

FEELING, EXPRESSION, AND ART  
by CHARLES ROCKEY April 20, 1960  
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**Feeling, Expression, and Art**

**Thesis:** Great paintings are portraits of the artist: his temperament, feeling, imagination, spirit, ideals, all things that make up his inner being or soul.

I. Art is a form of expression that requires a link between the artist's inner being and his work, an access to his vivid imagination, and a portrait of the artist's self.

Introduction: Expression is a human need.

A. There must be a connection between the artist's true self and his rendering.

B. There must be a scope in the artist's mental processes in the sense of feeling and imagination.

1. Imagination produces art. 2. Feeling lies between imagination and the senses.

C. There must be the message of the artist's self spoken in his painting.

II. Vincent van Gogh's paintings overflow with soul.

A. His life's experiences give him depth of feeling.

B. His feeling and emotion pour into his work.

C. His paintings explode with his feverish reality.

III. Paul Gauguin's paintings symbolize nature and life through his own bewitching paradise.

A. His temperament and genius' mold his art.,

B. His paintings are symbols of a mixture of ideas and representations of "nature's wholeness."

C. His paintings are portraits of his inner being.

## FEELING, EXPRESSION, AND ART

“Living is feeling. Our deepest satisfactions come as energy surges through us and we succeed in the jobs we set for ourselves. If living is energy flow, then emotion or feeling is our personal measure of the quality of our living. The more we feel, the deeper is our sense of living, and the more we have to express, the greater the quality of life for us. This expression, this vent to our inner necessity to communicate can be art.

It is “can be” because there are other forms of expression. Art is but one of them. It has been said, “Art is the most personal, intimate experience man can have. It’s entirely between the artist and you. There is no conductor, musician, or actor to interpret the experience for you. Great paintings are portraits: of the artist, of his temperament, feeling, imagination, spirit, ideals -- all things: that make up his inner being or soul. A painting is judged in terms of the intensity and scope of basic thoughts and emotions, themes and ideas conveyed, and subjective emotional appeal the work has for the artist.

If there is no direct connection between the emotion of the artist and his brush there is nothing produced that can be classified as art. John Dewey, although he concerns himself with education, brings out again and again the necessity of a connection between an individual and his work. If a person is painting with no meaning or purpose but just with a sensory-motor technique, reproducing sights, using methods which do not call attention to meaning, there is an isolation of mind and body and nothing more than a mechanical habit displayed. A work is meaningless and as shallow as the canvas it is done on when there is nothing of the painter himself involved. John Steinbeck thinks that ‘the most valuable thing in the world is the exploring mind of the individual’. Art holds up a mirror to this mind. (The art that has value is a form of expression given by a man’s imagination from his sensory experience and his life of meaning. Imagination is the mind. Imagination produces art. For it is the interior vision which forms the experiences of the senses. Imagination is the insight which seizes the heart of the matter and works outward from within the deepest part of the mind. Along with imagination – actually between imagination and the senses – is feeling, from which any work of art is originated.

Let’s look at an example. A painter sees a tree (the senses) and wants to paint it. It arouses in him a feeling for the tree as though it were a human being: he feels that the tree is strong or weak, peaceful or tormented, admirable or pitiable. subjective reality of the tree, the character of the tree, is how it is seen and felt by the artist. On this the artist’s imagination elaborates. If there is no inspiration arousing the senses and the feeling of the artist, his imagination works

in a vacuum and his efforts are not art.

Individual work must be creative, not copied or contrived. Imagination in its artistic activity is creativeness. Each form of work reaches individual perfection when it perfectly expresses the sensory experience and the feelings of the artist at the moment of its creation. The sincerity of the message of the artist, of course, must be told in his own words. His ideals must be in harmony with his personality. He must have faith in his own ideals to create art. The moral duty of an artist does not consist in supporting this or that moral theory; it consists in being true to himself. Most importantly, the artist must have depth of soul and pour his soul out generously without too much thought of personal gain. He must give of himself. He must make himself worth giving. Only the strongest personalities possess enough depth to make their gifts effective. Two such men are Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. Vincent van Gogh is well known because he had deep emotions and feeling. He put himself completely into his work. His paintings speak his innermost being clearly. To explain how such a man was molded by heredity, environment, and social-cultural experiences into the man van Gogh would be impossible. Some of the most important factors, however, in making him a man are: compassion, a warm humanitarian heart, even reckless generosity, blissful communion with nature, and sorrowful moods. His life was one of drama and starvation; every longing, every desire was beyond reach. In his life, he loved three women, each shunned his love openly. He pained for man and man ignored his dedicated life and artworks, disregarding the fact that van Gogh worked, not with his hand and eye alone but with his generous heart. In his relationship with Paul Gauguin, van Gogh displayed an eagerness toward him and his talent and a readiness to follow him. This honor was unaccepted by Gauguin, Van Gogh's kindness was scoffed at by Gauguin's harsh and jealous egoism; van Gogh's devotion and unselfish admiration remained within him.

