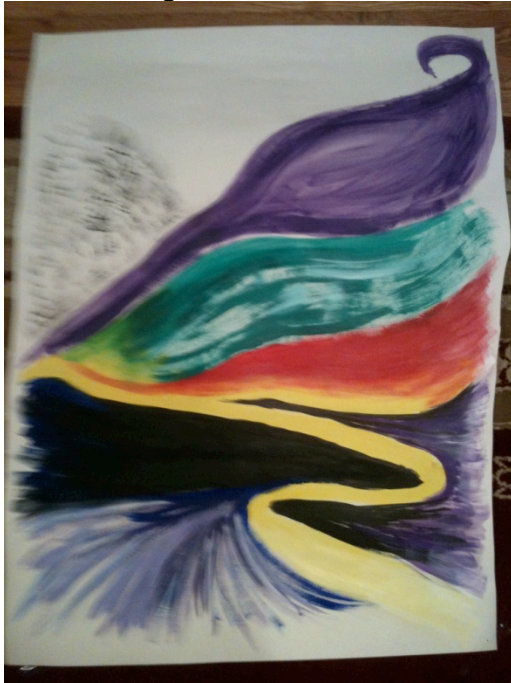


#001-F

Paintings and Affirmations

Painting # 1 “The Path”



“I am in the process of following my own path.”

Painting #2: “Eye See Everything”



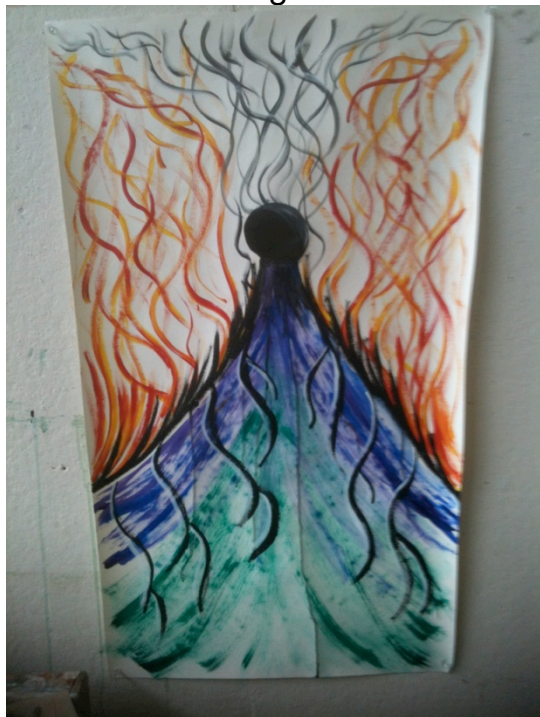
“I am in the process of finding balance.”

Painting #3: “Stability”



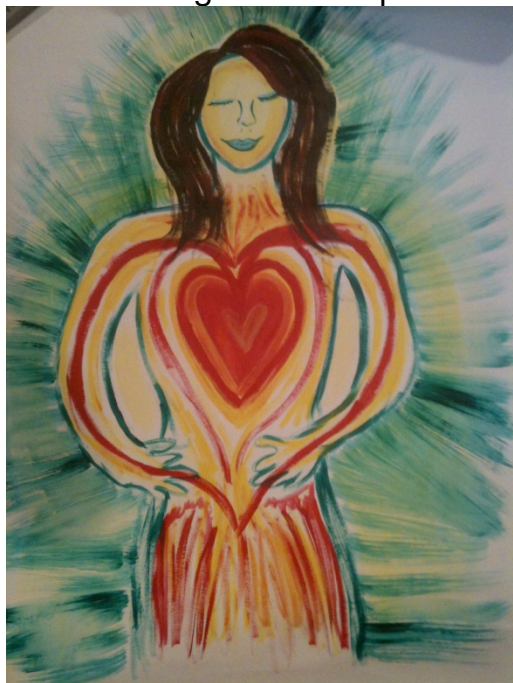
“I am strength.”

