

AI on Art- Fish and Art

Like many of us, Helen Frankenthaler turned to art to seek refuge from the stresses of her life. It is indeed tempting to consider the practice of art as a tidy compartment, isolated and insulated from the tumult of the rest of one's life. It becomes a precious cloistered activity which has no bearing on what life tosses one's way.

If we accept that painting entails using a visual language to communicate a personal message to others, we realize that segmenting oneself entirely is not easy to do. Frankenthaler's colorful, loose and creative work emerged in the environment of pseudo-freedom she felt when she painted but it also reflects who she is. In fact all painting, whether figurative or non-figurative, is thought to be autobiographical, revealing the person's inner self, personality and life experiences. So be careful, when you paint you are also exposing yourself to others!!

At the moment I have one foot firmly in the business world and the other in the art world. Perhaps my business side can inform the artistic side. I have been working on improving "service to clients" as this is an ever important consideration for any business. How to recruit customer-oriented employees and how to train them to be user friendly is a constant effort. The latest success story in this arena comes to us by way of the Pikes Fish Market in Seattle. They have developed an approach that assures customer satisfaction and higher fish sales. This group's success has everyone's attention. Here's how they do it: There are four basic premises which I believe one can readily adapt to painting.

The first is "**PLAY**". The sales force is encouraged to take a light hearted approach to their hard work. And play they do! When the person serving the customer calls out the order, everyone else shouts the order in chorus. The person filling the order literally throws the item to the person ordering. So that at any given moment there are fish, crabs and other forms of seafood launched into the air! The workers have fun doing it and the customers enjoy the spectacle. Many are attracted by the show and stop to observe only to decide they too want to buy a fish. The PLAY concept is readily transferred

to painting. In fact, we often hear artists referring to their work as “I had fun doing it”. I believe PLAY is a key factor in one’s growth as an artist because it is at the root of exploration, creativity and discovery.

The second concept is: “**CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE**”. How this can have a salutary effect in business is easy to see. If the staff chooses to be happy, cooperative, friendly and hard working, you will have a very effective staff that your customers will be pleased with. Similarly if you approach your painting eagerly, with a positive attitude, with confidence, with an expectation that it will work and that you will have fun doing it, this too will show in your work. It’s your life and your choice how you want to experience it. Choose being upbeat.

The third concept is: “**BE PRESENT**”. By this they mean, give the customer your undivided attention. Be attentive to your duties, do not be distracted, do not let your mind wander, concentrate on the task at hand, and do not let other pre-occupations distract you from your task. Again the business applications are obvious. They apply similarly to painting. If you are distracted, not paying attention to what you are doing, your work will suffer. This need not mean that you need long periods of uninterrupted time to do this. You can choose to BE PRESENT even when all you are able to extract from your busy schedule is just a limited amount of time. You will be amazed at how much you can accomplish and how much better you will feel.

Lastly, the Seattle Fish Market folks want their sales force to: “**MAKE THEIR DAY**”. They want their staff to go out of their way to acknowledge their customers, to smile and greet them, to say something positive to them, to respond to their questions as though they matter. Painting is a solitary activity, and this concept is focused on others. Nonetheless having a “MAKE THEIR DAY” mind set when you are painting will enable you to communicate more clearly and with more impact.

Of course if you are also engaged in the business of selling your work, then these concepts apply to the sales process as well.