

Why paint when you can take a picture?

From WOW session Jan. 24, 2019 by Wendy W.

As we all know, for much of human history painting (drawing – aspects of the fine arts) were essential to record everything occurring in that age: from portraits to architecture, to landscapes, to natural history – the flora and fauna; all the birds, all the animals all living things. What would we know of our world's history if you wiped out all of the painted, and drawn images pre-photography? But then cameras were invented. Photography really took off in the 50s and 60s becoming accessible to everyone.

This has led some to question what is the function of painting in a “world of global communication, the internet, and digitization?” Does painting serve a purpose now and what about the future? Is this an obsolete endeavour? Some critics have even claimed since the 1960's painting is dead –“an outmoded technology” Quotes from the Intro to **Painting Today**. (?2006)

“Painting today lacks purpose, it has no formal vitality, it has been replaced by photography, video and other new media.”

“Painting is functionless now, save as a prestige wall decoration with which a member of the new rich can show his or her wealth...”

“Painting is in a muddle”

Painter, Victor Burgin said, *“I'd given up painting in 1965 for the rather crude reason that it was an outmoded technology. There were enough paintings and sculptures silting up basements of museums all over the world - why produce more? It was economically unsound: a form of pollution. We didn't need more pigment on canvas, or bronze, or welded steel tubing, that no-one knew what to do with except keep in some store-room.”*

One of the direct results of such thoughts was the explosion of abstract and very expressionistic styles in the 60s. This led me to really question is there any value in painting in a very realistic style when you can just take a photo? Then I visited the White Rock Gallery in May 2017 where W. Allan Hancock and Renato Muccillo were showing along with 2 other artists. Muccillo's style is very realistic and just amazing art and I would say about 75% of his pieces were sold at \$1000 and much more. About 40% of Hancock's pieces were sold, so I was Yes!! There still is a market for the realistic style.

Reasons to paint

1. **Your ideas and expression are unique.**

Renato Muccillo says, *“You are given a gift to create, so keep learning all your life for you can do this.”* Another artist, Tony Hogan says, *“being an artist is about continually exploring all possibilities – a sunset, animals, flowers, or whatever captures your eye. You are the only one to view it that way, and only you can show your view to the world.”*

2. **Paint what you are passionate about, what you believe in.**

This comes out of your background and the things that make you who you are. Each of us will care strongly about different things. For example, because of my science background, I think that the microscopic world is so amazing and I want to portray the beauty, design, and intricate detail that is found in these minute spaces – splash it on canvases that will capture people's attention, since many people have not had the opportunity to see these things.

3. **The physicality of painting fills a innate desire to make, to create, to represent.**
There's something about squeezing a tube of paint, or mixing colors with water or some other media to get a delightful hue and then experimenting to see what new effect you can create. With art you are always experimenting; there is always something new to try.
4. **Painting has more of a 3D effect** than just a photo with the painting's shadows, washes, and accents. Painting involves your interpretation – you put in what is significant, leave out some aspects, emphasize certain things. Painting with its artistic freedom to alter the scene brings a 3D aspect to the image that is absent in more instant forms. This then is a record for history – what did artists of the early 21st C focus on? Nicholas Wolterstorff said, “When you and I carve wood, apply paint to canvas, pile stone on stone or inscribe marks on paper, we are dealing with things which bear to us the most intimate of relations.”
5. **A photo has a very narrow plane of focus.** The artist paints more like what your eyes see if you have normal vision. We've all been in a place where it is just a breath taking scene and you grab your camera and snap, but usually the awe is missing. The photo did not capture the whole atmosphere of the scene. In a painting you can have all the details in sharp focus, distant as well as close up and capture a bit more of that awe. All of our eyes are faulty e.g. colour blind people. We all miss seeing aspects of the world that we are depicting and the interpretive ability of our brains is limited. That is why each of our unique perspectives is valuable.
6. **Colours in photos are often not true. Especially blues and purples.**
It is a challenge in painting to represent the kaleidoscope of colours of every hue and shade as accurately as possible – that is in realistic painting. In other forms to present a pleasing array of colours that is like music on a page.
7. **Paintings can usually have a much larger size than a photo.**
A very large photo would kind of be like wall paper, while a very large painting has rich brush strokes, can envelop you with a delightful inspiring experience.
8. **Then there are many personal reasons to paint:**
 - a) When I enter that creative zone my physical aches and pains are gone or much decreased, making it very relaxing.
 - b) There is a therapeutic effect – art therapy is being used to improve health eg. Psych ward has afternoon painting
 - c) Fun – enjoy playing with colours, media, surfaces.
 - d) Sense of accomplishment, permanency, and a personal record.
E.g. of a lady who developed Alzheimer's after being a productive artist. The family delighted in having her paintings as a permanent expression of who she was.
 - e) Spiritual – depicting the beauty of God's creation or to express emotion.