

Warm Up to ART Introduction

Over the years working as a professional artist I have had the great opportunity to meet some of you in person. I am often asked "I would love to paint or draw, but where do I begin?"

Knowing there are many great structured lessons available, I understood people were asking for an encouraging boost of support before they signed up for those lessons or workshops.

I can help you find the confidence to step up to the easel.

Most of us have a fear to begin something new. We can all be self-conscious out of our comfort zone. This is the time to let go of those inhibitions. It is the time of discovery.

A comment I often hear is "I love that painting but I don't know anything about art" or "I would like to buy that painting but I need my friend to tell me if it is right for me". *I can assure each and every one of you, you DO know about art.* We all know what we love and what we are drawn to. Art is woven in our lives. It is in the colours we choose to wear, or decorate our spaces, the music we listen to, the letters we compose. *Our personality and individuality show up in our choices. This is something to be celebrated!*

In this little guide, you will discover ways to spark your creativity, some simple tools and resources to further your exploration. You will see a little about how I work and what motivates me. Enjoy!

Warm UP to ART Discover your creativity and the courage to start.

By Dawn Banning

Illustrations by Greg
Banning

Greg Banning is one of Canada's most recognized illustrators. He is a cousin of Dawn's In-law's. See more about Greg at www.gregbanning.com



A **warm up** is intended to prepare a player physiologically and psychologically to (participate) in a game.

Chapter 1

I have been asked for many years to teach art workshops. The fact that I have never attended one, and have little formal art education doesn't seem to deter people from this request.

I wondered, with the great invention of Google, why not just Google techniques and lessons? There are so many wonderful lessons available online. Google any art subject, you will see an array of learning tools, You Tubes, EBooks, dvd's, workshops. If it is technique you want to learn, Google is your very best friend.

What are people *really* asking of me, and how can I help?

When I listened, I understood people want to know how to begin. Mostly, they were looking for *approval* to begin.

People need help to get from here..... to here.



They expressed a desire for creative insight into art they are drawn to or have purchased. They told me they want to be more creative in their every day work, or with their children. People want to learn to play again, to express emotion, memories, share them and fulfill a need of something they feel they lack in life. Perhaps they wish to relate to an artist family member or friend, looking for common ground, a shared passion. Some yearn to do something artistic, but *just not sure what that is*.

Here is where I can help.

INTRODUCING ART INTO YOUR LIFE

Some people believe there is a magical secret to being an artist. A mysterious key exists to living creatively in a world that only a few are allowed to live in. The mystery is part of the appeal.

I believe everyone can live a more creative life. People of any age or profession can learn to be artistic on *some level* and appreciate art.

Here is what living more creatively may do.

You may be happier, calmer*1. You may be more productive. Your memory will be sharper. *2 You will learn to think on your feet, and go with the flow. You will embrace change easier, be more open to new ideas, and innovative.*3

**1"Creativity is also a great relaxation tool. It's an outlet for your emotions, while giving you something to focus all of your mental energy on. When you draw, paint, or write, you're turning your stresses into a tool – in some ways, is a good thing, because it sparks inspiration for some type of art form. Any artistic, creative activity that you enjoy doing can be immensely beneficial for*

reducing anxiety. The Calm Clinic [_http://www.calmclinic.com](http://www.calmclinic.com)

2*A Woodland Hills physician, Dr. Arnold Bresky, calls himself a "preventive gerontologist." He's been utilizing art therapy for patients that have Alzheimer's and dementia. He claims he has achieved a 70% success rate with in improving his patient's memories. Bresky states that his art therapy program helps people with Alzheimer's and dementia exercise their brains. "The brain works through numbers and patterns," Bresky says. "The numbers are on the left side of your brain, the patterns are on the right side. What I'm doing is connecting the two sides." "And we're getting the brain to grow new cells." Read more: <http://www.arttherapyblog.com/art-therapy-seniors/art-therapy-helps-alzheimers-patients-improve-memory/#ixzz2HEQfPCV1>

3*Closing the Innovation Gap: How the Arts are becoming the New Competitive. Today's most effective leaders are sharply focused on developing more-innovative employees and innovation-friendly organizational cultures. It's no longer enough to have a skilled and technically proficient workforce—employees also need to be creative, collaborative, and communicative. In recent years, the use of the arts by corporations to meet a wide range of employee training and organizational development needs has grown remarkably. Why? Because artistic processes and experiences are by their very nature creative endeavours—including creative and critical thinking, problem identification and solution, effective written and oral communication, teamwork, and collaboration—are deeply rooted in the artistic tradition. **Leader to Leader Journal** (a selection of the article is posted here) - by Harvey Seifter

In "The Lessons Art Teach—" Eisner is referring to art education in schools. I think it applies to people of any age. He speaks of the arts teaching children that problems can have more than one solution. He explains they teach good judgments of qualitative relationships.

