

Finally, the last question: to modulate is to modulate something—light or color—but on what basis? What’s the “signal” to be transmitted? What is the signal of painting? It’s not the model. The model is already an instance in which the modulation leans toward the mold. The model is simply a form of modulation in the broad sense. The signal is space. A painter paints nothing but space—and maybe time as well, space-time. A painter paints nothing but space-time. What space? Perhaps the grand styles of painting differ according to—and at the same time as—the nature of their space-times. Thus, I’m tending toward my complete definition: to paint is to modulate light or color—or light and color—based on a signal-space. It’s still missing something. What does that produce? It produces the Figure. It produces this resemblance more profound than photographic resemblance, this resemblance to the thing that is more profound than the thing itself, this nonsimilar resemblance, produced through different means. The act of modulation is composed precisely of these different means. Modulating light or color based on a signal-space will give us the thing in its presence. Hence the theme: that painting isn’t itself when it resembles something. Painting clearly is not figurative, since what’s on the canvas is the thing, in its presence. With that, I have all the parts of my definition.

– Excerpt from Gilles Deleuze’s *On Painting* (*Courses, March–June 1981*)