probably just leave them mostly how they are.

I do want to make a comment about one thing that I observed. I was painting backgrounds in a dim light with very light grays and white. I was able to notice the difference between

these very light values easier somehow I felt. I did a lot of blending and the transitions of the tonal values of the light grays looked very smooth. But then the next day what had looked nice in the dim light now looked somewhat choppy in the daylight. That seemed odd to me because in the dim light it felt as if there was a real nuance that I was able to pick up on to blend smoothly, but now in the bright light it looked like a lot of random brush marks. It didn't look blended at all. I just wanted to mention this because it was something I encountered while painting.

Then I spent a lot of time looking at the blue parts on all the paintings. In the dim light the blue looks very dark. If you didn't know what color it was you might not guess blue. But in the bright light the blue looks like blue and it contrasts with the dark outlines of the cubes just fine. So that is interesting. These paintings really look one way in one light and totally different in another light. It is just something to be aware of while I'm painting them I suppose. If I wanted these to read a little bit better in the dim light I would find a shade of blue that looked like blue in dim light. That would be a light blue color, but in this light, a dim light, light blue tends to look like gray. So the blueness is lost. Why make a lighter blue? To contrast with the dark outlines of the edges of the cube that the color sticker is affixed to. But then it would look different in a bright light. Or maybe not. Another thought is to paint the edges of the cubes a lighter gray, that way the darker blue would contrast. That might work when seen in a dim light, but in a bright light it might not look.

I think what I'm going to do, partly based on thinking about the paintings and writing about them just now, is correct all that choppiness in the light gray. I'm going to make them all uniform. I'll just finish them. Figure out how to make the

background look good and then just wrap up each painting. The other thing I want to do is add some highlights on the edges of the cubes. On the next group of paintings maybe I'll mess around with multiple shades of blue and all the things I just wrote about.

I am kind of feeling that I should just wrap these up without too much more work being done on them because I was just looking at the images for the lighting tests—when the paintings were in an earlier form, and those paintings looked good, and I've already painted over them, and now I kind of wish I had kept them as is and just moved on to the next paintings. That would have been truer to the idea of painting them in an hour. Since then I've repainted those and I probably didn't have to do that. I'm writing this to show all of the process, but I could have just kept those first three paintings. This is why being an artist is weird sometimes. You just get ideas and do them and you don't always know if it is the best idea or even worth doing. Funny how the whole reason for doing this is to make painting in less time, and yet, somehow, even though I am documenting this with writing about it each step of the way, I still went ahead and did something that added more time. Even after I had taken those photos and had considered those three paintings done.

That's what it was. I had taken the photos in the bad light so I knew I would have to take them again, hence the lighting tests. And then in between all of that time I got the idea to block in the cubes. Well, I'm still glad I did that. I can just paint new versions of those old paintings since I have the image. Plus I could probably recreate those in an hour, which is the whole idea. So nothing is worth regretting about any of this. I have the images which I like and I can just make a new painting in an hour based on one of those. So it all evens out. Now I am

focused on finishing the backgrounds, and then the last step will be any highlights, and maybe a last addition of color.

I thought about it some more and I decided that I should go back to painting these in the groups of three. So I'm going to just work on the first three until they are done. Then I'll work on the next three until they are done, and then I'll work on the three that this chapter was supposed to be about initially. Then I'll start the final three.

The next time I write in this chapter the first six paintings will have been completed. [They weren't yet but were close.]

*February 20, 2022*

On this day I had three groups of three paintings. Each group had been started together and then all of them were worked on together and now I am working on each as a group again.

For these three paintings I decided to paint a mid-dark gray shadow and a lighter field around this. These are the three paintings which I had really been focused on painting in just one hour. After spending that time fixing the backgrounds I was still under one hour cumulative time each and was very close to completing these. For the other two groups of paintings I did something else.

*February 21, 2022*

Earlier today I finished the first six colorcube paintings. I was happy with how they looked. Sure there were still things to adjust, there always are, but these things were inconsequential. They are just minor things that my eye picks up on that could be improved. But at a certain point making these continued improvements is superfluous to whether the painting is finished or not. Seeing that these paintings are meant to be done in an hour, a certain amount of detachment has to occur to consider one being finished. So now I am going to sit down and finish

these. Since they were made having corrected the things that I had encountered in the earlier six paintings it should be a fairly quick process to finish them. As they stand right now I have spent a cumulative amount of 55 minutes working on these paintings over the course of four days. I was also reworking the earlier ones during this time. So if I spend five minutes on each of these finishing them up, I will have achieved my goal of making these paintings in an hour. Then I will begin the next three paintings as a group, ready to create them with everything I have learned previously from making and documenting the creation of these first nine paintings.

I just finished this group—17 more minutes for each, so the total time for each was 72 minutes. More than an hour. Now I am ready to start the last three paintings in this series having made some substantial progress toward creating a painting in one hour. A lot of it has to do with very specific things that have to be done intentionally. That is the main thing I have learned. Now I am going to put it all together with the next three paintings.

50—274 minutes

51—197 minutes

52—192 minutes

53—135 minutes

54—126 minutes

55—132 minutes

56—72 minutes

57—72 minutes

58—72 minutes



## **Additional Comments on 59—61**

*February 21, 2022*

Earlier today I finished the first nine paintings in this series. I am now ready to take everything I have learned while making those paintings, and apply it to these next three paintings.

Since I'm going to paint them from my imagination, and have already decided how many cubes each painting will have, I am ready to start painting. I'm not relying on photographs or live objects for these ones. It's just me and the canvases and the idea of what to paint: colorcubes.

I decided to make some studies for these paintings since the number of cubes was nine, eleven and twelve. I wanted to get a feel for what I would be able to do with these objects. So I started with nine cubes and figured out how many in a row and how high they could go and how many cubes could be on a level. So I did some drawings of that and then I did some more drawings for eleven and twelve cubes. I was seeing what configurations looked good. What I discovered was that some configurations were aesthetically more pleasing than other ones. Then I also noticed that more than a few of the arrangements I came up with looked good. Naturally I thought that I would eventually make more than one painting of each of these. If I were to make more colorcube paintings I might make a set of three paintings with eleven cubes for example, and not just automatically keep making paintings a slow incrementation of the number of cubes in the painting.

I might still want to do that as well. I could do both of these things. I came up with a few nice designs for nine cubes.

For eleven cubes I also came up with four different arrangements of the cubes—designs. All four looked good to me so I'll probably end up making a painting of each one if I

continue making these colorcube paintings. But for now I will just pick one of the designs I made.

For twelve cubes I made four basic designs. Each have their own appeal. There are relationships to the cubes and how they look. How they are arranged alters the way in which they appear and the emotional impact they have when viewed.

All of the other paintings are done. I still have to photograph them. I am waiting for the morning light. Then I will start work on these next three paintings.

The previous three paintings each took 72 minutes to make. I am confident that I will be able to make these next paintings in an hour or less. The key will be to try to paint a color as closely to how I want it to look as quickly as possible. It seemed like in finishing the previous paintings I was spending a lot of time repainting the color parts. One or two extra coats is fine if that is the plan, but a lot of coats covering up mistakes and reworking it just to get the color to look good is something I'd like to avoid. That means I'll have to have a good outline drawing from the beginning. I have my sketches so I'll be able to just copy those for the outlines and then put in the paint. I've also decided for the backgrounds I'm going to do one each of the three ways I did them for the first three groups. On one of them I'll have a light gray background. On the next I'll have a mid gray to light gray background with a dark gray shadow, and on the other I'll have a dark gray shadow, a mid gray surface and a light gray background. [I didn't end up doing any of this.]

I also want to have lighter shade of green and blue so that these colors pop out more in a dim light.

I am also going to think about the edges a little bit more. I'm beginning to understand better how these shapes fit together. Where the dark parts are in shadow as they relate to those cubes that are in close proximity. I also want to add lighting effects to

the faces of cubes which face in the same direction so they have a similar relative tonal value or chroma value when compared to those facing different directions.

One quick note—the difference between nine cubes and twelve cubes really looks quite substantial. The designs with nine cubes look sparse when compared to the ones with twelve cubes.

*February 22, 2022*

This is likely the last thing I will write here since everything is somewhat caught up and orderly. I just took the photos of paintings 50—58. The neon orange in some of the photos looks bad, definitely not how it looks from across the room, but that is just how things are. Kind of ironic and funny in a way. It is the typical art thing that goes wrong at the end. If this was the culmination of three years of work and the photos didn't represent how the actual paintings looked right before a deadline. If the artist thought it mattered. Then there would be a big scramble. Like if an artist was printing a book and that is how the photos looked, and the artist thought they would photograph differently. Then there would be all the energy put into things to try to correct it at the last minute. I don't want to ever have to do that. I found it kind of funny that is how they looked especially since I had conducting all of the lighting tests as well.

