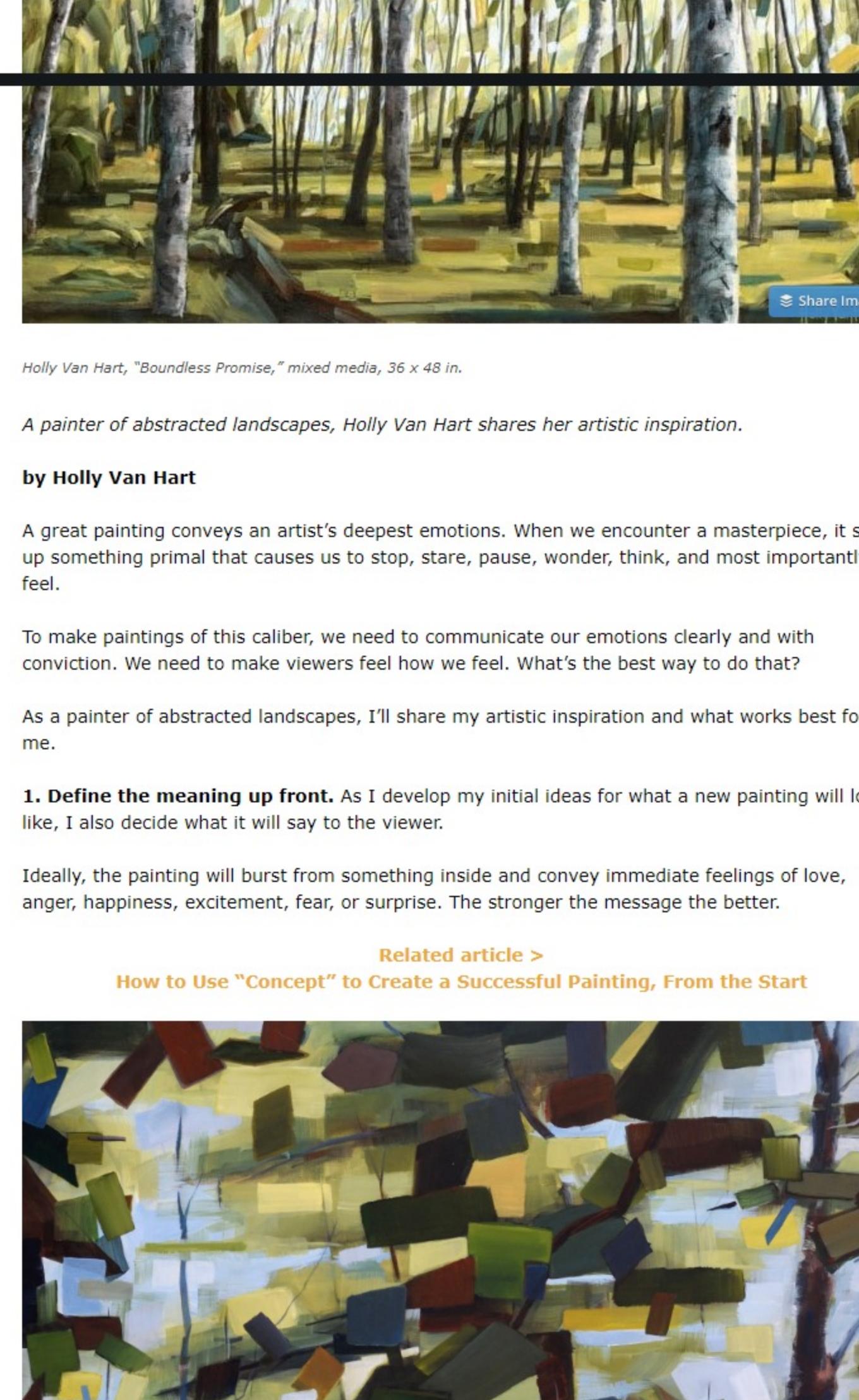


Conveying Our Deepest Emotions

By Contributing Author - July 11, 2019



Holly Van Hart, "Boundless Promise," mixed media, 36 x 48 in.

A painter of abstracted landscapes, Holly Van Hart shares her artistic inspiration.

by Holly Van Hart

A great painting conveys an artist's deepest emotions. When we encounter a masterpiece, it stirs up something primal that causes us to stop, stare, pause, wonder, think, and most importantly, feel.

To make paintings of this caliber, we need to communicate our emotions clearly and with conviction. We need to make viewers feel how we feel. What's the best way to do that?

