

Face Your Fears

As artists, we're like inventors. We try to identify new ways to present our ideas visually; similarly, an inventor works to imagine and create a new product. Both are vulnerable to failure. Artist **Anne Strutz** (with a little help from Thomas Edison) offers tips for learning to embrace the mis-steps in order to advance our goals.

NAME IT

Staying in your safe zone when creating art is a sure way to stifle your creativity. Write down what it is you're afraid of when creating. Here are a few examples:

- When taking a workshop, I'm afraid to let go of the techniques with which I'm familiar and embrace the new technique being presented, because I may fail and look like I don't know what I'm doing.
- My time is limited. I'm afraid of wasting it by trying out something new and then not getting a successful result.



Play Days

If you've ever watched young children creating art, you know that they're not afraid to apply color boldly, add too much water, start over. They're playing. They're taking the materials they have in front of them and creating freely. If they don't like what they see, they just start over. Allow yourself time to play in the studio. Break some rules. Be impulsive. Use less expensive paper if budget is a concern. The things you'll learn can often be applied to future paintings, so jot down notes on techniques or color schemes that work so you can remember them.

WHAT IF?

When you're working on a painting, do you ever find yourself thinking "What if?" The question is appealing, but you're afraid to act on the idea. You have a beautifully rendered landscape, for example, but there's something missing, and you can't place what it is. You ask yourself: "What if I add

a bold stroke of color along the horizon line?" If this is successful, you've just put the finishing touch on the painting. If it fails, then you may have to start over. You'll never grow by playing it safe.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

As artists, we often set high expectations. We think we

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

—THOMAS EDISON

should be able to step up to an easel and—voilà!—a masterpiece appears. We sometimes forget that painting is a skill that needs practice, just like mastering a musical instrument. Set aside the pressure to create a perfect painting every time you get in the studio. Paint the same image or scene multiple times, varying your approach each time. Take some risks. From each subsequent painting, you'll take away a different lesson. **PJ**

Pastel artist **Anne Strutz** (annestrutzfineart.com) earned a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work has appeared in a number of juried exhibitions, including the 20th and 21st Pastel 100 competitions.

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

—THOMAS EDISON