It's what I've called the trickster element in the past. So this is a seemingly direct relation that phenomenon. Always waiting to confound. But meanwhile, some of the photos with the neon do look good, so I'll need to investigate why and do that in the future if that's how I want it to look. The camera is just registering what it sees, and in some places that neon orange paint is so thin that where it cakes up on the edge of the brush as the paint is applied to the canvas still remains even after three or

four coats. And that tonal value is dark. The camera records that factually. Something in the brain adjusts it so it isn't noticed.

Learning about all of this through experience is part of the artistic process. But since I am making these paintings in an hour I can move on. I'll take that into account for the next one. I'll leave these how they are as historical documents. That is one of the good things about this approach.

As mentioned, since I feel that everything is caught up to the moment, I will just write comments about these making these paintings next to the image of each painting (in the earlier part of the digest) as I go. That is the plan anyway.

*February 23, 2022*

Well, I'm back here writing. I thought I was finished with this chapter because I was going to paint each painting in this group separately. But what happened is after working on the first one in a manner which pushed the time over one hour (71 minutes) I decided to start the second one keeping in mind not to do what I had just done.

What happened is that after I had made the studies of the colorcubes with nine, eleven and twelve cubes in pencil, and had shaded in parts and made it look like a drawing, when I started painting the outline I wanted to make it look like the drawing so I started painting a lot of gray areas to match the drawing. This is something which I had already realized was not the way to make a quick painting, but here I was doing that again. And of course doing this took fifty minutes. Then I added color and that took 17 minutes. It took that long because I was putting color on top of all the gray areas. So I was still making the same mistakes. (At least mistakes for this style and kind of painting—the one hour painting.)

So I decided to start the next one and just focus on making a quick but accurate outline. That went better—15 minutes.

Then adding the color took another 15 minutes. So that one was better, but still not ideal. I learned some more things about making the outline. For this one I used a light gray, but even that was too dark as I ended up having to spend time layering white on top of those areas (inside the cubes where the color would be.)

Then I moved on to the third painting and this one was similar. About a half hour for the drawing and the color. I used a very light gray for the outline drawing. I could still see what I was doing so painting over potential mistakes would be easier. I also added the backgrounds. I used a big brush and I wet and diluted different shades of gray and just put the paint on with a vague notion of wherever I wanted it darker or lighter. I tried different things to see what might look good. I was thinking about things like what the tonal value is on one part of the canvas compared to the other part of the canvas and then how quickly they change where they meet. It could be a sharp line of demarcation, or it could be a small area of blending. Or a large area of blending. Or combinations of these things.

At this point I outlined all the colorcubes with a dark gray to get them to a point of completion. Now I could look at them aesthetically and think of what to do.

The first one was now at 73 minutes and the other two were 36 and 41 minutes.

I still had the drawings in mind. I like how with drawing one can quickly shade in areas. It is fast. I had the drawings of the blocks and now I just shaded in the faces of the blocks facing in the same direction. I was creating form shadows—those areas where the form is not in sunlight, but isn't in a cast shadow. So I wanted to somehow account for this in the painting. I got the idea to simply glaze over the parts I wanted to darken with another color. I had been doing explorations of this kind often

on previous paintings in the 8 by 10 series, so I had a few notions to try. I also thought that it would make sense to also lighten those faces of the cubes facing the light. So that meant glazing with a lighter color or tonal value in those areas.

What I decided to try was a violet over those parts that are in shadow. I wanted to see how each of the colors looked with this layer glazed on. And for the parts in light I decided to try Naples yellow at first to see how that looked. I didn't want to use a regular yellow because that would really alter the color below. In the past I had sometimes put yellow on top of areas of white brightness, and every time that makes the painting look worse. The yellow detracts from the brightness of the whiteness. So I was fairly certain that glazing over those faces of the cubes facing the light with yellow would be disastrous. I had to use something else.

Whatever it was would have to push those colors toward white. Anything which lightens moves toward white—I've made a few painting studies showing this.

