

# Joshua Reynolds

## Quotes

*Art, Mind, Men, Color, May, Excellence, Eye, Mean, Character, Taste, Passion,  
Ambition, Ideas, Drawing, Hands, Produce, Memories, Simplicity,  
Understanding, Copying*

There is no expedient to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labor of thinking.

~Joshua Reynolds

The real character of a man is found out by his amusements.

~Joshua Reynolds

Few have been taught to any purpose who have not been their own teachers.

~Joshua Reynolds

A room hung with pictures is a room hung with thoughts.

~Joshua Reynolds

Our Exhibitions [The Royal Academy] have... a mischievous tendency, by seducing the Painter to an ambition of pleasing indiscriminately the mixed multitude of people who resort to them.

~Joshua Reynolds

Art in its perfection is not ostentatious; it lies hid and works its effect, itself unseen.

~Joshua Reynolds

Genius is supposed to be a power of producing excellences which are put of the reach of the rules of art: a power which no precepts can teach, and which no industry can acquire.

~Joshua Reynolds

The great end of all arts is to make an impression on the imagination and the feeling. The imitation of nature frequently does this. Sometimes it fails and something else succeeds.

~Joshua Reynolds

A mere copier of nature can never produce anything great.

~Joshua Reynolds

Taste depends upon those finer emotions which make the organization of the soul.

~Joshua Reynolds

The young mind is pliable and imitates, but in more advanced states grows rigid and must be warmed and softened before it will receive a deep impression.

~Joshua Reynolds

Invention strictly speaking, is little more than a new combination of those images which have been previously gathered and deposited in the memory; nothing can come from nothing.

~Joshua Reynolds

Could we teach taste or genius by rules, they would be no longer taste and genius.

~Joshua Reynolds

The art of seeing nature, or, in other words, the art of using models, is in reality the great object, the point to which all our studies are directed.

~Joshua Reynolds

Poetry operates by raising our curiosity, engaging the mind by degrees to take an interest in the event, keeping that event suspended, and surprising at last with an unexpected catastrophe.

~Joshua Reynolds

What has pleased and continues to please, is likely to please again; hence are derived the rules of art, and on this immovable foundation they must ever stand.

~Joshua Reynolds

Words should be employed as the means, not the end; language is the instrument, conviction is the work.

~Joshua Reynolds

I can recommend nothing better... than that you endeavor to infuse into your works what you learn from the contemplation of the works of others.

~Joshua Reynolds

Perhaps blue, red, and yellow strike the mind more forcibly from there not being any great union between them, as martial music, which is intended to rouse the nobler passions.

~Joshua Reynolds

An eye critically nice can only be formed by observing well-colored pictures with attention.

~Joshua Reynolds

However minutely labored the picture may be in the detail, the whole will have a false and even an unfinished appearance, at whatever distance, or in whatever light it can be shown.

~Joshua Reynolds

The greatest man is he who forms the taste of a nation; the next greatest is he who corrupts it.

~Joshua Reynolds

If deceiving the eye were the only business of the art... the minute painter would be more apt to succeed. But it is not the eye, it is the mind which the painter of genius desires to address.

~Joshua Reynolds

The great use of copying, if it be at all useful, should seem to be in learning color; yet even coloring will never be perfectly attained by

servilely copying the model before you.

~Joshua Reynolds

If you have great talents, industry will improve them: if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency.

~Joshua Reynolds

All the gestures of children are graceful; the reign of distortion and unnatural attitudes commences with the introduction of the dancing master.

~Joshua Reynolds

It is vain for painters... to endeavour to invent without materials on which the mind may work.

~Joshua Reynolds

The true test of all the arts is not solely whether the production is a true copy of nature, but whether it answers the end of art, which is to produce a pleasing effect upon the mind.

~Joshua Reynolds

While I recommend studying the art from artists, Nature is and must be the fountain which alone is inexhaustible, and from which all excellences must originally flow.

~Joshua Reynolds

It is but a poor eloquence which only shows that the orator can talk.

~Joshua Reynolds

The value and rank of every art is in proportion to the mental labor employed in it, or the mental pleasure in producing it.

~Joshua Reynolds

Certainly, nothing can be more simple than monotony.

~Joshua Reynolds

The mind is but a barren soil; a soil which is soon exhausted, and will produce no crop, or only one, unless it be continually fertilized and enriched with foreign matter.

~Joshua Reynolds

Whatever trips you make, you must still have nature in your eye.

~Joshua Reynolds

You are never to lose sight of nature; the instant you do, you are all abroad, at the mercy of every gust of fashion, without knowing or seeing the point to which you ought to steer.

~Joshua Reynolds

There can be no doubt but that he who has the most materials has the greatest means of invention.

~Joshua Reynolds

The painter of genius will not waste a moment upon those smaller objects which only serve to catch the sense, to divide the attention, and to counteract his great design of speaking to the heart.

~Joshua Reynolds

A passion for his art, and an eager desire to excel, will more than supply an artist with the place of method.

~Joshua Reynolds

Excellence is never granted to man, but as the reward of labour.

~Joshua Reynolds

Nothing can come of nothing; he who has laid up no materials can produce no combinations.

~Joshua Reynolds

In portraits, the grace and, we may add, the likeness consists more in taking the general air than in observing the exact similitude of every feature.

~Joshua Reynolds

A painter must compensate the natural deficiencies of his art. He has but one sentence to utter, but one moment to exhibit. He cannot, like the poet or historian, expatiate, and impress the mind.

~Joshua Reynolds

Reform is a work of time; a national taste, however wrong it may be, cannot be totally changed at once.

~Joshua Reynolds

A mere copier of nature can never produce any thing great, can never raise and enlarge the conceptions, or warm the heart of the spectator.

~Joshua Reynolds

Nothing is denied to well-directed labor.

~Joshua Reynolds

Common observation and a plain understanding is the source of all art.

~Joshua Reynolds

The excellence of every art, must consist in the complete accomplishment of its purpose

~Joshua Reynolds

And he who does not know himself does not know others, so it may be said with equal truth, that he who does not know others knows himself but very imperfectly.

~Joshua Reynolds

It is impossible that anything will be well understood or well done that is

taken into a reluctant understanding, and executed with a servile hand.

~Joshua Reynolds

Style in painting is the same as in writing; a power over materials, whether words or colors, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed.

~Joshua Reynolds

I wish you to be persuaded that success in your art depends almost entirely on your own industry; but the industry which I principally recommend is not the industry of the hands, but of the mind.

~Joshua Reynolds

The distinct blue, red, and yellow colors... though they have not the kind of harmony which is produced by a variety of broken and transparent colors, have the effect of grandeur.

~Joshua Reynolds

Simplicity is an exact medium between too little and too much.

~Joshua Reynolds

Less coin, less care.

~Joshua Reynolds

What is a well-chosen collection of pictures, but walls hung round with thoughts?

~Joshua Reynolds



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