

STEVEN MAY:

Painting:

“If you’re a painter, it is a mistake to think of painting as a means of communication. If so, you will be doomed to making nothing but illustrations. Instead, you have to realize that painting is a thing in itself, an embodiment. It is everything that you are when you’re making it.”

Illusion:

“I hate the aspect of art that encourages escapism. The hope, the worth, the joy we find in this life must be a real thing, not a sham. The hope has come from the truth no matter how hard are ugly it is, no matter how much it hurts.”

Faith:

“We are still humans. Faith was discounted because progress was our faith. Yet though progress is dead, faith still lives. It's greater than any idea. The faith that conceived the art of any era breathed life into it and it lives still. We need faith still for our art to live today”.

Beauty:

I might be wrong but I get the impression that most serious contemporary artists are afraid of beauty. Maybe they don't understand what it is. Maybe they confuse it with the attractive or picturesque. It's just the truth in that is all goodness it's possible to experience.

Value:

There is always a conflict between art as communion and art as commodity. Fortunately, when you are painting, you can forget that it will become a product and it can end up having a value that is different from money

Process:

The ideal, or what you must try to do when your painting, is to avoid all the bad things a person (artist) can be: arrogant, humorless, pretentious, insincere, cynical, self serving, opportunistic, greedy, self-absorbed, exploitative, lazy vindictive self righteous judgmental mindless sentimental trite flippant close minded, blind or self-deceptive, weak willed, scared or timid, deceptive, or artful, cruel or without empathy. Telling the truth frees you from all these things, lets you defeat the smallness of yourself.

Truth:

This is what art means to me. Truth. Unity of the individual with the whole. Comfort and courage in the face of the unknown. The peace of submission of the self to the whole. Empathy for all things that exist.

Seven Story Mountain

“On the last day of January 1915, under the sign of the Water Bearer, in a year of a great war, and down in the shadow of some French mountains on the borders of Spain, I came into the world. Free by nature, in the image of God, I was nevertheless the prisoner of my own violence and my own selfishness, in the image of the world into which I was born. That world was the picture of hell, full of men like myself, loving God and yet hating Him; born to love him, living instead in fear and hopeless self-contradictory hungers.

Not many hundreds of miles away from the house where I was born, they were picking up the men who rotted in the rainy ditches among the dead horses and the ruined seventy-fives, in a forest of trees without branches along the river Marne.

My father and mother were captives in that world, knowing they did not belong with it or in it, and yet unable to get away from it. They were in the world and not of it - not because they were saints, but in a different way: because they were artists. The integrity of an artist lifts a man above the level of world without delivering him from it.

My father painted like Cézanne and understood the southern French landscape the way Cézanne did. His vision of the world was sane, full of balance, full of veneration for structure, for the relations of masses and for all the circumstances that impress an individual identity on each created thing. His vision was religious and clean, and therefore his paintings were without decoration or superfluous comment, since a religious man respects the power of God's creation to bear witness for itself.

My father was a very good artist..... *Seven Story Mountain: THOMAS MERTON*

Fire Watch July 4, 1952 “Watchman, what of the night?”

The night, Oh My Lord, is a time of freedom. You have seen the morning and the night, and the night was better. In the night all things began, and in the night the end of all things has come before me.

Baptized in the river of night, Gethsemani has recovered her innocence. Darkness brings a semblance of order before all things disappear. With the clock slung over my shoulder in the silence of the Fourth of July, it is my time to be the night watchman, in the house that in I will one day perish.....

.....Now is the time to get up and go to the tower. Now is the time to meet You, God, where the night is wonderful, where the roof is almost without substance under my feet, where all the mysterious junk in the belfry considers the proximate coming of three new bells, where the forest opens out under the moon and the living things sing terribly that only the present is eternal and that all things having a past and a future are doomed to pass away!”

THOMAS MERTON:

