

## A PARTICULAR LINE

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by Robert Henri

AN INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT; something you want to say definitely about the subject; this is the first condition of a portrait. The processes of painting spring from this interest, this definite thing to be said. Completion does not depend on material representation. The work is done when that special thing has been said. The artist starts with an opinion, he organizes the materials, from which and with which he draws, to the expression of that opinion. Every material he employs has become significant of his emotion. The things have no longer their dead meaning but have become living parts of a coordination. A prejudice has existed for the things useful for the expression of this special idea, only things essential to this idea have been used. Nature is there before you. A particular line has been taken through nature. A special and particular vision is making itself clear. The lace on the lady's sleeve is no longer lace, it is part of her, and in the picture stands as a symbol of her refinement and her delicacy. The color in her cheek is no longer a spot of red, but is the culminating note of an order which runs through every part of the canvas signifying her sensitiveness and her health.

To start with a deep impression, the best, the most interesting, the deepest you can have of the model; to preserve this vision throughout the work; to see nothing else; to admit of no digression from it; choosing only from the model the signs of it; will lead to an organic work. Every element in the picture will be constructive, constructive of an idea, expressive of an emotion. Every factor in the painting will have beauty because in its place in the organization it is doing its living part. It will be living line, living form, living color. Because of its adjustment, it is given its greatest power of expansion. It is only through a sense of the right relation of things that freedom can be obtained.