**Why do we sometimes use photographic material to teach our classes?**

If it was good enough for the Old Masters, it is good enough for us! While contemporary painters are much more concerned with painting from life and the three-dimensional subject, copying the work of a really good painter is very instructive.

Firstly, when you copy you tend to look more closely and notice things you would otherwise not notice. When you begin to work all the decisions regarding have been made for you: you don’t have to work out what to paint or the composition, colours and format, everything is planned for you in advance.

By copying, you will learn new techniques and our tutor can guide you through how the original artist achieved their painting: what sort of brush did the artist use, are the edges you can see soft or hard, what colour was laid down first? Also, by copying brush strokes you can train your muscle-memory.

Where we use a photograph of a subject that isn’t the work of another painter all these aspects still apply, and it is a great next step to moving on from ‘copying’ and before starting on reproducing the three-dimensional object onto a two-dimensional surface.

While you may naturally aspire to move on from working from copies, until you are ready, or when you don’t have the subject in front of you, remember JMW Turner began his painting career copying the paintings of the Old Masters!