



The Number One Thing You Must Have to Complete a Successful Painting

What is the one thing you must have to complete a successful painting?

Without this, you will muddle along with your work and probably never paint anything that will make you proud. You will struggle with passages time after time, and make the same mistakes over and over. You may even get frustrated and give up before you paint a good piece.

What is this characteristic?

Confidence.

If you paint with confidence, you will quickly overcome your mistakes and learn to work past them. You will no longer allow the voices and opinions of others to affect you. You will actually begin to look forward to challenges in your paintings, because you will know that you can use those challenges to improve your work.

One of my favorite sayings is "I would rather put down a quick, confident brushstroke that was wrong than a hesitant brushstroke that is right". How can I say this? It's because I know that a hesitant stroke that is "right" is made because I was so worried about messing up that I really took my time to get that one stroke right. This will probably lead to strokes later, if done the same way, that will not go with the look of the rest of painting. The piece will be made up of a bunch of single strokes that, while done competently, don't go together in the painting as a whole.

On the other hand, if I try to make quick confident strokes, I will capture the "essence" of the painting faster. This will lead to a more cohesive work, with every stroke complimenting the last.

So how do you develop this confidence in your work?

Think about it first. I spend a lot of time reviewing my drawing and working on it between painting stages. This helps me concentrate on where I want to go next in the painting. I can then choose the best stroke for that passage.

Give up having to make each stroke perfect. This is a biggie - you have to let yourself make mistakes. Don't worry about making a bad brushstroke or putting down paint in the wrong place. As you loosen up, you will find your confidence increasing. If you make a mistake, leave it along and go on with the painting - most attempts to correct the mistake just make it worse.

Concentrate on the values and shapes. You will make a much more confident stroke if you give up having to get the color exactly correct, and

instead concentrate on the values and shapes. This will help you paint more abstractly, even in a realistic painting, by forcing you to think of “shapes” and “lights and darks” instead of things. Then you can take a bolder approach to your work, which will increase your confidence.

Make up your own mind about your work. Don't put too much stock in what other people say about your work, either good or bad. Concentrate on painting for yourself, and your confidence will increase. Opinions are very subjective in the art world. Listen to your own inner voice both while you're creating a painting, and when you are viewing your work.

Work on increasing your confidence, and watch your work grow!