

BECOMING AN ARTIST

Online art book



Magunta Dayakar

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Dear Readers,

I am writing this book not to explain how to draw & paint. Nobody can teach it. You have to understand what it is. Then you will know what to do. That's what I am trying to do here.

This small book's aim is to help struggling art students, to move towards the right path. That's why I am not writing any technical knowhow. There are thousands of books available for that purpose. A little number of them helpful. You have to learn technical skills on your own.

This book has not been written for fame or money. You will feel the artist's emotions and his truthfulness about his work. Thousands of words are not needed to express a thing emotionally, a few words will be more than enough. That's why I have chosen a small book format to tell my experiences about "Becoming An Artist".

BECOMING AN ARTIST



This book is dedicated to
Mr. Venkata Ramana Kode.
Without him my dream would not
have been possible.

Prologue

" Do you think an artist has to learn about color?"

I was shocked by this question! Because this question came from an artist. Before I came out of that shock, he spoke again... " I believe that an artist does not need to learn about color. It will come to him naturally, because he is an artist."

I could not digest his words. But I kept silent. By that time , I already knew about the sad state of learning methods of art in the country. There are not many teachers who are be able to teach the science of art. Yes! Science of Art! Leonardo Da Vinci said these words.

All my life I have continuously struggled to understand these words. I traveled many unknown places in the mind to know the true meaning of Leonardo's words. It's a mysterious world. You never know it fully. It always expands. Its a great experience to travel in that mysterious world.

* * *

"...Sir, I am very good at drawing, but painting..."

" ...I don't know how to draw! Can I learn how to draw?"

"... I can draw well, but ...drawing human figure!? Oh! It scares me!"

"... tell me some tips about how to paint?"

" ...what color I have to use to get skin effect?"

So many questions! Every art student usually faces these questions in the beginning. More or less similar doubts will hunt them continuously, even after they become experienced in painting.

Why?

To know answer for these doubts, once again we have to remember Leonardo's words...' Science of Art' 35 years ago I started to find the answer for this. That was the day my journey had begun to become an artist.



Lightscape painting
30x36 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

Learning, Invention, Search...

Chapter - 1

I was born in a village of Andhra Pradesh, India fifty five years ago. Mine was an agriculture family. My parents had no education. Not only my parents, in those days most of the people were like that. My grand parents were rich. When it came to my parents they became upper middle class. By the time I grew young we were middle class family. Everyone used to show lots of affection on me, because I was the first son in the family. I think this affection or you call it attention spoiled me. This spoiled character was the beginning for my becoming an artist.

My grand father, when I remember him now, I get tears in my eyes. He was a towering personality and he was one of the village heads. He loved me so much. He knew so many mythological stories. He had been telling those stories every night until his last day. Those stories were another mile stone for my becoming an artist.

Those stories stimulated me to read books. We had a small library in our village, and a rented book stall in my

neighboring town. These two places I used to go everyday. I never showed much interest in class books. This book reading made me an emotional person. Because of these emotions I had conflicts with elders in the village. Those days it was an unforgivable sin. Children of my age were not allowed to mix with me. I became a lonely child. Loneliness will give you an opportunity to think and imagine about another world. This was another factor for my becoming an artist.

I spent almost my entire childhood with books and stage plays. I was not much interested in games. I never drew until I reached my twenties. Till that time I never showed interest in art. It was always books and acting. One day when I was in the class room of my college, it happened. That was the day I had drawn first time in my life. Instead of listening to lecturer I simply did a drawing. The unexpected happened through that drawing.

That drawing pushed me into the mysterious world of art.

* * *

“Why I am telling all these things?” You may ask this question. There is nothing wrong if you ask that question. Because title of this book is ‘Becoming an Artist’.

Then what is the relevancy in telling about my past. Not only you, I also asked this question myself.

Of course...I knew my answer before writing this. I am not interested in telling the principles of art. Even if I say it would not be useful. The key is ‘Understanding.’ A student has to understand how the artist mind works? How a person can become an artist? Which factors will influence his evolution? To know the answers to these questions is very important. Knowing just technique



Lightscape painting
20x24 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

never makes you an artist. Techniques are a must. But more than technique you need a character.

The 20th century great artist David Leffel said in his lecture... 'The art collector is not buying your painting. He is buying your character through your work.'

Dear Reader...I may not be a Great artist like Leonardo. I may not be a great theorist like John Carlson. But I believe that I am also like them in emotions and reasonable technical strength.

