

NEW AND FREE ART EVERYDAY...

A Conversation with French-American Artist Adeline Goldminc-Tronzo

Born in Paris in 1953, French-American painter Adeline has been passionately practicing her art in the United States, for more than 40 years. Her compositions reveal an accurate use of frank and subtle colors, and they have attracted large numbers of art lovers.

Adeline Goldminc-Tronzo tells us here about her itinerary, her commitment to her art, and about the vision of painting she's championed.

You grew up in France, but you moved to the United States at a very young age. Why the United States?

Adeline Goldminc-Tronzo (A. G.-T.): for adventure's sake! I was 19 when I arrived in the U.S. from France, thinking I would hitch-hike my way across country and to Chile. A few weeks after I arrived in California, in 1973, a military coup took place in Chile so I had to change plans: I went to New York. The desire to paint had been strongly anchored in me since childhood. I always lived with the idea that painting was the most beautiful job in the world. After three years working in the New York city navy yards with friends I realized that it was time for me to focus on my true calling, and I enrolled in an arts school. And that's when it all started...

So you actually committed to painting while you were a student?

A.G.T.: Yes. It is truly while at that fine-arts school that I started to explore the paths to creating and that I discovered my own abilities. I was also very fortunate to make the acquaintance of one artist, particularly, who was very knowledgeable. That person accompanied me throughout my practical apprenticeship, helped me highlight my capabilities and open up to new horizons. And he also gave me a book that proved of the utmost importance to me: André Malraux' *The Voices of Silence*. For me, this major French author's art history book opened up doors of both comprehension and feeling in a totally unexpected way. My love of painting has grown ever stronger since that time. This is what I call "The Love of My Life."

So painting is your passion?

A.G.T.: Painting is everything to me! It is only when I am at work on a canvas that I begin to find myself again, that I see clearly why I am here.

After years of living and working as a painter in New York, you moved to the small town of Eliot, Maine. Is that where your studio is?

A.G.T.: I longed to leave the city and move to the country. After a trip to New England in 1990, I decided to move to Maine, a very pleasant state with some gorgeous natural spaces. It's worth noting that Maine has always been welcoming to artists. Throughout history, many artists have chosen to move to this region.

What type of activities do you have, as a working artist?

A.G.T.: I show and sell my work. Simultaneously, I teach drawing and painting at two fine-arts schools in Manchester, New Hampshire.

What is your daily life like in your studio in Eliot?

A.G.T.: I am an early riser. I get up every day at 5. I turn the heat on in the studio, because the cold season is rather long in Eliot. I start to work as soon as the room feels warm. On average, I paint a solid six hours every day of the week, except for the two days when I teach.

What are your priorities, as a working artist?

A.G.T.: What matters most to me is to do what I think I have to do while never compromising my integrity, sincerity, my dignity and esthetic sense. I don't like to feel any kind of external pressure when I paint. For example, some artists need to have the project of an exhibit or a commission in order to keep at their work. But that's not my case.

What is your state of mind when you start a new work?

A.G.T.: I like to feel both energized and contemplative.

You also alluded, I think, to a kind of availability in your approach to creating?

A.G.T.: Yes, when I start painting, I force myself to forget about everything and to give myself to the work as if it were the first and unique time! I try to reach a state of total mindlessness that allows me to be in the moment, free of prejudice, of goals, of any expectation. Each time I stand in front of my easel and I start painting, it feels as if I opened a new door, then another new door, and so forth, innumerable new doors... it is as if possibilities were endless. I am truly in the moment whenever I paint. It is a holistic experience. I feel cohesive, centered, homogeneous, ONE with the WHOLE. I have the feeling that everything and its opposite are together as one and that everything is possible. How liberating and how inebriating to be in that moment of purity, exploration, and discovery!

Isn't this is very Zen?

A.G.T.: Very Zen, I don't know, because studio work in itself is also a succession of very contrasted moments. My life is full of great moments of pleasure and satisfaction, which, I must confess alternate with great moments of difficulties and doubt. At times, I've had to erase a picture completely. It makes me mad! Mad with myself! All those hours only to come to the conclusion that I can't do it! So you see, none of this is ever very Zen... But most of the time, fortunately, it's not all that harsh or laborious. In the morning I look at what I left on the canvas the night before, I serenely change an element of the composition because I think it is too heavy, it lacks either simplicity or fluidity, because I let myself be distracted by meaningless details. And the passionate process of creation on the canvas unfolds quite normally.