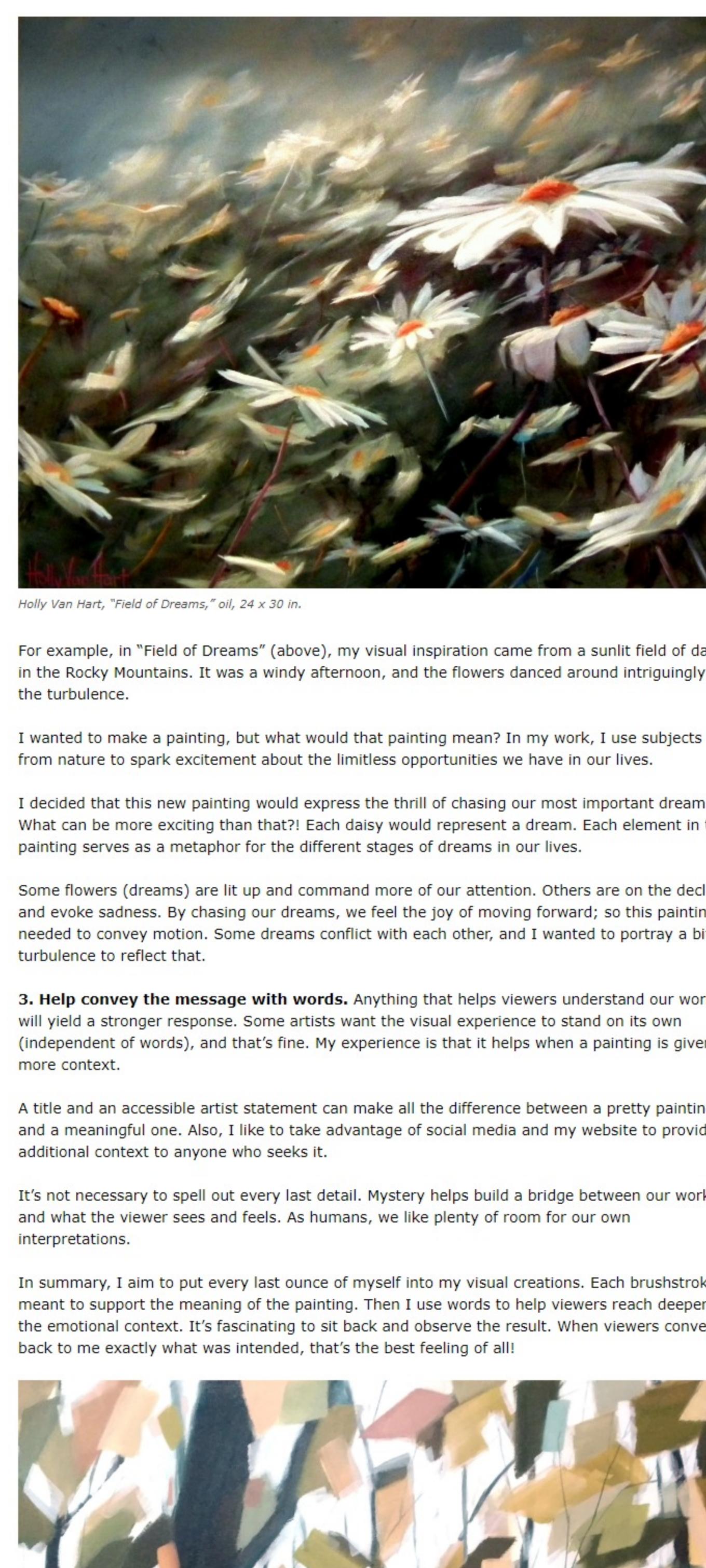
As a painter of abstracted landscapes, I'll share my artistic inspiration and what works best for me:

1. Define the meaning up front. As I develop my initial ideas for what a new painting will look like, I also decide what it will say to the viewer.

Ideally, the painting will burst from something inside and convey immediate feelings of love, anger, happiness, excitement, fear, or surprise. The stronger the message the better.