<http://www.arteducators.org/advocacy/10-lessons-the-arts-teach>

This report by Lisa Phillips shares similar points. She mentions children can learn focus, confidence, and perseverance, in the arts.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/22/top-10-skills-children-learn-from-the-arts/>

'A new study out of the University of Illinois at Chicago reveals that people who create (or enjoy) art or music on a regular basis are kinder, more active members of society than their less arty counterparts. Researchers say the mere act of going to a gallery or museum improves tolerance, increases

compassion and may even spur us to perform more random acts of goodwill'
Chatelaine Feb 2013

Hosting your corporate meetings/parties/ events at an art gallery might be worth some of these underlying benefits.

Whether you ever pick up a pencil or paintbrush, learning to incorporate creativity into your daily life will improve it. Becoming more creative can be transferable to many areas in life.

Chapter 2 THE CREATIVE PROCESS



Darin Larson photo- our Dad's hand&berries

Charlie Gilkey wrote a fantastic article Demystifying the Creative process. In brief, he says: *Preparation- means the work phase.*

Incubation- in this phase your conscious and subconscious mind are working on the idea.

Illumination- the Eureka moment that many of us spend our days questing after.

Implementation- where the idea you have been preparing and incubating sees the light of day.

<http://www.productiveflourishing.com/demystifying-the-creative-process/>

Artists have varying degrees of talent, what the great ones have is the ability to work very hard, consistently. They are adaptable, and open-minded. Like most things in life, it takes practice.

I improve and evolve by working consistently. When I was young, I sat up late on school nights drawing with charcoal pencils.



charcoal drawings - Dawn (Larson) Banning 1984 & 1985

I squeezed out time on weekends attending art fairs as a teenager. As an adult, I worked in stolen moments in time while pursuing other careers. My method has always been simple, and continues to be today, *trial and error, practice, keep an open mind, and heart.*

Years ago, a teacher in art class instructed us to draw a plain white sheet. We were timed, and we had to be fast! My first sheet looked like a cartoon rectangle. He gave us this lesson 5 days in a row- each day my sheet improved. On the last day I felt quite daring adding in a tea towel. Give it a try, see how your sheet unfolds.

I continue to ask, what can I improve on or learn today? I ask galleries to offer specific reasons if they reject my work. I have some written on sticky notes in my studio. Keeping an open mind about their professional input motivates me to improve. I can allow rejection to disappoint me, or use it as direction, allowing it to guide me to a higher standard. Of course, there are times when I just burn them with the bad art. (The cat is out of the bag now about all of our bonfires.)

Your pursuit in the arts may not be as serious as mine, but may it be a comfort knowing we all continuously work at our craft. Give yourself that commitment of time and work. Explore, learn, play.

Chapter 3 INSPIRATION



I wholeheartedly believe **INSPIRATION** *IS NOT TANGIBLE*.

It is not a 'thing'. Inspiration comes from an open heart. With an open heart we are able to see beauty everywhere and be open to experience.

Sharon Knettell says " Inspiration is not born of 'the eureka' moment, but in the quiet spaces we allow ourselves to be in- whether in a beautiful part of nature or in a peaceful meditative state of mind".



Simple methods to access your creativity & inspiration:

- Unplug and go outside

Backpackers scored 50 percent better on a creativity test after spending four days in nature disconnected from electronic devices, according to a study by psychologists from the University of Utah and University of Kansas. "[interacting with nature has real, measurable benefits to creative problem-solving] "says

David Strayer, a co-author of the study and professor of psychology at the University of Utah- Chatelaine Feb 2013.

