

Suzette's Art Blog

Ramblings & Musings on Art and Life

2007

Blog Entries	
Jan. 1/07	New Year Goals
Jan. 11/07	Two Kinds of People
Jan. 21/07	Overcoming Inertia
Feb. 1/07	Isolation
Feb. 11/07	What Makes It Art?
Feb. 21/07	An Element of Surprise
March 4/07	Finding Inspiration
March 12/07	Trial and Error
March 27/07	Work, work, work
April 1/07	What Makes It Art - Epilog
April 10/07	ArtSpeak
April 21/07	Life's Difficulties
May 1/07	The Value of Art
May 10/07	Art as Investment
May 22/07	Creativity
June 1/07	Playful Exploration
June 10/07	Dance - Another Art Form
June 20, 2007	The Need to Show
July 1, 2007	Being Different
July 11, 2007	Being Canadian
July 20, 2007	Closing the Sale

August 1, 2007	Too Loose La Trek
August 1, 2007	Humour - Part 2
Aug. 15, 2007	How I Got Started Painting
Aug. 23, 2007	My Favourite Painting
Sept. 1, 2007	Happiness
Sept. 10, 2007	Happiness - Part 2
Sept. 20, 2007	Men and Women
Sept. 23, 2007	Men and Women - Part 2
Oct. 1, 2007	Success
Oct. 10, 2007	Daydreaming
Oct. 21, 2007	A Very Successful Trip
Nov. 1, 2007	Blessings
Nov. 12, 2007	Crossroads
Nov. 23, 2007	The Meaning of Life
Dec. 2, 2007	The Many Worlds of Art
Dec. 14, 2007	Sweet Innocence

January 1, 2007

New Year Goals

Well, here we are, another new year. I can still remember when the year 2000 came in, all the talk of computer systems that were going to crash, all the disasters that were going to happen, some said it would be 'the end of life as we knew it'. That all seems so funny now. And here we are, in the year 2007. Seven years later. I know it's a cliché, but time does go quickly.

So, this being the beginning of the a new year, what does everyone talk about? New Year's resolutions, that's right. Personally, I don't like New Year's resolutions, they never seem to last very long. I prefer to set goals. Does it work better? Probably not. The goals I am setting this year are basically the same as the ones I set last year and the year before that. Does that mean that I failed to meet them during the last 2 years? Not quite, I did make progress towards achieving them, but did not achieve them to the level that I really want, so they are still worthy goals for me at this time.

How can I do better this time around? Good question. I don't know; try harder I guess; try not to lose sight of the goals during the year; try not to get distracted by other things and stay focused; just try harder. So that's a goal I can add to my list: 'try harder to achieve goals'.

I wish you all the very best in 2007. May you achieve all your goals and fulfill all your dreams.

Suzette

Don't forget to download my 2007 Art Calendar.

Quote of the Week: "I have the ability of single-minded determination and focu... Hey, look! A horse!" (author unknown)

January 11, 2007

Two Kinds of People

There are 2 kinds of people in the world. 'Cats and Dogs' is how I like to describe them. Here's what I mean:

Cats are very independent. They are affectionate, when they feel like it. They are in charge, they're the boss. They don't care if you like it or not. They go about their business, and you're just the poor sap who's taking care of them. (Don't get me wrong, I am a cat lover; I have had cats in my household for over 30 years).

Dogs are the opposite. They love you and they want to please you. They want to gain your affection. Nothing makes them happier than to please you and make you love them back.

Now, I believe that the same qualities apply to people, sort of.

'Cat' people are independent. They live their life on their own terms. They don't really care if everyone approves of their choices. They don't try to please others; they please themselves.

'Dog' people are pleasers. They want to be liked. They do nice things for others in order to be liked. They don't like conflict and avoid it as much as they can. Their reward is the love and approbation of their close ones.

So, I wonder sometimes, is life better as a 'cat' or as a 'dog'? It would be easier to make your way in the world as a 'cat', but chances are that 'dogs' are more popular and have more friends.

My other question is whether one has any choice in the matter. I don't think so. I believe we're born one way or the other, that it's not a matter of choice.

Me, I'm a 'dog' I'm afraid. I want people to like me. While I am my own person and quite independent, I care what people think about me and I want them to like me. That just makes me a REAL NICE PERSON, I guess.

So, which one are YOU?? Feel free to share by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

'You grow up the day you have your first real laugh at yourself.' (Ethel Barrymore)

January 21, 2007

Overcoming Inertia

Every day there are some things that I want to do, plan to do, and somehow they don't get done. Painting often falls into that category. Asking myself why that is, I recognize the fact that getting started is what's hard. The simple step of getting into the studio and picking up the brushes is what often doesn't get done. Once in the studio, I start to paint and never look back, but putting everything else aside and getting into the studio is what's hard.

In my mind, I liken this to the space shuttle taking off (okay, it's a bit of a grand analogy, but I like it). In order for the shuttle to get up in space, it requires this huge fuel tank and 2 rocket boosters, which fall off once the fuel is used up. Once up there, it soars and floats easily; but to free itself of earth's gravity and get up there, well, that's the tough part.

Dictionary.com defines inertia as: 'resistance or disinclination to motion, action, or change'. That's just it, isn't it? We get comfortable, we get in a rut, and changing that is like the space shuttle taking off; it's hard to do.

You might want to ask, so what? Well, understanding that makes it better for me. When I feel like procrastinating, or when there's a change I want to make like quitting smoking, or losing weight, I think of the space shuttle and I know that once I'm up there, I will soar and I will love it.

Your comments are always welcome. (Click on 'Comments' below.)

Suzette

'Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.' (Vincent Van Gogh)

February 1, 2007

Isolation

Visual artists (painters, sculptors, etc.) usually work in isolation. The road we need to travel to create our art usually must be travelled alone. Sure, some of us belong

to art clubs and they provide much needed companionship and feedback. We take workshops, we participate in group shows, visit galleries and museums with friends. But when it comes down to creating, most of us do that alone. I occasionally get together with friends to paint; that is fun but doesn't usually result in any serious work. Serious work needs more concentration, more personal effort, more gnawing and gnashing of teeth and pouring of blood, sweat and tears. It can be a lonely road.

Some believe that the group experience (when creating) can diminish creativity, resulting in a watered down effort, a middle-of-the-road kind of result, possibly even (heaven forbid) mediocrity.

It's probably different for everyone. I for one really enjoy being involved with different groups. I love the friendships I have made. I love the support and encouragement I have received. And while I enjoy the occasional 'group' painting session, I do most of my work alone. I believe in balance in all things, and that balance of alone time and group time seems to work for me.

What about you? How do you create your best works? Share your experience by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"What I do, I do alone. Doing art is a very isolated task. No voice is raised with mine and no one can pull with me. I have with me always the voices and knowledge of those who go before me, and those who breathe alongside me and cheer me on. But realistically, I pull this anchor in alone." (Jane Kley)

February 11/07

What Makes It Art?

