

Suzette's Art Blog

Ramblings & Musings on Art and Life

2006

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December 21, 2006 **Christmas**

As we all feverishly prepare for Christmas, I thought this would be a good time to give some thought to this time of year. Christmas for me is a joyful time. It's family time. I always get to spend this holiday with my children and grandchildren. I am very lucky, I know that.

It's not such a wonderful time for everyone, though. It's a very stressful time. We get caught up in the race of buying presents, of trying to find the 'perfect' gift for everyone on our list. So many things to do, spending too much money, it can ruin the mood for many.

So many of us have so much, while so many have so little. Whether we're talking about money, things, or family and friends, Christmas can be a sad time for many, and I like to remember that too.

Christmas started out as a religious holiday, but has evolved into a huge commercial machine. Some still celebrate it as a religious holiday, many do not. What I like about Christmas, and what it means to me, are the sentiments: LOVE and PEACE.

So, I wish you all the best over this holiday season. Love and Peace to everyone.

Suzette

PS: Here is a little gift from me to you: A printable 2007 Art Calendar. Hope you enjoy it.

December 8, 2006 **Keeping At It**

My regular method of painting is to create an interesting base with texture and colour and to let the painting evolve from there. One thing will suggest another, and the painting builds up, one stage upon another, until I am satisfied with the result and I can call it finished.

Every once in a while, a painting gets stubborn and just doesn't want to come together and I find myself changing directions completely half way through the painting. By completely, I mean paint over the whole thing with one colour, often black, and start over again; I still have my textured base at this point, but nothing else. My latest painting, Tulips, is an example of this; it just wouldn't come together and so, I (it) changed direction 2 or 3 times. I'm glad it's finished now.

It can be rather daunting when you can't bring a painting together and are forced to

start over like that. It happens once in a while. Why is that? I don't know. Maybe I haven't been painting regularly enough lately, and I get out of the swing of it, and it becomes more difficult to get back into it, to get the spirit of the thing flowing and finding its way. So the lesson learned from this one is that I must try and paint more regularly, every day if possible, even if only for short time. (Make that 'Item 1' on my list of New Year's resolutions!!)

Share your views by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

November 21, 2006 **Challenges**

I recently was the featured speaker at a Rotary Club meeting on behalf of the Garibaldi Art Club. One of the things I talked about was the challenges faced by artists today.

I am not talking here about the obvious challenges of learning the necessary skills, controlling the medium, achieving good composition, etc. etc.

Here are some challenges I think artists face: (I'm sure there are many more...)

Time: Finding time to paint is, for many of us, a real challenge. With busy lives, jobs, families, there always seems to be something more important to do. It takes determination and a real commitment to make time for our art.

Costs: Artists face so many costs: art supplies, framing costs, membership dues and entry fees to shows; then there's promotion costs, exhibition and advertising costs, and so on. Rising costs are always a challenge.

Interest: Another issue that is quite challenging is getting people interested in your art, or in art in general. Getting people to come to art shows is a challenge, depending on where you live. There's nothing worse than going to all the trouble of putting on a show, or setting up in an outdoor show, only to have a poor turnout. It can be very disappointing.

Sales: Selling art work is the ultimate challenge for an artist. Most of us would rather let someone else take care of the business side of art. So many people are afraid to buy original art. They think it should be an 'investment'. They think they don't know enough about art to make a 'smart' purchase. They're intimidated by the art, or by the price.

There are many challenges we all face. I suppose that's what keeps life interesting.

What are some of your challenges? Share your thoughts by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

November 11, 2006 *Abstract Art*

Abstract art is not everyone's cup of tea. I can understand that. Many people's reaction to abstract art is either 'I don't understand it', or 'my 2-year-old could have done that'.

For me, abstract art is all about the arrangement of colours and shapes in a way that evokes a feeling, a sensation, in the viewer. When I look at an abstract, it either speaks to me or it doesn't. And if it does, it's all about the colours, and how they are placed on the canvas, and how they interact with one another. There doesn't have to be a 'special meaning' to it, there isn't something to be understood, it's strictly a visual sensory experience.

