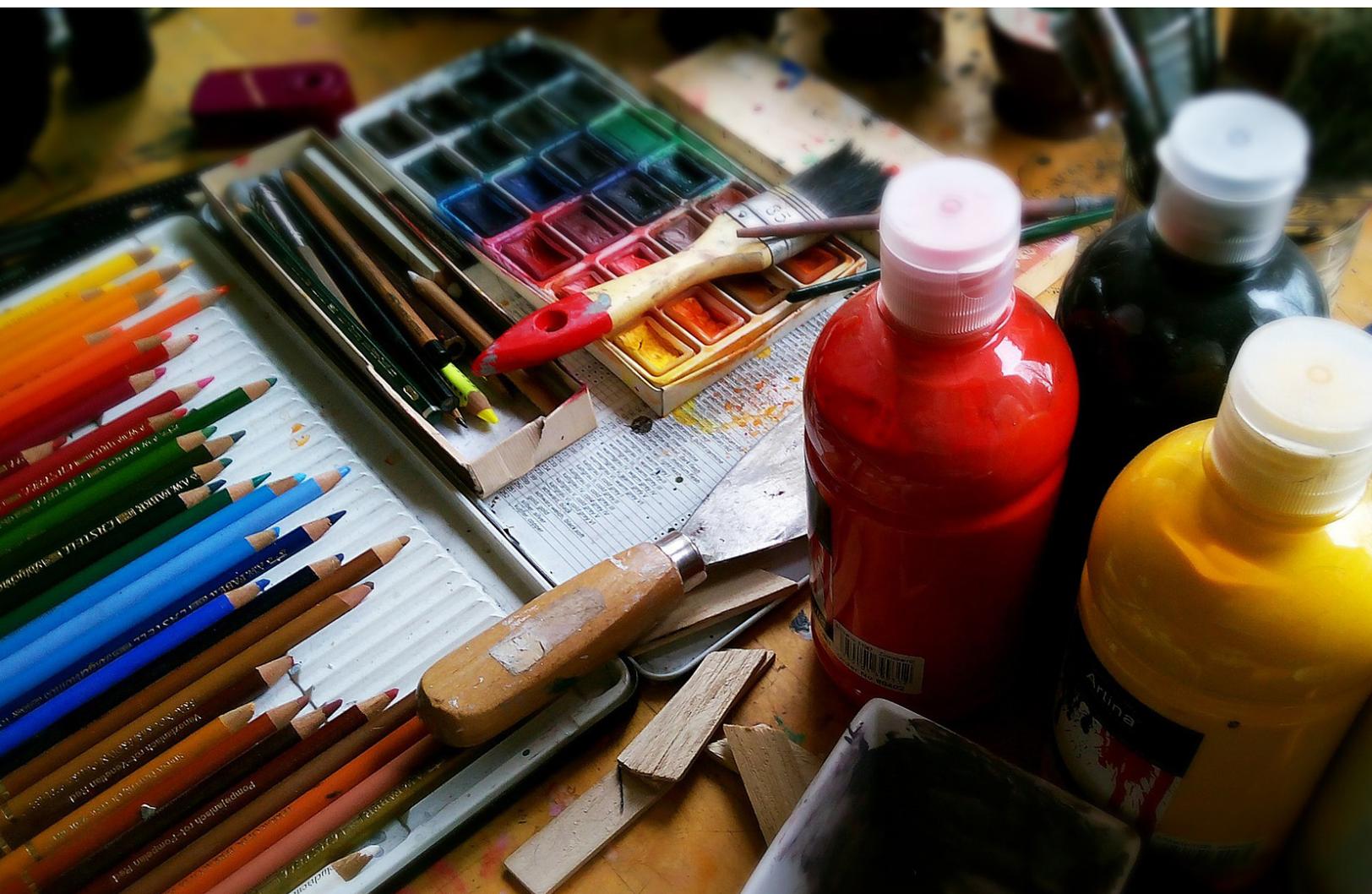


How to Discover Your Artistic Style & Voice

An Honest, In-Depth Guide



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Introduction

A lot of artists start pressuring themselves to find their artistic style way too soon in their journeys.

