

# [A SERIES OF SPONTANEOUS PAINTINGS]

An in depth analysis of six spontaneous paintings created over an eight week sequence. Paintings were created after being coached in a series of exercises and discussions to free our minds of core limiting beliefs.



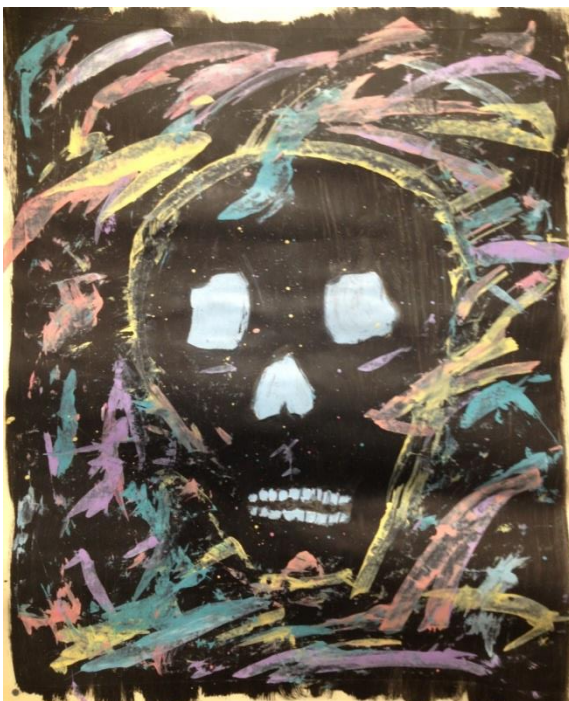
**Painting 1: "Take Me Back"**

*I am in the process of overcoming my past to brighten my future.*



**Painting 2: "Care More"**

*I am in the process of trusting others with my emotions.*



**Painting 3: "Colors of Life"**

*I am in the process of finding the beauty in everything.*



#### **Painting 4: "A Few Good Men"**

*I am in the process of allowing the good to overpower the bad.*

#### **Painting 5: "Serenity"**

*I am no longer afraid of the silence.*



#### **Painting 6: "Knee Deep"**

*I am in the process of starting a new journey.*

## **“Take Me Back”**



*March 24, 2013*

I am a field of red. I am a pickup truck. I am your beating heart.

I am a field of green. I am a field of soft, cool grass.

I am a field of black. I am a star soaked sky.

I am a field of yellow. I am the breaking of dawn. I am the rising of the sun. I am the awakening of dreams. I am a cold reality.

By that I mean that nothing good can last forever. As we awake from our dreams and our eyes face the sharp light from the sun our minds must face the coldness of reality. Dreams are dreams and that's where they shall stay.

Above is an exercise we were introduced to after finishing our painting. I took my belongings and sat in the hallway and began to write. I had just come back from a weekend trip to Massachusetts to visit friends. I was already missing them and the times we shared. One person in particular is always so difficult to leave. Because I had just arrived home a few hours before class began everything was fresh in my mind.

Analyzing the brush strokes and the abstract representation of my memory I can tell I was frustrated. I normally plan out my art work, sketches then to drawings, then to paintings. I am meticulous in planning in order to assure my desired outcome. Today was different.

Today I was angry, I was hurt and I was feeling vulnerable. I put paint to paper to complete the assignment not realizing how much I would truly reveal during the writing exercise. I constantly shut myself down, being too afraid to say what really hurts me. I find it difficult and embarrassing to express my fears. I struggle constantly with my fears of getting hurt, fears of failure, fear of the unknown. I recognize how often it hinders my relationships and my desires but often feel powerless to overcome them. Today I gave those insecurities a voice. I painted them in color fields, then I wrote them down in words and that made them real. Now that they were there I knew that I could slowly face them, and I





## “Care More”

*April 7, 2013*

Warm up: Think of a core limiting belief. Write one down. “I always get hurt.” Put it in the bowl and we are going to pass them and read them aloud.

