

“The Way we See (...see, hear, feel, dream...) The Things we Create”

>>>> OR <<<<

“What to Leave In...
...What to Leave Out...
(...What to do with It)”

(here, a whittled-down, compressed, condensed copy)



Richard D. Beebe
November 2025

Tracy Art League President, 2024-present
Photography Instr., Grand Theatre Center for the Arts
Photographer, Visual Artist, Writer

“Burned Cottonwoods, Mono Lake County Park, June 2025”

(My image that Tiffanie chose for the TAL flyer for the November TAL general meeting, Thursday, November 13, 2025...)

June 2025, the aftermath of a wildfire in Eastern Sierra’s Mono Basin... (the “Inn Fire”). The setting is the little county park at the northwest corner of Mono Lake, with the (volcanic) Mono Craters framed between the trees.

Sometimes little scenes found once upon a time are discovered can not be repeated even just a few months later. Sometimes there’s an unknown “time” factor with what we create, along with the “how” and the “why.” Times change. Our memories evolve. Or creative avenues evolve. How we see and create becomes altered... we just didn’t know it yet.



© 2025 Richard D Beebe

We're storytellers, each of us...

- *We gather, through our life experiences, through our relationships with family, friends, and on our own, we gather our own collection of “Tales, tall, short, and true.”*
- *We carry them. They become us. Some are borne in laughter... some through tears.*
- *Through our storytelling, we convey something of what we've lived, whether grand or intimate, of what we've loved, gained and lost, or just a simple moment in any given day we find our teachings. Along the way we learn to find our own ways to share them forward to others.*
- *Some of us share this with words. Some, with music and song. Some, through found materials that by themselves carry a latent impression only of their previous time. It's us who allow those materials to take on a life we give it; our chosen story for it to carry forward. (...And, hopefully, we don't screw it up to make “dumpster fodder” instead...)*
- *We're storytellers, one and all, to some degree or another.*

- We're storytellers, one and all, to some degree or another.



Richard D Beebe
October 25, 2025 10:59 AM



Richard D Beebe
October 25, 2025 1:44 PM

What is “Art?”

(AI Overview...)

- The phrase "*arsestcelareartem*" means "*it is art to conceal art.*"
...it's a Latin proverb often attributed to the Roman poet Ovid. It suggests that true artistry lies in making complex work appear effortless by hiding the underlying technique and effort. The phrase is also interpreted as meaning that the most skillful artists conceal their own personality to allow the work itself to be the primary focus.
 - Meaning: The core idea is that the **perfection of art** is to hide the craft, so the final product seems natural rather than labored.
 - Interpretation: A successful artist, according to this idea, makes their work look uncontrived.
-
- Many people see artists as these amazing creators, maybe a little abstract and elitist, of what ‘we’ see interesting in our respective artists’ lives, creating things from ultra-realistic to abstract in form or interpretation. And “ordinary people” can’t possibly create their own “art” (to which I, and most if not all of us, disagree).
 - (I disagree with the idea that skilled artists “conceal” their personality from their work... the work ***IS*** an expression of their personality and life. Have ten artists create from the same original subject, and each will reflect their own skewed, quirky, biased, maybe warped interpretation... their personality!)
 - Some artists feel that “expressiveness” ***DOES*** exist in each of us, whether brought to life or kept quietly tucked away because someone told them “art” wasn’t a worthwhile pursuit in life. ☹️

What is "art"?

