

WASHING AWAY THE DUST

SARAH L STEWART

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ARTIST STATEMENT

Art - both creating it and experiencing it - has been likened to "washing away the dust of daily life from the soul". This quote, usually attributed to Pablo Picasso, apparently dates to the 1800s, used by the German author Berthold Auerbach in relation to the power of music. Regardless of who first used the metaphor, it remains a vital reminder of the value of all artistic expression to revitalise us as we navigate this thing called the human condition.

When I first read about this idea, it resonated strongly with me, on a number of levels. Firstly, the idea that painting is a soul nurturing and cleansing process speaks to my own purpose for making art, which is to express my authentic myself, in all its rawness and vulnerability.

Secondly, this description of art reflects my painting process, which involves as much removal of paint ('unpainting'), as it does application of paint. Each (of many layers) involves a wiping/washing away of some of the previous layer, offering an opportunity for a deeper exploration of the landscape of my inner being.

The paintings in this collection refer to emotions, a feeling states, many of which are contingent upon others. The experience of anger and hurt ('Seeing red and feeling blue'), for example, can - if we explore it - lead us through a process of deep soul-searching ('The crux of the argument', 'The heart of the matter',). This search may lead to mining family archives ('Family gallery'), sometimes finding ourselves complicit ('In the frame'), and subsequently having to manage a range of turbulent feelings ('Emotional baggage-handling'). Picking away at old wounds may lead to periods of deep introspection ('Scratching the surface or plumbing the depths?'). Bafflement and confusion ('Boxed in or box of birds?') may result in a decision to do nothing, for now ('Idling in neutral', 'Hanging in there'), until the time feels right to resurface from the hard-edged darkness ('The softening', 'Letting the light in'). If we make it through such dark nights of the soul, we are reminded that this too shall pass and that life is 'Not always a bowl of cherries'. A willingness to open to the uncertainty of what lies ahead may be the reward of this emotional labour ('What's next?').