*\*I picked out my own core limiting belief.*

Read the core limiting belief and hold it inside you. How do you feel?

Transform it. Hold it. How do you feel?

On this day I happened to find fate right in the classroom, or in a sense, a bowl. During the core limiting exercise I couldn’t brush off the fact that I had chosen my own. I believed it was fate. I think it was a message to tell me that this was more than just an exercise. This was something I truly needed to work on.

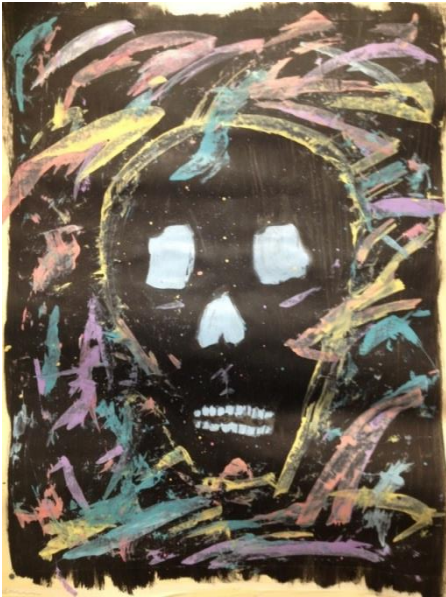
I went to my seat and I painted. I started off entire black. Simply painting the entire sheet of paper in dark black paint. I was holding my core limiting belief. Then like in the exercise I held it, and then I transformed it. I started mixing colors in different pastel shades. I started thinking about how instead of shutting down for fear of getting hurt, I should care more. It is in the act of carelessness that people get hurt. I decided from here on out I will care more.

During the writing exercise I wrote:

I am dark, vast, and black. I am over powering. I am overbearing. I am fear. I am pain. I am cold. I am everything. I am the constant reminder of the daily struggle to get close, to open up, to feel again. I’m the constant reminder of how much it can hurt. How betrayed you can feel.

I am bright. I am the vibrant. I am the light. I am soft. I am happy. I am love. I am joy. I am in the forefront. I am on top. I will overcome. I will conquer. I shine through when all is dark.

Reflecting back on this exercise I realize that my writing was very similar to the exercise introduced in later weeks. I was writing as if I was having a conversation between my fears and my ambitions. Reading this now I realize I was making progress earlier than I had even been aware of.



## **“Colors of Life”**

*April 14, 2013*

On this day I wrote:

I am conflicting. I am dark but I can see the light. I am happy but I feel the sadness. I am chaotic yet so organized.

What I mean by that is that the painting of the skull insinuates death, yet the pastel colors spread about the page represent the life.

There is a constant battle between life and death. There are constant reminders out there, like the news, maybe a song, to tell us that life is short. Life is beautiful. It is fun. It is wild. It is unpredictable. It is free.

I realize that I am continuously fighting a battle between what I want and what I think will happen once I gain those wants. I want to move out or even move away but I fear failure and disappointment. I struggle to make efforts to move or to seek employment outside my comfort zone. I have never failed at anything before. I feel that so many people depend on me to succeed that I limit myself in order to meet those expectations.

I want a relationship but I fear getting hurt. I have been hurt multiple times before so I have convinced myself it is easier to just keep my distance. I have friends and family so I feel connected in those ways but I am lost when it comes to love. I have shut myself down so completely I have rendered myself unable to feel genuine feelings.

I focus too heavily on what I think the negative outcome of situations are going to be which prevents me from ever taking the initial risk. I miss out on things by predetermining the outcome, telling myself there is no point in trying, no point in taking that chance.

I am working on taking the risks I need to in order to grow. I need to show myself that there are possible positive outcomes. I can make it on my own. I will be successful. I can fall in love. I tell myself key sayings. Do not dread life for fear of death. Do not halt love for fear of sorrow. Do not seek isolation for fear of companionship. Life is beautiful. Love is free. Bonds are eternal.



