

DEAR ERIC COLUMN - SEPTEMBER

DEVELOPING A PERSONAL STYLE

Dear Eric

How does one go about developing their own style?

Jenny in Indiana

Jenny,

Just disciplined, thoughtful, creative painting without the use of a photographic projection will help you to be on your way. I answered this common question in the following email newsletter recently sent to my collectors:

The greatest asset any artist has is his or her individual creativity. This seems obvious, but unfortunately this may not be understood, especially with regard to the art market in general and national competitions. Over the years I have become increasingly aware of how the art market is driven by the media- especially the photograph. It has overtaken the advertising industry- illustrators are no more. The photograph is viewed as reality, but it is far from it.

Several years ago, we were at the Vatican, and I was surprised by the bus loads of tourists who were not looking at Michelangelo's masterpiece, the Pieta, but rather taking photographs to be viewed later. This is the new reality for many young adults.

Nowhere am I more aware of the dominance of the photograph than in national art competitions. Painstakingly detailed realistic paintings can receive the top awards (why it looks just like a photograph!) and yet the public, and even the judges are turning a blind eye to the fact that the painting is nothing more than a projected photograph with a careful coloring applied. Even worse, the computer industry has helped out by developing Photo Editing Software with "Impressionist, Value Distribution, and whatever type of painting you want" buttons. The award should be for the patience required to fill in the blanks, like a coloring book, but certainly not for creativity! I have seen it a number of times: a student with superficial knowledge of painting shows me a painting of theirs that won an award -- but it's nothing more than a copy of a photograph- Photo-shopped or not.

Creativity is rare, and the artists who have the courage to express their own creativity, coupled with the disciplined knowledge, skill, and experience of painting, should be celebrated.

Keep your brush wet!

Eric



AWS 2012 Gold Medal of Honor Award