



DECLARING A CREATIVE INTENTION

CREATIVE INTENTION vs. EXPECTATION

Although very close in formal definitions, I like to differentiate between the two terms "Intention" and "Expectation" as we apply them to our creative process.

Here are some definitions for "*Intention*" I've tailored from dictionary.com:

- An act or instance of determining mentally upon some action
- The purpose or attitude toward the effect of one's actions or conduct
- The meaning or significance...

For our purposes as artists, I describe a creative intention is a declared direction of effort, a stated trajectory guiding one's creative actions. Intention facilitates a dynamic relationship and "conversation" with the artwork you are creating throughout the process of creating it. Since a specific pre-conceived outcome or result is NOT expected, we are free to respond to the art intuitively and with curiosity along the way within the "guard rails" of our stated direction.

Here are some definitions for "*Expectation*" I've tailored from dictionary.com:

- A specific outcome or result regarded as probable or likely
- The specific outcome or result being looked forward to or being waited for
- The specific outcome or result decided to be requisite or necessary

For our purposes as artists, an expectation is a specific, anticipated outcome or result decided upon ahead of time. There is nothing wrong with having expectations, the rub comes when they get in the way of our creativity and drive us to see failure and struggle more than the success of what we are creating, and the joy experienced in creating it. Expectation, although focusing, can often lead to struggle and disappointment when our artwork is not progressing as we think it should or is not turning out in alignment with the preconceived end-state expectation.



Important Disclaimer: Using intentions does not remove the need to continually develop more and more mastery in our toolbox of artistic skills and the foundational design elements. Using intentions instead of pre-conceived expectations allows us to enjoy the process and develop constructive discernment in lieu of frustrated judgement of what is working and not working as we create.



ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL!

To help you grasp and apply this idea of declaring a creative intention to guide you as you create, I have identified several categories. Remember, your creative Intentions are unique and personal to you, this information is intended (HA!) to get your own creative juices flowing!

Types of Creative Intentions:

1. **General Creative Direction/Boundaries** - The creative focus guiding your artwork
2. **Subject Driven** - Your connection with subject matter, what draws your attention and excited your interest
3. **Message / Story Telling / Narrative Driven** - The "take away" meaning you want your viewers to understand
4. **Feeling / Experience Driven** - The feeling you want your viewer to experience, the process you want your viewer to go through

Here are some ideas and examples for each category to assist you in declaring an intention. I often combine them depending on what I'm doing. For example, I'll declare a title from the General Creative Driver category, and then also declare that I'd like to share the aspect of my subject that draws me to it from the Subject Driven category. What we declare becomes the guard rails to guide making all our creative decisions from:

General Creative Direction/Boundaries Driver (typically used in combination with other types of intentions):

- Choose a Title
- Choose the "Star" and the "Supporting Cast"
- Choose a style to focus on
- Choose a primary tool
- Choose a limited palette
- Can you think of others?

Subject Driven:

- What about the subject do you want to be most important (and focus to convey)
- What are you drawn to and would like to share?
- What excites you and you would like to share?
- How does it make you feel that you would like to share?
- Can you think of others?



Message/Story/Narrative Driven:

- What Message do you want conveyed with this piece?
- What Story do you want to tell / show with this piece?
- What Narrative do you want to lead your viewer through?
- Can you think of others?

Feeling / Experience Driven:

- What Mood do you want to establish?
- What Feeling(s) or emotions do you want to convey and/or elicit?
- What Experience will this artwork provide and/or elicit?
- Can you think of others?

KEY CONCEPT! Notice that other than the General Creative Direction/Boundaries category, the prompts are having us focus on the IMPACT of what we are creating on ourselves and our viewers vs. the specific details of what it will LOOK like in the end!

Example Intention Declarations:

1. Subject Driven - My intention with this piece is to convey the whimsical character and postures of the nuthatch with the fleeting sense of capturing a momentary glimpse.



2. Message Driven - My intention with this piece is to show the beauty of nature and wildlife contrasted with the encroachment of civilization on their environment.



3. Feelings Driven - My intention with this piece is to evoke a sense of relief and wonder capturing the journey from vulnerability, through the tangle of circumstances, to the freedom of breaking free into flight.





Declaring Your Intention Worksheet

First, determine your starting point for this piece, then use questions below to guide you:

- **Play First then Clarify Intention** – Start with general drivers which will help lead you to a specific intention focus.
- **Declare Specific Intention Up Front** – Start with the specific intention focus and use the general drivers to clarify and support it.

<i>INTENTION PROMPT</i>	<i>YOUR THOUGHTS</i>
General Creative Direction/Boundaries Driver (The creative focus guiding your artwork)	
• Choose a Title	
• The “Star” & “Supporting Cast”	
• Choose a style to focus on	
• Choose a primary tool	
• Choose a limited palette	
Subject Driven – (Your connection, what draws your attention and excited your interest)	
• What about the subject do you want to be most important?	
• What are you drawn to and would like to share?	
• What excites you and you would like to share?	
• How does it make you feel that you would like to share?	
Message / Story Telling / Narrative Driven – (The "take away" meaning you want understood)	
• What Message do you want conveyed with this piece?	
• What Story do you want to tell or show with this piece?	
• What Narrative do you want to lead your viewer through?	
Feeling / Experience Driven – (The feeling or process you want your viewer to have)	
• What Mood do you want to establish?	
• What Feeling(s) or emotions do you want to convey/elicit?	
• What Experience will this artwork provide/elicit?	



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Use this space to refine your thoughts from above and capture any additional revelations for guideposts and boundaries for this piece... If you are still feeling overwhelmed or scattered, simplify, and remember you are creating a TRAJECTORY and GUIDERAILS not PRE-CONCEIVED EXPECTATIONS!

Now Declare Your Intention!

MY INTENTION FOR THIS PIECE IS TO...