- Experiment with colour, in your environment and what you wear- notice the energy colour brings to a space.
- Attempt a new recipe- taste something new
- Listen to all kinds of music
- Read a new author
- Write a poem or a paragraph
- Attend a play
- Carry your camera, take photos every day for a week. Experiment learning to frame the photo, with foreground, middle ground, and background.
- Sign up for a photography, pottery, or creative writing class.
- Plant a garden. Incorporate plants of different textures, height, and colour.
- Visit art museums and galleries. Speak with the staff, ask questions about the work and artists.

Spend time with children. There isn't anyone that can spark your creativity and open your mind like a child can. I have play dates with my little neighbor friends. Three-year-old Julia and I build invisible snowmen with invisible pineapples. Four-year-old Amy taught me the patience of watching a spider build a web. Paintings by children brighten my studio. These colourful pieces remind me to be bold and imaginative. Have you ever seen short hesitant strokes in a child's painting?



Audrey's painting at age 5.

Make a commitment to do something creative every week. Remember your creativity is to be cherished, not judged.

COLLECT ART YOU ARE DRAWN TO. It will enrich your life.



"I love my painting and get pleasure and calmness from it every day. Thanks again Dawn." (Seascape)

"In *Silver Lining* you've captured the essence of those skies I've seen on so many canoe trips. There's an emotional quality for me because often those skies are a storm clearing at sunset, the forest is quickly drying and we now look forward to sleeping out that night and embracing good weather the following day. As dramatic as the sky is, for me it also offers hope. Such a great feeling."



"Thank you SO MUCH for the absolutely beautiful painting of Killarney. It is sitting on my desk ... a little reminder to take the time each day to enjoy the beauty of nature. Your joy and aliveness comes through in your painting"



"Marc, I am so thrilled with the design of the table you made. The table has such lovely clean lines. Not only is the table functional, but it is a piece of art. Thank you so much for taking such care in the design of the table." (Original side table design and construction-Marc Banning)

Robert Genn wrote an excellent letter on the subject of collecting art.
(excerpt below) "The Art Collecting Instinct" Oct 22, 2000 the Painter's Keys:

"Art has a unique place among collectibles. It represents an individual connection between the producer and the collector. In original art, each collectible is a unique piece. While it may be part of a set, the collector gets the joy of breaking that set and holding for himself a part of the whole. The collector also has the joy of collecting a part of the artist, his life, his struggle, even his mood. This is of course less true in the collecting of reproduction art where other hands have taken part in the process. The brilliance of art as a collectible is that it has a way of reaching out on an emotional level. It touches on mystery, even spirituality."

Read the entire

letter <http://www.painterskeys.com/clickbacks/artcollect.htm>

Observe a favourite piece of your art. Why does it please you? Is it the subject matter, colour, the texture, what kind of pattern is recognizable in it?
How does it make you feel?

Chapter 4 WARM UP

a.to prepare for a game, sports contest, dance, etc., by moderate exercise or practice beforehand.

b.to increase in excitement, intensity

c.to become friendlier or more receptive



Warm up with an activity that will clear your mind and freshen your spirit. Some ideas might be; walk in nature, practice yoga, run, meditate, bike, swim. If exercise is unavailable to you, try sitting in a comfortable position in stillness. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax. Music is also a wonderful relaxing and energizing tool.

I may practice any of the above, but before work, running is my favourite. It frees my mind, brings a sense of connection, energy, relaxation and focus.

Newsweek Magazine wrote in 2010 an article about "Brainstorming", it stated "Almost every dimension of cognition improves from 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, and creativity is no exception. The type of exercise doesn't matter, and the boost lasts for at least two hours afterward."

Dr. Jonah Yakel says " Vigorous physical exercise helps your creative process by forcing you out of left brain dominant thinking."



A customer approached me during an exhibition stating "You aren't what I expected. You're not the typical artist, for one thing, you *run* and well, you're *happy*".

In fact, many professional artists are disciplined in fitness and health.

Randolph Parker is a 3rd degree karate black belt. He speaks of karate having a similar creative process to painting in his Video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVX1Cccy-F4>

Julia Hargreaves is an avid kayaker, participates in cross-lake swims and triathlon.

Bruce Steinhoff is a cyclist and runner. He once told me he times his paintings similar to his runs, writing the time on the back of each canvas.

Art is physical, mental & emotional. You need to learn hand eye coordination. Your mind needs focus. Your emotions are the strongest contributor, so having a cheery spirit helps. I find exercise prior to working not only assists me to achieve these, it is key.

People who have attempted art then given it up, often share similarities. They have unrealistic expectations and they don't give themselves time to learn.

