

TEN TIPS FOR PAINTERS

Pamela Yates

OVERVIEW

Painting and the hard work of incubating new ideas is intense and challenging. Painting also can involve long periods of work in isolation. While creating art is exciting, captivating work it's helpful to keep a friendly eye on overall quality of life and spirit. The pressure of producing artwork, running a business as well as nurturing yourself and your relationships can lead to mental and physical exhaustion and overwhelm. Exhaustion and overwhelm can halt and even put an end to an otherwise successful, productive creative career. The ten simple tips below span the gamut of the painter's life from a daily commitment to doing creative work, to nurturing relationships with family and patrons. It's not enough to "just" paint. The painter will benefit from keeping a friendly eye on her inner and outer health and happiness, and to do that she will need to be attentive to a range of opportunities, qualities and issues related to being a human being. It's deceptively easy to forget or ignore these opportunities, qualities and issues for lots of seemingly good reasons but she ignores them at her peril. It's to her advantage to spend a portion of her time, energy and attention maintaining and nurturing her inner and outer life. Some of these ten tips will seem unimportant during times of high creative energy but being consistently attentive to these areas day by day will likely contribute to a well-rounded and productive creative life, more stable emotional health, less time feeling blue, more compassionate self-assessment, and improved relationships with family, friends and business colleagues. Here are ten tips to use as a guide to nurturing your creative spirit, your relationships and your business. Good luck and productive, happy creating!

TIP ONE: DAILY WORK

Paint every day. Experiment with other forms of creative visual work on slow days. If you become halted, don't panic. Identify blocks to your

creative process as best you can and list ten wild solutions for each one. Ask yourself if your current artwork connects with you as a meaning vessel, or are you experiencing a meaning crisis which in the short term this might seem unimportant but in the long run meaning supports and propels us.

TIP TWO: HONOR YOUR CREATIVE WORK

Love and honor your creative work no matter what. Be a creativity warrior. The creative journey is just that, a journey, so be ready to embrace a long learning curve. If you continue to mature and grow as an artist you'll likely experience fears, doubts and technical unknowns in your creative work in addition to the other challenges we all face in life. As for criticism, it can be helpful: keep an open mind, try to learn something from criticism but take what you want and leave the rest. Avoid toxic inner dialogues as well as toxic messages from others - persistently honor your work and your intent as an artist.

TIP THREE: COMFORT

Artists experience emotional highs and lows. Painters work much of the time in isolation which can make the lows feel particularly devastating. Learn what or who creates a spark of light for you on dark days. Explore and experiment with relationships, rituals or behaviors which nurture sparks of hope, safety and comfort. Practice those rituals and behaviors during the good times so they'll be familiar and easily available when a dark day comes around.

TIP FOUR: RELATIONSHIPS

If you're blessed with good family and friends make time to be with them, pay attention, a little genuine thoughtfulness goes a long way. Good relationships with people are hard to find and once lost, even harder to replace. Spend time with creative friends, companions and colleagues, too. These folks can refresh and energize your creative life and spirit.

TIP FIVE: GIVE-AWAY

Share what you learn, help artists and others by sharing your time, experience and knowledge. Mentor other artists without selling your soul or

cutting too deeply into your own well of creativity, time and energy. Altruism is said to be good for physical and mental health and so if you don't want to help others because it's the right thing to do, do it because it's good for you. What goes around comes around.

TIP SIX: SELF CARE

Learn to recognize signals which usually mean you're headed for exhaustion and overwhelm. Gently take full responsibility for self-care: rest, get a bite to eat, call a friend. Know your limits. Slow and steady usually wins over panic and speed even when a deadline is looming. Self care includes continuing to grow your technical skills, look for opportunities to be a learner, persist in openness to starlight and what you can experience in the natural world around you.

TIP SEVEN: THE MAGIC DUALITY OF INTUITION AND STUDY

Intuition means these types of messages--your work will tell you what it needs; no-one can duplicate your unique creative vision; the best time to stop working on a new painting is before it's finished; let there be looseness; there are no straight lines in nature. Study means these types of messages--try to be unafraid of asking questions; attend workshops with masters; read books on art; call or send email to artists you've never met. Magic duality lies in being open to your own intuition as well as being open to the richness of learning from others.

TIP EIGHT: PATRONS

Notice family, friends, patrons and clients who consistently support you and your creative journey. Notice them, thank them, spoil them, and be sure to stay in touch with them, share news about ideas, paintings and shows with them. If someone seems interested don't be shy about sharing anecdotes about the life of a painting and your personal creative journey. Very often these stories are appealing and interesting. One or two committed and vocal supporters are worth a thousand temporary fans.

TIP NINE: BE A MEANING MAKER

Listen to your heart. Everyone has a gift to share. No matter what your age or experience as a painter, whether you're a beginner or a seasoned professional, you can choose to use your creative gifts to touch people in a good way. Meaning isn't something we find, it's something we decide to create. It might take some time but you can decide what holds meaning for you personally and reflect that meaning in your artwork, work that has your heart in it. Any style of artwork can be a manifestation of personal belief and meaning.

TIP TEN: ADDITION

Artists tend to experience deep emotions and are said to carry the collective stories of humanity. Artists like many others sometimes get enmeshed in excessive drinking, drug abuse and other troubling addictions which don't enhance creativity. Addictive behaviors can create an illusion of respite from life's challenges but will cloud your creative vision and eventually cause you to feel at best lethargic, depressed or at worst steal your vision and your life. If you're troubled by addictive or self-harming behaviors get help. It's not a moral issue, it's physical, and you won't be the first or last artist who needed help.

RESOURCES

The Blank Canvas, Inviting The Muse by Anna Held Audette.

The Van Gogh Blues by Eric Maisel, Ph.D.

Art & Fear: Observations On The Perils (And Rewards) Of Artmaking by David Bayles And Ted Orland.

Creativity For Life by Eric Maisel, Ph.D.

ABOUT PAMELA YATES

Pamela Yates is a painter of narrative, figurative and abstract expressionist work in oils, acrylics, watercolor and mixed media. She also works as a creativity and meaning coach with individual clients and has presented workshops for small groups. Pamela writes and coaches about art, meaning and

the frequent intersection of issues related to creativity and meaning-making. Creativity coaching is for people at any stage in their creative journey seeking a more active creative life, greater productivity or any number of other adventures in creativity. Meaning coaching is for people seeking a deeper understanding of their own unique personal ideas about living a meaningful life. Visit Pamela Yates at footprintsfinearts.com or circlepathways.com or contact her at pamela@footprintsfinearts.com.

