

The art of procrastination

The art of procrastination or the procrastination of art.

Procrastination refers to the deferment of actions or tasks to a later time. Psychologists often cite such behavior as a mechanism for coping with the anxiety associated with starting and/or completing any task or decision. [1] There are three criteria: for a behavior to be classified as procrastination, it must be counterproductive, needless, and delaying.

As an artist I don't procrastinate anymore because I have learned what motivates me and how I feel when I'm in the middle of a project. I'm at my happiest when I'm creating something off the top of my head or been thinking about for a while.

My office on the other-hand is wallpapered with notes that I hardly pay attention to. I think I write things down not to remember them but to waste time. One of the hardest things I've had to do in the last 6 months is keep to a schedule of creating a blog, marketing my art and generating business for my gallery.

I've had to set aside specific hours every week to do these chores, as I call them. Chores! Not my favorite thing to do, at all.

That's all in the past now because I've discovered what motivates me and many other people for that

matter, “EXPERIENCE”. The more I do the better I get and the more interesting these chores become. In fact they’re not chores anymore they’re projects with profound meaning.

People that come into my studio many times give me this 2-part statement; “I don’t have a creative bone in my body and if I did, I couldn’t create what you create”. My standard reply is; “The secret is doing lots of drawing and painting”. The more you do the better you’ll get and the more creative you’ll become. There is always the process of discovery but as you increase your activity level some of the technical problems inherent in drawing and painting seem to diminish. The challenge then becomes how will you continue to be creatively motivated.

Creativity is probably one of the toughest things to be consistent at. To produce one painting every 4-6 weeks is tough enough. Try creating 2 paintings a week; burns you out, so you need to renew your motivation.

I once worked as a display artist for a couple major retail stores back in the 70’s. At that time I had to come up with my own concepts and build all the in store displays my self. After a few years of this it became difficult to create anything new or fresh. Fortunately I decided to jump from the frying pan into the fire and go back to school to get my Bachelor of Fine arts degree.

If you have been a painter for many years like myself it is important sometimes to go back to those fundamental exercises in drawing, painting and design to re-excite you about your art.

Here’s a couple of motivational exercises that have helped me through what I call; "Blank Canvas Fever"

Exercise 1: Take a large piece of paper say 20x40 and draw a grid on it so you have a sheet full of 5 or 6 in squares. Give yourself 10-15 minutes to fill every square on that sheet with a drawing. By limiting your time you won’t over think the process, allowing your creative instincts to flow freely. This drawing exercise has helped me to generate a whole new series of paintings while referencing these preliminary drawings for paintings.

Exercise 2: Look at your painting table or cover a table with articles (the messier the better) and give your self 10-15 min again to generate as complete a drawing of your work area as possible. You won’t have time to generate much of any detail but you will learn how to expedite the process. Again! This exercise will free you up from over thinking the drawing. I use this exercise as a “way of seeing” a process by which I can capture essential components of the “still life” to simplify the drawing.

I have found that procrastination is something that all people in all walks of life do. The secret is to reduce its impact on your productivity. I have all sorts of imaginative ways of avoiding learning a new song on my Banjo or writing a blog but I’ve already noticed enthusiasm replacing those dredged out thoughts of what I once referred to as chores.

I’m now excited about most of my projects and you will be excited about yours if you maintain a schedule and keep working at them.

Procrastination is really just a word and it doesn’t have to control your productivity or creativity.

