

The Gift of Gutai: A Splendid Approach to Art

Tina Clancy

I must have always had a little artist somewhere inside. Retired from teaching chemistry and physics, I would often spice up the blander topics that students would have to endure with colourful and spatial flourishes, and would create artful activities and projects, the products of which were often used afterwards to decorate the walls and ceiling of the classroom, our own splendid playground. Diorama posters, 3-D signs used to suspend mobiles of chemical molecules, illustrated instructions for simple labs, and more. In hindsight, my approach to teaching science could have been called “Albert, meet Art.”

Soon after retirement, a trip to see the exhibit “Gutai: Splendid Playground” at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City lit many lights inside my head and inspired me to start to paint and create in earnest. The exhibit was a tribute to the Gutai Art Association's attempt to heal and restore life and hope through art in the post-war, grey, and decimated Japan. The liberating, medium-mixing art movement that began in 1956 endorsed the strength of democracy filled with informed, independent, and learned citizens. It promoted independent artistic styles, extolled the resilience of matter "allowing it to speak for itself" (Gutai means *concreteness*), and above all, celebrated life, love, and laughter by finding beauty, even in destruction, and encouraged a sense of fun, play, participation, and joy in the artistic process.

So much about the Gutai philosophy resonates with me still and keeps me believing in my own style of art. I now have my own splendid playground in my home where I paint in an exploratory, intuitive manner, letting all that I have lived, loved, and imagined culminate and flow into my creations - freely and innovatively...

To paint. To create. Often.

Often resourcefully. Most often inventively. Always playfully.

The result is often joyous and captivating.

I think Einstein would have approved.