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*SELF PORTRAIT - A vibrant spirit radiates because of his use of line and color even in the composed manner he pictures himself here. His later works show more of the feverish pitch he worked himself up to, although he depicts scenes ordinarily viewed as calm and peaceful.*

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He never lost his great tenderness, and died having complete possession of his mind, full of love for his art and without hatred for others". He knew grievous mental and bodily ills, defeat, despair and deprivation. All of these experiences gave him understanding and feeling.

They molded him into the van Gogh we know. Whether it is necessary to suffer to paint is not to be proved here. It is necessary to “feel” to paint, so that aspects of experiences can be expressed. In the Borinage, van Gogh felt the need to express the poignancy of his sense of the world. He couldn’t do it in words, he “must paint”. He was carried away by the violence and vividness of his experiences, giving full living quality to his paintings. Human passions boiled up within him to a sorrowing rage. Until it became a driving fire to paint. It consumed every ounce of his energy. It led him into a delirious disregard of every consequence in gaining and releasing an overflowing power of color and movement.

The same fire that drove him to paint and headed him toward self-destruction is the same that scorches the observer of his burning paintings. The symbol of flame is at the core of every cypress tree and in the form of his line strokes, whipped on in pure color pigments with nervous force and passion. For the earth, mountains, sky, and clouds, his colors blaze as his thoughts blaze. And the flame devours itself as his passion goes beyond control. Every canvas of Van Gogh’s later master-works explodes with heated emotion. With tortured forms expressing his own temperament, he attained spontaneous perfection through intensity of feeling. (This spontaneity and naturalness are essential qualities of art and both are included in the idea of imagination built on sensory experiences and the affected life of the artist.)

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*PUBLIC GARDEN AT ARLES (1688) The intensity and passion of the heavy strokes fill all the forms with nervous movement, making everything on the canvas alive and wriggling.*

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“Is it not emotion, the sincerity of one’s feeling for nature that draws us,” van Gogh wrote to his brother when there was criticism of the speed in which he worked, “and if the emotions are sometimes so strong one works without knowing one works, and sometimes the strokes come with a sequence and a coherence like words in a speech or a letter, then one must remember that it has not always been so, and that in time to come there will again be heavy days, empty of inspiration. He painted only when his inspiration compelled him on, freely releasing the image that formed in his brain, never conceiving form as something beautiful in itself. He tells of this in another line written his brother, Theo, “In a picture I give free scope to my own head in the sense of thought or imagination, which is not so much the case in studies, where no creative process is allowed, but where one finds in reality the food for one’s imagination, in order to make it exact...” This exactness, this truth is a function of the imagination and

in van Gogh's quest for truth of his feelings, he said, "My great longing is to make those very incorrectnesses, those deviations, remodellings, changes of reality in painting, in order that they may become, yes, untruth if you like, but more true than 'literal truth.'" Feeling expressed in works of art is as much reality as are human beings and objects. Some of his studies of high grass, with each stalk rendered by itself, surpasses: in accuracy of observation any closely detailed, direct study. To look at these studies, mere seeing, becomes pure vision, where nature has not been imitated but recreated from her inner source. Van Gogh absorbed all of inner nature and put it to full use in all of his emotions. "He is the most passionate of painters with extraordinary intensity of vivid impressions." For whatever he painted, even with themes ordinarily placid and composed, He produced feverishly tense and dramatic instead. For when he said, "I would rather say nothing than express my-self weakly" he knew his paintings were indeed thoughts from his very soul.

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*This painting is in the hands of the Russians and only recently has been shown for the world to see. It gives us the feeling of van Gogh's emotion through the complement of his brilliant colors, The contrasting yellows and blues, greens and oranges set our feelings at a fast pace.*

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Gauguin saw van Gogh attempting to sell one of his paintings and exclaimed, "Poor artist you have put a fragment of your soul into this canvas you have come to sell." Anyone looking at van Gogh's paintings, hears emotion and truth - a universal language spoken from within the artist. "Like van Gogh, Paul Gauguin. owes much of his fame to the romantic circumstances of his life." How stupidly short-sighted this statement is. It couldn't be more wrong: Circumstances don't make the man, it's his reactions to circumstances. Man because he is -a particular personality will act a certain way and create situations. Experiences do add depth to the individual for he then puts more feeling and life in his work. But still it is his inner being that creates greatness not the publicity from his actions. Paul Gauguin's character made his paintings great.

