

## Understanding Tonal Value, Color and Edges

Painting is simply creating the illusion of reality on the painting surface and we are able to achieve this illusion more easily by understanding how value, color and edges work in paintings.

**Tonal Value** is a way of describing the lightness or darkness of areas of tones caused by the lighting condition in our subject matter. If we record these tonal values accurately, our painting of the subject will look realistic and natural, (three-dimensional). Try to think in terms of **light, middle tone and dark values**.

A single source of light (from the side) on the subject that causes contrast of tone and shadows will make a more interesting, dimensional painting.

**Color** is simply the mixtures of colored paint that we apply in different areas of the painting, to help make the paint emulate on the paper or canvas how the light affects the subject.

Every color has four basic properties –

**Hue** – this is the name of the color – red, green, etc.

**Tonal Value** – the lightness or darkness of a color e.g. light blue and dark blue are of the same hue but different tonal value.

**Intensity** – the strength or weakness of a color. Straight from the tube the color is the most intense. When mixed with other hues, (and also in the case of watercolor with water), it loses some intensity.

**Temperature**– Colors are referred to as being “warm” or “cool”. Reds, oranges and yellow/oranges are generally thought of as warm, whereas blues greens and violets are classed as cool. All paintings benefit from the addition of both warm and cool colors.

**Edges** in painting are the lines in the subject between two different colors or tonal values. They can be sharp or very soft and are often referred to as “**lost**” (soft) or “**found**” (sharp). Edges are helpful in rendering form and capturing atmosphere. Soft edges allow the eye to pass over the shape whereas sharp edges call for attention.