Knowing my experiences is learning art. You could not separate them. If you understand my character which turned me into an artist, you will know how to become an artist... a true artist.

Those "How to draw step by step books" can not teach you any thing about art. You have been seeing books titled as ' Learn English in 30 days.' Anybody learned English in 30 days by reading them? These "How to draw step by step books" are also like that. Just they are selling some trash by exploiting your ignorance. If you want learn art, first come out of that ignorance. I am writing this book for that purpose. Here I am not going to explain how to draw and paint techniques. All I am going to do is to make you understand what is art? When you know what it is you will realize what you have to learn. Learning, Invention, Search ... all are key words to become an artist, to become a creator.



Lightscape painting
20x24 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

Process of Learning

Chapter – 2

Do you remember when you started to draw? I think it is a little bit difficult to remember when we started to draw. Some day we began to scribble some pictures on paper. Usually those pictures might not be clear. But that day, really it would not matter to us. Just we love them. That love will give us pleasure. Suddenly one day we will draw the picture with more clarity. Then everybody says we have inborn talent to be an artist.

Then it starts. We began to feel that we may have great skills. To bring out that potential, we need some support and encouragement. We begun to search for a teacher, who will be able to teach us.

Here the real story starts. Usually the teacher we find is not going to be the right person in 90 to 99 percent of cases. He does not know any thing about the science of art. With years of practice he might be able to draw, But he does not know the reasons, if something goes wrong. Most of the art teachers and artists are like this. They will



Lightscape painting
36x48Inches Acrylic on Canvas

teach the students what they know. Then the student also understands art like the teacher. Then the student starts to paint. After sometime the student begins to feel that something is going wrong with his work, which he doesn't know. Because the best works which influenced him to enter into the world of art, the beauty of those paintings which mesmerized him, those things he is not feeling in his work. Then frustration starts. Frustration and ignorance are the twins. You could not separate them. Then the student slowly forgets about learning art. If not, if he still has a lot of urge in him to become an artist, he will try to explore other options, like joining in fine arts colleges. Then another chapter will start. It will be a chapter of confusion.

Because there also, he would not learn what he needs. He has to be taught basic principles of art. In fine arts colleges, are they explaining these? Fortunately I have not studied in those colleges. I do not know about them through personal experience. But when I talk with the ones, who graduated from those colleges, I understood their confusion about those basic principles. These fine arts colleges are also running like other educational institutions in this country, which are giving useless degrees to millions of students.



Lightscape painting
36x24 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

Even though I have not entered in these kind of institutions, I had faced all these situations. I was in terrific frustration, by that time I had discontinued my college education. I entered into the world of art with mountains of inspiration. Ready to die to become an artist. Yes! Artists will die of starvation. Artists will die of ill health. Artists die with depressions and frustrations. They could not feed their families. They could not support their children's education. Why? Does Society not need art? Is it not necessary for it? Is it the reason for artist's suffering?....When they are suffering

that much then why are they remaining with art till their last day?

We have to try to find the answers for these questions. The first thing is Society needs art. But artists need to know what kind of art form Society needs. Are artists capable of it? Are they really equipped for it? I don't think so. If you want to survive decently on any work you must be good at it, like in any profession. To become good, a person has to learn basic principles of that field. Basic principles! A wonder! How many artists know about them in this country? Then how do you expect they will earn their bread and butter? I have to say one thing here, these artists did not learn the basic principles of art. I don't think

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it is their fault. It is the system which is responsible. It has to be blamed for this. It is the duty of the art institutions to prevent this sad state. But themselves they are ignorant, what can they do? First they have to be educated. Then only the new entrants will become knowledgeable.

Then artists don't need to starve. They can feed their families. Like any other professional they can support their children's education. Some one may ask " See the news in the papers about how artists are selling paintings for millions of rupees or dollars! " Yes! It is true. There are artists who are selling paintings for huge sums. But how many are they? I think our country population crossed 100 crores. Do you know how many artists are selling their works for decent sums in this 100 crores population? Is it 5...10...20..30...40...50...I don't think the number is more than this. Then what about other practicing artists? Another question is, if they are not surviving then why are they not leaving art? Why are they sticking to it till their end? I don't think They are able to do other things than art. That much they will be absorbed in art, by the time they know the reality. It is too late for them to go back. This happens to any art student who does not have financial support.



