

# The Zen of Housepainting

1.

A wise painter never spits on the drops.

2.

A wise painter never leaves his bucket  
in the sun, unless he likes found-art.

3.

A wise painter never accepts stamps for payment.

4.

A wise painter never paints with rollers,  
in a high wind, above a new car dealership.

5.

A wise painter never puts a rag,  
dipped in turps, in his pocket.

6.

A wise painter never kills a spider,  
unless it's drenched in paint, and  
he never assumes a black widow  
has been rendered harmless  
by painting it another color.

7.

A wise painter never ties his safety line  
to a tin pipe; he knows why a fall is called a fall.

8.

A wise painter is cautious when a client says,  
“Oh, and while you’re up there.....”

9.

A wise painter never paints a house  
before, during, or after it rains. He never  
paints a house in winter, fall, or spring.  
In San Francisco, he never paints a house  
in the summer.

10.

A wise painter never tries to paint the peak  
of a three-story house off the top of a forty-foot  
ladder, three colors, wet on wet, in a high wind,  
first thing in the morning, New Years Day.

11.

You should never buy paint labeled *one coat covers all*  
unless the store offers another gallon if not satisfied.  
Then, by all means, buy it. Your second coat is free.

12.

Research indicates that there is one novel, one play,  
and one movie about painters. All are masterpieces.

13.

When the painter tells you your house is alligatored, and he'll have to grind it, he means there is a Seminole curse on the property, and it will have to be leveled to the ground.

14.

If you are a housepainter, never hire a worker who sings TV commercials. The refrain will never leave your head. Never think, while housepainting, unless you enjoy dwelling on the same thought for half a day.

15.

Housepainting is great therapy, but it is possible to become over-therapized.

16.

Never smoke a cigarette while kissing a housepainter.

17.

Never spin out a brush next to a priceless Oriental tapestry.

18.

All non-union housepainters are artists. When they talk about work-in-progress, they are not referring to your house.

19.

All housepainters are heavy smokers and alcoholics.  
All painters are gassed out and half-smashed,  
and that's just from the paint.

20.

Housepainters are the scum of the building trades.  
They dress terrible. They look awful. They smell awful.

21.

Housepainters are the cosmetic surgeons of the  
building trades. They can take the shoddy work  
of all the other trades and make it look good.

22.

Housepainters are susceptible to the *three men  
in a pickup truck* rule. Under those circumstances,  
they will beat on the truck doors, whistle, shout, and  
make crude advances at any woman in sight. Once out  
of the truck, they will act shy and embarrassed. The man  
in the middle of the three will be the butt of all the jokes.  
The female equivalent is five teenagers in a Volkswagen.

23.

Housepainters never tip at lunch.  
At night, passing as civilians,  
they will spend and tip lavishly.

24.

If your mate is a housepainter, it will take him two hours, at the end of the day, to recognize your humanity. Anyone who spends eight hours a day, six inches from a wall, staring at it, will have trouble coming back to reality. Also, he will want to caulk the lines around your eyes, and prime out your forehead.

25.

Housepainters talk sex all day long.  
They will be asleep, one half hour  
after they begin to recognize you.

26.

Housepainters will lie in bed and notice every  
crack in the ceiling. It will drive them nuts.  
They will never do anything about it.

27.

No one with the sense of a stone  
would voluntarily be a housepainter.  
Most of my best friends are housepainters.  
Eventually, they will move to New Mexico,  
where the house are made of mud.

28.

I have reached the point where any house left unpainted  
for longer than fifteen years gives me a secret thrill.  
If I see one over thirty years without paint, I think  
I'm at an architectural shrine. On the other hand,  
I can spot an unputtied nail-hole at fifty yard.

29.

I have spent hours opening, filling, sanding,  
priming, and painting a hairline crack.  
I am in awe of the San Andreas Fault.  
The Grand Canyon is a caulker's nightmare.

30.

If you see a painter hitchhiking, don't pick him up.  
You will have to buy new seatcovers.

31.

You can always tell a painter  
by the caulk in his pants. A real caulksman  
is so heavily endowed, he can barely walk.

32.

The rule about caulking guns is that once you  
start them squirting, they will not stop. Unless your  
fingers fly, you will end up with a frosted house.

33.

Sanding without a mask is like  
swimming in a talcum powder pool.

34.