My only thoughts at this stage were if I should put a second coat of paint down now on top of the color areas—all these areas aren't 100% opaque and the brush marks of how the paint was applied (created by the paint being transparent) were visible. Some people this doesn't bother. I like more of a full opaque look, but in this case I was experimenting so I decided to just leave it. Maybe the glazing layer will have a positive effect on how these areas look.

I also noticed that the backgrounds look better when the big areas are painted with more of one shade of gray and change gradual or suddenly to another shade.

So I am going to do that now.

Well, I saw that Naples Yellow was too yellow, but I tried it anyway, and sure enough it made it look bad. So I just used an

unbleached titanium for the parts in the light that I wanted to lighten. The violet glaze looks good. It changed all the colors under the glaze to nice new colors. Except the white cubes now look purplish. I am going to paint over that with the same value gray.

I made the cast shadow purple, but that looks wrong so I'm going to change that to gray. I have to go back and redo the outlines since I glazed over some of them and the completeness of the form has been lost a little bit. I'll do that with black in the shadows, and lighter grays in the areas facing the light.

I am thinking now that it would probably make sense to put down two coats of the color to make that somewhat opaque, then add the glaze over that. I won't have to mix any colors to a lighter or darker shade since the glazing will create that effect.

I just spent some more time working on them. I made the outlines of the cubes using three different values of dark gray. Then I glazed over the orange parts with neon orange. I guess I should mention that when I painted the second two in this group I just used regular orange for the orange parts because it goes on more opaquely. Just now I glazed over those (at the very end) with the neon. It looked good. Right now, the second two paintings are at the one hour mark. So if everything worked out they should be done. So now I am going to look at them as a set of three.

Yeah, these are looking good. It is a real good look to them. That glazing step is what did it. All of it together is making it work. Now I can work on getting the colors to look better now that I have the rest of it figured out. I should spend more time getting the initial color to look how I want it. If that means mixing with a more opaque paint, then I should do that. If it means three coats of paint then I should do that. They're small

canvases so it won't take long to do. I seem to have figured it all out.

The second two of this last group took 56 and 61 minutes. I am going to spend a few minutes to fix the background and then they will be done. I have achieved my goal of making a painting in just one hour. It is now February 24 and I am going to do that and then work on editing all of this so it is readable.

*February 25, 2022*

I didn't do that. I didn't "fix the background." I just left them how they were. It had been an hour and that was that. Time had run out. The backgrounds were just created randomly anyway. Sure I tried to make it look good somehow as I applied the paint, but still, it was mostly chance. Maybe they are fine how they are. Someone will likely like the background as it is. Why should I keep changing them? It kind of doesn't make any sense.

So I decided to just leave them how they are. They are a document to a process and there may be currently unknown things in these paintings which might be discovered in the future, thus becoming relevant. I took the photos and cropped them, and wow, the photos ended up looking really good. So I'm glad I just left them how they were. Even the backgrounds looked good. I've got another dozen or so blank canvases so I'm going to keep painting. I have an idea for a 12x12 inch study. I'm going to work on drawing with paint and small figures.

*February 26, 2022*

I've gone through all the text and edited it. Overall it seems like it is in good shape. 18,000 words. It reminded me of the year I wrote all those books. All that time I spent revising and editing and correcting what I had written. What a nightmare. This now was enjoyable. Mostly I was correcting double letters



which happens from time to time when the keyboard malfunctions.

Well, it isn't even 8am yet. I'll mention that most of the text contained in this digest was written before sunrise. I'd wake up and then make some coffee and open the curtains. Most days it was clear skies. I would sit and type and sip my coffee and the sun would rise above the horizon. Over the past three weeks it has been on the move. A few weeks ago it was rising further to the right—on the right side of the window on the right. (There are two windows that are together.) Today it rose way over to the left, in the middle of the window on the left.

So I've watched that progression happen day to day.

I finished my coffee and sun is streaming in. Some of these paintings are on the wall and I guess I'll just sit back and look at them some more. I'll look for what I like and make a mental note to do more of that in the future. I'll look for those things that I don't think look as good as they could, and I'll avoid doing those things in the next paintings. The process never ends if there is plan for another painting.