Lightscape painting
36x48 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

The same thing would have happened to me also, if I had not met my teacher. He was Mr. Bhargava. An art teacher in a district high school. Basically I am a self taught artist. But if I have to say there was a teacher for me, then it was him. A really good one. He was one of those artists, who knew the basic principles of art. Who understood the science of art. But by the time he understood them, it was too late for him to use his knowledge for financial benefits. Not only for him, it happened to many artists in the past, it is still happening in the present, and it will continue to happen in the future also. That's why we have to strengthen the institutions of art to show the right path to the art students. Then suffering will be minimal.

My teacher showed me the right path. He introduced me to the teachings of the Great master Andrew Loomis. Andrew Loomis teachings showed me the way. That was the time, I understood the basic principles of art.

Unity, Simplicity, Design, Proportions, Color, Rhythm, Form....many of the things I understood from his teachings. I am fortunate because this knowledge came to me when I was in the beginning of my learning. I owe a lot to Andrew Loomis and my teacher Bhargava for this.

Once I learned those basic principles my work changed unimaginably. Paintings began to come beauti-



Lightscape painting
36x48 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

fully. Simply it was a wonder! A few basic principles...how they changed my work! And the paintings also looked very simple. Yet beautiful! Yes! This is the key word. Beauty! Beauty will be created by those basic principles. Beauty lies in every good art form. If the artists are not able to create the beauty in their work then what is the point of becoming artists? Every artist has to understand the beauty. To understand it, they have to learn the basic principles of art. Once I understood the basic principles, another chapter opened in my learning process. That chapter was about knowing the true meaning of those principles. Here the real struggle starts for a true learner.

This struggle is related to the character. Your personal character. This character will play the key role to make you a learner, a inventor or a warrior. To me every artist is a warrior. Warriors and artists are alike. Otherwise how do they get famous? How will they be admired? But to be a warrior how are they trained? They learn strategies of war, they practice and understand fighting skills. And finally they have the courage to be ready to lose their life in the battlefield. Then only they will be called as warriors. This courage or braveness which will make them ready to lose their life is called character. This character will push them to learn the things which are needed to become the best in their field. People love this character. Admire those who own this character. Not only warriors, If anybody wants to become the best they must have a



Lightscape painting
36x48 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

character.

Character demands learning, courage to sacrifice your life, this means risk taking. We can ask ourselves sincerely ...' how many artists are having this character? ' To become an artist we need to understand this character. We should try to become like that. In History only Warriors and Artists will be remembered more than any one . Perhaps the reason, they are the creators and they are also the destroyers. By conquering other kingdoms warriors will create new states. To achieve this they will destroy the existing states. Artists also do the same thing. To create a new world on two dimensional canvas they are ready to destroy so many canvases. In this process so much suffering, pain and agony they have to experience. Great things never come to you cheaply. The entire world, irrespective of races, countries talks about Leonardo da Vinci's Monalisa. Why? Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Lenin, Abraham Lincoln and Gandhi, Einstein and many greats.... Monalisa is always more in the news than them. Why?

Think about it! You may find the answer. To create new kingdoms warriors will destroy the existing things. Where as artists will lose themselves in the process of creation. That is the greatness of the artist. To be like that how much character we need? Think of it. You will know the answer. Then you will realize how serious this process of learning art is?



Lightscape painting
48x36 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

Way of Thinking

Chapter – 3

What is way of thinking? For a moment forget about this question. First I would like to rise a question ,”what is thinking?” There are so many definitions about thinking. I am not going to talk about them. I want to tell you about it through my experiences.

Like process of learning, thinking is also a process. Do you have to learn “ How to think?” Yes. Without learning how to think, you never become a creator. At least an intelligent person! Intelligence is a step short to creativity. That is the power of thinking. Becoming an artist means becoming a creator. Thinking is the soul of creativity. So... here is a simple question , “Without learning how to think, how do you become a creator or an artist?” No difference between these two words.

Thinking.....! As per as my experience 99.9% of the people don’t use their ability to think. We, all have the ability to think. But I told you already, most of the people never use this skill of “ability to think”.

When I started to learn painting, I began to imagine in my mind that one day I am going to be a great artist.



Lightscape painting
28x18 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

When I started to write novels I imagined that I am going to be a successful writer. Do you think all these are part of thinking? When you are sitting with a group of friends you are participating in a discussion about some problem which is creating shock waves in the society. You are explaining the reasons for that problem. Do you think this is called thinking? I don't think so.