The number of radios blaring in a house  
undergoing renovation is proportional  
to the number of trades under hire, and  
each one will be tuned to a different station.

35.

A bos'n's chair is designed to allow a working painter to leave toe and knee marks at regular vertical intervals in confined spaces.

36.

Whenever you find a paint that you like, be assured the company selling that paint will:

- (a) go out of business
- (b) discontinue the line
- (c) forget how to make it
- (d) say it was an odd-lot batch.

37.

The only truly valuable social function, performed by painters, is painting over the wall of graffiti you've read too many times next to your favorite urinal.

38.

Why is it that a paint job, that may last five years, will double the taxable value of your house?

39.

Do not allow a painter to take before-and-after photos of your house. He will be so impressed by the transformation, he will add a compulsory surcharge.

40.

Any woman working in the trades  
will be treated like one of the guys,  
until she is in the next room.

41.

When a painter gives you a low estimate, do not act  
pleasantly surprised and say, *Oh, my, that low?*  
He will then say, *Ah, that's not including the estimate,  
materials, second coat, prep work, color consultation,  
transportation....*

42.

If you bring donuts and coffee to the painters,  
they will act like you've just voluntarily paid  
hundreds of dollars more for the job, and  
home-baked cookies may get you a third coat.

43.

Union painters will sometimes  
paint so slowly as to appear frozen in time.

44.

Walking *under* a ladder is bad luck.  
Walking *up* the ladder is the worst luck of all.

45.

If a painter takes pains with the final coat and touch-up,  
it's because the first coat was subcontracted to the crew of  
chimpanzees, that showed up, in his head, the day before.

46.

The advantage of one-coat painting is that it will not obscure the cherished, intimate markings of the lives of the previous tenants. One-coat painting is as thin as a landlord's promise.

47.

Always ask the painters to leave extra paint at the end of the job. Your chances of matching the colors are the same as finding the woman of your dreams or a knight in shining armor.

48.

Spraying is faster than any other kind of painting. It can also be more evenly applied. To the windows, wall sockets, doorknobs, floors, pets, as well as the ceiling and walls, and finally to the painter himself.

49.

Painters are wannabe voyeurs,  
they will show up on their scaffolding,  
outside your bedroom window, at 7AM,  
staring at themselves in the reflecting glass.

50.

Painting is breathing paint. Spraying is chemotherapy. Painting is walking in paint, stepping in paint, sitting in paint, leaning on paint, scratching with paint, eating with paint. Painting is training in wetness paranoia.

51.

Caulk and spackle are floor-seeking elements.  
They are especially drawn to deep-pile carpeting.

52.

Because they must be stealthy, painters should make  
excellent cat-burglers. They aren't, because they leave  
their footprints everywhere.

53.

If you are a painter, you should know that every important paint job  
is next to a mad dog, chained to a pole. The dog will bark incessantly,  
all day long, and strain at his restraint in a vain attempt to get at your  
precariously placed ladder. The paint gods have pre-ordained that,  
at every exact, random, time-span coordinate, a mad dog will  
break loose from his bonds and attack your ladder. It will occur  
at the moment you are extended beyond the limits posted on the little  
cartoon label glued to the ladder. You will die. Or, you will spill a  
gallon of blue paint on a beige wall, or you will be left dangling from  
a clock tower like Harold Lloyd. Except, you are not Harold Lloyd,  
and your partner will have chosen that moment to go to the toilet.

54.

If you want your house painted in the exact colors you remember  
your childhood home was painted, tell the painters to read a certain  
poem by W.H. Auden or Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert. They  
will advise you immediately that you are nuts and advise you  
to buy ice cream. In Jamaica.

55.

If you are a painter, and the client tells you,  
*I don't care what color you paint my house,*  
paint it the same color it was, and charge  
extra for your color consultation.

56.

Oil paint is better than acrylic paint.  
Acrylic paint is better than oil paint.  
The proof is that most houses are painted in oil,  
and the majority of houses are painted in acrylic.

57.

Nobody knows why people hire painters. It may  
have something to do with the idea that the green  
always looks grassier, on the neighbors driveway.

58.

Painted beauty is only skin deep. It's the neighbors  
who look at your house. You're the one who lives in it.  
There are houses made of cow dung, and inside them,  
the people laugh and love. Don't worry if your house  
is cracked, peeling, and fading. So are you.