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Paul to Sam Jan. 14, 1937

Paul Sargent

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Dear Sam,

I got started on a good book. It’s hard for me to wring off and answer my letters. Reading now on scientific man’s fishing on the coast of Fla.

We are having much rain too. Two whole days it has rained steadily. Tonight it has stopped and thermometer is dropping fast, is a little below 30 degree now. We had several days of rain. The river is full to its banks and this last one will put it out in the bottoms. We are getting the rain we should have had last summer. The cistern is within a foot of the top. I suppose there is a leak at that point or it would be higher.

Many thanks for the muffler at Christmas. I think John got his as I saw another box similar to the one mine came in.

Before Christmas we had a wolf drive. Guess I may have told you about that. Anyhow got nothing but a fox cornered in Berkley woods. Since then have seen tracks of coyotes so they are still here.

Am busy getting pictures and frames ready for Hoosier exhibit in Chicago last of month. Have just finished making three large frames. Got advertising from a frame maker at Martinsville, Ind. He has a book on how to make frames, so I got it. I think now that I will have less trouble with them and will know what is wrong when they go wrong. I used the regular oil size on those last ones and it is easier to handle them now—wish that I have used before. A secret I did not know before was wiping the frame after putting on the sizer to get on thin uniform coat, so it would dry quickly and evenly. The trouble was getting it to dry fast enough. I used Japan dryer in it in 2 of Japan to one of sizer to dry in five hours. These are the best looking frames I have made. I intend to get a supply on hand.

I have been using varnish in the paint all fall. I like it better than turp. and oil. It does away with “drying in” spots. I use Devoe varnish in common turp. with Venice Turpentine, and purified linseed oil or sun thickened linseed oil in stand oil. Approximately 1/3 of each, Demar, Venice turp. and some kind of oil. When you get it right it will dry in several days and will have a half gloss so that it will not need varnishing. That is what I
like, no more making work when a picture has been sold, about varnishing after a year or so—or not at all. You should give it a trial. The old masters especially Rubens, used it, and their pictures show it is reliable. Dower guam???? Is rather cheap. I had our relative Chenowith in Casey order the gum??? It is $.50 a lb. wholesale, mastic is $1.25. You can get it at the big drug stores. Put some in a cheese cloth sack and hand in a bottle of common turpentine. In a day or so it will be dissolved and the sack holds the dirt that is in it from getting into liquid. I dissolved nearly a half lb. in less than a quart of turp. Venice turpentine can be had now. It is used in painting also in schools where students make microscopic slides. It is thick like molasses. Mix it by much stirring with common turp. then put into mastic then the oil. Stand oil and some thickened oil ??? thick too, mix them with turp. then into mixture. In your warm climate may dry too fast so it gets sticky on palette;; less varnish and more of the oil will make slower drying. It will do away with the drying in if that troubles you. A kind of half gloss when dry is right.

There is great interest now among the artists—getting back to the way the old masters worked. I can see that by the way the art material stores are stocking the materials that they never had before. Before long I am going to try tempera painting, begin pictures on white canvas with dry colors mixed with varnish and oil and water—an ????? source of the oldest and best preserved pictures were started that way and maybe finished without oil paint. The eff medium is very lasting.

The mural sketches were sent in. I have them back now. I got a letter saying that all of the mural sketches were turned down because not considered high enough in quality!! I knew before hand it was work for nothing. Now they will go ahead and give the job to some of the pets.

My mural sketches were painted on masonite with a beeswax medium—beeswax in turp. with Dewar varnish to dry it. The wax makes the paint dry matt effect and it very lasting. The pictures on the walls of Pompeii are painted with wax-2000 years old.
I would like to try something in the mural line but probably won't come my way.

I have a screen started. It is three panels with rocks and water at Corona in picture part, and below picture is space I am filling with figures of the sea, a fish, a gull, and a lobster. These animals I am building up with plastic paint and will finish them in metal leaf and tones like the frame of the panels, the same as on picture frame. If you know any millionaires out there clamoring for something of that kind, send him around.

When you get to teaching drawing for Miss White, remember there isn't anything as important as the correct big proportions, length compared to breadth, and have them measure, measure, measure. They won't measure at all unless you get after them. I know how my students are. I keep telling my class that the big masses of the object are like the framework of a house, and not to try to put in doors and windows in the house until the framework is ready. Proceed from the large to the smaller, just as a carpenter does. What would a carpenter do if he tried to put on a shingle before the framework was up. Well that is the way most students commence to draw—commence with the parts. Good strong drawing proceeds from the large to the small, in order of importance.

The class of mine is painting from still life. I try to get them to see the objects as a related whole first, then divide the composition into parts. There is a swing of lines around the outer edges of objects that is more important than the objects themselves. I try to get them to draw in these lines defined the boundary then separate the composition into parts. But students don't see the importance of these things—now. They seem to think there is some hocus pocus by which they arrived when it is nothing but the application of plain common sense.

Go ahead and take the job if you have the time. The ladies that will attend probably know nothing whatsoever about it, so you can keep several jumps ahead. Read the Vanderpoel book I sent you and get books by some other draughts men and dig in on the essentials. Drawing the human figure is most difficult and brings in all the principles that are used in any other kind, landscapes, water, still life, etc. Chas. Francis Browne said that
he learned to paint landscapes painting still life. He was my landscape teacher.

It is now past 12:00 midnight so I better desist.

Yours sincerely,

Paul

As soon as I get these pictures off for Chicago I am going to have the boards sawed out for the paint boxes.

Frl. Today I got a letter from the U.S. Treasury (Picture dept.) asking me to send photographs of my pictures to keep on file. Suppose they might have a job maybe. Perhaps give us an easel picture to paint. Funny they could not judge one’s ability by a mural sketch.

Rather cold today after the rain. Down to about 14 degrees above. I guess last night, 18 degrees when I got up. At 18 degrees now, at dark. I prefer it this way rather than mud.

10:00 P.M. Thermometer stands at 10 degrees above zero. Will be zero by morning. Coldest yet this winter.