There are many forms of art. We are surrounded by art all the time, more so than we realize on a day-to-day basis. Every jingle on television, every cereal box in our cupboard contains art work. There is music and drama, paintings, sculpture, etc. etc. There is also installation art. Some examples of installation art: an exhibit of dresses made out of raw meat, an exhibit of used sneakers, or worse yet, an exhibit of used tampons (yes, I'm not kidding...).

So my question today is 'what makes it art?' Is the art in the execution, the use of skills learned and practiced over a long period of time; is it about originality, doing something that is new; is it about timing, something that is considered art today would not have been art 100 years ago; is it about the concept, the idea, like installation art; is it about beauty or lack thereof; is it about creating a reaction, positive or negative; is it about feeling, the power to move someone, to touch them in a meaningful way; is it about novelty, 'oh look, a dog has painted this one'. Here's another idea: is it art (or not) because the masses like it; or is it art because the 'experts' say it is.

What makes it art? Is it in the doing, or is it in the thinking? Is it the difficulty of execution that makes it art, or is it the idea, the concept behind it? Is execution secondary to concept, or is concept more important than execution? Does a great concept, poorly executed, still make it as art; does a beautiful painting, with no real concept behind it, still qualify as art?

There is art out there that I don't think is art at all; and there is art that doesn't get recognized as art. And maybe it's all subjective after all. For my money, it's art to me if it's beautiful, if it speaks to me, if it moves me in some way. And yes, I did say 'beautiful' (although by beautiful I don't mean 'pretty'), because for me, it's not art if it's ugly or if it just provokes a reaction, or bad feelings; it's a statement then, not necessarily art. Art should be uplifting, make us feel better about ourselves and our world. What's the point otherwise?

“Why shouldn't art be pretty? There are enough unpleasant things in the world.”
(Pierre-Auguste Renoir)

Share your views by clicking on 'Comment' below.

Suzette

February 21, 2007

An Element of Surprise

When I first started to paint, I was taking classes and I was really confused by all the advice I was getting. I remember asking the instructor: 'what makes a good painting?'. Well, wasn't that the mother question of all time.

Yes, what makes a good painting?

At this point, you are probably asking yourself 'who is she to answer such a question?'. Trust me, I am asking myself that question. All I can do is tell you 'what makes a good painting FOR ME'.

After years of painting, taking classes, talking to people, looking at art, I have come to a place where I can look at a painting and know why I either like it, or not, or what I think is missing, what could be done better, what would give that painting the wow factor.

Here are some of the elements of a good painting: (I'm sure there are many more...)

First would be technical proficiency and an interesting subject, with a strong focal point where most of the contrast is located. It should have good balance, movement, unity and colour harmony. It should have a feeling of freshness and not appear overworked. And finally, it should have an element of surprise. Suzanne Northcott told us, in a workshop that I took with her, that a painting should have a

surprise. It's like the cherry on the sundae.

So now, whenever I am approaching the final stages of a painting, I ask myself 'where's the surprise?'. It can be an unexpected shape, or colour, or element, but it should catch and please your eye.

Now, knowing all this, wouldn't you think it would be really easy to produce a masterpiece? Yeah, right...

Share your thoughts on the subject by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"If the painting process is to be successful, we need to be able to apply paint expressively, to compose originally, and to maximize color as well as design."
(Stephen Quiller)

March 4, 2007

Finding Inspiration

I have just returned today from one of my favourite get-aways, a painting trip with my best friend and painting buddy. We went to Pender Island for a week. We were in a great location, did lots of painting, also enjoying a lot of down time. What a way to recharge our artistic batteries.

Those painting trips provide me with much inspiration. Immersing myself in the artist's life, visiting studios and galleries, and devoting plenty of time to painting, those are the things that inspire me and keep me going. I came home with 2 new paintings, one finished, the other almost finished, so I'm very pleased with the trip. I'll post pictures of the new works as soon as I can.

Talking about inspiration, one of my friends and fellow artists, recently asked me where to find inspiration, how to decide what to paint. She has not been painting long and she finds it difficult to find subjects. Since I'm running late with my blog, because of my trip last week, I'll share with you my response to her.

Finding inspiration can be difficult. For me, it's a matter of finding something that touches me, that I find beautiful, either for the shape, or the colour, or something. Take lots of photographs. Try to figure out what it is that you like in a scene, for example in a landscape, is it the shape of the trees, or is it the sky and the clouds, or the light in the sky; with flowers, is it the shape, colour or arrangement, or all three? Once you have determined that, you can focus on that element in particular and adjust the rest of the painting to 'feature' that particular element.

I used to have the same problem. I found it easier when I started to paint flowers. It was so easy to get inspired. I would suggest you go and buy some fresh cut flowers that you like and take lots of pictures. Arrange them differently. Big bunches, little bunches, in a vase, in a bowl, lying on a table, etc. etc. Take close-ups of each

flower. Flowers in a vase make a nice subject always, but for me, I preferred close-ups. Great big flowers up close. So spend an afternoon setting up different scenarios, take a ton of pictures, and you'll have inspiration for months to come.

After painting flowers for a while, I didn't have any problem getting inspired. There seemed to be more ideas than time to paint. So get to it, start painting, painting, painting. That's the only way to learn and get better.

"Don't wait for inspiration. It comes while one is working". (Henri Matisse)

Share your inspiration by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

March 12/07 *Trial and Error*

I hate to admit this, but my work often involves a lot of trial and error. By that, I mean that I start out without a full plan of what I'm going to do, and then I proceed step by step, often changing direction in the process if what I'm doing is not proving satisfactory.

When I used to paint representational subject matter, I would choose a composition, usually from a photograph that I had taken. I would draw it out and then paint it. In other words, I had it planned right from the start.

That's no longer how I work. Since I started doing abstract work, it's quite the opposite. I start out with an idea, usually something simple like 'I'll work with red and green', or 'I'll work with geometric shapes' or 'I'll start with a heavily textured base from modelling paste'. A simple idea. A simple concept to be built upon one step at a time, changing and adjusting as the painting develops.

Sometimes, when I get frustrated and allow negative thoughts to invade my mind, I start to think that the reason why I go through so much trial and error is because I'm not good enough, not creative or skilled enough, or I didn't plan and prepare ahead, I'm a fake, my better paintings are the results of accidents rather than skill..... Fortunately, I don't allow negative thoughts to prevail too often or for very long.

I believe that for most of us, the creative process is a struggle; it does not come easily. It is a sweet agony. Sweet because we love it, and agony because it is a struggle. Would I ever give it up? Not on your sweet life.

Share your struggles by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."
(Maya Angelou)

March 27, 2006

Work, work, work

I would normally have posted a blog entry this week but have been too busy and exhausted to do so. You see, I'm in the middle of painting/fixing up my kitchen and dining room. I'll be very happy with the results but in the meantime, I'm finding no time to do anything else.

Look for my next blog entry on the 1st of April (no April Fool's day jokes, I promise...)

Suzette

April 1, 2007

What Makes it Art - Epilog

I like visiting galleries and artist studios. Of course, what I'm most interested in are paintings; other exhibits are interesting too, but in a different way. When I look at paintings, I look, feel, analyze, interpret, examine techniques, colours, textures, and relate what I see to my own work. It's so much more relevant for me. I seem to be affected more by paintings than by anything else.

Every once in a while, I come across something other than a painting that just bowls me over, like Rodin's sculpture 'The Kiss' (<http://www.lewes.net/rodin/rodin.html>). It is so beautiful, you just want to run your hand over it, and feel the smooth cool marble, feel the wonderful shapes and curves. But generally, paintings are my main interest.

I recently visited a nice little gallery that I hadn't seen before. The exhibit was not made up of paintings, and it was strictly conceptual. Remember my discussion recently on 'What Makes It Art' (<http://suzettefram.com/blog.cfm?XYZ=54&REP=268>) where I ask the question 'is the art in the concept or the execution?' Well, this exhibit had 2 or 3 concepts kind of mixed up together and I didn't feel they went together. Some of the pieces were thoughtful and thought provoking. Some were just confusing or even irrelevant. All were competently executed but not masterfully so. Where was the art? I did not find it artful. It was a statement (albeit a confusing one), but I did not feel it was art. Even after speaking with the artist in person and having a chance to hear her explain several pieces, I still felt this way.

Of course, remember that my comments on this exhibit are those of an ignorant observer. This was not my medium and so I am ignorant of the technical aspects, etc. etc. But I am able to judge many elements which are common to painting, such as composition, balance, movement, focal point (or lack thereof), and most significant, a sense of excitement about the piece, an ability to touch you, to make you catch your breath. I saw or felt no excitement about these pieces. It was strictly about the concept(s) and these were not cohesive or well represented (in my opinion anyway).

The artist statement that came with the exhibit was one of those typical statements: 'artspeak' is what some call it. (Artspeak is another one of those subjects I feel strongly about; watch for it to be the topic of a blog soon!) What do I mean by artspeak? A lot of fancy words that really don't say very much. Frankly, I felt there was more 'art' in this artist statement, than in the exhibit itself.

I guess 'what is art' is a personal and subjective question, and the answer is different for everybody.

"There are people out there who think that heavyweight words are most in need for lightweight work." (Robert Genn on 'artspeak')

Suzette

April 10/07

ArtSpeak

In my last blog entry, I mentioned 'Artspeak' and today I'd like to talk about that.

What is 'Artspeak'?

When you read about art or about an artist, and the words and sentences used are so convoluted or obscure that they become meaningless, that's artspeak. You read it, on the surface it sounds like intelligent language, but in fact you can't understand what they're saying.

Here's an example:

"My motif is the deconstruction of mutant rulers from the fragmented hierarchy within the unsafe vision of postmodern classicism." This is an artist's statement that accompanied a loose painting of a drooling dog-like figure exhibited in an art school faculty show. (excerpt from a newsletter by Robert Genn, at [painterskeys.com](http://www.painterskeys.com))

For more on this topic, read Robert Genn's newsletter at <http://www.painterskeys.com/clickbacks/artspeak.htm> .

The use of language often determines our status in society. The well-educated and the wealthy's use of the language is generally more sophisticated than that of the lower classes. Most of us make an instant judgment about people based on their speech.

I feel that this use of artspeak is the same thing. It is an attempt to elevate oneself, or one's art, to a level higher than the viewer, to give meaning where there is none, or where none is obviously apparent.

Personally, I find such statements annoying and irritating, not to mention snobbish, elitist and meaningless. It is this kind of thing which gives the art world a bad rap and which alienates viewers and makes them afraid to buy art because they feel they don't know or understand it.

So bye for now. I am now going to elevate my physical essence to my art production facility wherein I will proceed to laminate ground-covering products in myriad hues, tones and shades, to a surface which has been prepared with an assortment of gelatinous substances used to create an underlying asperous expanse in anticipation of the further application of chromatic pigments. (I'm going to paint now).

Please share your thoughts on the subject.

Suzette

"There are people out there who think that heavyweight words are most in need for lightweight work." (Robert Genn on 'artspeak')

April 21, 2007 ***Life's Difficulties***

Last weekend, two of my grandchildren came to visit, as they do quite often. My oldest granddaughter, who is 15 years old, decided she wanted to watch the old family videos, which start when she was a baby. So we did that.

I watched these beautiful young faces. I saw in their eyes, their smiles, their faces, looks of pure joy. I heard their laughter, saw their pure unadulterated happiness.

What I saw in those faces was the belief that all is right with the world, that life is wonderful, perfect. That made me sad, because I know that life is anything but perfect. Life is full of difficulties, challenges, failures, disappointments, broken dreams. I felt like they had no idea what was ahead of them. The thought that these beautiful young children had pain ahead of them in their life, that's what made me sad.

Life is what is it; it's not easy, and it's not fair. Why that should make me sad, I'm not sure. What doesn't kill us, makes us strong, right?

What is life all about? Is it about being happy and avoiding pain, or is it about what we can achieve in spite of the difficulties? Is it about the journey, how we cope, how we live, rather than the absence of pain? And perhaps joy and happiness cannot be felt as deeply without having also felt loss and pain.

Please share your views by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but can choose his thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances". (James Allen)

May 1, 2007

The Value of Art

I often wonder how it is that people don't mind spending a couple hundred dollars on a nice dinner out, a fancy garden tool or car accessory, or the latest kitchen gadget, but they're really reluctant to spend that or a bit more, on a painting that they love. I know they love it and want it, I see them looking at one particular painting, and coming back to it over and over again, totally enthralled, but in the end, they just can't do it (or their spouse talks them out of it).

Let's look at this logically. Let's look at the cost/benefit ratio.

Dinner out: \$100 to \$200 - not particularly useful but very enjoyable - lasts a couple of hours.

New tool or kitchen gadget: \$100 to 300 - useful but probably not necessary, enjoyable for the first few uses but soon becomes just another tool - lasts for many years but probably seldom used after the novelty wears off.

A new lawn mower: \$300 to \$500 - useful and necessary, but not enjoyable - lasts a few years.

A painting that you love: maybe \$200 to \$500 (although could be much more) - useful in improving your home decor - extremely enjoyable, brings you joy on a daily basis, every time you look at it - lasts a lifetime.

I don't know, but for my money, the painting is just as good a buy as those other things. As the Mastercard commercial says:

Dinner out: \$150
A new lawn mower: \$400
A beautiful painting: priceless

Share your views by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"If art is not to be life-enhancing, what is it to be?" (May Sarton)

May 10, 2007

Art as Investment

A comment on last week's blog gave me the idea for today's entry, and that is the idea that art appreciates in value over time, that art is an investment. You hear all the time about people who buy art as an investment.

