

# STUDIO NOTES

BY FRANKA

## THE POWER OF ART

### HOW ART CAN CHANGE OUR MOOD



One early morning in autumn. Coffee is too cold. A look in the mirror says YUCK! It is pouring outside. Nobody seems to understand what I am saying. – The day is probably beyond saving... Except: A few minutes of powerful dancing or listening to the Indian version of “Jingle Bells Rock” works wonders. Who does not get goose bumps when the radio plays a song that catapults us straight back to the painful time of our first heartbreak. Same goes for a particular movie scene that makes us cry over and over again. No doubt- art has an impact on our emotions. But how does it work? And has painting and paintings the same effect?

As a loyal reader of my newsletter, you surely know that I aim to transport and evoke emotions with my artwork to interact with the beholder. To illustrate how a painting effected me is to tell you about one of my recent experiences. I have been to the “Musée d’Orsay” in Paris. And this is where I have experienced a childlike joyful moment. I found myself looking at van Gogh’s “Starry Night over the Rhone” with my mouth open in amazement. I have been captivated by the atmosphere with the shining stars and their reflections. The vivid, fascinating brushwork, the radiant colour palette, and the serene subject matter. Although the painting has a certain dynamic energy the scene is calm and quiet. The only witnesses of the scene seem to be the two people in the foreground of the painting and the beholder. I became really emotional about this painting. So many times I had seen it’s prints before but seeing the real painting was totally different. In addition, I had to share that special moment with many many more visitors that day.

So, yes: Paintings can affect my moods. It impacts the release of happiness hormones, reduces stress and it can also encourage creativity. Additionally, it can initiate a social discourse or it can be an experience in community with others. But how does that really work? I am not a scientist, but as a painter I try to understand and use such patterns for my creative process.

#### • *What do artists use to provoke emotions*

Artists convey e.g. happiness, sadness, loneliness or liveliness basically by using forms, colours and composition. Artworks mirror the inner world of the artist as well as the beholder’s. It can trigger memories and thoughts. It can even contribute to a healing process, to self-reflection or to a deeper self-understanding, though it does not work equally for everyone. You can see at a painting analysing the composition, the reasoning behind the selected colour schemes. Or you can feel a painting. Both methods have it’s value and are equally valid. For the purpose of this edition of the newsletter

I would like to focus on the emotional aspects. What did van Gogh’s painting made me feel. Usually, I don’t like night hikes or dark streets. But I was fascinated by the beauty of this painting, by the bright lights of the stars, by the reflections in the water. The infinity of the night sky with its hidden mystical ideas and stories has an enormous attraction. The calm, deep water comforts me. In contrast to my usual feelings towards darkness, the quietness of the night scene did not frighten me but rather soothed me.



Vincent van Gogh “Starry Night over the Rhone”

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Van Gogh used the contrasts of dark and bright colours and the reflection to maximise the calming effects of the lights. Lights in the night are symbols of hope and warmth. The two people in the front, the only humans in the painting see to tell me that I am not alone in the infinity of the universe. For me, this is one of THE examples of how art transports emotions. ...

- ***But how does it work in our brains, in our bodies?***

Scientific studies show a connection between viewing works of art, releasing dopamine and the production of endorphins. Dopamine and endorphins are messenger substances that trigger feelings of happiness. Engaging in a creative process can have the same effect as experiencing art. This is what art therapy is about. It aims to reactivate the healing powers of creativity. Meaning, you don't need knowledge or special skills because these are bio-chemical processes in our bodies.

For me personally, there is nothing more liberating, more relaxing or more motivating than creating a new piece of art. The first contact with the canvas often seems rough but it is also empowering. Some people might have respect being put in front of a white sheet of paper or even fear a blank canvas. But overcoming that is already part of the journey as you deal with a negative emotion or you even overcome it. And ideally, you turn it into a positive feeling such as starting to paint.

Applying texture on a canvas has an equal effect on my mood. It is empowering when the gesture is energetic, enthusiastic or joyful. On the other hand it can be calming when I work with rhythmic, soft, almost meditative moves. Applying layer after layer of colour can be harmonious, flowing even contemplating. Especially, when I realise there are things beyond my control. For example, when colours mix differently than expected or when the texture develops not as intended. At this moment I have to trust the process and I have to let go. Frankly, this is the best but also the hardest part. Not being in control, but not giving in at the same time. This can be a lesson for life. I chose to believe that the painting will turn out fine. I follow my instincts and trust my abilities. That is satisfying and helps enormously with self-confidence. Maybe the result is not as planned, the colour scheme is completely different but this is part of the history of a painting and thus, it reflects visibly the process. As a result it intensifies an artwork's effect and makes it look even more beautiful. At the same time the process contributes to develop an artist's personal style. It can even boost an artist's self-perception and therefore it can help with personal development. Maybe, we can also trick ourselves into a better mood by using these effects? But I better leave this discussion to the specialists.

