



# From the President California Watercolor Association

“Art is either revolution or plagiarism” *P. Gauguin*

I believe it can be very hard to paint a work that no one has EVER painted before unless you paint abstracts. I’m sure even with abstracts they can appear to be very similar to other artists work. But, there really is something in what Gauguin alludes to in this quote.

You can look at other work and it will create a spark. That spark drives your artistic thought process into high gear. What do I like about the other painting? What don’t I like? How should I change it to make it mine all mine? I’m not thinking along the line of copying another artist’s work and just changing up the colors or the size.

Look at the *Sleeping Venus* also known as *Dresden Venus*. It is attributed to Giorgione. He died in 1510 leaving this canvas unfinished. Venus is outside. There are no servants taking care of her needs. There are no animals present.

Now look at Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*. Look familiar? Titian is credited with painting in the background of the Giorgione in 1534 as well as painting the *Venus of Urbino*. Interesting isn’t it? Titian has brought Venus indoors. She has a couple of servants and look... she has a cute little lap dog sleeping on her bed. She’s coyly glancing in your direction.

But wait!  
Then comes Manet’s *Olympia* in 1863. Model Victorine Meurent is the modern “Venus.” You may be looking at her, but at the same time she is sizing you up. She’s got a flower tucked behind her ear and she’s toying with the mules on her feet. Her maidservant is showing her a bouquet of flowers someone, maybe you, has sent to her. She’s not interested and her black cat really doesn’t like you. Now, there is your revolution!

So, when looking for inspiration, think along Gauguin’s thought process to produce your personal revolution!

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*Sleeping Venus* by Giorgione



*Venus of Urbino* by Titian



*Olympia* by Manet