**Statement**

**For me, color embodies freedom. Color is life and energy.** Visual, verbal, and aural colors are like magnets that draw me in. I believe our souls (our inner beings) produce the essence of art, and colors of all kinds give breath to our souls. When we are free to express, art can emerge. I celebrate life, its joys and sorrows, through painting and poetry. I express my raw humanity, a candidness that I hope to share with anyone who sees my art or reads my prose.

**Background**

I came to art while studying music, and granted, there is a certain abandonment that comes from performing. But, as a classically trained flutist, the music I ‘created’ was always composed by someone else; the interpretation, phrasing, and tone colors might have been mine, but the music itself was not. The classical musician typically brings to life the vision of someone else ---the composer. Performing jazz allows freedom through improvisation, and the act of conducting offers freedom of expression through movement, but both are still ultimately tied to a score. Painting is different, in that it can offer a freedom of expression bridging experiences, thoughts, and emotions from within to something individualistically external and visual. Painting can connect us to a deeper part of ourselves.

**Freedom and Music**

There are special moments when this freedom of expression finds its way into music. One particularly beautiful performance took place in Berlin in late December of 1989 as Leonard Bernstein conducted Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 in celebration of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, which had taken place a month earlier. Eastern Europe, which I had visited in the previous year, was cold and oppressed, and with the Fall of the Wall, there was tangible freedom from the oppressive division of Eastern and Western Germany. This restoration of oneness embodied the idea of brotherhood throughout much of Europe, and it is this oneness and freedom that I tend to seek on a larger global scale.

What does this have to do with painting? For me, everything. There are layers of freedom represented in Bernstein’s Christmas performance of 1989. First, there is the foundational layer of Beethoven’s music. His approach to composition represents a movement away from Classicism (think Mozart), a time in which aristocratic society had demanded of the composer particular types of musical expression and genres. Beethoven pushed musical style toward the blossoming Romanticism of the 19th century. He, more than any other composer, became more individualistic and personally expressive, exemplifying the notion of creative freedom. Another layer of freedom represented through Bernstein’s performance in 1989 is the release from the complex oppression in Europe imposed by the division of East and West, which separated families, friends, and cultures from 1961 to 1989, my whole life at the time. There are also layers of musical expression from the German musicians led by Bernstein, and the multitude of their memories, experiences, connections to WWII, thoughts of their own musical training, and memories of their teachers who had seen the horrors of Hitler, murder, war, and oppression. There is also the layer of the audience’s emotion and reaction to the history in Berlin and the music of their country. If you are able to link to the performance below, you will see the extraordinarily long ovation at the end. The audience is moved, and the memory and relief felt by that city of Berlin and its people is impassioned. There is still another layer of personal history found through Bernstein and his Ukrainian-Jewish parents. His Jewish heritage alone strongly links us all to the memory of why the wall was built in the first place. This 1989 performance was more than a concert. It was more than symbolic. It was a moment of musical expression from the soul of a country, the collective souls of musicians and audience members, and the souls of Beethoven and Bernstein. It was a poignant moment of release from domination, and it was an expression of joy and freedom, while still laced with the sorrow of past events.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IInG5nY\_wrU

**Freedom and Painting**

When I stand in front of a canvas, my soul is free from all constraints, and I seek to feel that collective freedom that Bernstein gave us all on that December evening in 1989. When I paint, I experience a freedom from criticism, from society, from academia’s expectations, and from the oppression I impose upon myself for whatever reasons. With an impression that my arms are open wide to embrace life, my Creator, music, art, and humanity, I stand and I paint.

It is this feeling of the soul’s freedom that I want to share with you.