

The earliest form of Encaustic painting evolved with the Greeks use of wax as a form of weatherproofing for their ships. They began decorating their warships by pigmenting the wax. Derived from the Greek word enkaustikos meaning “to burn in”, the art form spread to Egypt where Greek painters painted the famous Fayum funeral portraits. Today’s medium is an alchemy of beeswax, dammar resin, and pigment, heated to approximately 180 – 200 degrees, and applied by pouring or brushing to a surface that will absorb the medium.

I begin by laying down creamy layers of medium, fusing each layer to the previous using a torch. The torch work is appealingly hypnotic. I continue until I have achieved a smooth, sleek surface. This is the jumping off point for imagination to take over. I always hesitate, not wanting to mar the clean surface. I know, once I break that surface, there will be tension until the painting is complete. I generally add a sweeping slash of color to jump off the cliff into the tension. From this point on, I chase any bright, shiny object. You will find that chase throughout the movement within my work. Layers of sweeping brush strokes, scaring marks using knives, scraps and scratches, smears from my hands, glazes and other inclusions, create the conversation of a painting.

I paint to exist with the moment and expose a purely creative image harvested from stream of consciousness. When I started this painting, rather than my normal process of letting a painting go where it will, I kept trying to control the process thinking of the colors of the Holy Trinity logo. It became a series of disasters. Nothing was working easily. I finally forced it into a place where it looked almost completed, and concurrent to this timing, I experienced an unexpected death of a co-worker.

When I went back to the painting, thinking it would be therapeutic to finish, an eruption of sadness and helplessness over this loss took over. I destroyed the painting; scraped and torched it to a place of melted mess. I had to give up trying to control the process, and with thoughts of my family and their life in New Prague, I gave it up to the Holy Spirit to manage the creative process, and the magic started. Encaustic is the perfect medium to enhance the intersection of thoughts and memories. I let the early remaining images of this painting’s previous history be shadow memories deep within the translucent layers.

When I let go and paint without conscious thought getting in the way, I am totally driven by the tension and curiosity of the process. The painting tells me when I have arrived at completion by releasing me from the tension. In that moment, the finished painting becomes a historical moment. It is an experience of the past, a diary of sliver of time in life. In this case, it resulted in “Rise”. Day after day of sunrises, the promises of a new days, and new opportunities, always looking up to The One who instills inspiration to rise daily with hope and purpose. This is where the splashes of joy live.