## **“A Few Good Men”**

*April 21, 2013*

At this point I had become conscious of my growth. I had noticed a positive change in my overall attitude. I had made plans to take small risks, essentially working my way up to more significant ones. Prior to this class I had recently watched one of my favorite movies, *A Few Good Men*. In retrospect the movie is about how good can, and will triumph over evil. This movie and one quote in particular has always stuck with me. “All that is required for evil to triumph is a few good men to do nothing. Here’s to a few good men.”

This painting is my homage to *A Few Good Men*. I painted colored circles along with a few black circles. The black circles represent the evil trying to overcome the colored circles representing the good. I made this painting assuming that the viewer would gravitate towards the black circles, when in fact I wanted them to focus on the colors. I find so often we as a whole are drawn in by negativity.

The news feeds on tragedy and despair and we as viewers gather around the television to watch it. It is like subconsciously we are drawn to the negativity because somehow it makes the things going on in our own lives seem less bad. Media constantly portrays shootings, murders, auto accidents, robberies and war. There is so much good out in the world yet we constantly shed light on the wicked.

I am involved in a community service organization on campus and I have grown to love helping the community. I don’t enjoy seeing the sadness but the smiles on the faces of people I help is enough to mask the sadness. When I helped clean out homes and collect food and clothing for hurricane sandy victims I blocked out the tears, the damage, the brokenness of the town. Instead I remembered the smiles on people’s faces seeing young adults taking action and coming together. I remember the stories of families as we helped them throw out or pack up their memories.

As I did in this painting, I choose to focus on the virtuous I am surrounded by rather than the evil in my own life. I choose to not delight in the sadness and misfortune of others. I choose not to watch the news when they report tragedies for the sole purpose of ratings. Sadness, evil, suffering; those are not emotions I am choosing to remember. Instead, I make a conscious effort to make a difference. I try and find something good that has come out of every day.



## **“Serenity”**

*April 28, 2013*

During the week prior to this painting I had been asked to write daily affirmations. I wrote in my

agenda book a short sentence to remind myself to push forward. I wanted to encourage myself to accomplish all that I had set out for myself. I read the affirmations daily and sometimes reread the ones from the days prior. This helped motivate me to get through my list of things to get done for the week. By the time Sunday had come around, I was feeling pretty upbeat. I had done all I had needed to do and I was feeling as though a weight had been lifted.

The affirmations helped lift the pressure I was constantly feeling off my shoulders. They reminded me that even when I hadn't achieved all that I had hoped to, I was still productive and accomplishing so much. Being proud of myself for what I had gotten done rather than beating myself up for what I still had left to do left me feeling at ease.

This painting is a feeling of serenity, or tranquility. I had a calmness resonating in me that day. I knew that the affirmations had worked the past week and I was looking forward to them working again for the next week. At this time I only had two more weeks left of classes and student teaching, so the course load was really piling up. Knocking things off the list little by little and reassuring myself daily that I could get everything done really helped me.

When I am feeling at ease I most often am either looking at the water or up at a star light sky. Although the painting is set at night, which some may misconstrue as a feeling of darkness, the general feeling of this painting is light. The flowers floating represent the feeling of lightness in regards to weight. They are floating on the calm water, looking delicate, serene, and beautiful. The moon is bright white and shining a reflection onto the water. This represents the actual presence of light. I felt that this represented the light shining through the darkness. What I mean by that is often I would degrade my accomplishments because I had not achieved all I had hoped for. That was my darkness. Now, I see a light, a sense of pride, a feeling of worth for what I have done. That new light is shining through and I intend to keep it that way.





## **“Knee Deep”**

*May 5, 2013*

At this point the semester was practically coming to an end right before my eyes. I was two weeks away from walking across the graduation stage and into an airport headed to Myrtle Beach. Mentally I was on a beach,

sipping a margarita and soaking up the sun. I was so over school work by this time and so ready to relax.