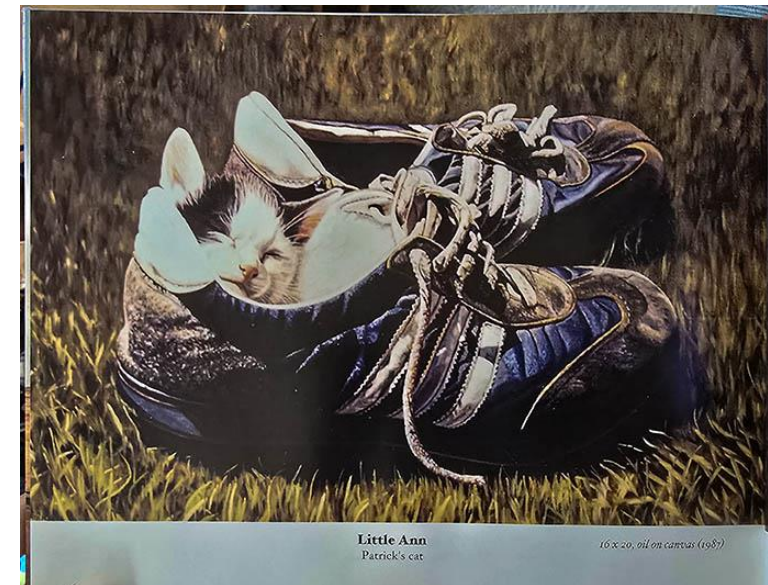
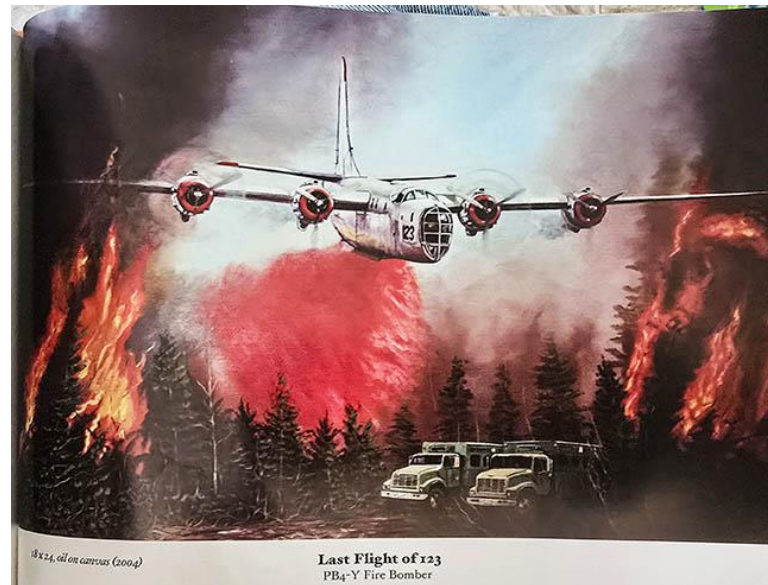
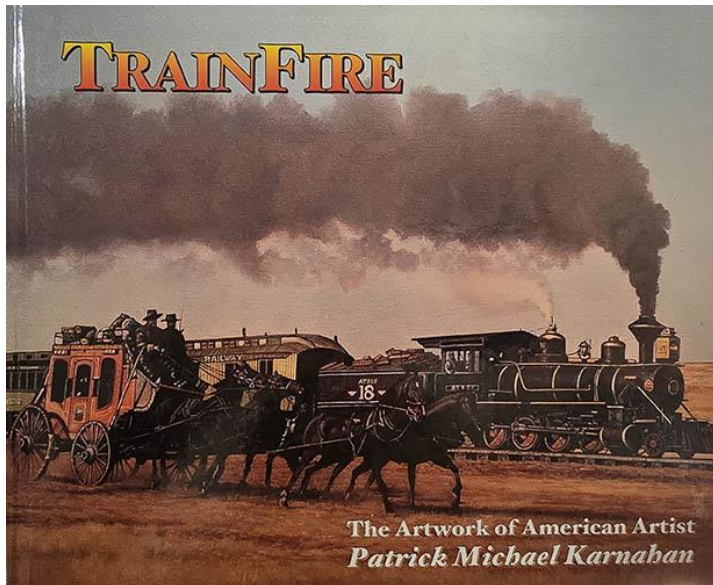
- Madiha Ahmed Khan (Madiha), Textile Artist, Educator, Conservator, Researcher –

"Art is a form of creative expression that combines aesthetics with meaning, often conveying messages or emotions through various mediums. For me, art is about transforming materials into visually appealing pieces that tell a story or spark conversation."