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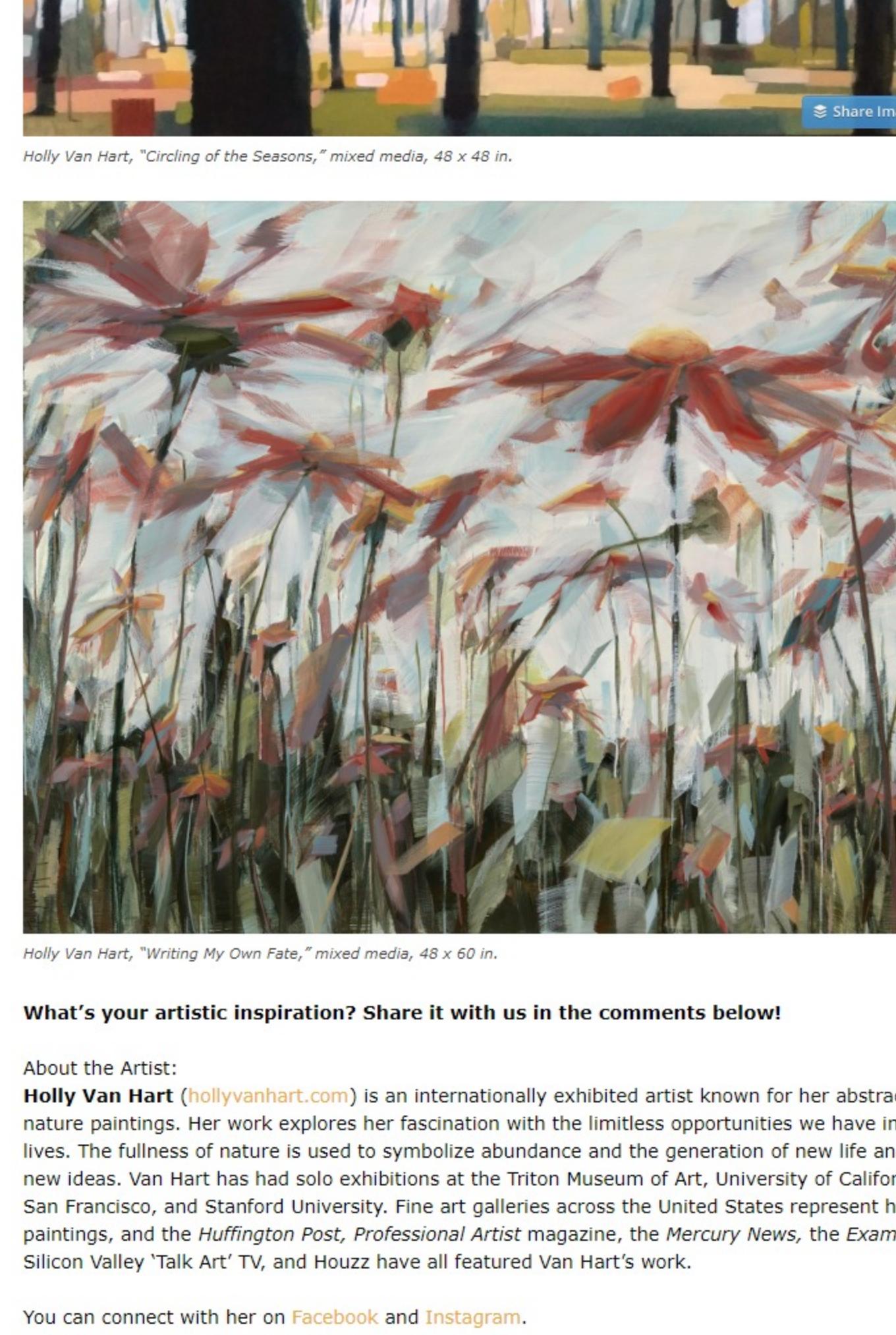


Holly Van Hart, "Summer Sparkle," mixed media, 24 x 30 in.

2. Align all elements of the painting with the emotion. The magic of each painting is in creating emotional depth in a visually creative way. The key meaning of a painting is supported by my choices for subject, color, use of light, depth, motion, and more.

Sunlight can evoke happiness, and dark skies will make us feel frightened. Fresh flowers can express love. An animal portrayed as threatened by a predator will induce sadness.

The most exciting paintings will conjure up multiple emotions at the same time. Human feelings are complex, and great paintings will often capture unexpected juxtapositions of subject and mood.



Holly Van Hart, "Field of Dreams," oil, 24 x 30 in.

For example, in "Field of Dreams" (above), my visual inspiration came from a sunlit field of daisies in the Rocky Mountains. It was a windy afternoon, and the flowers danced around intriguingly in the turbulence.

I wanted to make a painting, but what would that painting mean? In my work, I use subjects from nature to spark excitement about the limitless opportunities we have in our lives.

I decided that this new painting would express the thrill of chasing our most important dreams. What can be more exciting than that? Each daisy would represent a dream. Each element in the painting serves as a metaphor for the different stages of dreams in our lives.

Some flowers (dreams) are lit up and command more of our attention. Others are on the decline and evoke sadness. By chasing our dreams, we feel the joy of moving forward; so this painting needed to convey motion. Some dreams conflict with each other, and I wanted to portray a bit of turbulence to reflect that.