You don't need special knowledge or insight to appreciate abstract art. You just need to be able to look at the whole and feel what it says to you, without trying to find specific objects or places in the work. Just feel. Like it, or hate it, but feel it.

Wassily Kandinsky said: "The impact of the acute angle of a triangle on a circle produces an effect no less powerful than the finger of God touching the finger of Adam in Michelangelo." That's a powerful statement, and I couldn't agree more.

What do you think? Share your views by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

November 1, 2006 *Saving a Painting*

Have you ever had a painting that was not working? You've been working on this painting for some time and you suddenly realize that it's just not working. What do you do? Do you throw it away? Do you keep working and fussing, hoping that somehow it will work out in the end? Do you put it away hoping that next time you look at it, months from now, you'll magically have the solution to make it work?

In my experience, if you keep on doing the same thing, you keep on getting the same result, so, if this one isn't working, no matter how long you work it, it still won't come together. Unless you do something different.

Trying to save a painting can be a wonderful exercise, whether or not you succeed.

Once a painting is headed for the dumpster, you have nothing to lose. Now is the time to get really creative, inventive, wild. Let go. Be totally free. There is everything to gain and nothing to lose but a bit of paint.

I have often done this; I call it my 'kamikaze' approach. At this point, I know that I will either make or break this painting. And it doesn't matter. Does it work? I would say 50-50. Sometimes, something amazing can result; other times, it's a disaster and you end up throwing it away. BUT, it's never a loss if you have allowed yourself to be free and creative, because you have undoubtedly learned something in the process. So even if THIS painting does not make it, you have gained something by trying. I highly recommend it.

What do YOU do with problem paintings? Share your ideas by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

PS: The painting above, Teal, is an example of this. I had painted this small cradled panel, I had gel on there, it was NOT coming together. So I took a piece of rice paper, wet it down and glued it over the entire surface of the panel. Since there was texture underneath, the 'bumps' remained and showed through the rice paper. I put a layer of gloss medium over the paper and let it all dry. Then I painted it again. The texture underneath, and the paint over top of the rice paper, all created a most unique little painting. I rather love it.

October 21, 2006 Purpose

Have you ever dreamed of winning the lottery, the big one? Who hasn't. All the money you need to do whatever you want to do, no more having to go to work, being able to do exactly and only what you want to do. Sounds great, doesn't it.

Having recently retired, I often ponder upon what it is that keeps us going, that gives us a reason to get out of bed in the morning. No matter how much we thought we'd love having nothing to do during all the years when we were working, the fact is that we **need** something to do. We need a purpose. Without purpose, what's the point? Without a purpose, one could so easily fall into depression. We NEED a purpose, we NEED something to do.

Leaving aside the obvious 'spending time with family and friends', for me, it's everything to do with my art. Painting, even though I don't seem to paint as often as I always thought I would. There's maintaining my website and writing by blog. And one of the most fulfilling things I do is my work with the art club. As the president of the club, I keep quite busy with phone calls, meetings, preparing forms, brochures, booklets. All things that I love to do. An extra bonus to this are all the

wonderful friendships I have made over the years.

Those are the things that keep me going, that fill my life with purpose.

What about you? Share your thoughts by clicking on 'Comment' below.

Suzette

October 11, 2006 Seize the Day

Last Monday was Thanksgiving (in Canada, Thanksgiving is in October). This is always a good time to look at the things in our lives for which we are grateful. Hopefully, for most of us, there is a lot to be thankful for.

In order to have lots to be thankful for, I believe we must 'help things along', make our own luck so to speak. CARPE DIEM - Seize the Day!

I love that expression. SEIZE the day. Seize every opportunity, don't waste any of your precious time, life is short, make the most of it. Make the most of the every moment of every day if possible. As George Bernard Shaw said: "Yesterday is the past, tomorrow is the future, today is a gift – that's why it's called 'the present'."

