

Learning to Paint



Sunflowers 2016

Learning something new later in life can be a bit of a challenge. After my 2nd child went off to college, I decided to try my hand at painting. A dear gardening friend/art teacher began giving classes rather close to my home and I thought, “Why not try this?”

My first art classes involved acrylic paints. The paints dry quickly on the canvas and clean up is easy with soap and water. The very first class we learned about shapes and shadows. The teacher, [Joann Augur](#), provides thumbnails of paintings as inspiration. You pick one and then attempt to paint it in your own style.



I remember that first class. I literally knew nothing. Gesso? What is that? Alizarin red? It was all so foreign to me. Putting the brush to the canvas was intimidating. Where do I start? What colors to choose? What do I paint first? But Joann’s kind and gentle guidance, made the experience less painful.

Here is my very first acrylic painting done in the August 2015. The purpose of this lesson was to train our eye to look at *shapes* not the object. Where is the light coming from? What is the shape of the shadow? Though it’s hard to tell, but this is an abstract version of an apple. I recall being so proud of this!



My very first painting in acrylics

Here are some details about the class I take. The session typically last 4-6 weeks and we focus on a topic~~color,

perspective, landscape, faces, values. The class is held on either Tuesday or Wednesday for 3 hours; 1-4 p.m. or 2-5 p.m. The cost is usually around \$225.00 or so.

Here are some other earlier paintings from 2015. Joann told us to paint our shoe. My shoe is gray and splattered with paint and stains. I took artistic license and changed the colors.



What I love about the class is that people with different levels of experience are welcomed. Some have never even picked up a brush and others have been painting for years. Joann is such a good teacher she is able to provide challenges for the more experienced students, while taking time with the newbies.

On to 2016. This landscape was a happy accident. I failed to completely paint the background before I added the trees. Sometimes mistakes can be a good thing as it looks like the sun is peaking through the dark sky.



Feeling a little more confident after a few months of classes, I decided to try a seasonal Valentine painting for my home and it was the first one I framed. I display it every February and it makes me happy!



One of my favorite classes was learning about the Masters and trying to replicate their paintings.



Cezanne inspired oranges/color



Long necks were a signature of Modigliani



Sergei Bongart class

In 2017, our Winter class focused on color and we learned how to paint flowers. At this point, my fears of painting have subsided and I have relaxed the death grip on my brush.



In the Spring of 2018, we focused on painting faces and people.



In addition to acrylic painting classes, I branch out to try oil painting. A few of my master painter friends are students at the [Scottsdale Artist School](#). Talk about getting out of my comfort zone! Oil paints are so different from acrylics~~they are much more expensive, don't dry quickly and require a different set of blending skills. Instead of painting from an image, you paint from a real life set up. That first class I felt like a deer in headlights.



The real life set up~~learning to paint metals (copper)

This was my 3rd oil painting attempt. Both workshops were given by [Nancy Chaboun](#), a fabulous artist and teacher. I highly recommend taking a class from her. She is delightful and very talented.



Since each student has a different perspective on the still life set up, each painting is a bit different.



Still life set up



During this time, I continued to take acrylic classes, which are much closer to home. Below are a few I completed in 2018. You can see my progress, I hope!



Last year, I spent some time finally finishing some paintings that were incomplete. During the 3 hour class, I rarely finish a painting in class. If I like where the painting is heading, I tend to finish it at home. If not, it sits for months until I decided to either paint over it or finish it.



This is one of my favorites, inspired by Romona Youngquist. Not only is she a talented painter, but she also bakes beautiful breads. To see more of her work, click [here](#). I would love to copy everything she paints.



Last summer was the first time I took my supplies and easel on vacation. It was a relaxing way to paint. The flowers below were inspired by Cecilia Rosslee. You can purchase her paintings on Etsy. Click [here](#) for the link.



Inspired by Cecilia Rosslee



As I start a new art session, I look forward to getting better at this. Painting is a bit like golf. One day, you play a spectacular game and the next day you can't even hit the ball. I have only taken two classes so far this year and neither painting is even close to being finished.



Tried my hand at watercolor/gouache – Summer 2018

If you live in Phoenix and want to start painting, Joann Augur is located at the [Studio for Creative Development](#) at 12th Street and Glendale.

I hope this post inspires you to try something new. I find as we get older, it is so easy to get stuck in the same routine. Our paths to learn are not as available and we must continue to stretch ourselves, or we will become old and boring. Maybe someday, I will be able to sell my work.

Wishing you a creative Wednesday!

Mary