What is "art"?

- Patrick Michael Karnahan (Patrick), oil painter, musician/songwriter, USFS firefighter & Interpreter, storyteller –

“Art is a creative expression that comes from the very soul and heart. It lives in everybody, but some never realize that they have inner gift. Art comes of course in many (forms), for me it is songwriting and oil painting.”



- Casey Goodall (Casey), Photographer/Visual Artist, Poet –

“My initial impulse was to say that “Art is what we do when we attempt to express ourselves without the use of words, but that can’t be right—poetry and song are art, and they use words. So it is something else.

I could add that “artists create art” by directing the attention of others to notice what they believe is interesting, but also to what they think is good, true, or beautiful. Lines carry the eye and suggest motion. Balance suggests stability or instability. Clustering, separating, aligning elements of art imply order, disorder, unity or multiplicity, harmony, conflict, cohesion or disintegration. Contrast or the accentuation of differences create emphasis or drama. Rhythm/repetition and repeated patterns suggest unity or diversity, energy or stability.

With all this said, art is not just expression, it is translation. It translates the inarticulable into something we see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Even baking, where scent, texture, presentation, and timing converge, can be considered an art—a translation of care into crust. Art is an invitation by an artist to others to inhabit or share their perspective, not by argument, but by atmosphere. It doesn’t demand agreement, it offers experience.”

- Mark Knize (Mark), Sculptor, Woodworker, -

“There are lots of definitions, I like the idea (that) art is the artists’ thoughts made visible.”

- Richard Beebe (Richard), Photographer, Visual Artist, Writer (prose, poetry), Instructor of Photography, Tracy Art League President, 2024-present –

“It’s my way of seeing what catches my attention, or my imagination. How I choose to interpret the world around me, or an emotional reaction to an event, without or within. I look for a way I can relate to a “found something,” whether it’s just the way morning sun finds a flower, backlights a leaf, the mist on still water, or something more “industrial.” It’s my way of storytelling my reaction to it, in whatever medium is available in the moment.”



“Sheer Luck, Bus”

When I opened the shutter, it was a quiet, simple, empty street night scene along 7th Street, January 2010. Ten seconds in, here comes a bus, pulls to the curb but continues. My quiet mantra, while holding my breath with fingers crossed... “stay open, stay open” to the camera shutter. And, it did.
P.S... I had NO knowledge of the bus coming.

(So, again...) What is "art"?

- *How do we “see” (...see, hear, feel, dream...) the things we create?*

- Madiha – *“Each story begins with a concept or theme related to sustainability, environmental awareness, or social responsibility. I might be inspired by nature, personal experiences, or current events, and then experiment with different materials and techniques to convey my message.”*
- Casey – *“I want to begin my answer ... by stating that art need not be story-related. I believe, for example, that art can simply exist at the art of "feeling." ... Dance may begin, not with words, but with gesture, movement, ritual, or a visual cue...”*
- Mark – *“Hmmm... For me it begins with “Would this idea be “anything” if I made it?” I don’t think I start with a story...”*
- Patrick – *“From the interest of a certain subject, a passion of bringing something forward that might be invisible to the light. I create music and art about subjects I've enjoyed since childhood. I like to tell stories that have not been told.”*
- Richard – *“It’s very much situational. I want to enjoy what I have to “say” about something found, sometimes on a grander scale, or something smaller and just “personal.” I create for me...”*

(So, again...) What is "art"?

How do we “see” (or “hear”) the things we create?

- Constance Glende, former NPR reporter, musician – *“We were producing a segment of ‘Folk Festival USA’ for NPR (in the mid-1970s). And had the honor to interview Dick Barrett, Texas fiddle champion. We asked his approach to becoming such a great fiddler: ‘Play the Melody Note every 5th note.’*
‘Is that all there is to it?!’ we asked.
‘Well, that's not all,’ said with a hearty laugh, “It's knowing what other 4 notes to play.”
- *(And I would add... ‘having the courage to explore variations of the other 4 notes that you play.’ ...However, I like his simple way of saying it.)”*

“The way we ‘Build’
(... see, hear, feel, dream...)
The Things we Create”

- Patrick – *“Like when I paint a song, the chords bring out the color, light and dark, it also creates a feel and mood. Without ever singing one word of intent, you create a story with a note, a chord. While painting from life, I am always hearing music melodies that help create my original art.”*
- Richard - *“...Of finding a spark through external sources? Absolutely! Many friends will simply believe that I derive best from other photographs or other visual art.*

Truth be told... I hold music and song lyrics far more dearly.”

