

Painting: The Act and the Object



Dr. Mark Bishara with several of his acrylic canvases.

Being a dentist involves many responsibilities and duties, and while the work is stimulating and satisfying, a practice entails many must-do endeavours. But when Dr. Mark Bishara puts brush to canvas to create a painting, he temporarily leaves those commitments behind and embraces what he calls “freedom.”

OD: What sort of dentistry do you practice and where?

Dr. Bishara: I graduated from the University of Western Ontario in 2010 and have been practising general family dentistry since. In addition, I have completed the necessary course requirements for dental implant therapy. I practise in Bowmanville with my wife and father-in-law.

OD: How long have you been interested in art?

Dr. Bishara: I have always enjoyed sketching as far back as I can remember. My mom was into drawing and my grandfather was also very talented, so there is definitely a genetic component. My mother could see I was interested in art and encouraged me. I was impressed by some of the artwork that my mother and grandfather did, and that's where I got some of my passion for art.

OD: Have you had formal art lessons?

Dr. Bishara: I studied art in high school as an elective. I also took some classes later as a hobby when I was in university, but mainly I'm self-taught. I start with an idea in my head of what I want to do and then work on it to bring it to life. I just like picking up a paintbrush and seeing what comes of it.

I used to work with watercolour paints. I did that because it was easy and water paints are what my parents gave me. I still have my first watercolour paint set. Now I paint on canvas using acrylics.

OD: How would you describe the images you paint?

Dr. Bishara: I'm more into abstract art than realistic art. I like to paint landscapes and nature, but I don't get my inspiration from the outside world. I like open spaces and not focusing on one particular object.

A lot of the paintings I create are textured, so I usually paint one layer, let it dry for a few days, and then apply another layer. I have an end goal in mind; so I will keep layering and layering until I feel the piece is finished.

OD: What is it about painting that appeals to you?

Dr. Bishara: When you're painting you have the freedom to express yourself any way you want. I find painting relaxing and soothing after a busy day's work. I like the freedom of expression and seeing what comes of it. For me, a lot about painting is discovering how to do it yourself. I'm not trying to become an expert; I just get pleasure out of working on a painting and finishing it. The creative process is definitely enjoyable.

OD: Do you show your work, and if so, where?

Dr. Bishara: I use my work to decorate the front area of my dental office, and I have it in the house.

OD: How much time do you spend painting?

Dr. Bishara: I paint whenever I get the chance to. I spend several hours a week painting. It's difficult to know how long I spend on one piece; it varies depending on the piece. I guess anywhere from six to eight hours of painting on average. But I have to let it dry in between layers.

OD: What, if anything, is the connection between art and dentistry for you?

Dr. Bishara: A big aspect of dentistry involves dexterity and an eye for esthetic work, especially when it comes to restoring beautiful smiles to my patients, and there's the thought process of how to come to that end goal. After the first few minutes of seeing a patient, I usually know my end goal and the different treatment options. In that way it's related to my art, since I already have a picture in my head of what I want to achieve.

You have certain commitments being at a dental office: seeing patients, managing the office, courses to take, upgrades, new technology. There are so many obligations when you're a dentist. With painting, I have the freedom to relax and enjoy the creative process. ■



This interview was written and edited by Gilda Swartz.

Do you have a story to tell about your passion?
Email the details (and a photo or two) to Julia at jkuipers@oda.ca.
We may publish it in an upcoming issue.