I know this sounds like a bit of a cliché but true nonetheless. I think it fitting to look at our lives and look at the ways in which we are seizing the day, and if we're not, why not, and what can we do better.

I always feel inspired when I hear that expression. I should make myself a sign and post it in my office, or studio, to remind myself to make the most of every day.

Life is short! Seize the day!

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

Suzette

October 1, 2006 A Style of One's Own

Today, I'd like to talk about my work a little bit. Over the last few years, my paintings have become quite abstract, with a lot of texture and geometric shapes. I love doing those. But sometimes I come up with something that is quite different. This year, for example, I did 3 acrylic 'collages'. Completely different than anything I've done before. One is abstract, one is a flower and the other a parrot (shown above). Then this summer, I did some 'small pieces' for a juried show where the dimensions could not exceed 6 x 6. Half of those are geometric abstracts, the rest are not.

What I'm getting at is this: how important is it to have a consistent style, one that is easily recognizable as your own? Does it matter if you stray from that sometimes? What about if your work changes from year to year so that there is no real consistency in your style, except for a slow progression over time?

From everything that I hear, that's not a good thing. They say your work should be 'consistent' and you should have your own personal style. That's all very well, but then wouldn't I be painting the same thing all the time, except for small variations of shapes or colour?

I don't know what the answer is, but I refuse to be bound by rules like that. I want to do whatever I feel like doing. I am sticking to a certain style in a general way, that is in the use of texture in an abstract or semi-abstract format. Beyond that, no, my work doesn't all look the same and I often put something in a show that proves to be a surprise to viewers.

I like to think that the only viewer I am trying to please is me. However, like most artists, I do care what other viewers think and I also want to think of my art career and the direction it takes. What do YOU think?

Share your views by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

September 19, 2006 *The Making of a Hero*

Yesterday, September 17th, was Terry Fox Day. All across the country, people gathered to walk or run and to raise funds for cancer research. Terry Fox has become such a hero to everyone, he is beloved, almost worshipped.

Every year, as I hear about the Terry Fox runs, I feel very sad. I feel sad for Steve Fonyo. Does anyone remember who he is? He is the one who finished what Terry started. Since Terry could not finish his walk, Steve did the whole thing over again. From coast to coast, Steve walked, like Terry, with one artificial leg, and he made it through the ups and downs (literally), the weather, day after day, he kept going until he made it across. He was 18 years old and took 14 months to go from St. Johns, Newfoundland, to Victoria, British Columbia. He raised \$13M for cancer research. Why doesn't anybody remember him and call him a hero?

Some people will say that Steve got into trouble after his walk, that he was not as 'pure of intent' when he did it, that he was not as likeable. Can any of those people do what he did? I certainly couldn't. Steve did have some trouble for a while, but

that doesn't take away what he did.

So my question is: What is it that makes a hero? Is it having the IDEA; is it in the DOING, the completing of the run; is it about the MONEY raised; is it about DYING while you're doing it; is it about having a dedicated family to continue the memory by organizing the walks each year; is it about being likeable, or inspirational? What is it?

In my book, Steve Fonyo is a hero. 18 years old. 14 months. He never gave up. Bravo, Steve. You're a hero to me.

Share your views by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

September 11, 2006 ***New Beginnings***

I love this time of year. September is a time for new beginnings. Even though the start of a new year is technically January, September is really the time when new projects get under way. Kids go back to school, people return from their holidays refreshed and recharged, they sign up for classes and begin new projects. This seems to be the time when one evaluates one's life and decides (hopefully) to finally make those changes they've been thinking about, like signing up for fitness classes, registering for workshops, taking up a new hobby, maybe something they've been thinking about for a long time, like piano lessons, or dance classes. It's a great time of the year.

It's energizing, when you get caught up in it. It seems that everyone around you is caught in this frenetic activity, getting ready for everything. For parents with children, there's shopping for new clothes and school supplies, not mention the 'activities' supplies. Everywhere you go, stores are busy, people are rushing around. You either love it or hate it, I suppose, depending on where you fit in the chain.

