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The answer to the question
WHEN IS A PAINTING
DONE?

Quitting time

For a thousand years the question as to when a painting is finished has been pondered and examined. Seemingly brilliant minds have given such advice as:

It takes two people to do a painting, one to paint it and one to tell us when it is done.

If you listen carefully the painting will tell you when it is done.

A painting is done when you can neither add anything or take anything away.

The real answer to this age old question is none of these glib pronouncements and generally is found long before we consider the end in sight.

A PAINTING IS FINISHED THE MINUTE YOU LOSE SIGHT OF THE BIG IDEA AND REACH FOR THE SMALL BRUSH.

How many of you have neared the completion of a painting and been dissatisfied? I know, I know, "all of us have." This is the moment of truth. Do you reach for that #6 round and begin cleaning up edges and introducing small details in the hope of finding success? This marks the end of the painting. "It is done!" The battle is over, call in the hounds and put out the camp fire, the hunt is over. You have lost. But do not despair; there is a solution. Put down the small brush, take a seat 20 feet from the painting, and think about the **reason** you wanted to do this image. Get back to your **BIG** idea—the one that made you notice the scene or person or object in the first place.

Now, do not immediately go back to painting, but look for the big things that need attention (and believe me it is always a big thing that needs attention). Once your initial idea has returned, pick up a big brush and without hesitation commit to a bold addition or adjustment. Perhaps you need to re-establish a color or temperature dominance or eliminate all objects that don't contribute to the big idea; or perhaps it is a matter of creating relationships that are interesting rather than accurate. Whatever the solutions are, it is the consideration of these big ideas that will answer the question "when is a painting done" and in addition lead to success.



A painting isn't finished just because you've taken a small brush and made everything neater.



*A painting is done when (after you've taken a **LONG** look) you take a **BIG** brush and make the all **BIG** relationships work.*