Painting #4: "Volcano"



"I am making room for all of my emotions."

Painting #5: "Acceptance"



"I am accepting myself."

## Painting #1: “The Path”

This painting, being the first in my series, is very symbolic of the journey I started on at the beginning of this class. The yellow path, perhaps my own yellow brick road, represents the beginning of my journey to finding myself; this path comes from the far left of the horizon filled with mountains, and continues to pass by dark majestic waters. This path will take me to many different places, and while I may be uncertain of my final destination, I must remember to enjoy the journey and appreciate that this path is entirely my own.

In referring to our class packet, I am surprised to find that the color yellow represents issues with power, control, and letting go. I feel that I have always had a struggle with all of three of these things my entire life; I have found myself to always be concerned with having complete control and power of my own situation and I have a real issue with letting go and allowing myself to live in the moment. When I look at the colors that make up my huge mountain, I find it amazing that they symbolize a lot of issues that I had struggled with in the past. The purple in my mountain symbolizes my issues with trust and my questioning of religion, the green is my need for affection, and the red at the bottom of the mountain represents anger. The layers of the mountain represent that at the core of these issues, they all result in anger with my past situation, maybe that is why my yellow path seems to stem from the red part of my mountain; is my subconscious trying to tell me to leave my anger about the past behind? In holding onto the anger and pain from my past, my path for my new journey will always be plagued by my pain body. In order to move from the mountains to the deep blue waters representing communication, I must learn to accept my past and move beyond it.

I feel that I needed to paint this in order to get a lot of issues off of my chest. It not only helped open my mind to the ideas of spontaneous painting, but it clearly allowed my subconscious to let out some emotions that I have been bottling up for a long time. Regardless of what the colors represent in this painting, the actual image of the road really makes me desire to give myself a

clean slate and start over. This painting really makes me want to make improvements in my own life that will allow me to move on with my life and to stop dwelling on my pain body. One step that I can take to move away from the things in my past that anger me and prevent me from moving forward is to be conscious of when negative thoughts come into my mind. For example, a big part of my pain body is fear of being betrayed. I often find myself not being able to trust others because of what has happened to me in the past. To move on from this feeling that seems to be negatively affecting my relationships with people, I need to address the presence of these thoughts whenever they pop into my head. In doing so, I am able to be aware of these negative thoughts and perhaps better understand why they are coming up.

The affirmation I chose for this painting is “I am in the process of following my own path” because I feel that is what this painting represents. A lot of the issues left behind in the mountain were due to beliefs placed upon me by others, such as my religion. I feel that in order to find true happiness, I must blaze my own trail and do things my own way instead of following what others believe.

## Painting #2: “Eye See Everything”

With this second painting, I really identify with the image of the eye. This painting evokes a lot of different emotions for me. First off, the eye seems to be very distressed, like it is dealing with a lot of outside factors. The red and the blue are painted to be polar opposites in this painting and they seem to both play a role in the eye’s distress. As in my first painting, there is a consistent image of paths. In this painting however, the paths are all starting at the eye and seem to create more of a maze than a clear cut path. Without even knowing it, I had painted a representation of my own struggles that I was having at the current moment.

While I was well aware that I needed to create and follow my own path in order to achieve happiness, this painting shows my confusion with picking my own direction. All of the paths in this painting are either red or blue, again

representing my issues with anger and communication. The eye is engulfed in these two colors, almost as if the presence of the choice is more overwhelming than actually choosing. The presence of making a choice has always caused me great anxiety, and that is why it was always easier for me to live in an environment where others made my choices for me. While this eye seems to be engulfed in this anxiety of choice, the eye is wide open and I think that is important. I could have painted an eye lid, or even a half open eye, but the fact that this eye is wide open represents that the eye is open to the choice it has to make. It realizes that it needs to choose, thus meaning that I need to choose for myself, which paths I will choose in this maze of life. The eye itself is purple, representing my constant inner struggle with trust. I must not only find the courage to trust others, but I must learn to trust myself in the choices that I make.