The problem with buying art as an investment is that you pretty well have to buy art from an established artist in order to be guaranteed that its value will go up. Otherwise, you're taking a pretty big risk. You also have to know and understand

what you're buying. Original, lithograph, giclee, print, reproduction; there are so many terms out there, many people would be fooled into thinking they are buying something valuable, when they might be buying one of thousands of prints, the value of which may never increase.

If you know art and have a good eye, you might be able to spot an emerging artist who is going places and whose original works will go up in price. But there are so many talented artists out there today, the rise in price, if it happens, might be only slight.

I much prefer to think that **buying art is a decision of the heart**. You see a painting, fall in love, and you must have it. It speaks to you. A soft 'Wow' falls from your lips without you really knowing it; you are captured. You feel wonderful every time you look at it. Now, there's a reason to buy a painting. If you're lucky and the value goes up, good for you, you're a double winner. If it does not, you still have the pleasure of that painting for a lifetime. You're still a winner.

What's your take on this subject? Please share by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"The work of art must seize upon you, wrap you up in itself and carry you away. It is the means by which the artist conveys his passion. It is the current which he puts forth which sweeps you along in his passion." (Pierre-Auguste Renoir)

May 22, 2007 Creativity

A few days ago, I had a delightful surprise in my inbox. A culinary student in Mexico let me know that his class did a project where each student had to find an abstract painting and replicate the abstract in a dessert of their own creation. What a cool idea. Three of my paintings were done and he sent me pictures, which I'm posting here. I was very impressed at the very idea of doing an abstract painting in a dessert but I was most intrigued by the adaptations they made and the ingredients they used. For my painting 'Outside the Box' (the one with the blue, red and yellow spheres), some of the ingredients used were blueberry mousse, red wine sorbet, cake, curacao jelly and blueberry crystal. I can only imagine how tasty that must have been. So thank you, Pablo, for sending me these lovely pictures.



That brings me to talk about creativity. I believe we all have a need to be creative and to express that in some way or other. And there are so many ways to be creative. The abstract desserts is one example, but really, on a day-to-day basis, any time we do something differently, come up with a new way of doing something, we are being creative. But for me, the most rewarding is when there is something beautiful at the end of the process, something to be enjoyed, whether it be for an hour as with the desserts, or forever, as with a painting. Whether it is knitting, coming up with new recipes, or finding a way to make the darn thingy fit into the blasted thingamajig, it is using our brain to come up with new things, new ideas. And it feels great!!

So, here's to everyone finding their own way of exploring and expressing their creativity.

Share your views by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it! Boldness has genius, magic, and power in it." (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

June 1, 2007 *Playful Exploration*

Many artists plan their paintings before they start painting. They prepare thumbnail drawings, colour and value sketches; they can see the finished painting in their mind before they even start.

Sometimes, I envy those artists. I can't do that. I think that's due to 2 things. One, I'm a very visual person. I have to see it to process it. Even learning another language, I can't do that by just listening; I have to see it in writing. With painting, I have to see the effect of the step I'm working on before I can decide what the next step will be.

Secondly, I think it's a lack of patience. To take the time to work out the entire composition, to make those sketches, for me that would take the fun out of finally doing the painting. All my creative energy would be spent on the sketches, leaving little for the actual painting. Or at least, that's what I like to think. Maybe I'm just impatient.

I like to think of the way I work as 'playful exploration'. I have an idea and I start. As I evaluate what I've done, the idea comes for the next step. The painting develops this way, one step at a time. Sometimes a step seems to be taking me backwards, but it's all part of the process. Even if something I've done ends up being covered up, it's still there underneath, its spirit still energizing the whole.

Sometimes I start feeling that my process is haphazard, almost accidental. But it's not. It's not a lack of imagination as the steps are often quite creative and inventive.

And usually, it is the progression of the painting which gives birth to the next idea. So, it's not really accidental either. It just feels that way sometimes.

I think I would summarize it as 'the willingness to not be in control, to explore and to let things happen'. That's open-minded creativity as far as I'm concerned.

"Each painting has its own way of evolving... When the painting is finished, the subject reveals itself." (William Baziotēs)

Share your views on the subject by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

June 10, 2007 *Dance - Another Art Form*

Talking about other forms of art, I just attended my granddaughter's dance recital (which I've done every year for the past 12 years). The dancers ranged from 3 or 4 years old, to adults, but the majority were school-age children. Of course the cutest ones are the youngest; they are so lost on stage and keep looking to the side for their teacher's promptings, or else they stop and wave at their parents in the audience. Totally charming. As they get older, you begin to see the skills improving, the dances getting more difficult. I enjoyed it very much.

One thing I noticed is that, for me, I enjoy the dance more when I enjoy the music also. My enjoyment is affected by whether or not I like the music, regardless of the quality of the dancing. I wondered whether we are similarly affected by colour when we look at a painting. Could it be that colour affects us in a similar way, regardless of the style or skillful execution of the painting? That would certainly explain why abstract work can be so compelling. Or if not colour, then perhaps light, or contrast, or a strong focal point have the same effect.

Another thought occurred to me during the recital. In each group, you could see dancers who put their whole body and soul into the dancing, and others who seemed to just be going through the motions. What a huge difference it made. Here again I thought, are there painters who go through the motions, execute a painting quite competently, but fail to get the spark in there, that element that gives the painting excitement, life? Yes, I've seen it lots of times, paintings that are well done but have no spark.

So here's to remembering that it's about more than skillful execution, it's also about excitement, surprise, imparting feeling and connecting with the viewer.

One more thing, as I watched these dancers, I thought about how hard they've been working all year for their 3 minutes on stage and a little bit of applause. Yes, they deserve their time on stage. Artists need to show their work, and I'll talk about that in my next blog.

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

PS: This week's entry marks my 1-year anniversary of doing this blog. It has been a surprisingly enjoyable task. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

"The subject means little. The arrangement, the design, colour, shape, depth, light, space, mood, movement, balance, not one or all of these fills the bill. There is something additional, a breath that draws your breath into its breathing, a heartbeat that pounds on yours, a recognition of the oneness of all things." (Emily Carr)

June 20, 2007 *The Need to Show*

I recently did a 3-day outdoor art show. These shows are certainly a lot of work and very tiring. I ask myself sometimes if it's worthwhile doing them. No matter what happens with the weather, or other difficulties, the answer always seems to be yes.

I believe artists have a need to show their work, to get feedback. The creative process does not end at the completion of the work, it ends when you share the work with the public, when you see how people react to it, when you get their comments. It's a validation of sorts.

Doing any kind of show is challenging. You are putting yourself out there to be seen and to be judged. And you ARE getting judged, trust me. You watch people go by and what happens says it all. Some go right by, with barely a glance. Obviously, they're not impressed with your work. Some look for a few minutes and then go on. They were interested enough to look, but didn't really care either. Some stay longer and take a good look; a few look very carefully at several paintings and they are clearly interested in the work and in the technique you have used.