“One day I am going to be a great artist”...that you call simply “Dreaming”. And discussing about the problem which is shocking the society is also not thinking. It is using the information what we stored in our memory. Thinking is an entirely different thing.

“Thinking” is thinking about some problem or question. You call it a “Search”. There will be no particular answer for that question. You have to think. You should think. You must think. Because there is no answer. Everything is confusing. There is no light to see. Nobody will help you to come out of the darkness. That's why you need think. You need to search. You have to explore one hundred thousand ways. Then one sudden moment you will find the way. Light may appear to you. Archimedes found his answer in this way. In that moment he shouted



Lightscape painting
48x36 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

“ Eureka” .That is thinking. That’s why all creators are great thinkers. When an artist can be called a creator, he must be a thinker also.

Now its very clear to be an artist means to be a thinker. When some one wants to become an artist he has to question himself , is he using his skills of “ability to think” ?

Thinking is one most essential factors to become a true artist. Thats why we won’t find many artists in any century, in any time. Some will learn art or other arts to become famous, to become rich. Of course they love their work also. If there is no love, then they won’t enter into these art fields, which are very tough to survive. Once they began to get a little bit of control over technique, they began to think about fame and money. There they lose. Becoming an artist means becoming a learner. A real learner never thinks what he will get from his learning. He will enjoy the learning itself. Once he become a good learner he will survive. Learning art and becoming an artist are not only tough tasks. They are tough, tougher, toughest. It is simply like coming out of storm weather on the sea.

Many people think learning art is a born gift. It can be learned with some special talents. In reality it is not like

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that. You don't need any born talent or some genes in you to become an artist. Like any other subjects, art also can be learned. All it needs is determination, hard work and ability to think.

Why thinking is that much important? The successful artists, about whom we know, are they great thinkers? Good question. First thing we have to know ... many of these persons who are called as artists, are they really artists? Is selling paintings for huge sums the scale to measure artistic talent? If not, then what? A great economist may not be given a key post in finance ministry. Another person who passed some exams on memory which won't concern economics may be given a key post in there. Who do you think is the real expert?

That's why don't bother about artist's success stories. Think about their work. Are they really worthy? This is the question you have to ask yourself. Before asking this question you have to understand, what makes a good painting? What are those elements? To know about them start the search. What is color? Is just knowing how to mix them enough? Or is there another side to it?

What is Drawing? Seeing figures or objects and sketching them or copying, is it drawing? Observation is



Lightscape painting
34x36 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

the key to drawing. Observation means learning to see. How to look at the objects, how to understand them, these things you have to learn. To learn these you have to change your way of thinking.

Again... way of thinking! Same question! What is this?

I told you what is thinking. Every human being has thinking ability. When you are going to use this ability in a specific area, you must know the structure of that area. How to understand that structure? What are the things which caused it? What kind of relation they have with themselves?...many questions. First try to find those questions. Then...search for answers. Here your character plays a key role. Character...! Which is shaped by so many factors. Those factors are the shadows of your past. These factors will affect your thinking stream. They are the enemies to your growth. Change them. Be a determined person. Be a warrior. You are not going to lose anything in this world. I am not saying Pseudo philosophy. What I am saying is truth. The truth never dies. It never lies. Be truthful. That truth is your way of character. That is real philosophy.

I tried to be truthful always. Always there has been a continuous conflict in me about my understanding on painting. I know I am reasonably good at the science of

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art. But...Always I tried to search the many layers of painting as if I don't know anything about it. Which is true? I think both are true. I Know it. I don't know it. I am not saying this later one for humility. I am not that much sophisticated. Always I feel my knowledge is incomplete.

Do you know or anybody knows about any thing in this universe completely? Every work, every thing in this universe is incomplete. All works, All people whoever, whatever they are ...incomplete. There is a completeness in incompleteness. Order in Disorder. That is the law of nature. Nature itself power. Power means God. When God Himself or itself whatever way you call it ...is incomplete, then how do you think about completeness. Thinking about completeness and feeling about it, is man's foolishness. How do you expect a fool to become an artist? Artists and Creators are one. All creators whatever fields they are in, they are always searching for things they don't know about. That is the secret of their power. This secret is their way of thinking.

If you want to be an artist, be like them. Try to understand what I am saying. If you don't understand this how do you become an artist? Becoming the artist means understanding the life. Art is a way of life. Its a philosophy of universe. It is a way of thinking.



