



From the President

California Watercolor Association

Inspiration Comes in Many Forms



The hard part is listening to it! By “it” I mean inspiration. Why is it so hard to listen to inspiration? I think our brains get clogged with other stuff that blocks our senses to the environment around us. We question everything we do.

“If I paint that, will it get in a show?”

“If I paint that, will someone buy it?”

“If I paint that, is it a waste of paint, paper, time...?”

Who are you painting for, that is the real question.

If it is not for myself, why am I painting?

I take a lot of pictures with my phone. Why? Because I can. It doesn't cost me anything but a little space. I don't print them all but I can play with them and see if there is anything there to inspire me. If not, I can easily delete them and look around me for more inspiration.



While in Paris recently we walked to the Place du Tertre in Montmartre. This is a small square near the Sacre Coeur Basilica. Cafes and souvenir shops surround it. Tourists abound. And there are artists...lots of artists. Some are portrait painters. Others are caricature artists. And there are landscape painters. It is a sight to see. These artists share a one-meter square space with another artist, alternating days of the week. They pay approximately \$600 per year for this tiny space. They must go through a rigorous selection process at the Montmartre City Hall to be added to the ten-year waiting list for these spots. Here they paint for all the milling tourists to see. I came upon an elderly watercolor landscape painter who brought tears to my eyes as I watched him. He was so intense but so gentle as he applied his color to his painting. Adding here. Taking off there. Changing a color. Intensifying a color. I asked him quietly if I could take a couple of photos and he nodded “yes.” I'm sure he nodded since I obviously didn't speak “fluent” French, but close enough. What inspiration did I get from that moment of watching this painter? Confidence to work on what I want to work on. Working with the painting, not against it. Seeing what I was working on and adjusting while in the moment.



I was inspired on this trip because I looked at my surroundings more closely and with more introspection. While others were in a museum ogling gold gilding on everything, I was taking photos of a beautiful still life decorating a massive table. The sun was streaming through a window hitting that floral arrangement and screaming at me to paint it! That's inspiration!



The fact is, you have to be inspired before you create almost anything. Without inspiration you'll just produce a pretty painting. With inspiration you'll create an awe-inspiring painting!

Carol Husslein

CWA President