

Finding Your Authentic Voice as an Artist

A 4-Week Creative Workbook for Visual Artists

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A Gentle Beginning

How many of you have watched *Landscape Artist of the Year* or *Portrait Artist of the Year*? Sometimes the judges choose a painting that surprises us. They pass over technically perfect work and choose something looser, more expressive, even a little rough around the edges.

Why? - Because they are not just looking for skill.
They are looking for a **voice**. Something unmistakably *that artist*.

This raises a question many artists quietly ask themselves:

“How do I find my style?”

As if it is something hidden.
As if one morning you simply wake up and have it.

But your artistic voice is not something you suddenly discover.
It is something you **uncover over time**.

It emerges through curiosity.
Through persistence.
Through experimenting, exploring, and sometimes struggling.

And often — through staying with a painting when it feels uncomfortable.

This workbook is designed to help you do exactly that.
Not by forcing a style. But by helping you **notice the patterns, instincts, and creative fingerprints already forming in your work**.

Your authentic voice is a combination of:

- Your personality
- Your life experiences
- Your struggles and joys
- The marks and textures you naturally make
- The colours you return to again and again
- The emotions and spiritual truths you express

It may not be recognisable to others at first. But it will become recognisable **to you**.
And that is where a true artistic voice begins.

“Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.”
Henry Ward Beecher

The Three Foundations of Artistic Voice

Before we begin the weekly exercises, it helps to understand three simple ideas that shape the journey of every artist.

These will guide everything in this workbook.

1. Curiosity Over Perfection

Your artistic voice often begins with **what naturally draws you**.

Think about your past artwork.
You might notice patterns like:

- Colours you repeatedly return to
- Certain marks or gestures you often make
- Subjects or themes that keep appearing

These are not accidents. They are **creative fingerprints**.

Curiosity is often the first whisper of your authentic voice.

2. Push Through the “Ugly Stage”

Many people think the hardest part of painting is the blank canvas.

But often the real challenge comes later
The **UGLY stage**.
That moment when:

- The painting feels chaotic
- Nothing seems to work
- You think you’ve ruined it
- You feel tempted to scrape it off

Almost every strong painting goes through this stage.

It is not failure. It is **transition**.
It is the space between what was... and what is becoming.

The artists who develop a strong voice, are rarely the most naturally talented.
They are often the ones who simply **stay with the painting a little longer**.

Often the breakthrough lives one layer beyond where you want to stop.

3. Learn - Then Transform

Copying is not something artists should feel ashamed of.

In fact, it has always been part of learning.

Many great artists studied and recreated work they admired.

Copying teaches:

- Composition
- Colour relationships
- Technique
- Mark-making
- Visual awareness

Your voice emerges when you begin to change things:

- Adjust the colours
- Shift the composition
- Alter the marks
- Let your instincts take over

But copying is only the **beginning**.

Your voice strengthens when it connects to purpose.

Why do you create?

For some, it's healing.

For some, exploration.

For some, communicating spiritual truths and mystery.

When your intention is clear, your decisions become clearer.

Colour.

Texture.

Movement.

Composition.

Influence shapes you, Interpretation defines you, but Purpose helps anchors YOUR voice.

How to Use This Workbook

This program is designed as a **4-week creative journey**.

Each week includes **three sessions**.

Suggested time: **30–90 minutes per session**

You can move through it **at your own pace**.

Some exercises may feel easier than others.

Some may feel more enjoyable. You might want to journal your responses.

If an exercise feels difficult, simply move on and come back to it later, if you want to.

The goal is not to produce perfect finished pieces. The goal is to **listen to your creative instincts** and begin recognising the patterns that form your artistic voice.

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."
Maya Angelou

Week 1 - Freedom & Exploration

Theme: Releasing expectation and reconnecting with intuition.

Many artists begin by overthinking.

This week is about **loosening control** and allowing instinct to lead.

“Creativity takes courage.” — Henri Matisse

Session 1 - Automatic Mark-Making

Set a timer for **10–20 minutes**.

Paint freely with **no plan**.

Allow your hand to move naturally across the surface.

Do not try to make something “good”.

Just respond to the movement of your hand.

Reflection

- What gestures or shapes did my hand naturally create?
- Which movements felt effortless or satisfying?
- Were there any surprises I want to explore further?