LET GO OF ANY EXPECTATIONS. Yes, ANY.

One of the biggest art secrets in the world is, sometimes magic happens in mistakes. Little accidents along the way of a painting are what some may interpret as strokes of genius. Let them believe this. It can be our secret.

Many years ago, my friend Emma came over one day to paint. It was her first attempt painting on a canvas with 'real paints'. Her vision was a large apple

tree on a grassy knoll with bright sun, blue sky. She tackled the canvas with vigor and serious focus of an 8 year old.

Emma was meticulous with her execution of the round red apples in the lush tree. She became more confident as she went along, using bigger strokes, mixing paint on the fly. Waving the brush like a magic wand, her constant chatter filled the room. Near completion she decided the sky needed to be a brighter blue. In her enthusiasm she added too much water. Blue paint ran into the apple tree, turning it purple. Big streaks of purple ran thru the base of the tree, right down the canvas.

I prepared for tears. She was silent a moment, a rarity in the day. She turned to me, smiling, eyes wide with wonder, exclaiming, "I MADE A PURPLE TREE!!!" She was thrilled. She proudly announced her painting would go in their home above the fireplace in a place of honour. It did.

If you find your work has suddenly taken an unplanned direction, think of Emma and the purple tree. I do.

Expectations can distract us from the being in moment and the process. If we get too caught up going directly from the start to the finish in the work, we may miss something special in the evolution.

It is in preconceived notions that we can limit ourselves to possibility.

SUPPLIES

You can begin your exploration into drawing fairly inexpensively. A few sticks of charcoal, some sketch paper and you are off to the races.

If you can, use acid free products for sketching. I drew a wildlife series for my father's office when I was in high school—the drawings eventually disintegrated from poor paper quality and having acidic glue applied to the back.

I am sad about the loss, even more so for my Dad, knowing how much he loved them. You might not treasure your work in the early stages, but someone else may. Give the work the opportunity to live many lifetimes.



charcoal sketches- foot study-early 1980's Dawn (Larson) Banning

Feel free to try out different brands of paints and build your confidence. A premium acrylic brand I love is Golden. I began painting in oils a decade ago. Recently I switched to water-soluble Winsor Newton. There are many mediums to mix with paints.



Whatever medium you wish to explore in, there are countless sites with information on products. Ask the staff in your art store, if they are educated in their products they should be more than happy to help. I was told if I didn't use the most expensive brushes, it would make or break the painting. I spent a fortune those early years on brushes. It took years and confidence to experiment on my own, only to discover I much prefer the least expensive I can buy. ***Don't be afraid to try something new, discovery can be empowering.***

