

## Steve R. Coffey- Artist Statement

I've always thought of the prairies as a place loaded with visual intricacies. Throughout my travels over the years I have found that there is simply no light like that of the Canadian prairies, a challenge to describe especially on canvas. I have also felt that the human being is both dwarfed and defined within this light and I use the figure and human elements as both a romantic and metaphorical signal, not for a sense of aloneness but rather as an individual existing under the vast sky. My paintings are mental snapshots. I'll see something that strikes me, file it away in my head and draw on it as I return to my studio. These files I call 'Memory Polaroids'. With my move from a major city to a small prairie town however, I have been much closer to the landscape I attempt to capture so the 'eye to canvas' is now much more direct. Nevertheless, my process remains a mingling of what I see in front of me with that that I've seen in the past which reminds me of the surreality of a polaroid photograph. My process continues to evolve.

I have been driven to create art all of my life whether it be painting or music. I don't analyze why so much as simply 'feed the need'. Visual Arts is one of my chosen languages and my end goal is to perfect it. Something no artist ever really does, hence the painter that dies holding the brush. It's much more than a passing interest. It's a way of life. It's forever learning.

Painting and music both come from the same expressive place but with different tools. My natural shift over the early years of awkward attempts at 'art speak' was to adopt and utilize the language of music in the creation and discussion of my canvas: Tempo, Lyric, Melody, Rhythm, Verse, Chorus etc. and of course vice versa when writing and playing a musical composition: Hue, Tone, Contrast, Line, Weight etc. Thus- Painting my song and singing my painting.

My philosophy (with a tint of opinion): Art derives from a personal place and must first pass that inside test before it is let loose to speak publicly. But for me a painting's completion is simply a remnant of that moment of expression. At that point the piece is no longer as important to me hence why it is easy to let it go and to move on. A physical painting created yesterday gets in the way of the perceived one being painted today. The only value to draw on is what may have made yesterday's painting visually successful enough to let it enter the outside world. It is the informant that instigates progression. Nothing more. It is no longer mine as such but an echo of my voice speaking elsewhere in the world, in wherever it ends up and takes on a new role as some sort of purveyor. Now, hopefully, important to somebody else for whatever reason. A collector's perception then becomes a collaboration or what I call 'the dance' between viewer and artist. What is art without the viewer or music without the listener? The truth is: Art that comes from that natural need to express will find it's place organically therefore should travel carefully through superficial realms such as contests, awards and competitions. There, there is little more than judging the 'flavor of the day'. Unless they are designed with integrated teaching tools, competitions and contests risk belittling true expression rather than encouraging it by suggesting that only a select few can do it well and ultimately, can set a poor precedent for our aspiring future artists. With art making there is no right or wrong. My process is an ongoing artistic refinement using intuition, instinct and inspiration gathered from what's around me and those I hold dear and without any public voice saying: "you should paint this". I don't rely on other's artistic approval. Just my own.

In the end I would hope that my work triggers the feeling of familiarity, that somewhere at sometime the viewer has seen or felt this; a familiar mystery that lives on the tip of the tongue. I would hope that my work is accessible for simply what it is; a painting or a song left to the viewer's interpretation with no tricks.