

Choosing What to Paint - Staying Close at Hand

From Marla Baggetta's Email Newsletter

One of my biggest challenges as an artist is choosing: choosing what to paint; choosing the media and the approach I'm going to use. Sometimes it can be quite overwhelming. I'm easily enchanted, or maybe distracted is a better choice of words. Nevertheless, it makes for lots of ideas swimming around in my head. I wake up in the morning thinking about painting and lay my head on the pillow at night still thinking about painting. Most of that thinking takes the form of things I'd like to paint.

Fortunately, a little wisdom comes with years of being an art creator. I have the understanding that it's not the "what" it's the "how" and the "why" that count. It's not the subject, it's the process.

A few tips from my side of the easel:

1. Figure out when you're most productive and be prepared when that time hits. Have your subject and your materials, equipment ready to go. Get ready by having your photos chosen, if you're using them, your thumbnails completed, maybe even an under-painting started. Don't face a blank page when your productive/creative time is at hand. I never walk into my studio in the morning without this organization.
2. Realize that there is an audience for every possible subject or genre. Paint what inspires you and you'll do your best work. Finding the audience for great work is easy.
3. Don't pin your worth as an artist on one piece! The unsuccessful ones are as much a part of the process as the successful ones. This is how we learn. I know this to be a certainty! Just keep painting.
4. Give yourself permission to play. I love, love, love the landscape, but I'm also attracted to many other subjects and want to feel free to explore those. Yeah, maybe they won't sell as well as the landscapes, but I know that everything I paint informs everything else I paint.
5. Sometimes the "plop yourself down and paint" mode is the best. Or, look around the room you happen to be in and paint a single object large on a full sheet of pastel paper or substantial canvas. We never have the excuse, "there is nothing to paint". Beauty is in the eye of the beholder! If a trash can has the right light hitting it, it can be a worthy subject.
6. Be grateful. If you're reading this, you are an artist. If you've spent any time considering what to paint or draw, you're an artist. Consider this deeply and you'll know what to paint!
7. Hone your skills so that they meet with your ideas. You don't want to have any weaknesses that prevent you from manifesting your art.

8. Be brave. If being an artist was easy, everyone would do it!
9. Stay engaged with an art community. Keep up on the latest tools and techniques. It pays to have artist friends and it's a beautiful thing!
10. Stay in the game over a long period of time. Doesn't this go without saying?
11. Remember to find the joy in it, even when it feels hard.

Ok, all of that being said, a good idea is starting at home and then slowly widening your sphere...your neighborhood, a nearby park or urban scene, photos from a hike or day-drive...you get the idea. Before long you'll be traveling to the four corners of the world for exotic subject matter. It's a big world and there is so much to paint! Go and have fun!

Although Marla Baggetta paints her landscapes mainly in pastels, she also paints them in oils and acrylics. This video by Marla is worth watching, no matter what medium you use:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=272&v=UU0otBr2iFM