Session 2 - Spontaneous Colour Study

Choose **3–5 colours** that reflect your current mood.

Create one or several small studies without planning a composition.

Simply respond to colour relationships.

Reflection

- What do these colours say about my inner state?
- Are there colour combinations I return to naturally?
- Which colours excite me or make me uncomfortable?

Session 3 - Texture & Material Play

Experiment with materials such as:

- Acrylic mediums
- Gels
- Pastels
- Charcoal
- Found materials

Let the physical experience guide you.

Reflection

- Which textures feel most “me”?
- Do I prefer bold textures or subtle ones?
- How does my body respond while creating them?

Week 2 - Focus & Constraint

Theme: Discovering patterns by narrowing choices.

Limitation often leads to surprising creativity.

“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.”

— Vincent van Gogh

Session 1 - Monochromatic Painting

Create a piece using **only one colour** and its variations.

Explore tone, transparency, and layering.

Reflection

- What gestures emerged with limited colour?
- Did this constraint change my decision-making?
- How does this colour express emotion?

Session 2 - One Tool, Many Marks

Choose a **single tool**, such as:

- Palette knife
- Sponge
- Fingers
- Cardboard edge

Use only that tool.

Reflection

- What marks naturally appeared?
- Which gestures felt authentic?
- Did restriction spark new ideas?

Session 3 - Time-Limited Layering

Work in **10-minute layers**.

When the timer ends, add a new layer responding to the previous one.

Avoid overthinking.

Reflection

- What patterns appeared across layers?
- Did I tend to overwork or let the painting breathe?
- Which decisions felt instinctive?

Week 3 - Emotion & Intuition

Theme: Painting from within.

This week invites you to explore emotion and meaning through abstraction.

“Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.”

Thomas Merton

Session 1 - Emotion to Abstract

Choose an emotion or spiritual reflection.

Express it abstractly using colour, gesture, and form.

Reflection

- How did my marks convey emotion?
- Which areas felt effortless?
- Which felt forced?

Session 2 - Sound to Paint

Play music, ambient sound, or a chant.

Allow the rhythm to guide your brush movements.

Reflection

- Did the music affect my rhythm?
- Did new gestures appear?
- How connected did I feel to my intuition?

Session 3 - Memory Layering

Paint a memory or meaningful experience using layers.

Let the layers represent different aspects of the memory.

Reflection

- Which parts of the memory appeared visually?
- Did abstraction reveal something unexpected?
- Which gestures felt truthful?

Week 4 - Integration & Voice

Theme: Recognising your artistic fingerprints.

By now, patterns may be emerging.

This week is about **noticing them and building upon them.**

“Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working.”
— Pablo Picasso

Session 1 - Mini Series

Create **3–5 small works** exploring a recurring element you noticed:

- A colour
- A texture
- A gesture
- A theme

Reflection

- What repeated naturally?
- Which choices felt unmistakably “me”?

Session 2 - Dialogue with Your Work

Lay out all your recent work.

Observe carefully.

Look for patterns.

Reflection

- Which pieces feel most alive?
- Are there recurring colours, marks, or emotions?
- What surprises me?

Session 3 - Synthesis Painting

Create one final painting bringing together your discoveries.

Let intuition guide you.

Trust the process.

Reflection

- How does this piece reflect my voice?
- Which parts came from instinct?
- What have I learned about myself through this process?

A Final Encouragement

Your artistic voice does not appear overnight.

It forms through:

- Curiosity
- Persistence
- Experimentation
- Staying with the work when it feels uncomfortable

Trust the process.

Stay with it.

Keep painting.

Your voice is already forming beneath your hands.

When we begin to discover our artistic voice, it unlocks something within us — a renewed sense of joy, freedom, and quiet confidence. Our work begins to feel more honest, more aligned with who we truly are. And as that authenticity grows, something surprising happens: others begin to connect with the work more deeply too. They may not be able to put it into words, but they can sense it. They recognise that what they are seeing is not imitation or performance, but something real — an artist expressing something that could only come from their own heart, their own story, their own way of seeing and experiencing the world.

Your work leaves creative fingerprints.

The key is simply learning to see them.

Blessings

Katrina