

## "My Technique's Bad And I'm So Sad" Intuitive Painting Blues

by Chris Zydel, MA

**Over and over again**, I hear a common complaint from students in my intuitive painting classes that goes something like this... "My painting doesn't look the way I want it to because I don't have enough artistic training . I can see this perfectly formed image in my head and I want to make it appear on the paper exactly as I see it, line for line."

For example, a student in one of my classes recently painted an image of a woman with the intention that the figure would appear very happy and carefree. However, when the image came out looking mask-like and somewhat stiff, she started blaming her capabilities as a painter. "I know that the problem is that I don't have enough technique. If I had that, I could completely control the outcome of my painting and then I would be happy!"

This part of the mind can be so darned sneaky. Listening to her statement, the operative word that jumped out at me immediately was control. "If only I had enough skill I could be completely in charge of this darn wayward brush. If only I had enough training I could wrestle my creative process to the ground and make it give me exactly WHAT I WANT."

What's really true, and what most people don't want to hear, is that **there are no mistakes in the land of intuitive, soul painting**. The images being born out of your brush are coming into the world exactly as they were meant to be. Your frustration with what shows up really has nothing to do with lack of skill or technique. No matter what your skill level, if you are able to let go and surrender, the painting will simply show you what is genuine and real for you in any given moment. And you are not necessarily always going to like what you see. The painting is an incredibly accurate gauge for where you are, not where you expect yourself to be. So when the painting doesn't conform to your expectations and bow down and obey, you round up the usual suspects and blame the poor brush.

The woman in the above example wanted to see herself as free and exuberant. Seeing the stiff and mask-like part of herself was painful. She was having a hard time just accepting with compassion that aspect of her being. But if you are able to cultivate an attitude of mercy and curiosity for what shows up on the paper in front of you, there can also be a tremendous experience of self acceptance with telling the truth about who and where you are right here and right now. There is a gift in telling the truth, because the truth is where the energy lies. And the energy is your direct connection to the present moment and being fully alive.

When we are painting from our intuitive center we are allowing the unconscious part of the mind a direct avenue of expression. And the unconscious cares not a whit about technique. The deep psyche can be satisfied if you paint your mother as a stick figure or if you paint her as if you were channeling Rembrandt. The only thing that the deep psyche really cares about is the symbol, and that can be expressed with no technical expertise whatsoever. Now, there is nothing wrong with the pleasure that comes from executing an image with great skill and technical virtuosity. It is a real satisfaction and can be very fulfilling on it's own terms. **BUT IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO HAVE ANY LEVEL OF SKILL IN ORDER TO CREATE!!!**

All we have learned about creativity in this loony western culture gives us exactly the opposite message. We are taught that we don't DARE to create unless we have a great deal of technical virtuosity at our disposal, and that if we try to create and are unskilled, we are just making fools of ourselves. YUCK!!! and DOUBLE YUCK!! There is no room in this attitude for play, for experimentation, for making things up, for making mistakes, for being anything less than perfect. Whenever I am speaking to a group about this approach to art I always see a few light bulbs go off in peoples minds when I make the statement that creativity and skill are two very different things. That skill is something you learn and that anyone CAN learn if you are willing to devote the time to developing it, but that our creativity is effortless and innate, a gift given to us by spirit.

Intuitive process art is about valuing the inner over the outer. What you feel is more important than how it looks. Your internal experience is what counts, not the external product. The innermost private world of your feeling landscape and the expression of that inner life is the highest priority. If you feel excited, engaged, energized and compelled as you are painting, that is enough. What it looks like doesn't really matter. This concept is extremely hard for most people to get. The attachment, verging on compulsion, to focus on the external is very deeply wired in us. It is so unconscious, and so much a part of our intrinsic world view, that initially we can't see it for what it is, which is just one more belief system.

We unquestioningly accept the voice in our minds that says, "I literally CANNOT feel satisfied, engaged and happy if my artwork doesn't look the way I want it to look." This profound split between the internal and the external is part of the western mindset where it almost feels like heresy to say that what we feel has value just because we feel it.

If you learn to listen, you can get valuable messages from your insides. There is magic there and an abundance of wisdom and intuitive guidance. If you let go of control there are wild rides through internal landscapes of incredible complexity and richness that feed you in ways that just focusing on external presentation never can. You have a natural expression that doesn't need to be trained. It doesn't need to be polished, controlled, cleaned up and made presentable. It is good enough, more than good enough, just as it is. Trusting your own unique and spontaneous style and giving it room to live and breathe, can lead to profound experiences of healing, of trusting yourself and of trusting life, unlike anything that can happen when you grasp so tightly for control.

You cannot rely upon the accomplished, well-trained and ultimately well-behaved aspect of yourself to lead you anywhere new. That domesticated part of you will only take you down well-trodden paths that lead to places that you've already been a hundred times before. But the wild, unexplored, unfamiliar places inside of you are where things begin to get interesting. If you let go of control and let anything happen, what will be revealed? Some

passion, some hunger, some wildness may show through. Some long suppressed aspect of yourself that has been kept in the chains in the dungeon of your psyche may break through into the light of day. Can you risk it? Are you willing to give it a try?

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