It's always a tough call trying to decide who to talk to, and who to leave alone. I've learned from experience that there's not much point talking to anyone who is not obviously interested. So when I see someone looking closely and spending time, I'll go over and start talking to them. If I've judged it right, they're quite interested in hearing and talking about my work.

Those few genuinely interested viewers are the ones that make it worthwhile. They give me the pleasure and satisfaction I look for. They give me validation. Although, let's face it, interest and compliments are nice, but the ultimate validation is a sale. When a person is willing to part with his money to get your painting, then you know he really likes it. And it feels wonderful. It's not even about the money, it's about the sense of value you get; you know your work has touched someone; it has value.

"The more people you engage in seeing, thinking and talking about your art, the more you'll build your audience. That doesn't mean exhibiting your art only. It means

creating opportunities for people to talk back to you.” (Alyson B. Stanfield)

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

July 1, 2007 **Being Different**

I'm in an art club of almost 100 members and there are only 2 or 3 other artists in the club whose work is experimental and abstract, as mine is. What makes me want to pursue an avenue that is different than most? What makes me want to be different?

Being different is a lonely road. You must stand alone, make your own rules, be your own judge, and most of all, you must be able to disregard the opinions of others and not look to them for validation. Your faith in yourself and your work must be strong, and you mustn't be swayed too easily or you will begin to doubt yourself, and that is the death knoll of individuality and creativity. And how can you pursue excellence if you are the only judge of your own work? There is a difficult balance to maintain between standing alone and believing in yourself, and allowing others to judge your work so that you can improve.

So what makes me want to be different, to stand alone rather than being one of the mainstream?

I think it's because I don't want to be 'just one of the crowd'. I want to stand out and be judged for myself and by myself, not by comparison to others. I want to distinguish myself in my own way.

Does that mean that I don't care what others think of me, of my work? Not at all. I do care, and like most artists, I'm always hoping that viewers will like my work. I certainly hope for acceptance when entering a juried show, and I'm most definitely pleased if I receive an award.

I just want it to be ME. I want my work to be ME. I don't want it to be a rehash of others' work, or a repetition of things learned from teachers, or the following of established rules. **I am making a statement with my art. I am saying: 'Look! This is Me!'**

I encourage anyone to find their own unique style, their own voice, and to sing at the top of their lungs. It's very liberating.

"Of course you will say that I ought to be practical and ought to try and paint the way they want me to paint. Well, I will tell you a secret. I have tried and I have tried very hard, but I can't do it. I just can't do it! And that is why I am just a little crazy. (Rembrandt)

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

July 11, 2007 **Being Canadian**

Last week, we celebrated Canada Day. I watched some of the celebrations that took place, on the news. Some of the celebrations I saw involved some Irish dancers, performing together with East Indian dancers, and the narrator spoke of our cultural diversity. It led me to ask myself who we are as a people, what it means to be Canadian.

Whenever Canada is represented in another country, it is usually through Native Indian art, or performances. And when we celebrate, we acknowledge our various ancestries, be it Irish, Italian, German, East Indian, Asian. Our culture is enriched by these ancestral traditions, but is that what defines us as a people? Who are we? What are we about? Are we not more than our ethnic origins?

Canadians are such nice people; we are polite and well behaved; we don't want to offend anyone; we are strongly democratic; we are politically correct. We live by the strength of our convictions. We are pacifists, and are known throughout the world as peace keepers, but we can stand up and fight if need be.

These are some of the things to come to mind when I try to answer the question of who we are, but I know there is a lot more. Wouldn't it be fun to explore that question, next Canada Day? Wouldn't it be fun to celebrate our heroes, our Canadian icons, and our everyday Canadians.

We live in the best country in the world, I am convinced of that. So I say, let's embrace who we are, let's celebrate it. Whether we are born here or not, does not matter; if we choose to live here, then let's embrace what makes us unique and let's all be Canadians eh?

"The happiest people don't have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything." (Rev. Dr. Leahmanda)

Suzette

July 20, 2007 **Closing the Sale**

Whenever I'm at a show, and meeting and talking to people, there always comes a point in the conversation when I feel I need to walk away. I often feel afterwards that I may have walked away from a sale. I feel that I dropped the ball, so to speak.

It's a difficult thing to do, talking to people about your art. You can tell right away those who are not terribly interested, so with them, you simply exchange pleasantries. You can also spot the ones who ARE interested in the art, and so with them, you talk about the work itself, the techniques, the colours, and so on.

And then comes that point in the conversation, when if I were selling widgets, I would say 'how many would you like' or 'what colour would like them in' or 'shall I wrap it up for you'. Somehow, selling your own artwork doesn't seem to work that way. And yet, it probably does.

Someone I met at the last show I did gave me a few ideas. Something like 'what room were you thinking of for this piece', or 'what are the colours in the room you're thinking of', or 'is this for you and is it for a gift'. Anything to draw them in, to engage them in conversation and find out information that might allow you to show them why they should buy one of your paintings, instead of someone else's.

I find it hard to do. I think artists in general find this hard to do. We are painters (or sculptors, or musicians, or whatever), not salesmen. Selling is a completely different skillset altogether. It's tough for artists who must represent themselves (as most of us must do); we not only have to be accomplished artists, we also have to be good businessmen AND good salesmen. It's a tall order.

So I guess, it's like anything else: practice makes perfect. So, next time I'm in this situation, I now know how to lead into the sales talk, thanks to my friend at the show. Let's face it, opportunities for sales are few and far between for most of us; it would be a shame to miss out on an opportunity.

"In the modern world of business, it is useless to be a creative original thinker unless you can also sell what you create. Management cannot be expected to recognize a good idea unless it is presented to them by a good salesman." (David M. Ogilvy)

Share your thoughts or techniques for selling by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

August 1, 2007 *Too Loose La Trek*

I came across today's title somewhere, and I loved it. Thought it was very funny.

Humour. I love people who are funny. I wish I could be funnier. Don't get me wrong, I do have (in my opinion) a good sense of humour, even quirky sometimes. My problem is that it takes me a long time until I can get loose enough to let my quirkiness come through. When I first meet new people, I'm all business. I'm serious and to the point. I don't know how to be playful right off the bat. It's only after I've known someone for a while on a more personal level that I can start to let my quirky side show.

It's not about telling jokes either; I enjoy a good joke occasionally, but generally I don't care for people who tell jokes all the time. It's more about seeing the funny side in everyday situations. I have a good friend who's really good at this. She shines in social situations where she doesn't know people well. Instead of being

uncomfortable, as I would be, she becomes the life of the party; she's able to see the humour in whatever situation she's in and she's able to express it and make others laugh. She's able to put a twist on whatever story she's telling and make it even funnier. What a gift.

I'd like to improve that side of myself but honestly, I don't know how. Just keep telling myself not to take things so seriously, I suppose. Try to remember to relax and be myself. I guess I could always try to imagine what the other person looks like in his or her underwear (does that really work....?).