To continue on my path, I must take steps towards learning to trust myself and my choices. A small step that I can take towards learning to trust my own choices is to constantly remind myself that I know myself better than anyone else. If there is ever a time where I am unsure, I need to remember to look inside myself for the answer; through mediation and journal writing, I feel that I will allow myself to become more in touch with myself and allow myself to learn about my needs and desires. In learning and understanding about my needs, I will then be able to make choices that will help me achieve these needs.

The affirmation I chose for this painting was “I am in the process of finding balance” because I feel that is a major part of my journey. During the time of this painting, I was very overwhelmed with all of the outside stressors in my life. With school, work, student teaching and family obligations constantly taking up my time, it seemed that I never had time for myself. I was constantly putting myself into the temporary roles that were expected of me by the people around me. This was very damaging to my own well being because I rarely had time to focus on my true self. After painting this painting, this is what I wrote in my notebook:

*I see everything. This world has become a nightmare that I somehow have to fit into. To take the path of the victim or the predator, the choice is mine alone. This madness seems to be cracking me in two; two separate lives living in one body. I must choose my path soon, or I will forever be trapped here; not a victim, not a predator, just a bystander to the madness that is my life.*

Looking back at this painting and my response to my painting, it is clear to me that my painting was provoking me to find the courage to choose my own path and not become a bystander in my own life. In taking action, I would be able to create a life of balance that I so desperately needed at that time. While this painting does show some despair and anxiety, I am happy that I was able to express these emotions and become aware of what I really needed to do in order to find balance and happiness in my life.

### Painting #3: “Stability”

Out of all of my paintings in this series, I would have to say that this was my favorite. The image of this strong brown tree with no leaves was an image that I could really identify with. Some may view this tree as sad or lonely, but I view it as a symbol of strength. The tree is not a necessarily beautiful tree; it does not have lush leaves or any animals such as a bird or squirrel living in its branches. I really wanted to focus on the different branches of the tree to show their unconventional beauty. I titled this painting “Stability” because that is what this tree represents to me. It has strong roots, and while it does not have any leaves right now, they will eventually grow when the time is right. The sunrise in the background seems to show that there is still hope for this tree and that it will one day be able to bloom. Taking these images into my own life, I would like to believe that one day I will be able to find the courage to trust myself and others.

I feel that this painting really changed my style of painting because I started to use other tools and brushstrokes when painting. The entire background of this painting was created with a wet sponge, and I really love the way it blended the colors together. Creating the branches also allowed me to experiment with the amount of pressure I used while painting with my brush. I

found that if I wanted to create a thicker branch, I needed to use more pressure to expand the bristles on the brush; that was the easy part. Creating the thinner branches took a lot more concentration and made me pay more attention to detail. Painting those smaller branches really made me slow down and begin to enjoy the process of painting. This was the first painting in my series where I really felt that I was able to lose myself in the painting process; for the first time, I was not concerned with what others were doing or painting around me.

This painting really reminds me of how much I enjoyed taking my time with something. It allowed me to solely focus on myself and my own thoughts and not concern myself with what was going on around me for once. I feel that taking some time out of my week to do something that I really enjoy would help me feel the same way I did when I was painting this particular painting.

#### Painting #4: “Volcano”

This painting for me represents an inner battle with myself. I still remember the overwhelming feelings of anxiety that I had during the period that I painted this painting. Every time I look at this painting, it brings me back to that period and reminds me of the emotions I was feeling. I was extremely overwhelmed and felt like I had no control over the situation that I was in. This is the only painting in my series that I feel really expresses my inner battle with anxiety and anger. While this is my least favorite painting to look at, I am happy that I was able to get my emotions out in my painting.

