

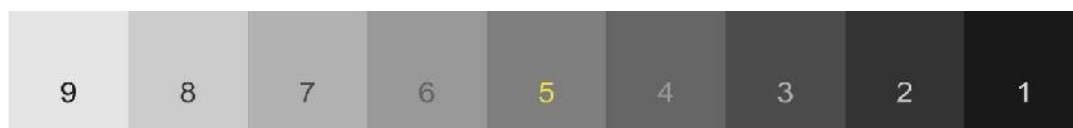
My Biggest Art Breakthrough Moment

What would you say was your biggest art breakthrough moment? That occasion when you stood back and saw something very new in your art. Sometimes you may feel it happening as you work on the project. A tingle of excitement perhaps? You may say something to yourself as it is happening because you cannot contain the experience. (who are you talking to by the way? Your muse knows the truth).

I have had a number of these moments over the years. Some frustrating moments too, but they almost always point to a new breakthrough coming up. Some leaps are short while others are huge. They all add up though to forward momentum. As we know momentum is a force to be reckoned with!

My biggest moment? That is easy to answer. It was when I grasped the idea of values. Sounds, well not very exciting actually, but think about how important lights and darks are in a painting. I am confident that if you look at your favorite paintings of all time that the lights and darks are the critical elements that add impact to the painting.

In case you are not sure what I mean by values let me explain. Consider a black and white photograph. The light and dark elements can be divided up into ten distinct shades (values). I prefer the term values, but sometimes artists use the word tones. I hear tones and think of music, but values seems more universally understood. The range of ten values has been arranged into a scale called the Munsell Scale. The scale ranges from 0 to 10 being pure black to pure white. However since these extremes seldom feature in real life I prefer to work on 1 to 9.



So why did values make such a difference to me? In essence it made my paintings have impact. The sort of impact that attracts the eye from across a room before any other paintings register. This does not mean that my painting was inherently better than another, but it sure gave it a fighting chance. What else can you ask for?

Oh but colour is all important you may say. Yes colour is important, but look at an Ansel Adams photograph. It is black and white, but would it be better in colour? Hardly. It would change everything. Using values alone Adams could make a dramatic and profound image.

The next important point was that colours have values too. I did not need to paint in monochrome. Once I learned to match colours to their values a whole new experience was revealed.

Taking these breakthrough moments into my painting added immensely to my enjoyment of art. It opened new understanding to master artist's methods and made things like composition easier to grasp too.

So there it is. My biggest breakthrough moment.

What will yours be?

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