



10 Common Painting Myths

🎨🎨🎨 That Might be Holding you Back 🎨🎨🎨

*As in most things related to art, my responses below may only apply about 80% of the time.
These myths are in no particular order, and some of my responses may apply to acrylic paint only.*

🌸 Don't great painters paint from their head?

I would say that if they do now, they probably didn't start out that way. Most master artists learned to draw "perfectly" from observation. Over time, they may become so familiar with their subject matter that they don't necessarily need to always use a reference.

🌸 Tracing? Really! Isn't that cheating?

When painting, any method for getting your "sketch" onto your painting surface is all fair game, and definitely not cheating: projecting, tracing with transfer/graphite paper, gridding, and even painting over a printed photograph.

🌸 Isn't copying the best way to learn?

Not really, at least in my opinion. The best way to learn is just to start painting, and then practice as often as possible. Seek to learn design fundamentals as well as different tools and techniques. Most importantly, be patient with yourself and don't expect to be happy with your results until you have worked on LOTS of practice paintings.

🌸 I would love to paint, but I can't even draw a stick figure/I can't do that/I have no talent/

No drawing required!!! Any drawing just gets covered by paint anyway. There are plenty of ways to paint and create beautiful art without any skills at drawing. While some are born with natural talent, most of us can be very good with enough desire and discipline to learn and PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Abstract painting isn't serious painting

When non-representational painting is done well, it typically involves a mastery of a selected group of design fundamentals. The ability to plan your composition using only line, shape, value, color and texture will only enhance your design skills for your representational paintings, ie editing, placement, proportions, relationships, hierarchy etc

Only use the best paints you can afford

The short answer is “no”, especially when painting large. Feel free to prep your canvas with economy or even latex house paints, and continue to use your less expensive paints in the early layers. You can leave your higher quality paints for the final layers and/or finishing touches. (Note: I do not necessarily recommend mixing different qualities of paints within the same wet-on-wet layer.)

A limited palette is just red, yellow and blue (plus white)

For those using oil paints, this is common, but when using acrylics, it is more practical to use 2 of each primary, 2 of each secondary, a few favorite colors, 1 to 3 chromatic grays, lots of white, and either black or a really dark pigment like Payne's gray.

I need to love every painting I create

When you see a famous painting, you are only seeing one of that artist's most successful works. It was most likely preceded by many less successful works, painting studies, hours of practice, hours of planning, etc. etc. So, again, “be patient with yourself and don't expect to be happy with your results until you have painted many feet or miles of canvas.”

Who needs rules, I have my artistic vision? OR, but I was taught to ALWAYS do “XYZ”?!?

I highly recommend learning all the generally accepted “rules” of art, and applying them consistently until your design skills reach a point where you are ready to try breaking 1 or more rules with intention. Some rules, like “don't paint over oil with acrylic,” really shouldn't be broken, but then again, breaking rules or deviating from standard practice is where innovation

can occur. On the other hand, I often hear students making comments like, “But so & so instructor told me that when painting XYZ, I should ALWAYS use this color.”, or “Never use XYZ color.”, etc. I would caution you to investigate any statements like this that are not necessarily considered to be best practice guidelines.

🌸 Signature style?!? I can’t imagine only ever painting one subject or style? OR I know I need to find my style as quickly as possible

Oftentimes we get the impression that most successful artists have a painting style that is recognizable as distinctly their own. While that may be true for some, it also may be the case that the works we see are only the ones they, or the gallery(s) representing them, choose to show. Artists may very well create all sorts of other styles or even work in other mediums as part of their regular creative practice. Having one series or more in a recognizable “style” certainly helps within the marketplace side of art, but there is no necessity to limit yourself to just one style. Either way, many artists thrive on experimenting, and most have a desire to continue to learn and evolve their creative practice.

🎨🎨🎨 Bonus: “But, in the photo it looks like xyz?!?” 🎨🎨🎨

When starting out, most of us naturally focus on accuracy as the best measure of success, but I would highly recommend a different approach. I think a better starting point would be to focus on mastering design fundamentals first, as well as just getting the feel of the paint, in all its different versions, and experimenting with different tools and techniques.