The main image of this painting is a volcano. At the mouth of the volcano where the volcano would normally erupt, there is a huge mass covering its mouth. With this mass, the volcano will not be able to release lava, causing it to self destruct. This relates to my life in many ways. I often find that when I am angry or overwhelmed it is hard for me to open my mouth and express my feelings. Like the volcano in my painting, it is like there is a huge blockade preventing me from speaking my mind. This “mass” in my life is my insecurity with sharing my emotions with others, which leads back to my fear of trust. I am often afraid to tell others how I am feeling in fear that I will be judged or



misunderstood, especially when I am angry. I have found that this not only has a negative effect on my own self esteem, but it also negatively affects the relationships in my life.

I feel that this painting is telling me that it is okay to be angry, and that it is a healthy part of life to express your anger and emotions from time to time. In order to truly accept myself and move along on my journey to happiness, I must realize that I need to accept every part of my being, even the parts of me that may not be so positive or viewed as “acceptable”. Throughout my life, I was always taught to not create a scene and to save anger for when I was behind closed doors. Unfortunately, when it was finally an acceptable time for me to express these emotions, I often found that I was surrounded by people who didn’t understand where I was coming from; they often told me that I was overreacting and that I needed to get over my feelings of anger or anxiety. Telling me that my emotions and feelings of despair weren’t a big deal made it very hard for me to open up about my feelings. Pretty soon, I stopped expressing those emotions all together.

I was a little taken back by my painting when I was finished because it wasn’t as “pretty” as my other paintings. It clearly displayed emotion, and at first that was something that I didn’t like. I didn’t want anyone to look at it because I was afraid of what they might think about me. Then I realized that it didn’t matter what they thought about my painting; I painted this painting for myself, not for anyone else.

The affirmation that I chose for this painting was “I am making room for all of my emotions” because I feel that was the message this painting was trying to tell me. If I continue to keep some of my emotions inside, they will consume me. One step I can take towards making room for all of my emotions would be to find an outlet to express my emotions. I have found that this spontaneous painting process is a great outlet for my emotions. Hopefully after finding myself to be comfortable with some of my “undesirable” emotions, I will find a way to express them to others who are willing to listen.



## Painting#5: “Acceptance”

For the final painting in my series, I have titled it “Acceptance” because I feel that this is truly the final destination on my journey. Before we began our painting, we were to write about our true desires and needs. In my writing I stated “I desire to find the strength to break down my own walls instead of constantly building them thicker.” I realized that this was my true desire, the walls I have built up are what is preventing me from trusting myself and others. With this painting, I wanted to show what I would look like and feel like if I were able to break down my own walls.

Without realizing it, I chose to make the skin tone of my figure yellow. Looking at the color chart in our packets, I have realized that yellow is the color of hope. At the beginning of my journey, I had to deal with issues of helplessness and panic. Throughout my journey, I was able to identify these issues, and I am in the process of feeling empowered by the path that I have chosen to take. Instead of this person being surrounded by walls, I painted a person with a huge heart that seems to connect to her entire being. After finishing with the basic structure of the painting, I moved onto the figure’s facial expression. I wanted her eyes to be closed to show that she is trusting in herself that everything will be okay; this figure does not have to constantly have their eyes wide open in fear that she will be taken advantage of, she is truly able to be at peace with herself and the world around her.

When I finished painting the figure, I was getting ready to start cleaning my brushes and put my paints away. I kept looking back at the painting, realizing that it wasn’t finished. This is when I picked up the biggest of the brushes and added the green brush strokes around the figure, almost creating an aura. After adding these simple strokes to my painting, I felt relief. Looking at the color chart, it says that green is the color of love.