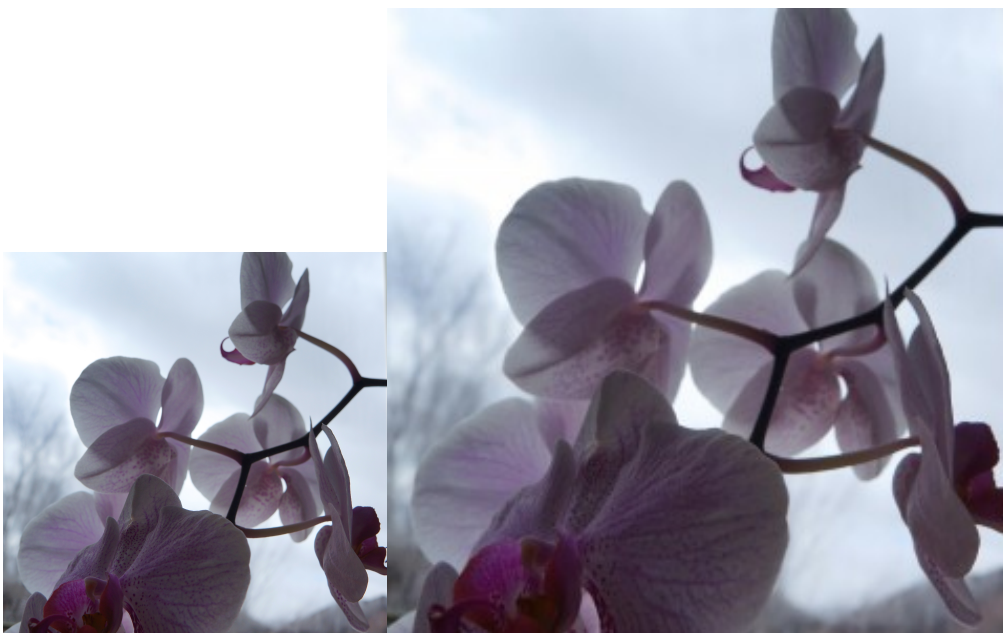
Chapter 5 OBSERVATION SKILLS



Whatever subject you decide to paint, draw, or sculpt, the basics are the same. Learn to see and draw shapes. This will take you back to your kindergarten days where you cut out triangles, rectangles, and circles out of coloured paper. Go ahead and do this. Fun is a big part of art.

Take out your children's play dough and make shapes. If you have forgotten, a 4 year old can help. Feel the shapes in your hand, how would you interpret this shape in a drawing?

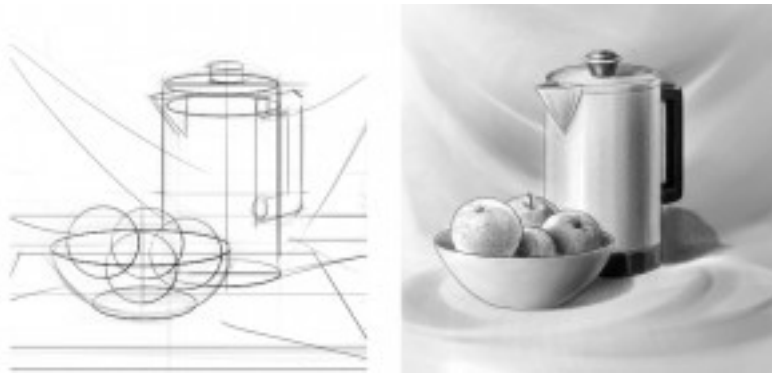
Discover shapes everywhere, on your desk, in the landscape, shadows on the floor. Find the basic shapes and draw them. Take a little sketch pad everywhere and draw shapes. Experiment drawing with different mediums, explore pastel, charcoal, varied pencils. Every great painter was first a great sketch artist. Draw Draw Draw. Aristotle said "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is a habit, not an act"



Look for negative spaces as well as positive ones.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_space

What is the shape within the spaces of tree branches? Notice the sweeping line of an armrest on a chair, or the line of a banister, and how it curves at the bottom. Set up a little still life display. Place it where you will pass by daily. View it in different light. What do the shadows look like, how do they change? Where are the spots of light that highlight the objects, what overall shape do they make together?



Greg Banning illustration

"When I eat a tomato, I look at it the way anyone else would. But when I paint a tomato, then I see it differently" Henri Matisse

Visit museums and galleries exploring all variations of art. Look for shapes, patterns, textures, lines within the pieces and where they lead your eye. Even the most abstract work has purpose in line, shape and colour. View lines in sculpture. Study the realist's work, they have an extensive ability to define shapes to the tiniest detail, and layer them so effectively the painting will appear three- dimensional.

It will become second nature to quickly identify shapes. You are training your mind to disconnect from identifying things. When we dis-associate ourselves from defining things we are better at drawing them.

Try looking at a picture upside down. Betty Edwards author of 'Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain' has students duplicate the drawing by Pablo Picasso' Portrait of Igor Stravinsky" *upside down*. I was given the lesson at International Peace Garden Camp, when I was 14. My Ivor had a head like a raisin.



Greg Banning illustration

Colour is another animal, but use the same approach.

Observe colours and identify them. Look at the sky. Do you see blue? Look again, do you see purple, gray, warm gray or cool gray, yellow, magenta? For reference, I understand colour wheels are available at most art stores.

When I began to paint in my late 20's the work was awful. My colour education was (still is) trial and error. The colour wheel probably would have been helpful at this point.

Months and many awful paintings later, I created one I didn't immediately trash. Colour wasn't so scary after all. Painting had become a joy.

Switching from acrylic to oil painting in the early 2000's was a new learning process. The horrible paintings began all over again, until I found my groove with oil.(awful paintings still occur, just not every day).

However you find your groove, trial and error, or with formal study, enjoy the process. Similar to other things in life, it's the middle part that can be the most fun, like the creamy center of a good cookie.