How do we “see” the things we create?

- Constance’s maritime “street” photo in the Portland, Maine, harbor: *“I remember watching the schooner edge toward the lighthouse. And did get shots of the schooner when it was farther away. I moved where I was positioned as it got closer to the lighthouse. And I think it was just one shot after I repositioned myself further up on the hill. In my image gallery I’m not seeing a bunch of shots as it edged closer...”*

(...about the strongest label she’d brush off is “photographer.”)



“How do you know what to “leave in” vs. “leave out?”

- Madiha – *“I know what to leave in or out by trusting my instincts and stepping back to evaluate the piece as a whole. If it feels balanced and visually appealing, I might leave it as is...”*
- Casey – *“In photography, I plan out in detail where I am going to stand, where the lights will be, what angle of shadow the light will create, etc. However, I never know in advance what will work well and what won’t. The secret is to keep trying until I get it right.”*
- Mark – *“I don’t always, but with experience I think about trying to edit. Thinking about editing is part of the lifelong learning curve.”*
- Patrick – *“At first, in my growing years, that was always hard, when to leave it alone. Oil painting is a very creative artform, and in doing the process, it is always subject to change, just like the final stroke. At my older age, I now know when it is done because I feel that the subject needs to breathe, let it be what it is - more of a Zen type of acknowledgement these days. In my early years, some paintings would get overworked, and become less of a creative artform, and become a big mess and a Big waste of creative time. I think that might just be the fine-line also between an illustrator and a creative artist who allows a flow without boundaries.”*
- Richard – *“Sometimes, you don’t. Not until you “just keep playing” with it and realize it was better three moves back. Other times, you pretty much have that feeling of what to do and how to do it, even when you’re still just standing in the scene with a camera (or painter’s easel, or sketchpad)...”*

How does this "magic" of composing work with you?

- Madiha – *“For me, composing is a process of experimentation and discovery. I might start with a vague idea or theme and then let the materials guide me as I work. I enjoy the freedom of not knowing exactly where a piece will go, as it allows for unexpected surprises and discoveries.”*
- Casey – *“As we learned from Chief Dan George in the movie Little Big Man, ‘Sometimes the magic works. Sometimes it doesn’t.’ That is exactly how it works with me in art.”*
- Mark – *“I know a pleasing composition when I see one. It might just be magic.”*
- Patrick – *“I wake up with an idea, and think through it a little, just enough to gain a concept of what will be created, and then the instrument comes to hand like a piano or guitar, or a paint brush. Much is left however during the process for change. I like to allow change in the process, to have the freedom to change my mind, depending on my mood at that moment...”*

How do we See the Things we Create?

- *Famed French photographer, Henri Cartier Bresson, coined the phrase “Decisive Moment,” back in the 1930s, implying that being attentive enough to be aware that "something might happen." and being prepared enough for that moment if and when it occurs. I have noted that with all things being otherwise equal - experience, skill, tools, background, etc. - I'll bet on what some may call "sheer luck" in being there as that moment is before me to behold.*

Richard – *“There’s the idea in some circles that however you get to the end of the task or road is however you were meant to take to get there. Detours? You never know if that was the way you needed to find to go all along to reach that moment or goal. Not taking it would have led you elsewhere, to a different outcome.”*

...Like Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken.”



(“Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare,” Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1932)

Is everything always all planned out?

