
The OTHER Artistic ‘Perspective’

June 12, 2017 by [Mary Pettis](https://blog.oilpaintersofamerica.com/author/mary-pettis/) · [6 Comments](#)
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(<https://blog.oilpaintersofamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Cycle-of-Lilies-29x48-2017-FINAL.jpg>)

“The Cycle of Lilies” by Mary Pettis

Becoming more self-aware (a requirement for clarifying our artistic vision) often results in a curious irony. Going inward to find enchantment and beauty in our everyday lives invariably leads us to an acknowledgement of the tremendous gratitude we hold for others. We are each connected to those who have come before us!

One of the great lessons in art and in fact, life, is that there is no such thing as a self-made woman or man. We, as individuals, are each products of the creativity of the parents, teachers, mentors and friends who have nurtured us, taught us, shaped us, inspired us and showed us the way.

Also consider the many people we have never met from whom we have benefited because of their paintings, their poetry, their music, screenplays & books. We walk around with their melodies stuck in our heads, their ideas in our hearts and their words on our lips: For example, did you know that every time you state that *“Time is Money”* or you are *“snug as a bug in a rug”* you are quoting Ben Franklin?

Or when you vow to *“turn over a new leaf”* or declare *“Honesty is the best policy”* that Cervantes said that?

Or when we are *“off on a wild goose chase”* or *“split our sides with laughter”* or say *“Mum’s the word”*, we are quoting the Man of La Mancha?

In the business of making paintings, I know that I can hardly find an art magazine or periodical that does not contain this sentence: *“My goal*

as an artist is to capture the fleeting effects of light!" Some creative soul decades ago came up with that lovely and appropriate phrase, and, it stuck. It is woven into the fabric of our artistic discourse and now, (sigh), there is no escaping it!

The point, though, is how often wise and learned observations become a part of us, even though we have no idea where they came from! We are connected.

I think of those who have influenced me and I pause at the responsibility behind the question, *"Will any be influenced by me?"* Artists know that art endures.



(<https://blog.oilpaintersofamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Cottonwoods-and-Prairie-Flowers-30x40.jpg>)

"Cottonwoods and Prairie Flowers" by Mary Pettis



(<https://blog.oilpaintersofamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/In-Harmony-II-30x40.jpg>)

"In Harmony II" by Mary Pettis

I remember, as a young child, sitting on the floor looking above the couch at a landscape painting and getting totally lost in this majestic place that had a lake, mountains and a huge cottonwood tree. I wondered what it would be like to look out my window and to see mountains instead of cornfields. I imagined myself sitting on the elephant trunk roots and smelling the moist morning air. Well, a few decades later I found that forgotten picture in the basement of my mother's home. By now I recognized my childhood escape as a copy of a famous Bierstadt painting. My Mom had displayed that first Christmas gift from my dad in a place of prominence for all those years, and once shared with me: *"You know, I never did like that picture!"* But it hung there when I was young, and I believe that the creativity and insight of a man born in 1830 had an influence on my life.

We are called to embrace the melting pot of influences that have helped make us who we are, and, with gratitude and humility, re-examine and rediscover who we can be. Sometimes in the frenzy and fear we lose our perspective.

Artist and author M. C. Richards said, *"All the arts we practice are apprenticeship. The big art is our life."* This thought comforts me when the demands of real life interrupt my painting time.

I have read that as a culture, we tend to define creativity too narrowly. I wholeheartedly agree. Nearly everything we do requires making creative choices, although that fact is seldom recognized. Everyday life is raw material. Through mindfulness, we can sculpt each day as we wish. How we respond to others, the way in which we dress, set up our homes or studios, the music we listen to, the books we read, how we spend our time...how we problem solve or overcome obstacles; these are all expressions of our individual creativity. This may be who we really are, and who will seep into our work. These are the qualities that we bring to the easel.

Finally, in a state of gratitude and with a sense of connectedness, we can find enchantment and beauty in the simplest things. Be joyful. Let's slow down and listen to a cardinal or the children's voices. Experience the sensuality of existence! Look more deeply at the vibration of the yellow and lavender in the wild prairie plants. In the grand scheme of things, we are so very fortunate! Let's stop a moment and be grateful that we can look at the world through an artist's perspective!