

### **A few words on practice and picture making.**

I've collected these from a book called **The Little Book of Talent** by **Daniel Coyle**. He wrote **The Talent Code** first and this latest version is a book of tips that is somewhat of a summation. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in improving their skills.

I believe "talent" boils down to a whole lot practice. A type of practice called **deep practice**. When you do deep practice, you're rewiring your brain. Wrapping myelin around neurons and hardwiring new pathways. I can't stress enough practice practice practice.

### **Here are some tips and thoughts on practice and picture making:**

- **To do deep practice you must reach**, stretching your experience envelope just beyond your present skill level every day. Doesn't take much time. Around 15 minutes. If you're comfortable while painting, you must reach further to improve your skills.
- **Do deep practice daily for 15+ minutes as mentioned above**. Or more. Whatever time you can carve out of your day. Draw or paint. Or both. But do it daily and you'll find yourself learning and improving quickly.
- **See failing in a positive light**. Know that if you're failing, you're learning. You're acquiring new knowledge and honing new skills. Have confidence that with practice you'll improve. A lot.
- **Tolerate the discomfort**. If you feel fear while practicing, you're doing it right.
  - **Here's some tips for getting started and dealing with the fear:**
    - **Don't tie yourself to the outcome**. In my experience, while staring at my paper or sketchbook I always tell myself "this is an experiment, I'm learning, and I don't care how it turns out" with the intent of playing and having fun. I'm always surprised by the enjoyment and freedom I experience in the process with this attitude. And pictures will always look different than you want or expect. They have lives of their own.
    - **Dirty your paper**. Scuff it up. Splash it. Nothing is more intimidating than a pristine, white piece of paper.
    - **Set limitations on:**
      - **Use a limited palette**: Analogous colors? A triad? B&W? or
      - **Subject**: "Today I'm focused on drawing that vase that's difficult to draw" or "I'm drawing people at the coffee shop to study noses" or "composition" or
      - **Paper size**
      - **You know** what you need to practice. And reach.

- ***Be prepared:*** Do some quick B&W thumbnail value/composition studies of your subject or idea using pencil or wash to use as a guide.
- ***Paint or draw an image several+ times,*** exploring the many options. Again, consider them playful experiments.
- ***Cultivate your ability to visualize:*** Close your eyes and imagine the act of creating the painting. Visualize every step. What composition? What values? What brush? What colors? Horizontal or vertical? Water first or pigment first? What questions arise?
- ***Tell your inner critic to shut up.*** Be gentle but realistic when self-critiquing.
- ***A successful painting can have a lot of mistakes.*** Use the mistakes as lessons but dwell on the successes. Consider what you've learned and move on.
- ***If you want to improve your drawing skills, hand eye coordination*** practice drawing objects and scenes. Carry a small sketchbook and pencil or pen all the time. Sketch at every opportunity with simple line, edge to edge with no half tones, but with consideration for composition. Again, frequency outweighs time.
- **Explore freely and with curiosity during your practice.**
- **Draw and paint what you're interested in or passionate about.** Follow your heart.
- **Stare at what you want to become. What you want to paint like.** Who's your favorite artist or genre? If you don't have one find one. And STARE. Look closely. Keep them in your sites.
- **Steal!** I think it was Picasso who said, "Good artists borrow, great artists steal."
- **Watch your fellow students.** Everyone does things differently.
- **If you reach a plateau** or get stuck and can't seem to get beyond it, switch out techniques, exercises, materials, color palette or subjects. Do it different. It may jumpstart a new idea or process.

There's so much more that can be said about practice and picture making. But I hope you'll find this helpful in getting going and maintaining your practice. And, if you have ideas on how to make the process of picture making easier please share with us!