Chapter 6 MOTIVATION



I have painted when not necessarily motivated, with discipline you may find you can tap into your creativity easier with time. I have. I have painted when I have been sick with pneumonia, recovering from surgery, and dog-tired. I am not really sure how tired dogs get, but my friend Marley can be pretty whipped after hours of running in the dog park.



Marley

I recall an interview written many years ago with one of Canada's most elite Ironman Triathletes – Lori Bowden.

<http://www.bcsportshalloffame.com/inductees/inductees/bio?id=334&type=person>

At the time she was training intensively, putting in phenomenal hours running, riding, swimming, and strength training. She was asked what the hardest part of her training was. I thought she would say the 40 hour training weeks or perhaps the grueling 100 mile bike rides. What I wasn't expecting was her humble answer, "Getting out the door".

Her answer relates to so many things in life. "Getting out the door", Beginning.

Discipline and commitment are important, but so is giving yourself a chance. Know that you will make some mistakes, you will *think* you have failed, but really, you are learning. You are placing the building blocks of the foundation that will be your greatest asset.

Sign up online for a free daily motivational quote. Runner's World has some excellent ones that are applicable to much more than running.

"With ordinary talent and extraordinary perseverance, all things are attainable."

Sir Thomas Foxwell Buxton, British philanthropist and politician- Runner's World Daily Quotes.

A friend of mine receives lovely spiritual daily meditations. Never underestimate the power of reading something on a daily basis that stirs the mind and enlightens the spirit. You may want to write a few down on sticky notes and intersperse them in your sketchbook or in your work area.

There are some wonderful art sites, blogs and advice columns that will assist you in your art education & understanding. Here are just a few at the top of my list.

My favourite newsletter is written by one of Canada's most recognized painters, Robert Genn. You can subscribe for free to the Painter's Keys online. His insight, humour and wealth of knowledge is amazing. The fact that he shares his wisdom for free is a tremendous gift.

Robert also has an excellent workshop calendar. This is a great source for you when choosing your first workshop.

<http://painterskeys.com>

A wonderful essay for you to read' How to get more Creativity in your Daily Life 'by Laureen Marchand at Grasslands Gallery

<http://www.grasslandsgallery.com>

Her blog is captivating and motivating.

One of the most read art blogs in the world is Making a Mark, by Katherine Tyrell.

<http://makingamark.blogspot.ca>

A couple of great books are ' The Artists Way' by Julia Cameron.

'Drawing on the right side of the Brain" by Betty Edwards.

Do your research. Find your path.

Dressing the Part

Relaxed comfort is key to your art wardrobe.

I paint in comfy clothes. I painted in pjamas once, but when paint spilled on my legs, the thin material stuck to my leg.

Now old jeans or shorts are my daily attire along with my mismatched socks.

Here are a couple of my favourite pairs.



Mismatched socks remind us to have fun, that in the spirit of fun great things can be accomplished. It reminds us to 'think outside the box' when problem solving. ***If you want to be more innovative in the boardroom, wear mismatched socks.***

I have a great pair of bright red painting socks, knitted by my Grama. Having these cozy red socks on makes my day extra special.

If you have worn a uniform, or are a runner (or enjoy any activity that require special clothing), you understand the practicality and the psychology of dressing the part. Our art clothes can be just as powerful. Even when I am not painting, if I am working creatively in other areas, I dress in my paint clothes. I feel more creative in my work clothes. Whether this is just in my mind, or from years of habit, it doesn't really matter. What matters is, knowing yourself and your keys to help you 'tune in' to your creativity.

Continuing to explore creativity in your life, you may feel confident to move forward and take structured lessons. Find that new best friend Google or sign up for a workshop, and begin. I am right here with you, learning every single day. Winston Churchill once said "The way to be happy," "is to find something that requires the kind of perfection that's impossible to achieve and spend the rest of your life trying to achieve it."



Dawn Banning is a professional artist. Her present genre is landscape impressionist oil painting. 2013 marks the 32nd year since she sold her first painting to a non-relative.

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Greg Banning is one of Canada's most recognized Illustrators. His work is sought after by major advertising agencies in Canada, the USA and the UK. Besides his advertising work, Greg has built up a solid reputation in publishing. He has had the privilege of illustrating the cover of Maclean's Magazine. Greg's work can also be seen on the new Canadian Mint Coin, released Jan 22/13. Greg is a cousin of Dawn's In-Laws.

<http://www.gregbanning.com>