

George Hofmann

Artist's Statement, 2018

Since finding my footing in the 1960's, I've sought a way of working that respects, and ultimately finds its origins in, emotions. Ironically, my training, and my innate sense of balance, have so subtly influenced me that I have found being true to my feelings much more challenging than it would seem, so I cannot say that I have been really successful. All too often self-criticism, the desire for acceptance, the wish to fit into art history, the abhorrence of disharmony have all undermined the best of my intentions.

In practice, painting often starts with a choice of color: this can be impulse, or instinct, or the source could be a dream, or a longing. In fact, all work starts even earlier, with a choice of materials – here too, feelings play a decisive role, in the sensual choice of the surface, the mediums, the size and format, etc. All these emotional inputs are extremely determining – which shows up most when disregarded, and, I believe, is most keenly sensed in the frustration felt in any long look at work that falls short.

Ideas can be emotive too: an idea conceived out of feeling and executed in a feeling way can be a powerful conveyer of emotion. Matisse, at the very beginning and especially at the end, is a perfect example.

Today, art about ideology is extolled, yet, in its base, ideology is emotional; the problem for art is that lesser artists aren't aware, within themselves, of the emotive; in addition, critics and curators do not work from their emotional experiences either, so poor choices are made, and the public gets misled.

I believe that great art wants to change - even refinement is a change and significant (see Velasquez), if it is based in true feeling. Truth seeking is the key, not ambition; ambition helps (see Caravaggio) - if it is based in true feeling it has power, if not, it is empty and unrewarding.

As an artist, I've often misunderstood what I've done, or not understood it until later. Hopefully, history will help to sort this out.

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