- Madiha – *“Planned or spontaneous; Sometimes I have a clear plan, and other times I let the process unfold organically. I enjoy the flexibility of working with different materials and techniques, which allows me to adapt and change direction as needed.”*
- Casey – *“My compositional practice is really in two parts.
Part 1: plan, plan, plan.
Part 2: Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome...”*
- Mark – *“Everything, always and all” doesn’t leave much room. There’s planning, but the surprises make it art. I think “everything, always, and all” is more like production work, not artwork.”*

My own “magical timing” - I have noted that with all things being otherwise equal - experience, skill, tools, background, etc. - I'll bet on what some may call "sheer luck" in getting the timing as perfect as possible in that moment, when we might not have any overt control on life and events.



© Richard Beebe 2010, 2021

“Sheer Luck Bus” *(January, 2010)*

When I opened the shutter, it was a quiet, simple, empty street night scene along 7th Street, January 2010. ~10 seconds in, here comes a bus, it turns, pulls to the curb, but continues on passed.

My quiet mantra, while holding my breath with fingers crossed... “please, please, please, stay open, stay open, stay open” to the camera shutter.

And, it did.

AND, I had NO knowledge in the bus coming north on Central, let alone turning.

Is the art of composing truly teachable?

- Madiha – *“While some technical skills can be taught, I believe that creativity and artistic vision are innate. Anyone can learn techniques and principles, but the spark of creativity is unique to each individual.”*
- Patrick – *“Basic form maybe, some techniques, but the inspiration and creating drive, must be in the person upon birth I believe. You can teach this stuff, but the person must connect it to their own creative drive, or nothing takes shape. It’s nice these days in the World of A-I, to think machines can take over this creative ability, but it can’t. ... Art is not the perfect look of the painting, or the perfect voice, or guitar lead, or the chord pattern or even melody, it is much more than that. It goes beyond all of that back to the one that created it- what was in the mind of the artist when they created the art, what kind of day was it, what was the weather like, what happened that morning or evening that made the artist want to create that work? Or better yet, what were all the one-million thoughts of that artist’s lifetime work, that brought that new artwork to form that you are now listing to as a song, or viewing as an original painting.*

Best example I can give you is from the late artist- Picasso...

A women came up to the famous artist at a café in Paris, she asked the artist, “could you do me a little something of art”, the artist said yes- Picasso did a little drawing, and presented to the women. She said, “How much do I owe you?” He said “a thousand” ... She said, “But it only took you one minute!” Picasso said, “No, it took a lifetime...”

- Casey – “I don’t think it is “teachable,” but it is “learnable,” and learning often requires a teacher. Practice, practice, practice, fail, fail, fail, until you succeed.”
- Richard – *“On some level, yes. (But is there a latent pre-existing spark in someone? Very possibly, yes, as well.) I think sometimes the technical side of art might be easier to convey than the aesthetic... teaching the “numbers” stuff with photography, for example. I’ve watched students in class try interesting angles for a different point of view on a found subject. And the idea was self-generated, nothing to do with anything I said. They had a curious spark of creativity they were willing to follow... whether looking silly doing it or not. Can I teach someone to do that? Part of my role as instructor is to encourage and enlighten; I can only hope and inspire, not rewrite their minds to actually do something.”*
- Mark – *“Yes, I think there are principles but admit there are exceptions that might be good. I’ve seen things in museums that I think are bad composition, but it’s rare!”*

- * How important are "rules" for composing (any genre)?
- * Do you always follow some rules or guidelines?

- Madiha – *“Rules can provide a foundation, but I think they're meant to be broken or bent. The most interesting art often pushes boundaries and challenges conventions. I like to experiment and find my own way, rather than following strict guidelines.”*
- Casey – *“In my mind, they are important, but a third tier of importance behind more fundamental compositional concepts...”*
- Mark - *"I think very important. I have heard even Jazz music has “rules”. Yes, my rule is to “try and make some museum-quality thing.”*