3. Help convey the message with words. Anything that helps viewers understand our work will yield a stronger response. Some artists want the visual experience to stand on its own (independent of words), and that's fine. My experience is that it helps when a painting is given more context.

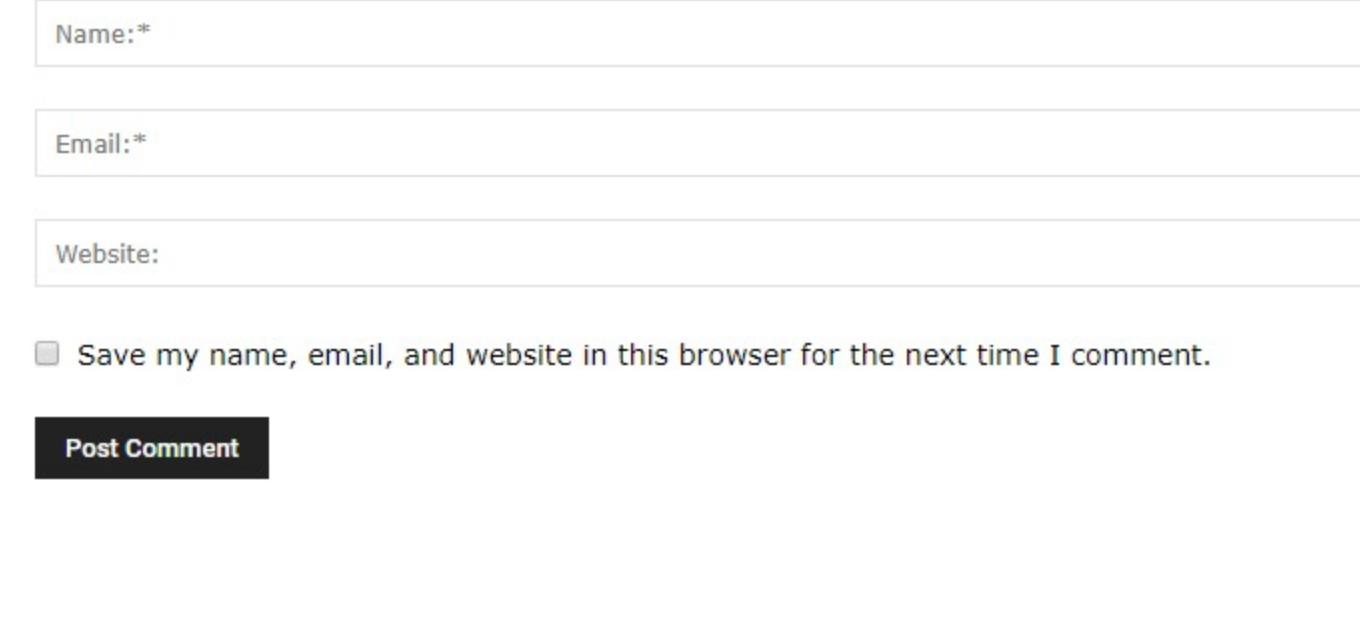
A title and an accessible artist statement can make all the difference between a pretty painting and a meaningful one. Also, I like to take advantage of social media and my website to provide additional context to anyone who seeks it.

It's not necessary to spell out every last detail. Mystery helps build a bridge between our work and what the viewer sees and feels. As humans, we like plenty of room for our own interpretations.

In summary, I aim to put every last ounce of myself into my visual creations. Each brushstroke is meant to support the meaning of the painting. Then I use words to help viewers reach deeper into the emotional context. It's fascinating to sit back and observe the result. When viewers convey back to me exactly what was intended, that's the best feeling of all!



Holly Van Hart, "Circling of the Seasons," mixed media, 48 x 48 in.



Holly Van Hart, "Writing My Own Fate," mixed media, 48 x 60 in.

What's your artistic inspiration? Share it with us in the comments below!

About the Artist:

Holly Van Hart is an international, exhibited artist known for her abstracted nature scenes. Her work explores the connection with the natural world and how we live in it. The fullness of nature is used to symbolize abundance and the generation of new life and new ideas. Van Hart has had solo exhibitions at the Titon Museum of Art, University of California San Francisco, and Stanford University. Fine art galleries across the United States represent her paintings. The *Huffington Post*, *Professional Artist* magazine, the *Mercury News*, the *Examiner*, Silicon Valley "Talk Art" TV, and Houzz all featured Van Hart's work.

You can connect with her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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