Lightscape painting
48x36 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

Struggle and Pain

Chapter – 4

Struggle and Pain. Another crucial chapter in any artist's life. There may only be a few who escape this. Artist has to feed his mind always with new knowledge. At the same time he has to feed his stomach also. If he has a family it also has to be feed. For all this money is needed. Here many of the artists face a worst situation. Especially if you are a true learner your sufferings will be much more.

This world is full of hypocrites. So many sweet words. Beautiful lies which will give you pleasure. They say Art is Great. It's a God gift. They express that they feel sad for not having this great talent. Words...words...all are words. That words won't help you to come out of starving. This starving will make you sad. Pathetic. You feel confused. You don't know what to do. The reality will hit you like a tornado. You began to lose the courage. After all, you are human. What you will do then? Its too late. You will become helpless. You could not leave your art. Can any sane person desert his family, because he is not able to feed them properly? He will fight till the last drop of blood



Lightscape painting
48x36 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

remains in him. Art is also like that to him. Sometimes he may go away from art. But not permanently. Just drifting.

Why? He will question himself. Because nobody is there to answer him. Nobody has time to think about this. Art is not their priority. Everybody have their own problems. Why they should think about you? It is your problem. You have to think yourself. That is the truth. Truth never changes.

You have to know one bitter truth. You have to ask one question genuinely for yourself.

Why people have to pay money for your work? You started to learn art because, you enjoyed it. That time you did not think about the money. Once you learned art more or less, you began to realize to live as an artist you also need money. There's the problem. Nobody assured you that they will buy your work if you learned art. If they find time they will enjoy it, that also as long as they don't need to pay any thing for that. There may be few who will pay to your work if they like it. But how do you know those true art lovers? How do they know you? One in a million chance. Then you have to go to art galleries. There again you have to face bitter experiences. Very few art galleries show concern for artist's welfare. Most will ignore you or exploit you.

I don't want to create fear about art in you with my experiences or my understandings. What you are practic-



Lightscape painting
48x36 Inches Acrylic on Canvas

ing is not a commercial commodity to make people pay money for your work. It's an entertainment for the mind to the people, which they are reluctant to pay for. They will pay for the physical entertainment. Yours is not physical. Know this reality. Learning art, becoming an artist is enlightenment for your mind. Why should they pay for your enlightenment? Think of it. This world is not that much idealistic. If you are an idealist then that will be your problem.

By learning truth you may survive, if not physically at least mentally. We are having our momentary weaknesses even though we are detached with many materialistic things. This is the life we have to live. Struggle and pain is inevitable especially if you want to live the way you want. Accept the mistakes. Acceptance makes you strong. Everybody has to die one day or other. Death should not bother you. Life is precious like art. Life is full of struggle and pain. Life and art are same. They are abstract. You never know them fully. That's what I understood in the last chapter of my life.

Epilogue

Becoming a great artist does not necessarily mean great technical skills. Reasonable understanding about the basic principles of art is sufficient. All you need is truthful imagination. I think nobody used this word till this day.

Everybody knows about truthful representation. Then what is this Truthful Imagination?

Imagination based on reality, follows reality and captures reality with a little bit drama...you call it truthful representation. When imagination goes beyond reality you call it fantasy, which will exist only in our mind. When imagination creates reality, you are not able to see that reality in nature, even though you feel it will exist in this universe. This is Truthful Imagination.

Whether paintings based on Truthful imagination sell or not, they will be great paintings. Selling of paintings is not the criteria to judge the quality of paintings. Many great artists didn't sell their paintings in their life time. A mediocre painter can sell his paintings with good marketing skills. A painter, who is good at marketing, will never be good at his work. That's why I never concentrated on selling of my paintings. I always used to think how to create the best which will give me satisfaction and pleasure. I never satisfied with what I have been doing all these years. Only now, after 30 years with these Lightscape paintings I have got that pleasure and satisfaction. My pleasure and satisfaction are may be momentary...

If I don't bother about modesty, I have to say these words, "These paintings will be respected as great art"

About Magunta Dayakar

Magunta Dayakar, an acclaimed portrait painter, is also nationally known for his Lightscape Paintings, A successful novelist. and also he has scripted, acted and directed two feature films. People used to praise him for his style in painting and writing. But he used to say he never consciously thought of the style. He believes style evolves on its own when the artist works continuously with involvement. He is running an unique art school for children and ladies in Hyderabad, India.