- ***Is art simply magic, surprising effects or calculated use of tricks?***

Artists use colours, forms, textures, special motives or symbols to express themselves and to evoke specific reactions. They also play with contrasts aiming for harmony or tension. But how art is perceived depends on other factors as well. Let's have a look at some more concrete examples.

**Colours and emotions:** They say "I see red" when a person is angry or "green with envy" when somebody is jealous. We clearly associate colours with certain emotions. Other cultures for instance refer to the concept of dark and light. An artist's observation of the reality or its inner vision of a subject or scene is reflected in the choice of colours. Monochrome or colourful palette leaves clues for interpretation of a painter's mood or of the message of a painting. Let's play a game: Describe the colour YELLOW without using the actual word.

## News

### Upcoming

- Next Exhibition: 6 November 2025, Whall
- Art-Calendar 2026 is in preparation. Send me a message to reserve your calendar for next year
- Looking for a nice present? New necklaces and earrings are available. Contact me for more information.

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Banana comes to my mind, instantly. You might have thought about using duck or sunflower, perhaps. We associate colours based on our environment, on our cultural background and experience.

It is also our traditional understanding that we distinguish between warm and cold colours. Red, orange and yellow are considered to be in the warm range. Whilst green and blue are perceived as cold colours. There is so many more to effects of colours I would wish to talk to you about... Why dentists prefer pastels in their waiting area or why warning signals are red or why certain brands use certain colours. Perhaps it is worth an article of its own... To illustrate and for your own experience, I show you a range of warm and cold colour pallets.



warm colours

cold colours



**Texture:** 3D effects in a painting are very popular. Texture and haptic effects create layers and thus, they convey visual and emotional depth. The composition of a painting with different materials and different layers invite the beholder to spend more time discovering and exploring the piece of art. These instruments create little adventures, surprising WOW!-moments in the beholders every-day lives. For my paintings it is allowed to touch it, thus you can also have a haptic experience. Therefore, an interaction between the artwork and the beholder reaches a different level since the experience becomes more complex as more senses are involved. Ready for an exercise? Have a look at the examples of textures from my work and try to find words to explain what you see.



**Subjects:** An artist can express its emotions by choosing the subject of the painting. A peaceful landscape with bright colours will be evoke positive emotions such as serenity and a calmness. Whilst a brutal warlike scene or a wild, powerful sea rather represents tension, conflicts and fear. Abstract and organic forms are mainly chosen to express safety and relaxation. Geometric forms or realistic illustrations stand for clarity and stability.



A calm, sunny landscape will be perceived as serenity and as a peaceful ambiance.

Whilst a dark, powerful wave at the impetuous sea will rather represent tension, conflicts and fear.



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**Expressive Styles:** The more expressive a piece of art is, the more contentious it is. Vivid paintings often provoke. They stimulate questions and discussions, sometimes they even cause discomfort. In contrast, paintings from the period of realism are exact images of the reality. Thus, it evokes emotions like familiarity, security, connection and it can also comfort the beholder.

Artists often combine opposing styles aiming to create either harmony or tension like for example Abstract Realism. It is based on a real idea or on a template from real life and it uses simplification, distortion or abstraction. Take my painting "Mystic Forest" (below). Based on the impression of old tree trunks, I have used different materials, basic forms to create the impression of a forest. The colours are not only green and brownish, but also orange and blue in the original version of the painting. Until now every beholder has recognised the forest, but there have been different interpretations ranging from seeing a "witch forest" or "mystic forest" scene to dawn in the forest or even a painting aiming to denounce pollution. Of course, it is also the natural materials and the sensory stimulation resulting in this perception. Do you share these impressions? I am interested in your thoughts!



I know, this edition has been longer than usual. But there are so many more stories to tell... Hopefully it became clearer to you why it is so important to me that my paintings transport emotions and that you connect with a painting. For me that is what art and paintings' purpose is about: A connection between the artist and you the beholder. What would art be without an interaction between the painter, the singer, the dancer, even the cook if the recipient of the artistic message would not get involved, would not reflect about what he/she sees, hears, feels, tastes. Art is not only a one way street. It is a constant exchange of ideas, thoughts, emotions.

That having said: I am looking forward to hear your ideas about this newsletter, my paintings or simply about life! You are welcome to send it to: [contact@franka-boehm.eu](mailto:contact@franka-boehm.eu)