

APPRECIATING THE DOWNSIDE

‘Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher.’ William Wordsworth

On a grey day, with an overcast sky, the sun bravely tries to break through. Creating is just like this. The joy can sometimes be elusive. Creative people are always hard on themselves. Even the most skilled doubt their ability. I hear some say they are producing but don't know what they are doing or where there are headed. It can be a challenge just to step up to a blank canvas or a blank page.

Nature is our instructor. There will always be changes, for all living things, due to the elements that can nourish, or compromise the landscape and its inhabitants. There may be many stages in the artistic cycle dependent on the way creativity flows. Up and down and around and around it can make the head spin, but the pure exhilaration of a breakthrough is worth all the chaos and turmoil. Everything is cyclic and without a doubt the growth spiral will turn, and with it comes the downturn.

There are successes and there are rejections. The journey is affected as much externally as it is internally, and the dry times can be tough. How much damage will be allowed to occur in a downturn depends on the attitude of the artist. A positive approach is always beneficial, keeping in mind that you can't appreciate the good side if you have never experienced the bad, just as you can't appreciate great work if you have nothing to compare it with.

The most creative and successful artists I know of have one thing in common, intense focus. At this level of commitment they still have distractions, but will persist. They believe that answers will come, doors will open, and valuable information will arise from unexpected places.

A narrow focus isn't inhibiting as one might expect, but instead will open up many possibilities for working in series without exhausting inspiration or energy. Creative work needn't falter or 'hit a wall,' nor should the struggle continue for so long that it robs all passion. There are many ways to get back on track and finding what works is essential to avoid the discontent.

An artist working from essence rather than personality won't consciously choose a path. Direction finds them through continued questioning and searching, and by experiencing many new things. As creative work develops deeper layers and becomes more spiritual, it inherently has more of the artist's energy. The surface no longer reflects technique, or lack of it, but is authentic. The subject matter can be irrelevant if this degree of depth is achieved.

Right: Fires in the Valley, 76 x 76 cm acrylic painting on canvas 2012