I was there myself a couple of years ago, anxious to create artwork that *really* had myself in it and that showed a distinctive style that everyone would perceive as my own.

Through years of practice I had attained decent drawing/painting skills and had a vast amount of knowledge about Art Fundamentals thanks to my background in Graphic Design. However, when I saw a finished piece of mine, I didn't know where other artists' influence on me ended and where my own intrinsic style began.

I felt behind looking at the amazing work created by artists plastered all over social media that were, very distinctly, theirs. I wondered if I was ever going to be able to get to that level myself. What's more, I wondered if I'd ever be able to call myself an artist.

I deeply regretted having wasted so many years not giving my artwork the importance it deserved. I spent hours thinking about where I would be today if I had started seriously working on my art sooner.

Looking back, all those negative feelings only made the process of finding of my own artistic voice longer and more painful than it needed to be.

In this workbook I'll be sharing the mental shifts that allowed me to find my style organically, as well as practical exercises that you can apply to help you get there sooner.

Part. 1

Three Principles to Keep in Mind as Your Journey Progresses

*“Learn to poke around. Take your time. Go slow.
Get down on your hands and knees and dig around.
Sit in one place for an hour at a time
and let the world come to you.”*

-John Bates

1. It's all about the journey and not the destination

A huge part of an artist's life is exploration and self-analysis. It's through smaller studies and explorations that we get to know ourselves as artists, discover our supplies/techniques of choice and gain confidence to take on larger projects.

A big shift for me happened when I started giving my sketchbooks and smaller pieces just as much importance as finished, polished paintings. I was able to advance my skills with these smaller studies *before* jumping to the canvas and all of this translated into higher quality, more original artwork.

I 100% believe that three-to-four faster drawings or sketches a week are going to get you *much* farther in terms of progressing artistically, than completing one larger painting every 5 months. Make your art a *habit*.

It's essential to understand that even after you think you've found your own artistic voice and style, you're going to keep evolving as you learn more about art (and about yourself). Most artists who have long lasting success are those who consistently step out of their comfort zones and reinvent themselves throughout the years.

There's no "finish line" here.

Acknowledge the point you're currently at, whether you're just starting to learn about Art Fundamentals, or you're progressing your skills with your particular drawing/painting medium of choice, embrace it and *enjoy* it!

Ask yourself:

Have you managed to make your art a habit? How many times do you work on your art a week? What are the topics or techniques that you feel you should be working on currently?



2. Great artwork demonstrates both technical ability and is able to communicate a message

Unless you create art as a sort of private therapy or hobby, drawings and paintings are meant to be seen and appreciated by others. I believe we're able to build bridges with others through art, even though this might not be our intention when we're starting out (or we might be unaware that this is what we wish to do).

Think of your favorite songs, movies or books. Most likely, you love them not only because their creators are skilled musicians, film directors or writers, but because something in you *resonated* with their message and you were *moved* by them in some way.

I'm going to encourage you to push yourself (kindly) in order to continue progressing your cold technical skills, *while* you look into yourself and give thought to *why* you feel compelled to create what you create. Give thought to the message you ultimately want to put out into the world through your work.

If you're still building up a solid foundation of Art Fundamentals (which is an absolutely essential phase that should not be skipped), there's no reason for you to be worrying about finding your artistic style or creating super meaningful pieces just yet.

Always remember that seeking perfection in everything is actually a hindrance for creatives, so be kind to yourself and *always* remember to see both what you need to work at, as well as what you excel at, in everything you do.

Ask yourself:

What's important to you? Are there any topics that you feel strongly about? How would you like your audience to feel when they see your art?

3. Your art style is already inside of you, but you need to peel back those layers

Every single one of us is unique. Nobody in the world has gone through the same life experiences and has been influenced by the same mix of people, literature, movies, music, design, culture, etc. that you've been influenced by.

Because our art is directly tied to our personalities and identities, we have to go through the process of discovering who we are in order to create original and meaningful work.

When we're just starting out, it's easy to get distracted by other artists' work and to immediately want to go online to find inspiration for our next piece. However, I'm going to challenge you to seek inspiration/motivation inside yourself, as opposed to looking for it externally.

