

## ON THE COVER

*Spring Rain* by Russell Scabbo (R. Skevis)

*This article is based on a video interview on January 5, 2024, with the artist, and written materials he provided.*

We generally welcome Spring and its accompanying refreshing changes from Winter. The days lengthen, the sun is closer (warmer), and various indications of rebirth become evident. In this season of renewal and transformation, rain is critical as it provides the nurturance that seeds and plants need to mature. Rain may be intense or combined with winds as it shapes the environment needed for growth. The sounds and smells of spring rain can provide comfort during this changeover, suggesting both energy and tranquility, and foreshadowing new beginnings. The cover of this issue of *American Psychologist*, *Spring Rain*, is an artistic representation of the changing of the seasons and captures these themes.

*Spring Rain* was created with multiple layers (six to 10) of vibrant acrylics and watercolors. These coats of paint generate iridescence and provide contours and texture on a flat canvas. The artist, Russell Scabbo, PhD, is a psychologist who paints under the name R. Skevis after his ancestor, who is drawn to and works with, colors and contrast in his paintings. *Spring Rain* creates an illusion that Scabbo describes as “edge-to-edge movement” and suggests rhythmic rain. Scabbo starts with a dark background palette (black) and adds colors and layers to create movement and the perception of a figure-ground contrast. One can see impressive dark tree trunks; perceive the depth of leaves, grass, and bushes in various shades of green; and appreciate hints of sunlight or budding flowers in yellow and gold patches. Scabbo describes himself as a synergistic colorist and hopes that viewers will look at his work and create even more colors and contrasts in their minds when observing art. Indeed, I think it best that I end my formal interpretation of this piece here and invite you, the viewers, to finish the painting in your minds.

Scabbo was drawn to art since childhood. He asked his mother and sisters to share their nail polish with him so that

he could work with and mix the colorful pigments in some of his earliest art. He never missed an opportunity to visit a museum throughout his life. As a painter, he subscribes to the quote of Pierre Bonnard, a French postimpressionist known for using bold colors and landscapes, and portraits that “the painting will not exist if the viewer does not do half the work” and similarly believes his personal goal as an artist is to provide colors in a painting that let the viewers finish the painting in their minds. Over 30 years, Scabbo has created a broad collection of paintings, each with the common elements of bright colors arranged in intriguing abstract designs.

Scabbo was born in Rochester, New York, but spent most of his childhood in Cleveland, Ohio. He worked in construction to put himself through Borromeo College/Seminary, receiving a theological degree before working in Corpus Christi, Texas, as a rehabilitation counselor with individuals with spinal cord injuries and hearing impairments. This background of a faith-based approach with a deep understanding of the challenges facing people with disabilities led him to Michigan State University and a PhD in psychology. For many years, he has worked as a unit chief in a state prison in St. Louis, Michigan, with deep compassion for the prisoners and their experiences.

What pulls this all together is the combination of powerful vibrant colors and contrast and the insights and experiences of a psychologist-artist who understands the important impact of art on well-being. Scabbo’s experiences with a range of clinical populations offer an opportunity to effectively use art to expand upon our awareness and engage us in a creative process, one with the very important potential to heal.

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