One thing I've noticed about humour, is that things always seem funnier when you're sharing the experience with someone else. 'Funny' is contagious. A shared laugh is always a better laugh.

I guess we can't all be funny. We all have different gifts. Some of us are funny, some of us are good looking, some of us are smart, etc. etc. I guess the trick is to find out where you fit in, what your special gift is.

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

*"Do not meddle in the affairs of dragons, for you are crunchy and good with ketchup."
(seen on a bumper sticker)*

August 1, 2006 *Humour - Part 2*

I thought I'd follow up my earlier blog about humour with some examples of things I find funny. I just came across these this morning and had a good laugh; they were apparently taken from actual high school essays. I hope you enjoy them.

Her face was a perfect oval, like a circle that had its two sides gently compressed by a Thigh Master.

His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free.

Her vocabulary was as bad as, like, whatever.

Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left Cleveland at 6:36 p.m. traveling at 55 mph, the other from Topeka at 4:19 p.m. at a speed of 35 mph.

He was as lame as a duck. Not the metaphorical lame duck, either, but a real duck that was actually lame, maybe from stepping on a land mine or something.

The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like

a dog at a fire hydrant.

He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a garbage truck backing up.

Let me know which one is your favourite.

Suzette

August 15, 2007 *How I Got Started Painting*

I read somewhere that to help you talk and write about yourself and your work, and to come up with a better artist's statement, it helps to pretend that someone is interviewing you. Ask the questions, and then answer them.

So here is pretend interview question #1:

How did you get started painting?

For me, it was a cute little blue elephant. OK, let me explain. My brother went through a painful divorce. He took lessons and started painting. His first painting was this little blue elephant; I just fell in love with it. He showed me his work, which is surreal in style and spoke at length on the meaning of each painting. He was clearly passionate about it. I became fascinated with this form of expression. I went home and enrolled in painting classes, and that was my start. That was 15 years ago.

I didn't have art when I was going to school. I had never been exposed to the works of the masters, or contemporary art. I was completely oblivious. But seeing my brother's excitement and passion made me want to try it.

It took a few years to gain a little proficiency and to become serious about painting. I started having a little success painting flowers. Things improved when I switched to acrylics, which for me, seem to be the perfect medium. Eventually, I gravitated towards more abstract and contemporary work. Not having to worry about being realistic was immensely freeing and really opened the doors to creativity for me.

Today, I am very grateful that I discovered painting. I am still sadly lacking in art history, but I have learned a lot of the craft of painting and cannot imagine not having this passion in my life. Painting is enriching and fulfilling.

How did you get started painting? Share your story by clicking on 'Comments' below.

"Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable."
(George Bernard Shaw)

Suzette

August 23, 2007 *My Favourite Painting*

Continuing my pretend interview, here is question #2:
Which is your favourite painting?

I get excited about all my paintings and I like them all; if I didn't, I would simply continue working on them until I did. So generally, my favourite painting is my last painting.

Each painting is a new adventure. I don't have a set plan when I start. I start by applying texture to the surface and work from there. I have to work through several steps, work out problems, constantly evaluating what I've done so far and where the painting is going. I continuously have to make decisions about the colors, the composition, the direction the painting is taking.

Because this is such an exploratory way of working, I often have to take a step back, sometimes a drastic step. I may have to paint over a large area, or even the whole painting with gesso, either beige or black gesso, and change directions.

Don't forget that the underlying texture is always there and is the heart of the painting. When I paint over an area, I don't usually completely cover the previous layer; I try to leave little bits showing, as they will add interest to the work later.

There always seems to be a point, usually about three quarters of the way, when I start to feel that the painting is not working and I don't like it. I continue working and making adjustments until somehow it all comes together and I begin to really like it. In the end, a few final touches seem to really bring it to life. Like the icing on the cake.

So, to answer the question, my favourite painting is my last painting because that is the one I am the most invested in. As I start my next one, and reach the stage where it really is coming together and I feel pleased with myself, then that one will become my new favourite.

How about you? Which is YOUR favourite painting? How about posting a link to your favourite?

"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep."
(Scott Adams)

Suzette

September 1, 2007 *Happiness*

Here's a question not many people ask themselves: 'Am I happy?' And if the answer is not a definite yes, then why not? And what can I do to be more happy?

Sometimes, we need to be reminded to look at our lives and find the things that make us happy. So let's talk about happiness. What is happiness? What does it mean to be happy?

Here are some indicators: Are you satisfied with your life or do you wish things were different? Would you change anything? Are you always looking for more, for something else, or are you pretty well content? Do you live in the past (regretting things done or missed), or in the future (waiting for something to happen, for conditions to be just right), rather than in the present? If you could do it over, would you do anything differently?

When you start answering these questions, you get a pretty good sense of how happy you are, or are not. But happiness can really be a matter of attitude, and choice. There will always be circumstances in life that are beyond our control and about which we can do nothing. But we can choose to see the good things that are there, to appreciate what we have. We can choose to see that there can be adversity in life, but that doesn't have to keep us from being happy. We can choose to be happy.

If, in the process of examining our lives, we find that there are areas about which we are unhappy and about which we CAN do something, then we must be brave enough to do what must be done. We must choose to do the right thing, no matter how difficult, IF we want to be happy. It is a choice. You don't like something? Then do something about it. Or else, accept it and learn to be happy with it or in spite of it.

Happiness is not brought on by external things. It is inside of you, you just have to find it. I believe that self esteem and self respect are the basis of happiness. I believe that loving yourself is the first step to finding happiness, that everything follows from that simple act.

Life is short. Let's make the most of it. Let's be happy, every day. It's a gift.

"The happiest people don't have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything." (Rev. Dr. Leahmanda)

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

September 10, 2007 **Happiness - Part 2**

Last week, I talked about happiness. This past weekend, I experienced a day that drove me to say 'this is what happiness is about'.

It was a simple thing really, an ordinary day, but on second thought, it was quite extra-ordinary. My grand-son was playing football in my town, Maple Ridge. He and

his sister came over from Langley the day before and spent the night with me. On Saturday, I took him to his football game. It was a beautiful early fall day. Sunny, warm but not too hot, with a nice little breeze blowing. We sat there in the perfect weather and watched the game.

Everyone came out for this game, his mom, his dad and step-mom, his sisters, his paternal grand-parents, and me, his maternal grandmother. We watched the game and visited with each other. What a great day it was. After the game, the kids all left with their dad, and my daughter and I went and had a nice quiet lunch together. A perfect day.

By the end of the day, I felt contented and happy. I couldn't help thinking: this is what life is about, this is happiness. A perfect day, the love of children and grandchildren, and the ability to enjoy it all. Yes, this is what happiness is about, for me anyway.

I think we are not always able to recognize the precious moments in life, to see and appreciate those things that matter most. And those things are not necessarily big things, like money, possessions, success. They are often as simple as a perfect day watching your grandson play football.