- Patrick – *“There are no rules, you just feel it and create it. Sometimes it might take months, days, or sometime minutes, but you will create if it exists inside your soul, it just has to come out.*
- *With oil painting I always like a quick free form drawing with paint to start, but not always. With original songs: sometimes a melody I will hear in my head, or wake up to it. Or I will see or read something that makes me interested in the subject enough to capture it in a song. Some songs I create never have words, because I can paint it all with the melody and cords to create the feel.”*
- Richard – *“I remember one particular episode of an old TV series, “Young Indiana Jones and the Mystery of the Blues,” where he was with a jazz musician and wanting to learn the saxophone. He first needed to learn how the thing works, where to find the notes, how to play a series or progression of notes together... then, once he was comfortable with that basic process, to learn how to improvise around those notes he had learned to play. Whether learning a musical instrument, or how to paint, how to deal with glass, to write, to dance, and more... before you can get creative and be more “expressive,” you need to understand the basics of creating it.”*

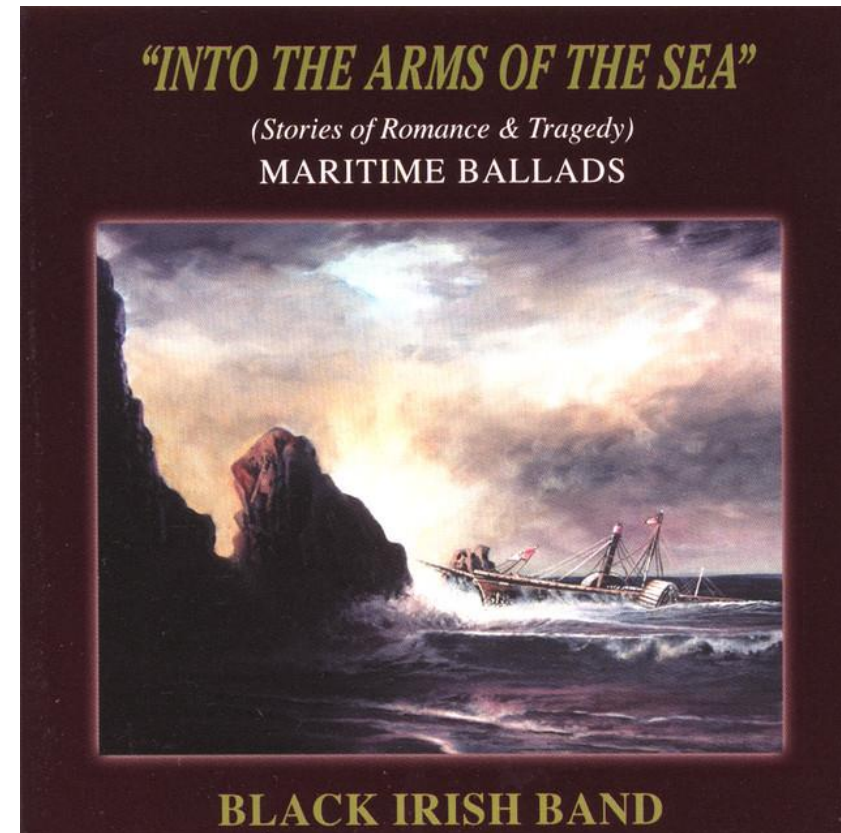
Do you find ways to merge different genres?

- Madiha – *“Textile art can gain from other forms like painting, sculpture, or photography by incorporating new techniques, textures, or perspectives. For example, I might use natural dyes inspired by watercolor painting or incorporate found objects like recycled plastics.”*
- Casey – *“As with a poem I (wrote), poetry can take from drumming, drumming from painting, etc.”*
- Mark – *“For the work I do, I use the ‘seeing’ skills I learned from drawing, and color theory, composition, and even tools like photography to “get what I want.”*

Do you find ways to merge different genres?