Personally, I find it invigorating. Of course, now that I'm retired, I have the luxury of mostly watching from the sidelines and not getting too caught up in it. But I've always liked September, even before I was retired.

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

Suzette

September 1, 2006 **Why We Paint**

Last time, I spoke of talent and how I think talent is mostly hard work and the willingness to learn, practice and keep going. After going on about how much hard work it is, I then asked the question 'Why do we do it?'

I think for most artists, we paint because we must. We paint because it's unthinkable not to. We paint for the joy we feel while we do it, we paint as a means of self expression, we paint because it gives purpose to our lives, and we paint because of the wonderful sense of accomplishment we feel when we finish a work. Some do it to communicate, to send a message, to make a statement.

It's probably different for different artists, and I'm sure there are many more reasons than those I have listed. Those are MY reasons to paint. For the joy and the feeling of accomplishment.

There is also another component to this. We paint because we must, and having done so, we must share the results. Showing our work, seeing a reaction from the viewers, getting feedback, it's part of it too. It completes the process. Artist and author Lynda Lambert said:

"Our paintings are not whole until they are seen by the viewers; our poems are not complete until a reader speaks them aloud; our goals do not become a reality until we call them into being by our voices."

That is certainly true for me. What about you?

Share your comments by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

August 23, 2006 **Talent**

People often say to me "Oh you're so lucky, you have this wonderful talent". I know they mean well, and that it is meant as a compliment, but really, do they think that artists have this 'talent', this magic wand, and can easily churn out lovely paintings without effort?

In my opinion, talent is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.

Film maker Sam Goldwyn said "The harder I work, the luckier I get." My feelings exactly.

The fact is that, except for a few rare exceptions, it is not talent that produces the paintings, it is work. Hard work. It is being willing to spend the time learning the

necessary skills. It is finding the time to practice and being willing to struggle. It is pushing through and keeping at it even when it seems pointless. It is overcoming discouragement. It is struggling. It requires courage, determination, perseverance, and most of all, hard work.

You might ask then 'Why do we do it?'. I'll talk about that next time.

So when people tell me I'm lucky to have talent, I accept it as the compliment I know they mean it to be. And I try not to resent the feeling that maybe they think it is easy.

Share your comments on this subject by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

August 11, 2006 *Shaping our lives*

Last week's 'quote of the week' gave me much food for thought. So I decided to leave it up for another week, and talk about it in my blog.

"In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility." (Eleanor Roosevelt)

Isn't this a very interesting idea? We are responsible for our lives. We make choices, we take action, or not, and by this, we affect the direction of our lives.

Do we not always tend to blame things on something, or someone? That's so easy to do. Difficult childhood, no education, poor health, too hot, too cold, no luck or bad luck, don't feel good today leave it till tomorrow. There's always *something*. That's our way of explaining our bad choices, or lack of action. Can't lose weight, exercising is too hard, always too much to do. All good reasons, right?

I like Eleanor's take on the matter. I do believe we are responsible. And until we see that, until we accept it, we have no chance of overcoming whatever it is that ails us - 'inertia' being, in my opinion, one of the biggest factors holding people back and keeping them from realizing their dreams. Dictionary.com defines it as: '*resistance or disinclination to motion, action, or change*'. You get into a rut and sometimes it feels like getting out of that rut just takes too much will, too much energy. So we don't, and we blame it on something, anything.

What's your take on the matter? Share with us by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

August 2, 2006 *The 4 Stages of a Painting*

When painting one of my intuitive abstracts, I find that there are 4 stages that I go through with each painting: they are exploration, discovery, struggle and resolution.

Exploration: This is the first stage, the playful stage. I begin by applying texture and sometimes add some collaged elements until I have an interesting starting point. I then start applying colour. I have no specific plan. I just want to see what will happen. I am exploring the possibilities.

