



"Expressive Painting Secrets for Art Lovers + Bold Painters"

WHY I LOVE EXPRESSIVE PAINTING

"Nobody tells this to people who are beginners...All of us who do creative work, we get into it because we have good taste. But there is this gap. For the first couple years you make stuff, it's just not that good. It's trying to be good, it has potential, but it's not. But your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is still killer. And your taste is why your work disappoints you. A lot of people never get past this phase, they quit... It is only by going through a volume of work that you will close that gap, and your work will be as good as your ambitions... It's normal to take awhile. You've just gotta fight your way through." — Ira Glass

When I think of expressive painting I think of the Fauves, the Expressionists, Post-Impressionists—painters like Vincent Van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, and Andre Derain to name just a few. Painters who decided to use vivid, non-naturalistic color and composition. They were artists who invented painting in a style that is highly personal and subjective. That's what my painting is all about, but it took me awhile to own it. Of course the basics of painting must still be learned—how to mix colors, how to compose a picture, how to use light and dark to attract the eye but beyond the basics, the content and style can be invented by the painter. Perhaps you have become discouraged or have received feedback that keeps you from painting in the expressive way that feels most natural to you? For example, I fought painting flowers because I was concerned about earning the label of a "Sunday painter" or "an old lady flower painter". Who knows why, (*might have been put there by art school?*) but I had it in my head that to be a real painter one had to paint realistically. Then I took a hard look at what truly made me happiest, which artists' work I gravitated towards—and I realized that, for me, painting is about color, pattern and expression and less about reality, perfection or meeting the expectations of others. After some thinking, I discovered that the painters I most admire paint in an

expressive style which relies more on feeling through the use of color, shape and pattern and less on traditional ideas of perspective, chiaroscuro or reproducing of reality.

As painters we owe a debt to those artists around the turn of the twentieth century who experimented with breaking free of long-held painting traditions. Beginning in the late 1800's with the Impressionist painters (ex.-Claude Monet, Camille Pissaro) and later the Post-Impressionists (ex.-Paul Cezanne, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin) and the "Fauves" (ex.-Henri Matisse, Andre Derain), painters began to celebrate pattern and color and abandon techniques such as the mathematical principles of linear perspective. They experimented with expressing emotions through heavily textured surfaces, bold brushstrokes and vivid color.

French painter Maurice Denis radically reminded the art world in 1890 that *"a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude, an anecdote or whatnot, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order."*

The legacy of such movements is that we now have the autonomy to paint with individualism and originality. We only have to please ourselves.