"Too often the real beauty of life is missed as we submit to the daily grind. One role of the artist is to observe the beauty that others miss and help them see it through their creative pursuits." (Gary Lanthrum)

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

September 20, 2007 *Men and Women*

I apologize in advance to men. This blog entry is strictly tongue-in-cheek, and just for fun.

Everybody knows that men and women are very different. Like the book says 'men are from Mars, women are from Venus'. Anyone who has been married for more than a couple of months knows how true this is. For all we know, men and women were dropped off here, thousands of years ago, from different planets, in some gigantic lunatic experiment, or colossal joke.

One of the problems between men and women is that women expect men to understand them and, consequently, to behave in certain ways. It's like expecting dogs to understand cats, or to stop chasing cars and barking. It's not going to happen. **THEY DON'T SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE. THEIR BRAINS WORK DIFFERENTLY.**

For example:

When a guy says 'It would take too long to explain',
what he means is 'I have no idea how it works.'

When he says 'It's a guy thing',
he means 'There is no rational thought pattern connected with it, I don't know why,
that's just what guys do' .

'That's interesting, dear'
means: 'Did you say something?'

'Take a break, honey, you're working too hard'
means: 'I can't hear the game over the vacuum cleaner'.

'I can't find it'
means: 'I looked around the room with my eyes closed and it didn't fall into my
hands'.

Joking aside, I wonder whether there's a difference between men's and women's artwork. Do men and women approach making art differently? Do they favour different subjects, styles, colours? Do they take painting more seriously? Do they experience success more readily? Can you tell whether a painting was made by a man or woman, just by looking at it? I've often found myself surprised when I see a man who paints flowers. Am I guilty of stereotypical thinking?

I have no answers to all these questions, but it sure would be fun to have that discussion in a mixed group, don't you think?

"Art is the one thing that speaks to everyone. Art transcends time and ties us all together as the human race." (David Dory)

Suzette

September 23, 2007 *Men and Women - Part 2*

Following my last blog on Men and Women, it occurred to me that it might be fun to turn the tables on women and explore the meanings of some of the things women say. (Again, it's all in fun; please don't get offended).

(If you haven't read the last blog, you should read it before continuing.)

When SHE says 'It would take too long to explain',
what she means is 'You'll never understand; it's too complicated.'

When SHE says 'It's a guy thing' (rolling her eyes),
she means 'It's a stupid thing; women are so much smarter than men'.

'Take a break, honey, you've been working too hard'

means: 'Honey, I'd love to renovate the kitchen; new cabinets, countertops, appliances; wouldn't it be fun?'

'I can't find it'

means: 'You must have lost it; that's the only possible explanation'.

'Do these make me look fat?'

means: 'I'm not sure about these new pants, but I already bought them, so please tell me I look good in them.'

Of course, these are terrible generalizations, but aren't they funny? It's our ability to laugh at ourselves that makes us human, I think.

Suzette

October 1, 2007

Success

Last month, I talked about happiness and what it means to be happy. Today, I'd like to talk about success. Happiness and success usually go hand in hand, don't they? Or do they? What is success? What does it mean to be successful?

There are obviously many different ways of being successful. The key is finding out which one is important to you, which one will make you happy.

There is personal success: being well adjusted, confident and happy about who you are.

There is life success: having close friends, a spouse and children if that is what you want; in other words, having achieved a level of intimacy with close ones, that is fulfilling and rewarding.

There is professional success: having found work that is enjoyable and fulfilling, and that pays sufficiently for a nice living.

There is artistic success: having found a passion, like painting, and being able to pursue it, as well as being able to achieve a level of proficiency in that passion, that it is both challenging and rewarding.

There is artistic recognition success: being recognized by your peers through professional organizations, competitions, awards.

There is artistic financial success: being able to generate sufficient sales to make a living from your art.

Those are the ones that come to mind at the moment. I am sure there are many more.

So, as part of our search for happiness, we need to ask ourselves 'what does success mean to ME?' and 'have I achieved success as I define it?'.

It may be that a well-considered answer to these questions may turn out to reveal to us that we have indeed been successful where it counts, and that discovery may in fact contribute to a higher level of contentment and happiness.

"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful." (Albert Schweitzer)

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

October 10, 2007

Daydreaming

What do YOU dream about? I don't mean nighttime dreams over which we have no control, although those can be pretty interesting too. No, I mean daydreaming, wishful thinking, the 'if I won the lottery' kind of dreaming.

So what's your dream? What would you do if you had the means?

For me, there are a few things. But mostly, it would be about living the artist life. One scenario has me living on Salt Spring Island with a nice property and studio, but with a nice apartment or townhouse in Maple Ridge. So I could go back & forth between the two, enjoy the artist bohemian life in Salt Spring, but still maintain my ties and friends in Maple Ridge.

In another scenario, I would open an artist co-op facility. It would be a large building which would include individual studio spaces, a teaching space for workshops and classes, a large gallery space and a gift shop. A number of artists would have studios and would take turns teaching classes. Different artists would be invited to show in the gallery. Local artisans would sell their art in the shop. It would be a busy community of artists, students and art lovers.

Isn't it fun to imagine such things? Even though these two particular scenarios will never come true (unless I win the lottery), it is fun to imagine, to answer the question 'what would I do if I could?'. I believe it's good for us to daydream, I actually read that somewhere. And for us creative folks, what's more creative than to imagine new wonderful adventures for ourselves. You never know what it might lead to.

What's YOUR dream? Share with us by clicking on 'comments' below.

Suzette

You see things and you say 'Why?', but I dream things that never were, and I say 'Why not?' (George Bernard Shaw)

October 21, 2007

A Very Successful Trip

Hi everyone,

I just got back this weekend from one of my painting trips. I went to Salt Spring, in the Gulf Islands just off the coast of British Columbia. We rented a house on St. Mary Lake. We visited art galleries and art studios. We talked art and we lived art. And we painted. This complete immersion in art is very inspirational. This past week was very productive. I came home with 3 finished paintings and one half-way there. It's hard work, but it's such a nice break from every-day matters and worries and stresses. It's refreshing and inspiring and wonderful.

I'll be taking pictures of my 3 new ones and posting them later this week. Watch for them.

"I always thought I couldn't create art unless I was 'inspired'. Now, I find that inspiration is a by-product of discipline - simply getting up everyday and planning, plotting, sketching, setting up or applying paint to a painting. The inspiration comes during this process of discipline." (Beverly Claridge)

Comments always welcome.

Suzette

November 1, 2007

Blessings

As a follow-up to my last blog and my recent trip to Salt Spring, I have now posted 4 new works completed recently, three on my last trip and the fourth was done during the summer.

The night that I came home from the trip, I remember walking into my bedroom and thinking 'Oh, it'll be nice to sleep in my own bed tonight'. Then I was flooded with thoughts of how good it was to be home, how much I like my home, how fortunate I am to have a nice home, to have been able to retire at a fairly young age, to have a wonderful network of friends, great kids and grandkids, good health. I suddenly realized how blessed I am and felt humbled and grateful for all I have.