Discovery: Once the painting has reached a certain stage, I have to make a decision as to the direction the painting will take. I look at it from every direction. I look for hidden things, suggestions, to see what might pop up. Sooner or later, I get an idea on which way to proceed. I sometimes discover something interesting in the way the texture and the colour have been applied, which will direct my next step. Sometimes, I just make a decision and proceed.

Struggle: This is the most difficult stage. Once I have made a decision on where I am going, I now have to make it happen. Along the way, I will encounter difficulties, doubts. I will have to make changes. I will have to evaluate what I've got, assess the composition, colours, values. There is always that moment when I can't stand the painting and think it's a complete failure. But I keep going and work problems through.

Resolution: Eventually, the problems work themselves out and I become happier with the product. I now begin to see some meaning to the painting. I keep going until I feel the painting is complete. It's not always easy to know when to stop. Sometimes I have to leave it alone for a while, looking at it frequently and evaluating, trying to decide whether continuing will make it a better painting. Then I reach the point when I know I'm done; I know that there's nothing more I want to do to it. It's time for the signature.

What about you? What's your process? Share with us by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

July 24, 2006 *'Outdoor Art Shows'*

It's interesting to watch visitors at an outdoor art fair. I am referring specifically to the Mikleson Art Festival in White Rock, where I was showing for the past 2 weekends, but my comments apply to most shows.

There are some who walk by without as much as a glance at the artwork; they're

on their way somewhere else. There are those who look as they walk past, but don't slow down or take a good look; they're just not interested in this particular display. There are those who stop and look for a short while, and then move on; the work clearly did not hold their interest. There are those who are interested and will talk to the artist about the work, the techniques used, and so on; many of those are artists themselves, or art lovers; sadly, they also move on after a while, but usually not before making some nice comments about the work. Then there are a few, very few, who make it all worthwhile: they take a very close look, want to know everything, they make wonderfully positive comments; some may even buy something; when they leave, the artist feels uplifted and will concede that perhaps the whole experience was worth it: worth it to get up at 5 am, travel for an hour, set up tables, easels, paintings, etc.; worth it to stand in the sun (or the rain) all day, for 2 days, or 4 days, depending on the show.

Why do we do it, you might ask. I believe that, for most artists, there's a need to share their work and to receive feedback from others. It's not enough to paint, we must show it; we must see a reaction to the work. For us, that completes the creating process. Outdoor shows are a great way to do just that in a most direct way.

Let me know what you think by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

July 17, 2006 **'The Brotherhood of Artists'**

This past weekend, I was showing at the Mikelson Art Festival in White Rock, along with 100 other artists. I had the pleasure of meeting several artists whose company I enjoyed very much. I was reminded once again how artists stick together and support one another, and what a wonderfully warm and friendly community artists make.

Artists are not only willing to talk about their work with other artists, they're not afraid to discuss their techniques and share tips and how to's. No guarded secrets here; nothing but openness and generosity of spirit. Artists willingly trade information on methods, materials and their source, even tools and supplies someone else may have forgotten.

Artists, for the most part, commiserate and sympathize with each other over problems while maintaining their sense of humour. They share joy in successes without jealousy. They demonstrate trust, honesty and generosity. What a great community to belong to.

Share your ideas on the subject by clicking Comments below.

Suzette

July 10, 2006 **'Originals versus Prints'**

Why buy an original painting, as opposed to a more reasonably priced reproduction such as a giclee or lithograph print, or an extremely cheap mass-produced open-edition print? What are the differences between them, and does it matter?

Well, an original is of course a one-of-a-kind piece, conceived and executed by the hand of the artist. Though reproductions may be made, there is only one original. (There are some processes that create original prints, but that is a topic for another time).

A limited-run reproduction, such as a giclee print (an inkjet transfer on canvas or paper), is often bought directly from the artist. Few prints are made, and you can still have the feeling of having an original but at a much reduced price.

An open-edition print is where prints are made by the thousands and sold very cheaply in chain stores like Zellers or Home Sense; even stores like Rona are now carrying a selection of inexpensive prints. The quality is usually not as good as a more expensive print.

Why buy an original?

