

yoga

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FUSION OR CONFUSION?
What's Gained &
What's Lost As Yoga
Diversifies



Vision Quest

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEAN KRAKEL

Painter Erin Robbins, 49, is enthralled by color. Her Boulder, Colorado, home and art studio are awash in lush hues of blueberry, mustard, seafoam green, and royal purple. On her walls hang recent watercolors or oil works, expressionistic/figurative paintings that often feature a human figure emerging from abstract—but always colorful—geometric shapes. Her work seeks to express the soul and is deeply infused with emotion. “I believe that creating and experiencing art has the potential to bring us closer to our soul, our essence,” she professes.

A spiritual and creative awakening after an undergraduate art class launched Robbins on her life’s colorful journey. Alone in an A-frame studio surrounded by redwood trees, she became entranced. “I threw my brushes away and put my hand in a pile of blue paint. Suddenly I saw—really saw—blue.” After that, she began to play with blue on her canvas, then did the same with yellow. “Soon I was covered head to toe with paint. I was in such a blissful dance with color that I painted all night. In the morning, when I looked at the canvas, I sank to my knees and cried because I couldn’t believe something so beautiful was painted through me,” she says. “From that moment on, I understood that creativity has the power to change the world.”

A meditator since 1975, Robbins has become devoted to spiritual and creative inquiry. “Meditation is inseparable from my life as an artist,” she says. “One could not live without the other. When I’m at my easel, it’s a meditation for me.” Meditating, whether with closed eyes in Lotus position or with a brush on canvas, gives her insight.

“Just this morning I was sipping tea, looking out the window,” she says. “Since I wasn’t busy-minded, I noticed the subtlety of the light on the leaves outside and the way the sunlight stroked the cat on the windowsill. Out of that meditative state is born my sensitivity of vision and impulse to create.”

Like meditation, creativity is not an isolated act. “Being an artist is more than putting oil on a canvas eight hours a day,” Robbins emphasizes. “It’s a way of life. Sitting at the cof-

fee shop or walking down the street, I notice shadows, shapes, and nuances of colors. Seeing and being aware is 80 percent of my work. Only 20 percent is painting in the studio.”

“It’s easy to miss the beauty, to become preoccupied with practicalities—the worries, the mortgage,” Robbins adds. “To truly open our eyes, we need to make a conscious apprenticeship to creativity.” To learn about Robbins’s art and workshops, visit www.erinrobbinsstudio.com. —L.K.

Painter Erin Robbins responds to the muses in her Boulder studio (top) and gives thanks to them (above).



BY LAUREL KALLENBACH