At times I've thought of not making any more paintings, to just stop. It seems like it would be easier. It can be a real struggle at times. I think it has to do with making discoveries and then having to rewire the neurons in the brain to account for these new awarenesses. That is a physical process—like lifting weights to develop a muscle. In this case it is thinking deliberately to rewire neurons in the brain. It can be an uncomfortable process.

So to achieve this goal of finding a way to make a painting in an hour involved a lot of neuron reconfiguration. It takes time and deliberate thought.

## Photography Lighting Tests

This section is a look at how the lighting will effect how a painting looks when photographed. Each painting [50-52, *in progress*] has been photographed in four different lighting conditions. Each image is placed on the same page for comparison.

The upper left image was captured in late afternoon light with the main window facing east, and a smaller side window facing north, with no sunlight streaming into the room.

The upper right image was taken in morning light with an east facing window, within the cast shadow of the wall in the room, with light streaming through the window nearby.

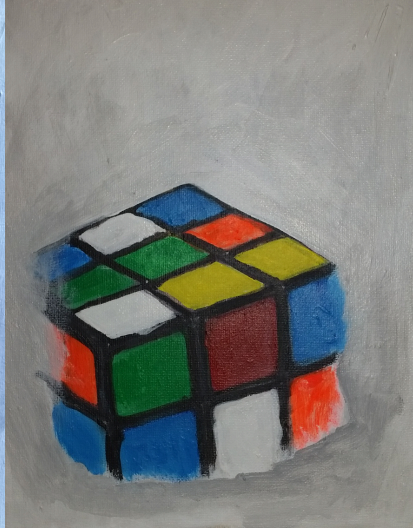
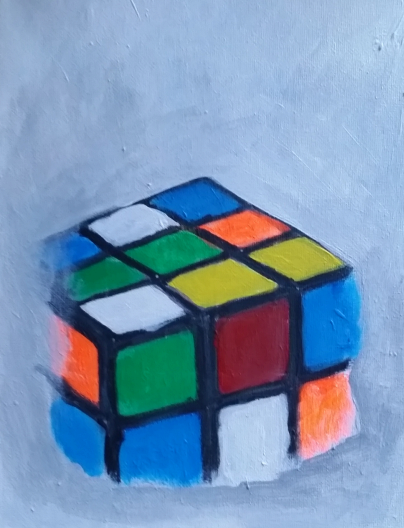
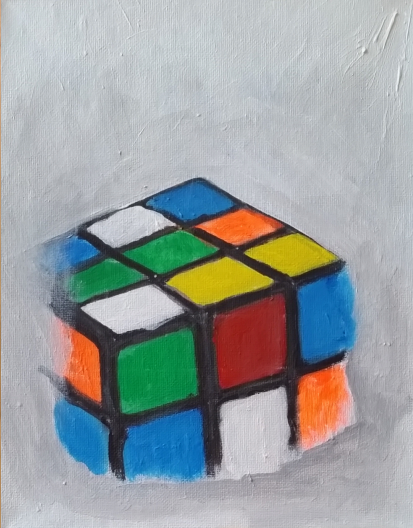
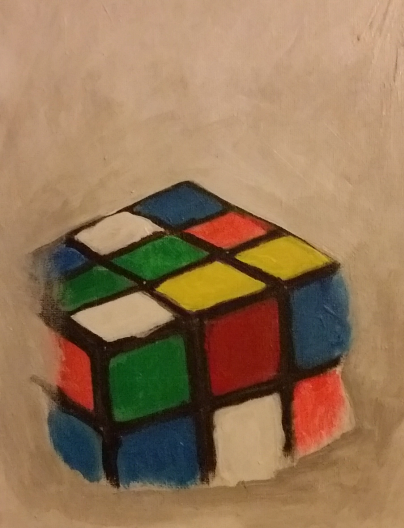
The lower left image was taken at night with artificial lighting.

