

Jonathan Eiten: Artist's Statement

I paint because I enjoy the challenge of recreating what I see onto a two dimensional surface. I believe that I have been gifted with the ability to render objects and images in a realistic manner and that I have a responsibility to use this gift.

My intent in composing an image is not only to tell a story but also to let the objects tell their own story. Objects have their own place in our lives and can take on a life of their own. They undergo use and wear as they age and naturally take on character, making them interesting to look at.

Still life is the mode of painting in which I primarily work. Because I consider myself a realist, still life is an ideal genre for me. I enjoy combining old, man-made objects with objects from nature; the comparison of the two is appealing. I paint from life but also use photographs as aids to capture the correct light or, in the case of painting flowers or other 'live' objects, to capture the objects before they change.

My creative process has been shaped by a number of people: contemporary painters like the Noordelijke Realisten movement and painters from the past such as Chardin and the 17th-century Dutch masters. Although aspects of their paintings can be seen in my work, I am striving for a unique look. On the one hand, I paint from life and want the image to be objective, but I also want to present another dimension or reality beyond what one first sees. For example, the scratches in a wooden table or the worn pages of a letter or book are things that tell a story. I use the elements of light and reflection, important parts of my paintings, to help focus the eye and to aid in telling this story, but I want the viewer to look beyond the objects themselves and contemplate deeper.

My method of painting starts with making several drawings to decide on the composition. I then make a fine-line drawing on a masonite panel. Next I do an underpainting of the image- sometimes with the basic colors of the images and sometimes in gray-scale. After the underpainting is dry, I start applying layers of color, which is the main body of the painting. Beyond this I will work on enhancing shadows and highlights of the images by applying further glazes of paint. My painting technique could best be explained as applying paint with thicker, coarser brushes in the secondary areas of the painting while paying attention to the primary areas by using finer brushes and a delicate touch.