

Painting “Too Cold For Swimming”

On this day at the Naseby Swimming Dam, it was distinctly chilly. Not a swimmer in sight. Usually there are one or two diehards who will swim regardless of the day, but perhaps I was too late for them. The days preceding had been good swimming weather and perhaps their desire to enjoy this fabulous swim hole had been sated. Whatever the reason, today it was deserted.

The light was interesting. It was bright but misted so that the tops of the trees were shrouded, indistinct. The sunlight was hazed and scattered. The effect was to put a glaze on the pond that looked a treat: a shimmer of reflection, some bouncing of the surrounding colours, and a surprisingly *cold* appearance to the water. The trees lent a lovely backdrop to the pond too: lots of shades of green and plenty of depth in them. Overall, it was a painting waiting to find an artist.

I guess I got to be the one for that moment.

As has been the case previously, I snapped some reference photos knowing already that I would paint this scene. The brushes danced over the paper intermittently for about a week, but there was a restlessness to painting it. I didn't really pray my way through this one, even though I felt God had drawn me to it. In some ways, it showed.

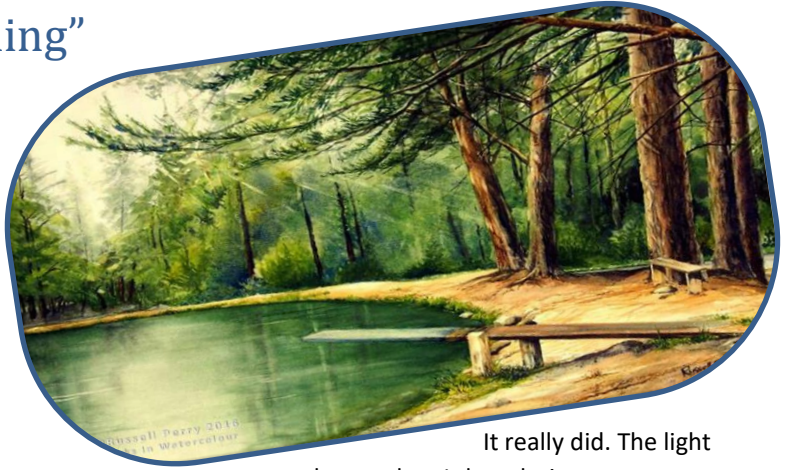
There comes a time in any painting, certainly in any watercolour painting – when enough is enough. I put the brushes down, sat back and looked at it, then signed my name. It's the last thing I do on a painting, a sort of closing ceremony signalling a decision to let it be.

The trouble was that this time, I wasn't finished. Even though I'd said I was, even though I'd signed, even though I had said to myself, “Leave it alone, it is done!”, I wasn't finished. There was no peace to it. I couldn't sort it either. Finally, I moved it to one side, closed up the studio and left it to marinate on its own. I popped in from time to time over the next few days to look at it afresh, but it was as though the light wasn't properly on. The familiar buzz that says *you've nailed it* had a flat battery.

“Lord, can I leave this with you, please? I confess I've done this one pretty much on my own. It shows, Lord. It lacks that deft touch that only You bring.”



Three days later, glorious early autumn day, late in the afternoon, I went into the studio to stretch some paper for new paintings. As I walked in, I looked at “Too Cold For Swimming”, up on the easel. Goodness me, it looked fine.



It really did. The light was better than I thought it was, scattered rays leaking through the trees giving it a lovely touch. Silly me, why didn't I see that before? Hmmm, maybe I had nailed it after all. Okay, great – now I can cut it off the board and get it ready for framing.

I threw open the curtains ... AND THE LIGHT DISAPPEARED!
No more rays!
What!!!

Sometimes I'm a bit slow. You've probably figured it out already. The late afternoon light was the key – it was leaking through the gaps in the curtains and washing the top left quadrant of the painting, giving the effect of rays of light. No wonder it looked good: it was real! Laughing at my own foolishness, but also filled with the realisation that this was what the painting needed, I set to with a small brush to wash out some of the lines of light. Watercolour is great for being able to *lift* colour. In just a couple of minutes, it was done. NOW IT WAS FINISHED.

YES!
But WHO nailed it?
It wasn't me, that's for sure. I can't take the credit.

Was it luck? Was it an accident of light? Was it coincidence that I unwittingly placed the painting where it could harvest from the wee cracks in the curtains? Perhaps all those things.

But that's not what I think. When finally I had given that painting to God and confessed to a solo act on it, (I like to think) He answered. In His own inimitable way. Firstly He made me wait. Good parents do that. Then **He** showed **me** how to finish **HIS painting** with **His light**.

And what do people comment on most in this painting?
The lovely way the shafts of light come through the trees.

God bless.
Russell.