Patrick – *“Like when I paint a song, the chords bring out the color, light and dark, it also creates a feel and mood. Without ever singing one word of intent, you create a story with a note, a chord. While painting from life, I am always hearing music melodies that help create my original art.”*

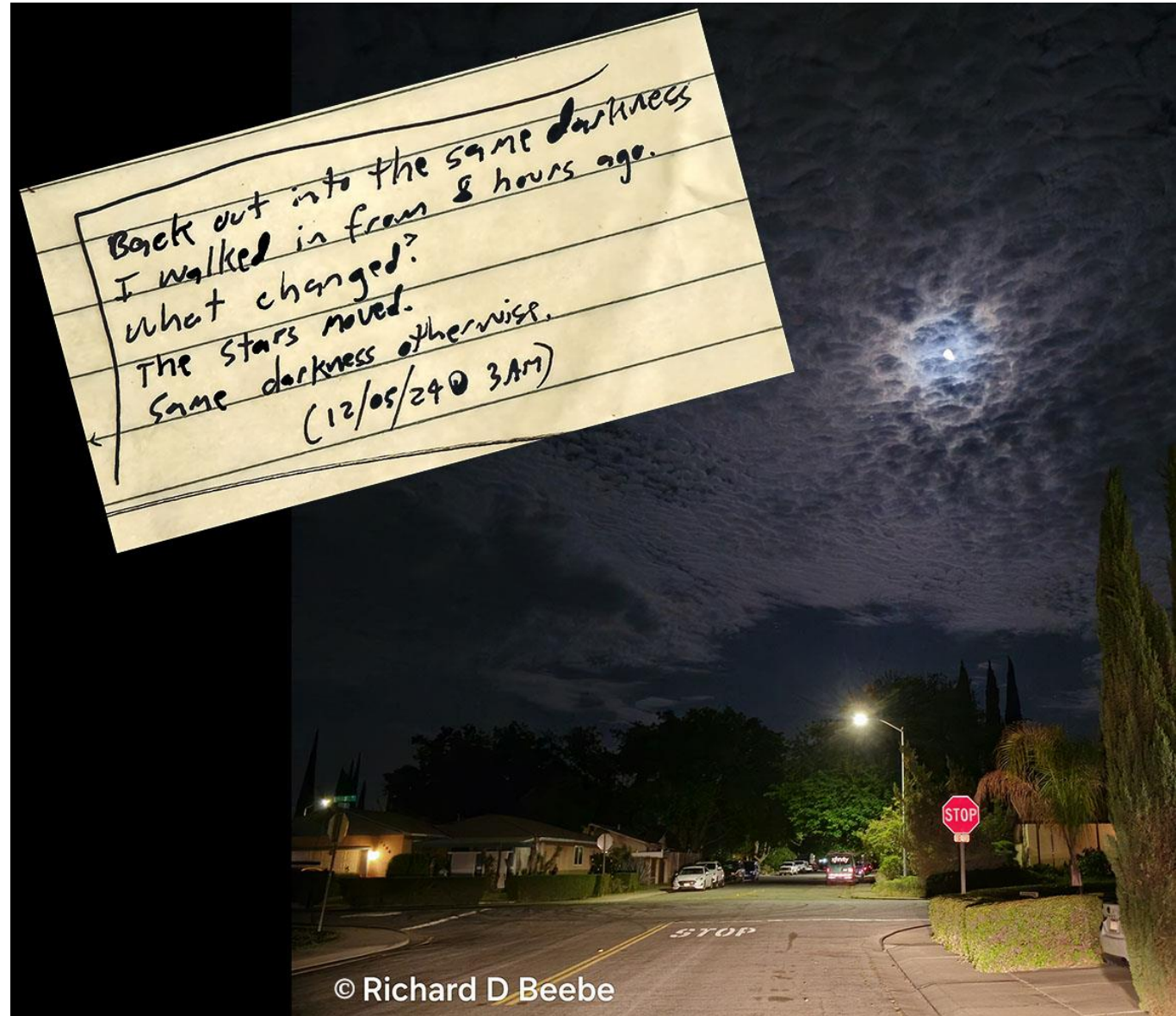
(For the cover of Black Irish Band’s 2003 “Into the Arms of the Sea” CD, he painted this scene of the paddle-wheeler “Northerner” which was the shipwrecked near Eureka, in the “Fate of Miss Gregg,” the last song on the CD.)