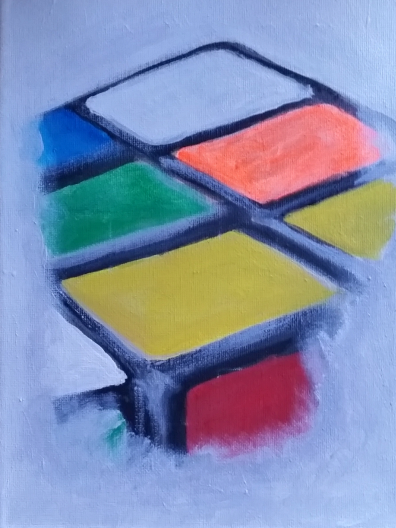
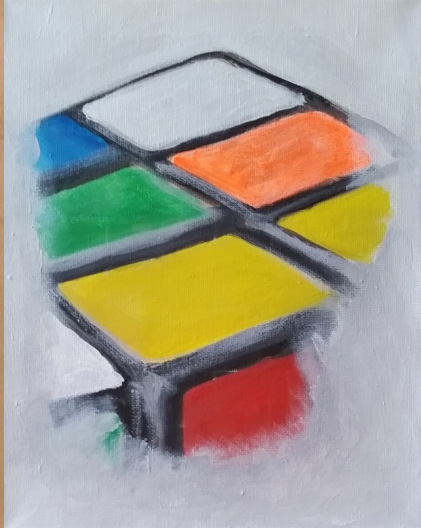
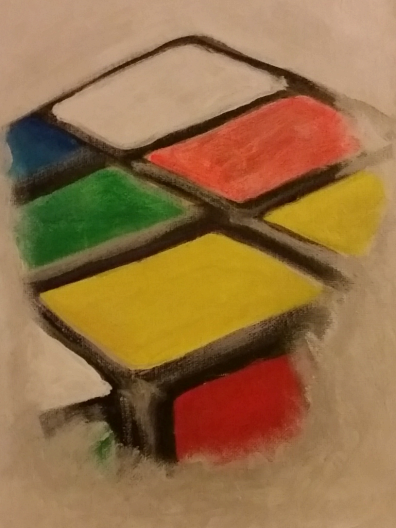
The lower right image was also taken at night using the flash bulb built into the camera.

These are the four lighting conditions for this experiment. By way of comparison to the actual paintings, when viewed in the daylight, the photo taken in morning light seems to be closest to the original. When looked at in later afternoon, about the time the upper left images were taken, the paintings still most closely resemble the photo taken in the morning (upper right).

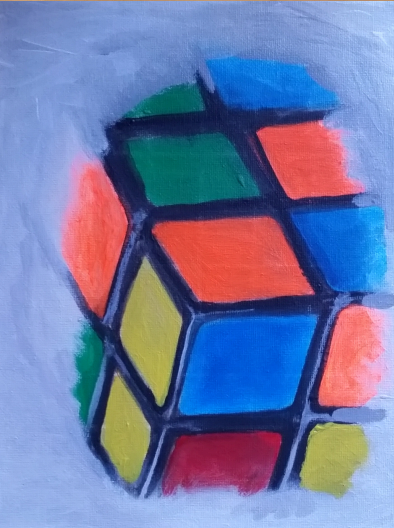
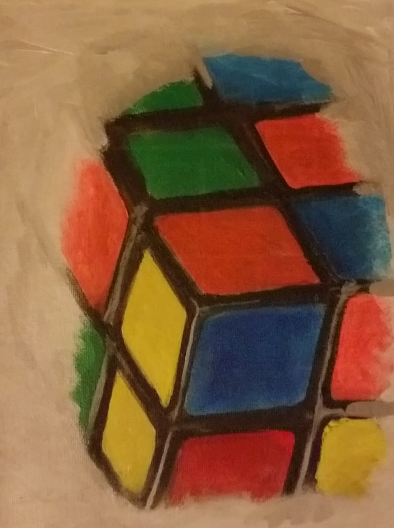
When looked at in artificial light the paintings also still most resembled the photo taken in the morning light. So that seems to be the best time to take a photo of a painting.

Please note that these photos were taken on February 15, 2022. They paintings were subsequently modified. See the main body of text for more information regarding how this occurred and to see images of how these paintings ended up looking.









## **Drawings [36—47]**

February 1—28, 2022

I didn't do much drawing this month. Mostly it was working on the paintings while making the paintings. For the music I had the notion of rewriting out some of songs I had written to like I had done January, but this is what ended up happening.

036 Music Intentions

037 Art Intentions

038 Painting Notes for "51"

039 Music Research Consolidation

040 Study: Colorcubes

041 Study: Nine Colorcubes

042 Study: Eleven Colorcubes

043 Study: Twelve Colorcubes

044 Study: Figures 1

045 Study: Figures 2

046 Study: Figures 3

047 Study: Ribcage, Hale, page 26