This painting most accurately represents how happiness is a state of mind. I painted the beach that I soon would be sitting on in South Carolina. However, I am not seen lying in the chair, enjoying a cold drink on a hot beach. I depicted the chair empty primarily because I am not there physically, only mentally. The mental anticipation for this trip, the culmination of my college career, it was enough to put me on a mental vacation. I had enough mental build up that I could have sworn I was there already. I could see myself tanning, feel the warm sun, and hear the water crashing by my feet.

My mental vacation kept me in high spirits for about two weeks. I am yet to step onto the plane (I will be in four more days) but it is enough to keep me happy for now. Everyone believes that happiness is a destination; I believe it is a state of mind. When I am in my head I can be anywhere. It is similar to the saying “It’s not where you are but who you are with.” It is not the beach that makes us happy but where our mind goes when we get there. How we feel sitting in the sand staring out into the water. I can sit in my backyard with my toes in the grass, face in the wind, eyes closed and imagine I am at the beach. I can achieve that same happiness, that soothing emotion that I would feel when I was at the actual beach itself. Although I am fortunate enough to be able to physically go to the beach and achieve my serenity, I know that I do not need to tangibly be there to achieve my mental state.

I am fortunate to have come to the realization that happiness is something we create. Looking forward to graduation, feeling a sense of pride for my accomplishments, the anticipation for my vacation, they are all small things that culminate to big feelings of happiness. Appreciating the little things is how I gain happiness on a daily basis.

## Conclusion

Throughout the last eight weeks of this experimental process I have noticed that I was aware, yet unaware all at the same time. What I mean by that is that I was noticing my core limiting beliefs but I was struggling with affirmations. I knew I had to change but I wasn't quite sure how. After completing all the reading assignments, participating in exercises, and reflecting on my paintings I have come to a few conclusions.

I had mentioned in one of my homework assignments a quote by Charles R. Swindoll. It read, "I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes." That message resonated within me for a long time before I truly understood what it meant. This class helped me put meaning to words. Through spontaneous painting and reflections I realized that we are in more control than we allow ourselves to believe. Yes it is true that for the most part we cannot control what exactly happens to us; but we are *always* able to control our reaction.

For every action there is a reaction. We can choose to react in a positive manner, assess the situation, and find what many call the "silver lining." Or we can sulk. We can get angry and we can pity ourselves. We can belittle ourselves and further add to our already present core limiting beliefs. Anger and negativity only make situations worse. Core limiting beliefs play tricks on our mind to make us think situations are predetermined. They make us believe that because something bad happened once that it will always happen that way. They make us feel things that we don't need to feel and see things that probably aren't even there. These core limiting beliefs not only hurt our mental state but they limit our relationships and our risk taking. They hinder our growth as individuals.

Something that truly impacted me this semester was a piece of advice from Jeffers. Jeffers writes, "Take a risk a day-one small or bold stroke that will make you feel great once you've done it. Even if it doesn't work out the way you wanted it to, at least you've tried. You didn't sit back... powerless." Taking a risk a day regardless of how big or how small it is, can only make us stronger. I have realized over the years that for the most part we don't seem to live the lives we always dreamed of. I am not speaking of money, or jobs, or romance. I think that once we recognize our core limiting beliefs we will be able to overcome them with our affirmations. Our affirmations which may start out as only words can lead to actions. They will lead to the risks that Jeffers writes about. Overcoming our core limiting beliefs is a slow process but I believe that I am getting there.

What I have learned most distinctly from this class relates back to another quote I have come across when watching *Grey's Anatomy*; "Boundaries don't keep other people out, they fence you in." I have learned through my series of paintings and completing the readings that more core limiting beliefs are not protecting me. They are hindering me from taking chances, from experiencing something wonderful. I am glad that I have come to realize this as a problem and am taking steps towards fixing it.

I know now that if I continue to do the same things I have always done I will continuously get the same result. It takes courage to start to do something differently, to break out of your shell. But, the way I see it, the rewards far outweigh the risk.