Do you find ways to merge different genres?

- Richard – “For a long time, the avenues were separate. (Much like my “working (commercial electrician) world” and my personal, creative side stayed well apart.) At some point, they learned to play off each other...

I have created one from the other several times. I have also looked for ways to combine the two – imagery with text written on or into it.”



Is the art of composing truly teachable?

- Patrick – *“...You can teach this stuff, but the person must connect it to their own creative drive, or nothing takes shape...Art is not the perfect look of the painting, or the perfect voice, or guitar lead, or the chord pattern or even melody, it is much more than that. It goes beyond all of that back to the one that created it - what was in the mind of the artist when they created the art, what kind of day was it, what was the weather like, what happened that morning or evening that made the artist want to create that work? Or better yet, what were all the one-million thoughts of that artists lifetime work, that brought that new artwork to form that you are now listening to as a song, or viewing as an original painting.*

How important are the “tools” of your creative process?

- Madiha – *“The tools I use are essential to my process. Whether it's the feel of fabric, the texture of recycled materials, or the flow of natural dyes, each tool allows me to express myself in a unique way.”*
- Casey – *“Fundamental.”*
- Mark – *“My hands are my important tools and I need them.”*
- Patrick – *“Like with music, the piano as a tool is an advantage over the guitar, because I can see it, looking down at my hands, and putting the chords to the melody. With oil painting, there are some brushes I prefer in style over others.”*
- Richard – *“There's the 'tools' aspect I hadn't thought of... like most photographers, my thought was on the physical things, not in other aspects of a broader sense of tools. I remembered my 1980s 'homework' in probably learning the equivalent of an AA in the understanding of light-sensitive materials (specifically b&w film, paper) and how the chemistry worked and could be manipulated to fine tune in physical form what I saw in my mind's eye - I learned well how to finesse them.”*

Does everything you start to create pan out into some degree of success?

- Madiha – *“Success is not just about creating a visually appealing piece; it's about conveying a message, promoting sustainability, and inspiring others to think differently about waste and consumption. If a piece resonates with others or sparks conversation, I consider it a success.”*
- Casey – *“No. I fail more often than I succeed, but I succeed more frequently now than I did even two years ago.”*
- Mark – *“No, certainly not everything. To be a success, I need to like the product and think I couldn't further improve it. Somebody else liking it is also good and selling it, putting it in a show, or winning an award is big success.*

Does everything you start to create pan out into some degree of success?

- Patrick – *“Yes, I think it all works out in the end, more of the Zen thoughts- “everything is meant to be, or Bob Ross, “just Happy mistake’s make great art sometimes...Don’t worry about the perfect world of A-I, just say to yourself— “it’s all good”, or art should be left for everyone’s interpretation, so how could it be bad!”*
- Richard – *“The vast majority of photographic images I capture would simply be thrown away... I may keep changing my viewpoint and changing other aspects of the camera controls, until I at least have enough visual ideas to find the best impression to work with, even if maybe 15 frames back.*
- *Of the writing I do, only a small fraction ever has any sort of audience.*

It's all a "process" to find ways to learn – not just of the tools, the craft and the materials, but within your own mind, spirit and heart – AND knowing that it may be a lifelong "work in progress" journey. (*Sean Beebe, my late son, had a quote we can adapt...*
"Recovery is a process you may need to do over and over."
...maybe we start with "The art of creating, or the creating of art"?)

It's personal, regardless of the classes you take, the workshops you enroll in, the number of YouTube videos you watch, the number of books you buy, or the number of miles of paper you go through... Make it yours... and try not to screw it up in the process, or at least learn something from it.

"It is a universal fact there are as many ways to complete a photographic assignment ...or an art project, poem, song, book, etc... as there are ways to screw it up."

...Jon Falk

"Adventures in Location Lighting," 1990

“I have long considered the creative impulse to be a visit – a thing of grace, perhaps, not commanded or owned so much as awaited, prepared for. A thing, also, of mystery.”

... Loreenna McKennitt

Liner note for “The Visit” CD, 1991