Tutorials are fine, if you're looking to learn a specific medium or technique. However, once you've learned it, *limit* that time on social media and try to come up with your own ideas. Work on your art, and then come back to share once you're done (getting your work out there and obtaining constructive feedback is essential).

It's okay to get ideas from other artists, but always combine specific aspects from a *variety* of pieces and create your own original drawing or painting. Also, start working from photographic references and/or from life as soon as you can.

Ask yourself:

Who are you? What are those things that make you different from others? What lights you up? What are you drawn to and why?

Part. 2

What Makes an Art Style?

"We are the sum total of our experiences. Those experiences – be they positive or negative – make us the person we are, at any given point in our lives. And, like a flowing river, those same experiences, and those yet to come, continue to influence and reshape the person we are, and the person we become."

-B.J. Neblett



An art style is made up of both objective and subjective aspects:

I. The technical, objective aspects:

-Artistic medium(s): Graphite, charcoal, watercolor, gouache, acrylics, oils, etc.

-Subject of choice: Still life, portrait, animals, landscapes, indoor scenery, etc.

-Specific techniques: Particular ways the artist uses the medium(s) on hand.

-Substrate: Paper, canvas, wood, glass, etc.

-Format: Large/medium/small + Square/rectangle/round/multi-panel

-Level of realism-*abstraction*: (Hyperrealism/Photorealism, some degree of stylization, mixture of figuration with abstraction, full abstraction, etc.)

-Use of Elements of Art (Color, Line, Shape, Texture, etc.):
Is there a specific element that overpowers others?
Does the artist have any distinctive ways of using different Elements of Art?

II. It's meaning, subjective aspects:

-Overall mood: Dark, calm, whimsical, dramatic, etc.

-The idea/message behind the works: This can be general/specific, complex/simple, paramount or commonplace.

What can you tell me about your own art style so far, in relation to each of these categories? **Collect at least three different pieces you've created recently and fill in the following.*

-Artistic medium(s): _____

-Subject of choice: _____

-Specific techniques: _____

-Substrate: _____

-Format: _____

-Level of realism-abstraction: _____

-Use of Elements of Art (Color, Line, Shape, Texture, etc.): _____

-Overall mood: _____

-The idea/story of your work: _____

Part. 3

Dissecting Our Influences

"In searching for myself, I have created myself."

-Ljupka Cvetanova

Some Tips to Apply Moving Forward

-Create a Pinterest inspiration board in which to collect images that inspire you.

Include anything from color schemes you'd like to use, textures, photographs, general moods that speak to you, etc. *If you'd rather do this physically, take clippings out of magazines and start putting them together in a folder, scrapbook, or paste them on a cardboard. Refer to this board whenever you're planning a new color combo, style, etc. for a new piece.

-Remember it's *incredibly* important to stay consistent.

It doesn't matter if you only have 20 minutes to draw or paint a day, just make sure to make your artistic progress a priority. Establish specific days for yourself that you'll work on your art, as this helps you stay in check.

-It's okay to find another artist's work online and try to replicate it if you're still learning about Art Fundamentals and basic techniques. However, once you're past this initial stage, it's imperative to start looking into your own self for inspiration.

Something I've found helpful is going through what I like to call *incubation periods*. These are specific periods of time in which I keep myself from actively seeking new external stimulus and *really* take time to digest everything I've taken in. This allows you to sort through the styles and subjects that have called to you and make something from them, while diminishing the constant bombardment of new visual stimuli.

-Realize that inspiration can come from *anything* (as long as you stay receptive).

The color combinations of different pieces of fruit at the supermarket, a flower bouquet, a movie, the feelings that come up during a night out with friends. There's no need to immediately seek inspiration in the form of other artists' work.

-Keep a journal or write morning pages.

Free form writing is *incredibly* useful in terms of getting to know yourself and breaking through creative blocks. Whenever you can, take time to do "mental dumps" on paper. Write out anything that's on your mind (what's stressing you out, what makes you happy, what you're thankful for, etc.). In time, you'll be able to find patterns in your daily thoughts, which can help you come to conclusions about what's important to you.

Thanks so much for reading and using this workbook! I hope it has helped you make some discoveries and has given you some ideas to apply moving forward.

I look forward to helping you and encouraging you to keep going!

Lots of love,
Erika