

## The Doctor is In

Artist Eleanor Fisher prescribes a cure for seasonal artistic depression

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By CELINA COLBY | Feb. 27, 2016



Eleanor Fisher

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Artist Eleanor Fisher has a very cerebral understanding of the creative process. As a therapist with a doctorate in psychology and the survivor of a traumatic brain surgery, Eleanor's mind is central to her work.

Her background allows her to see the struggles of creative people in a more transparent light. For example, she says, "Americans are very approval oriented. If I can't express how I feel safely, I get depressed."

This kind of depression and anxiety about their artwork is common among artists, especially at this time of year. As seasonal depression grips the public, many artists are struggling to find inspiration in the cold greys of the winter months.

Fisher says that 50% of the patients she sees are creative people, and so she has a process for reinvigorating these dull February days. She recommends taking small steps, one action at a time every day towards creating something.

This takes off the pressure of creating a masterpiece by breaking the work down into one or two brushstrokes or camera clicks a day. Slow but steady.

Diversifying routine can also shed a new light on tired subjects.

Fisher herself sometimes paints with her hands to spice things up. She recommends other artists try something a little crazy to break them out of their shell. Her most oft repeated adage is a tried-and-true method for re-centering in any situation, "Close your eyes and breathe deeply."

The painter's own work reflects these positive processes. She creates acrylic paintings mixed with shards of glass for a multimedia effect that offers a glittering, almost other-worldly feeling.

Many of her works are of strong females, perhaps underlying self-portraits of her own strength in leading a rich life after brain surgery. *Lady in Green* shows a woman confronting the viewer in a full-frontal portrait. She wears a lavish green garment accented by painted white lace and shards of glass. With the ball of fiery red hair on her head, she looks like a younger version of Fisher, passionate and defiant, challenging the viewer to stand in her way.

All art begins internally for Fisher. In a world so focused on the opinions of others she says, "everything begins with self-love." She encourages her patients to decide what they want to get out of the creative process and make it happen.

Positive reinforcement and self-encouragement are the pillars of her artistic teachings. It's refreshing to see someone genuinely looking inward rather than looking at how they appear to others and acting accordingly. When Fisher talks to her students, her lecture audiences, or her friends, she's a ball of frenetic energy.

With so much to say she jumps from personal stories of difficulty to renewing creative processes in minutes. The audience is left inspired, if not by Fisher's advice then [sic] by her unending energy and positivity, even at a mature age.

Fisher's work *Make a Joyful Noise* is a perfect portrait of the artist inside her. A woman with long, flowing hair takes up the whole frame of the piece, her arms spread wide in an ecstatic position of acceptance. It appears she's having some kind of spiritual revelation. Her robe is a vibrantly colored floral ensemble and the background burns a fiery orange. This woman is a force of nature, and a direct reflection of her powerful creator.

Ironically, Fisher's creation process is a painful one.

Working with glass shards she often cuts up her hands and suffers physical damage while putting together a work. The contrast between this technique and the joyful paintings that result from it is a perfect representation of Fisher herself. She masters the pain, and it turns into art.

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