When you buy an original, you have something unique and are able to see the artist's hand and work in it. There is something to be said about the craftsmanship and the love that an artist puts into her work. Non-painters may not understand that every painting has its difficulties and that painting is, for most of us, always a struggle. The final result IS our 'blood, sweat and tears'.

By buying an original, you have the knowledge that this work IS the fruit of the artist's labour. You know that you have encouraged one artist, financially and emotionally. In our world of mass production and 'throwing away anything no longer useful because something new and better is now available at a cheaper price', **buying an original work of art is making a statement that there is still room in our lives for something real, a work that has required thought, planning, slow and sometimes-painful execution, the use of skills learned and practiced over a long time, and most of all, love, dedication and commitment.**

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

Suzette

June 21, 2006 *'Inspiration'*

I recently took a painting trip to 'Quadra Island'. Quadra Island is one of the Discovery Islands, located between Vancouver Island and the Mainland of British Columbia.

I spent a week in a lovely house overlooking Gowlland Harbour, surrounded by nature and wildlife. This is a regular thing with me. I have a friend who is also an artist and we both like to go away once or twice a year to paint and visit art galleries & art studios. That's our way of relaxing, recharging our batteries, finding inspiration and renewing our commitment to our art.

I'm often asked where I get my inspiration from, how I come up with the ideas that become my paintings. Since I paint mostly abstracts or semi-abstracts, it's not immediately obvious where that inspiration comes from.

That's a good question. I feel inspired by seeing beautiful things, like a beautiful landscape or sunset, or the delicacy of a flower; but I feel especially inspired when I look at beautiful paintings, that's when the urge to paint really hits. That inspiration however does not mean I want to paint THAT beautiful thing I just saw, it just means I want to paint.

Once I get down to painting, it's a process of letting go and discovery. I start with applying colour or texture, and then I let things happen. And I keep going, one step at a time, until the painting comes together.

Inspiration is different for everyone. What inspires you? Share your inspiration by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

June 13, 2006 *'Art That Speaks To You'*

Have you ever heard someone say: 'I don't know much about art, but I know what I like?' If you're like me, you've heard this often. So what does this say? Do people think that you have to have special knowledge to know what good art is? Does it have to be good art for them to like it? What is good art, anyway?

I think that how we react to any piece of art is very personal, and we all react differently. It is completely subjective. Some react to a memory, a scene that reminds them of a happy place, or time. Some react to an emotion, an emotion they feel when they look at a particular painting. Others react to colours, the arrangement and placement of colours on a canvas, whether abstract or representational, that evoke a feeling in them, a sense of 'Wow, I feel good when

I look at this'. It's different for everyone.

The bottom line is, a painting has to speak to you if you're going to buy it and live with it. If it does, you will develop a deep attachment to the piece. If it doesn't, it will become just another decoration in your house, serving the only purpose of decoration, rather than inspiration. But when it does speak to you, wow!; every time you look at it, you will feel the sense of awe, wonder, happiness, or whatever it is that the piece makes you feel. Is it worth the price? Absolutely.

So does it matter if it's good art? Who cares! If you love it, if it speaks to you, then go for it. You won't regret it. In fact, you'll probably regret it if you don't.

What do you think? Please add your comments by clicking on 'Comments' below.

Suzette

June 12, 2006 ***What is a 'blog' and why do it?***

The word 'blog' is short for 'web log'; it is an online journal. It's a way for one person to share thoughts with internet viewers and to invite comments and discussion. I hope mine will prove interesting enough to keep you coming back. And PLEASE, post your comments. I welcome any comments or questions you may have.

In this blog, I hope to share with you what is happening with my work. But more than that, I'd like to start some discussion going on art topics, like 'what is art (and who says so)', 'snobbery in the art world', 'original art versus reproductions', 'the difference between prints, copies and reproductions', 'are oils better than acrylics', 'why many people are afraid to buy art'. (Feel free to suggest topics by posting a comment!!)

So bookmark this page and stay tuned. Look for my first discussion topic in the next day or two.

Suzette