I've talked recently about happiness and success, and how I believe that much of our happiness, or lack thereof, depends on our attitude. Many people who feel unhappy fail to see and appreciate all the good things that they do have.

I am glad I was reminded of how lucky I am, and I hope that others, reading this, might take a minute to think of all their blessings also.

"Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies." (Charles E. Jefferson)

Suzette

November 12, 2007 ***Crossroads***

Lately, I've been feeling like I am at a crossroad, artwise that is. I feel somewhat confused, unsure what direction to take, what or how to paint next; I feel directionless.

I'm not sure if it's because inspiration isn't coming, or more likely, I think I may be in a transitional stage, ready for something somewhat different, not too different, but a new direction. I am standing at a crossroad with several avenues open to me, and I am unsure which way to go. There's no inspiration, no intuition, no foresight telling me which way would work out best.

I just finished a 2-day show this past weekend, and I was looking at my area and how it was arranged, and even though I was pleased with the arrangement, it occurred to me that the work was not very cohesive. There was no real continuity in the work. I felt somewhat dissatisfied in some strange way.

I think perhaps this is normal, a normal part of being an artist, with ebb and flows, times when inspiration comes easily, and times when finding your way is a struggle. Perhaps, as we progress through our artistic life, a sort of evolution, or growth, takes place, and each time a change is coming, you experience that time when you feel lost because you have left one era behind and are about to enter another, but not quite there yet. It's that 'in between' time. That would certainly explain this. And really, in retrospect, I have been there before, changing from representational to abstract work. There was a transitional period there too, where my work was definitely somewhere between the two.

I have no intention of getting away from abstract, or abstracted, work, but feel that I need new inspiration, new blood flowing through my veins, fresh air to blow through my studio, and my mind. Am I experiencing Painter's Block?

If you've had a similar experience, please share by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

"The doors we open and close each day decide the lives we live." (Flora Whittemore)

November 23, 2007 ***The Meaning of Life***

I was watching an old television program the other day and someone was talking

about existential angst and the meaning of life. (In case you think I watch some very serious programs, I don't, it was a comedy).

Who amongst us has not, at some point of other, considered the questions 'What is the meaning of life?'; 'Why are we here?'

At the most basic level, we are all trying to find happiness. To be happy, we need love; we need to be loved and to love others, parents, children, friends, a significant other. I don't believe we can live without love; love, who and how we love, is what allows us to define ourselves, to know who we are.

However, I believe we need more than love. We also need to be fulfilled. We find fulfillment through meaningful work, whether that be through our jobs or other activities, such looking after our families, volunteering, or painting, to name a few. We need to feel that sense of accomplishment and pride at doing something well, something worthwhile.

But is that all there is to it, seeking happiness, love and fulfillment? Or is there some grander purpose for us being here? I don't pretend to have the answers to that, I just thought I'd throw the questions out there, make everyone think.

"Life's greatest happiness is to be convinced we are loved."
(Victor Hugo, Les Miserables, 1862)

Suzette

December 2, 2007

The Many Worlds of Art

There isn't a world of art out there, there are many worlds of art. I say this because I often come across things 'artful' that leave me feeling completely befuddled. So I started to think about this and realized that the world that I know is only a very small part of the world of art out there.

There's the world of art which I know and where I fit. It's the '**local**' world of art. It's made up of local artists who work at home, belong to a local club, participate in local shows. Our prices are low and our sales modest, neither of which are any reflection on the quality of the work, which is sometimes fabulous. Some would call us hobbyists, but I resent that name. We are simply local artists who have not yet reached beyond our local community and built up more of a reputation and a following.

There's the '**in**' market, where the artists have managed to achieve a higher level of recognition, and with that a higher level of both prices and sales. Their work is sometimes very good, or sometimes just trendy, but they have managed to build up a following for their work. Experts, and buyers, declare the work to be good so therefore, prices can reach well into the thousands.

There's the **'nice'** market, for so many people who want something that looks nice in their living room, usually in colours that match the sofa, or the wall colour. These are often reproduced in canvas transfers and sell all over the place, even in unusual places like Rona or London Drugs, for a very reasonable price. The people who buy in this market don't care that there are a million copies of this painting out there; all they care about is that it looks nice above the sofa.

There's the **'important work'** world, where experts declare a work to be 'important' or 'significant', or 'a good investment' and the work's prices can reach into the millions. It can be as simple as a yellow dot on a canvas, or a red and a blue stripe, but the experts call it important, therefore it's worth millions. I find this world to be snobbish most of the time and occasionally a lot of nonsense.

Then there's **'conceptual art'** and **'installation art'**. What can I say about these? From what I've seen, these usually have nothing to do with skills, learned and practiced over a long time, nothing to do with the artist, through his/her hard work, capturing a moment in time and touching the viewer. It's all about shock value, making you think, creating a reaction. To me that's not art, it's a political statement. As Ilse Fourie of South Africa recently said (on Robert Genn's Painters' Keys site), it's 'garbage displayed with a title'.

There are indeed many different worlds out there. I find that realization helpful in understanding my world and where I fit in, as well as where I want to fit in.

"Art is what you can get away with." (Marshall McLuhan)

Your comments are always welcome.

Suzette

December 14, 2007

Sweet Innocence

Do you ever think about when you were young, 14 or 15 maybe, and how exciting everything was? The world was so full of possibilities, without limits, and without being tainted by cynicism or reality. Remember meeting that special boy? How wonderful that was, and holding hands for the first time, and exchanging that first sweet kiss.

And can you remember being even younger, 6 or 7, and what it felt like at this time of year, waiting for Christmas? How exciting, and magical it all was. Christmas was all about Santa Claus and presents, and the Christmas feast and goodies and fun. And even though everyone kept telling us that there was more to it than that, that's all we could see, in our excitement.

How sad that we lose that sweet innocence as we grow older. The realities of life rob us of that sweetness and taint the way we see life and people, and ourselves even.

They steal, or at least diminish, much of our hopes and dreams, if we let them. And it's hard not to do, after all that's what being grown up is about, isn't it? Seeing the world with realistic eyes and adjusted expectations.

Sometimes I wish we could retain that rosy view of the world, the belief that we can do anything, that all is right with the world, that the future is full of possibilities just waiting for us to show up. Life experience is valuable, but it does rob us of our innocence, doesn't it?

So at this time of year, Christmas time, it's nice to try to reconnect with that part of ourselves, the sweet innocent child full of joy, and hope and dreams, still open to all possibilities and expecting nothing but the best in life.

And that's what I wish for all of you, a Christmas full of joy, sweetness, innocence, hope, and mostly, love and happiness. Best wishes to everyone.

Suzette

“Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.” (Calvin Coolidge, 30th President of the United States, 1872-1933)

PS: As this will be my last blog this year, I also wish you a Happy New Year and I'll be back early in January with my annual gift, my printable Art Calendar for the coming year. Look for it on January 1st.