What do you think are the most important qualities in a painter?

A.G.T.: First and foremost, work and love of one's work, of course. And perseverance, too. Talent can't hurt, either... but, for me, the artist *must have something to say* in order to create any work.

What techniques do you use most often?

A.G.T.: I work mostly with oils. I sometimes use acrylics or pastels. And I like to draw with charcoal.

What size canvases do you prefer?

A.G.T.: I tend to use medium-size canvases. I am fortunate that I can choose the sizes that I need, because I make my canvases and frames myself. That's a definitive advantage.

Do you favor certain colors?

A.G.T.: My palette is quite simple: I use primary colors – two blues, two reds, two yellows, black and titanium white. I sometimes add a third color to the primary ones. I love all colors! I rather favor warm colors, but this is actually changing at the moment.

Are portraits important in your work?

A.G.T.: I feel 100% a portraitist, in the most literal and figurative meaning of the word.

Have you painted many self-portraits?

A.G.T.: Yes, I have. Painting one's own portrait is a traditional and very difficult stylistic exercise that many artists like to practice. Some have even turned it into the central theme of their work. I am specifically thinking of Rembrandt and Max Beckmann. There are others, of course, such as Frida Kahlo, for example. A self-portrait can also be a very interesting case study for a painter. And you can add to this that it is very practical for an artist to paint his or her own portrait: the model is right there, on time, and free...

But what does it mean to you to paint your own portrait? What is your goal?

A.G.T.: That's a difficult question to answer. First, of course, I have an esthetic goal. Besides, we're all seeking our own personal "truth" in our lives. When I paint my portrait, I think that I am partly seeking this *personal truth*, this *me*, this *ego* that dominates us to a degree so that I may discover its deep meaning and free myself from it. For me, painting my own image is a long-term activity that I don't indulge in for the pleasure of it but rather in response to an inner need. I know that some people associate self-portraits with narcissism, egocentrism, and vanity. One has to admit that it is true of some artists who enjoy looking at themselves in a mirror. But sometimes, looking at oneself in a mirror and enjoying one's reflection makes sense. Dürer, for example, painted two magnificent self-portraits – perhaps his best portraits. For me, while I can see a great deal of vanity in those works, I must admit that they are splendid, so...

What about nudes in your work?

A.G.T.: Nudes have been a part of visual arts for millennia and in many civilizations. Our body emanates from Nature, it is our sacred temple. It must be honored and represented by artists.

But you are also interested in still lifes and landscapes.

A.G.T.: Yes, I also like to paint those, but, for me, no matter what I address in my paintings – still life, landscape, nudes, imagined themes – it is all about portraiture! As I said before, I think of myself as essentially a portraitist.

Do you think one must have a painting style?

A.G.T.: I think of style as a necessity that may impose itself on the artist to express a specific and personal vision rather than as a “fashion” that he or she will borrow or as a goal that must be achieved. For example, many students do not understand that, before thinking of *style*, they must think of the *substance* they need to bring to their work. That’s what matters most! If the work shows qualities, then style will be a consequence of such qualities. Not the other way around! Artistic qualities do not emanate from style.

So the cart shouldn’t come before the horse?

A.G.T.: Indeed. Why encourage style in an artificial way? Each of us is unique and original and therefore may convey a unique and original style. Obsessing on producing a style kills the style within each of us. Besides, style – once revealed – can smother creativity. It is often the case that the artist who becomes aware of his/her style ends up imitating and repeating herself.

In short, style is not a preeminent issue for you?

A.G.T.: No, it’s not. If you work on your art with integrity and determination, a style may emerge and even surprise you. Or not! Having a painting style is not mandatory! One can be enormously talented but have no style. Of course, I am talking about studio practice. When it comes to the history of painting, style is necessarily another issue. One can only bow to artists who were able to find their own style, which is definitely the strong mark of their atypical, exceptional and universal specificity in the context of the standards of excellence of a given period.

For now, what do you wish for your own artistic career?

A.G.T.: I wish to continue painting with the same pleasure, the same faith, the same freedom. I am very lucky. I have nothing to complain about!

Interview by Didier Robrieux

translated from French into English by Helene Potter