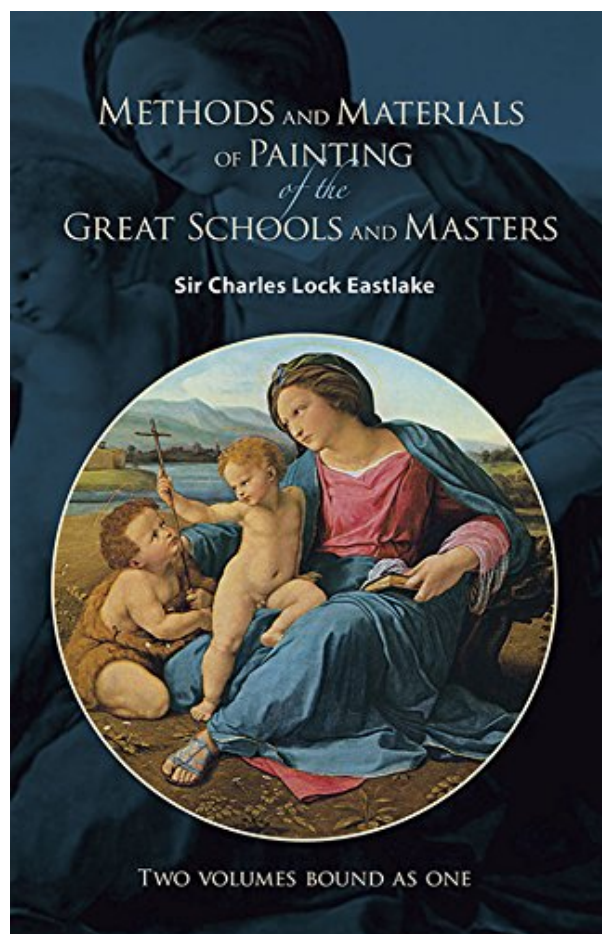


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OF THE GREAT SCHOOLS AND MASTERS  
(DOVER FINE ART, HISTORY OF ART) BY  
SIR CHARLES LOCK EASTLAKE**



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## From the Back Cover

Sir Charles Eastlake, a former president of the British Royal Academy and director of the National Gallery, was one of the world's foremost experts on the techniques of painting. A painter of considerable renown himself, he devoted years to traveling throughout England and Europe, where he searched through museums, monasteries, universities, and libraries, gradually amassing a collection of rare manuscripts from which he was able to reconstruct the technical secrets of the great painters of the past.

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16 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent but might not be the whole story

By Brian Asquith

My initial reaction on receiving this book was "Bloody hell is it big enough!?" At 1024 pages you're certainly getting a lot of information for your buck.

Eastlake (1793-1865) was a former president of the British Royal Academy, director of the National Gallery, and in his day an major expert on painting techniques. Do note the book was first published in 1847, hence the writing style can be somewhat turbid. Perseverance pays with there being more information in here than you can shake a stick at.

My comment about caution is based upon recent studies of old master paintings. The old masters would typically have a team of apprentices working alongside them, mixing paint, painting parts of the painting that the master was probably too bored to bother with (as well as good training for the apprentice) etc. The Master/Apprentice setup allowed for a continuous stream of knowledge being passed along the generations. However as oil paint technology advanced, in particular the ability to buy premixed paints off the shelf, the painter no longer needed a team of apprentices. He could pretty much get by on his own. Hence there was no longer anyone for the painter to pass on his knowledge to. This resulted in a considerable amount of technical knowledge being lost. (A good example is the recent theory promulgated by David Hockney that the old masters were able to paint such realistic paintings as they used rudimentary projection techniques to place a guide image on the canvas, overwhich they painted. No one knows if he is right or wrong).

From the 1800's on, technical experts such as Eastlake and Max Doerner ("The Materials of the Artist") began to impart their wisdom on how the old master paintings were created. But the techniques they had available were very rudimentary, more often than not being a case of the expert trying to reproduce a certain style and looking at the painting surface close up. The experts proffered their theories and techniques, often with much aplomb leaving no room for doubt. Unfortunately they were often quite off the mark - they could emulate a style somewhat but never 100%. There are too many variables involved even for a discerning eye. It has only been with recent advances in scientific analysis, chemical and visual, that a truer understanding of the old master technique is finally being determined. Van Wattering's excellent "Rembrandt - the painter at work" book details the findings of extensive research carried out on a number of paintings considered to have been painted by Rembrandt. The book is 340 pages, and they still haven't got all the answers. But what they have done is to throw in to doubt the theories and techniques of the 19th/20th C experts.

There is a welter of information in this book, but if you are trying to perfectly replicate a certain old master painterly technique, and failing to do so, then be warned the experts might not be such experts afterall.

All said and done, I do recommend this book for the wealth of information it contains. Numerous recipes for mediums, varnishes etc. along with many techniques that it lends itself to study in its own right. Dover books have once again provided an excellent product at an excellent price.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A must for any Atelier Student

By Amazon Customer

I am working on my MFA in art. While I am not a strict conservative in the tradition of painting, I am very serious about my training in the techniques of the old masters. Many new books have been published that claim to give you the substance needed, but most of these books show you what you can do, not how you can do it. We are in a period of time in art education where the late modernist and early postmodernist curriculum is strongly emphasized. It is a rare opportunity to find a teacher that has the information this book contains. A true painter ought to know where his materials come from and how they are made. This book gives direct translations from the old masters on how to create pigments and vehicles for oil painting. Like the fact that masters would save the bones from dinner and then char them to create lamp black. This book also gives techniques for purifying raw linseed oil. Little facts like these have been a mystery to me for so long because few teachers know this information.

This is actually a two volume book compiled into one. The first volume deals primarily with recipes of the masters and correlating schools of their time. The second volume deals with techniques such as sfumato(Da Vinci) chiaroscuro(Caravaggio) and other important concepts in painting.

If you learn more about the materials you work with, you will be a better artist, no matter what type of art you do. I recommend this book to the traditionalist, modernist, and postmodernist.

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Pivotal printed text- the only book you should have.

By Dan Riesmeyer

I was disheartened while reviewing the comments by others concerning Eastlake's work and felt personally obligated the "weigh in" with my own conclusion. Simply, C. Eastlake's book is by far the most valuable resource for any aspiring artist who believes in traditional technique.

The concern about the antiquated language is well founded- indeed, the text was originally published post-mortem hundreds of years ago- but, this should not intimidate a student willing to invest in his/her future as a painter. The language, when deciphered (I saddest taking notes the FIRST time one reads the text), discloses a plethora of information which just cannot be found in any other text.

I am an undergraduate student at a top-tier art school-> having discovered, purchased, and read the whole of the book as well as experienced some college courses I move that this book, for all of its dated quarks, is by far the best resource from which to learn not only the history behind oil painting but actual Old Master techniques- in an even more comprehensive way than such as Maroger, Doerner, Mayer, or any other more recent contemporary of the late Eastlake.

I cannot express the imperativeness of this book to any painters library, if it does not become the painters library.

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