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*SELF PORTRAIT - "We must go to the human soul for states of being so that, when properly brought out we have both symbol and creation; symbol expressive of the deepest levels of the human soul, and poetry as the power of creation."*

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Gauguin abandoned a lucrative business for art. It was a command within himself to forsake all else to paint. If anyone had tried to tell him to quit everything and paint, Gauguin would have rebelled; but when nature, his nature, said it to him, he yielded, knowing he was beaten. You see, Gauguin was a man who followed his fancy -- free with an eye to see things as they really were -- and having such a clear view off hypocrisy, he became cynical, proud, and haughty. The need for a creating mood was basic in all his paintings (and one might use the degree of effective communication of such emotion as one criteria of success) to create his own more satisfactory ideal world. Gauguin, like van Gogh, hated nullity, the halfway. He believed you should “spend yourself, spend yourself, again, run until you are out of breath and die madly. Prudence ... how you bore me with your endless yawning!” And of will, he says, “I believe that life has no meaning unless one lives it with a will, at least to the limit of one’s will.” With a strong will, a hate of whimpering civilization, an over-powering yearning for the exotic, and his art genius, these threads of character, he interweaves into personalized tapestries of paintings. Also his surroundings enhance the mood of his world for he finds the savagery of the Maoris the sort of savage he is and will remain. He uses the extraordinary setting in order to give his dream a local habitation, unpolluted by lies of civilization. And to aid the flight of his imagination, he closes his eyes and sees, without understanding, a dream of the “whole of nature” and then he paints! for “painting is the one art which shows the way by resolving the antimony between the world of the senses and the world of the mind.” It puts sensory perceptions and mental representations or state of soul into one single faculty, the source of art and being, a Gauguin’s perception of things tallies with the inner vision of his desire.

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*THE WHITE HORSE This is the exotic, enchanted world of Gauguin with its flat dimension, strange filtered light, and its new forms of life.*

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His recreation of simple primitive nature possesses all of the essence of the plants\_ and trees and then goes beyond to make a strange world of enchantment. It is a rich powerful, intense world without limitations . It is capable of stirring the human being to the inner-most and secret fibres of his spirit. Everything is flooded with sunshine, a dazzling fairyland of light and blazing supernatural flora such as no botanist could ever discover. His men, he alone could have created. His sea might have flowed out of a volcano. His sky, no God could inhabit. These things make up a new heaven and earth. And in his paradise there dwells an Eve who

is a flawless enigmatic beauty formed from his own ideal. He said, "These nymphs, I want to perpetrate them, with their golden skins, their searching animal odor, their tropic savors." Their flesh has virile radiancy.

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*WHENCE COME WE? WHAT ARE WE? WHITHER GO WE? Detail. - The spellbinding atmosphere of the rhythmic/harmonizing colors and Gauguin's deep felt love for nature's golden bodied primitive people melt together to give a fragrant, exotic land of the imagination.*

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You get a sense of man's mysterious origin and a balance between birth, love and death, symbolizing the primitive tradition of "nature's wholeness". Through his symbolic element, his people represent actual ideas and emotions that express all of himself. Through his bold harmonization of exotic color his symbolism is again apparent. If he represents jealousy for us it is by a flamboyance of pinks and violets in which all of nature seems to participate.

Through the tones of color that contrast and melt together and sing as in a symphony; and which, like music, are vibrations, he achieves, nature's inmost force. By "dreaming before nature" Gauguin translates it into a unique language of flat brilliant colors juxtaposed in decorative patterns. Gauguin tells a. "Tainted from mepoty, It is your work your own; your sensation, your intelligence, your soul..." Nature abstracted in this way is visionary realism, supreme realism in which forms and colors come to life with that full bodied ease and freedom which do not imitate but recreate the forms of nature. (Nature means the sensory perception of the character of people and things by the artist, his feelings of them and then the transformation by his creative imagination) so that when Gauguin speaks of the truths of nature, "my technique is meant to express my mind and takes no account of the truths of nature as she outwardly appears." He means objective truths. Because the truth of nature, the reality of the "real world" is always prey to change, but the reality of his work is lasting. There is then truth spoken from within Gauguin's world since, although he uses certain "laws" in his use of lines and colors for expressing all human emotion and use in his immense recreation of nature, he doesn't stop with those laws to leave an impression. He goes on using them to form a great idea through the senses. from the brain.

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*THE DAY OF THE GOD GAUGUIN; the man who abjured and defied, preferred to see the water red and gold rather than blue with the crowd. His use of resonant colors rimmed by elegant outlines and flat surface instead of the usual spacial recession create for him and us the fanciful world he had longed for and found.*

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“My artistic center ‘Is in my head’ said. Gauguin “With me everything happens in my wild imagination.” With freedom of the mind and unconscious control of the senses “I have only to let myself go with the brush and my wild imagination does the rest.” “Spontaneity!” - cries Gauguin, “Paint your impression without detail so that your work is fresh:” Do not linger or have doubt. “If then I am in doubt about spelling my handwriting becomes illegible. How many people use this stratagem in a painting, when the drawing and color embarrass them.” Art, then, is to comprehend and not to “cover-up” doubt and not-knowing. To create includes in itself the connecting link between the conscious and unconscious, the mind and soul, the artist’s temperament and his painting, the artist’s inside world and the outside world of nature. Emile Zola, the French writer of Gauguin’s time said all this simply , “Art is a fragment of nature seen through a temperament. ` You wish to know who I am?” Gauguin asked. “My works are not enough for you? What if you do see me quite naked; that is no argument. It is the inner man you want to see.” There are things to be heard from an artist, things said from the man’s self, and they must be said from his vo very soul. Once they are said, once a work is done, the desire accomplished is sweet to the soul. The work is there before you. There is the painting that is a portrait of the author



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