



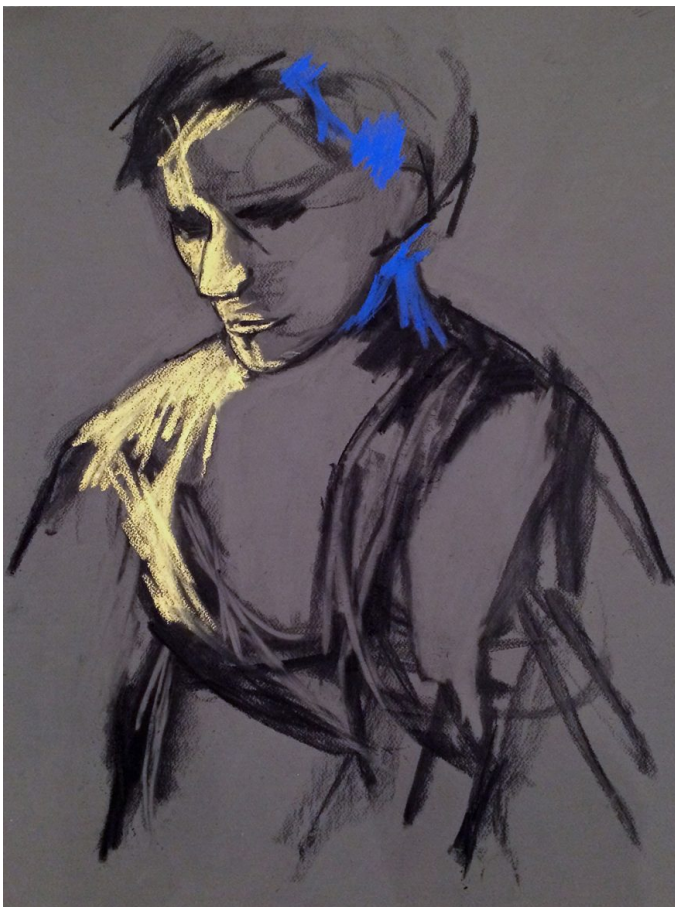
## How Do You Know When You're Finished?

Kate Feiffer, *Process*, MARTHA'S VINEYARD: ARTS & IDEAS (July, 2016)

Pablo Picasso is reported to have said, "Woe to you the day it is said that you are finished! To finish a work? To finish a picture? What nonsense! To finish it means to be through with it, to kill it, to rid it of its soul — to give it its final blow; the most unfortunate one for the painter as well as for the picture."

Hoping that some of our local artists had a brighter outlook, we decided to ask around. How do you know when you are finished?

**Elizabeth Langer, painter, collage artist, and printmaker**



*Blue Tuesday, charcoal and pastel,  
by Elizabeth Langer*

Often I don't know when a piece is finished. Knowing when to stop is one of the most difficult judgment calls a creative person is called to make. Countless times I have ruined a work by failing to stop. Other times I have looked at a drawing or painting and said to myself, "This is good, but it's not special; it doesn't grab me." I can take a risk by adding a color, some dissonant lines or a bold mark. Sometimes I hit the jackpot and the work sings. Other times (more often), I destroy the piece and I am unable to bring it back. But I always remember the voice in my head: "It's far better to take a risk and fail than to settle for something that is only good."

To the left is a drawing that resulted from this process — a charcoal on gray paper. It was a nice drawing, but nothing special. I have piles of "nice" drawings in my studio, but I wanted to go for something more. So I took a risk. I reached into my pastel box, took out a lemon yellow and a cobalt blue, and without hesitation added a few strokes of color. I knew it was finished. The transformation, "Blue Tuesday," is the result.

In other instances, I have work that is so bad, it's headed for the trash bin. There I have nothing to lose. So I play with it. One such piece was a small watercolor landscape. The colors were dull, and the work had no vigor. Out came the pastels. My little landscape, "Judean Hills," came alive.



*Judean Hills, by Elizabeth Langer*