In this painting, I think the green represents self love, which I feel has been my desire for this entire journey. Realizing that this is what I need to do to make myself happy, I have decided to make this painting’s affirmation “I am accepting myself.” I feel that in doing so, I will finally be able to achieve the

happiness that I have been looking for my entire life. People have always said that you need to love yourself before you can love anyone else, but I think it's deeper than that. For me, I have come to realize that in loving yourself, you are able to realize that you can trust yourself and make your own decisions on your road to success. One step that I can take towards self love would be to not be so judgmental of myself. I often find that I am my own worst critic and I realize that I need to be more accepting of myself. I am going to try to be conscious of the times when I start to be negative about myself. I feel that once I am able to be aware of these instances and how they make me feel, I will be less likely to want to repeat these thoughts.

This painting inspires me to continue on my journey for self love so that I can eventually radiate that love and give it to others. Whether or not this journey takes me down a path that is approved by others does not concern me. I have come to realize that my journey does not need to make sense to anyone but myself. This painting gives me the courage to find what I am passionate about so that I can share it with the world.

## Conclusion

This whole experience I have had with this class has been a real eye opener for me. In allowing myself to learn how to paint spontaneously, I feel that I have awakened a part of me that I was taught had no right to exist in this world that we live in today. This whole idea of painting without planning and allowing oneself to simply create, is something that I feel is lacking in today's education system and in the world in general.

After viewing this series of my paintings, I have observed that while I am graduating with a Master's degree and expected to teach future generations on how to be successful, I have somehow overlooked the importance of learning to know myself. These paintings express emotions that I have been taught my entire life to hide because they weren't acceptable. Without realizing it, they came out in my paintings. While at times it was uncomfortable to view these

paintings, I must admit that I do not regret painting them because they have allowed me to begin to know myself.

After this whole experience, I am left with a few questions. Why is it that I went through a school system that pressured its students to get good grades, but didn't care to ask them who they were? To be honest, I went to college because it was expected of me; I needed to have a plan by the time I was seventeen years old or I was considered a failure. Thankfully, I was able to find a passion in the subject of English and decided I wanted to share my love for the written word with future generations. That is what I thought teaching was supposed to be like. Unfortunately, I am finding out that this is not the case. Schools are more concerned with students passing exams than building their creative writing skills. Most of the time students are literally given formulas on how to write an essay "correctly". There is little to no room for expression. Is this really considered education? Are students really learning anything valuable from this philosophy that good grades means success?

In beginning on this journey of finding myself through art, I have begun to realize that while I do want to be an educator, I don't feel that a public school environment will be a place that will best suit my teaching style. I want my students to find the courage to express themselves and not concern themselves with being right all the time. Hopefully I will be able to find a school that will allow me to create an environment that allows me to share this wonderful experience of expression and self reflection with my students. How can we expect students to succeed if they are not in touch with their own needs and desires? As a future educator, I feel that each child will have different needs and desires, and it is my job to help them figure out what they are.

I have found this experience to be therapeutic, engaging, and rewarding; I have truly learned more about myself in the past few weeks than I have in my entire life. I have found myself to have new priorities in life and have set new goals for myself that I never would have thought I'd have room for. I want to continue painting, because I feel that it allows me to learn so much about myself and my own emotions. I also found that taking time to reflect on my

artwork was just as important as painting it. Along with the painting and reflecting, I have found many of the exercises we have done in this class to be invaluable. Learning to actually listen to someone is something that isn't taught in schools, and to learn about this in class has really helped me in my relationships with my family and friends.

Overall, this class has opened my eyes to the power of acceptance. Accepting yourself for the way you are can be one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. Finding this acceptance through self expression makes it even more rewarding because you are able to see your journey. I have also learned that it is extremely important to accept others and to not judge them for who they are. Listening to others without judgment not only allows you to truly understand what the other person is saying, but it creates a space for that other person to express themselves freely which is something we all need more than we know.

I am beginning to understand that I have many talents that I have yet to tap into. This class has only started me down the path on my journey to happiness and I can't wait to see what happens next. I am so happy that this was the last class that I took before graduating, because I feel that it has really changed my outlook on my life. I hope to continue to explore my talents as I continue on my journey. My experience with spontaneous painting has left me feeling more whole and awakened, and I am truly grateful for the experience.