




The Sun Inside

An artist celebrates the solar-plexus chakra
and source of authentic personal power

by Leah Fanning Mebane



As I stapled seven large sheets of raw canvas to my studio walls to create a series of chakra paintings, I had no idea what would emerge. The main colors were a given: red for the root, orange for the sacral/womb, yellow for the solar plexus, green representing the heart, blue evoking the throat, indigo for the third eye, and violet for the crown. But what images would I use? I had set a simple goal—to study every chakra’s interpretations by different cultures and then to experience meditations, yoga poses, and visualizations for each. Finally, I would stand before the canvas with an open heart, holding out my brush for whatever would come. Priming the surfaces to begin, I did not foresee that immersing myself into these seven swirling energy centers would not only reveal life-changing personal insight but also uncover a plan for global healing.

Beginning with the root chakra, located in the area of the perineum, I moved upward through the spectrum to the crown chakra. Moving from the root on to the sacral/womb chakra was invigorating, and the painting came out fast and freely. Energy healers say this is our center for creativity, childlike playfulness, imagination, joy, and sexuality, among other wonderful things, and I immediately resonated with this color.

Meeting resistance

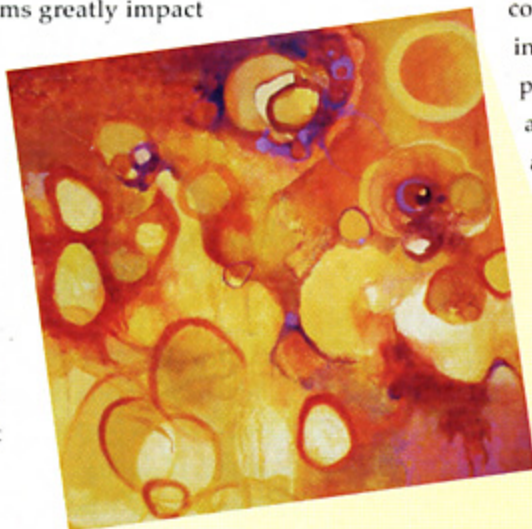
When this chakra finished itself and I looked ahead to the solar plexus (yellow), I was caught off guard by a strong resistance to painting it. I skipped ahead to the next paintings, wondering why I felt such discomfort.

Over the next four months, I painted the heart, throat, third-eye, and crown chakras. The process of each painting brought endless insights into compassion, self-expression, communication, and spiritual connection. As the series neared completion, the dreaded "yellow" painting loomed. Exploring my procrastination, I researched the solar-plexus chakra extensively until one day a floodgate of tears broke open.

The solar plexus, I learned, is where our individual identity and personal ego are formed and maintained. It says, "This is who I am. This is who I want to be. This is how I want to be seen." Authoritative and parental judgments are stored here. Cultural messages and criticisms greatly impact the third chakra.

Out of all the chakras, our western culture has unfortunately chosen to glorify the solar plexus. We're obsessed with individuality rather than community. This chakra can be cunning, suspicious, and responsibility-bound, and is the common cause of blocking the innocent and childlike sacral orange

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chakra that I so enjoyed painting.

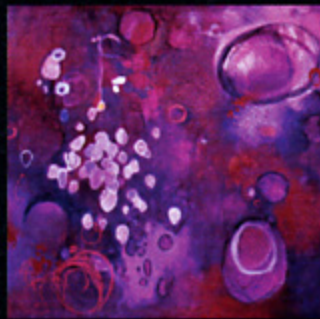
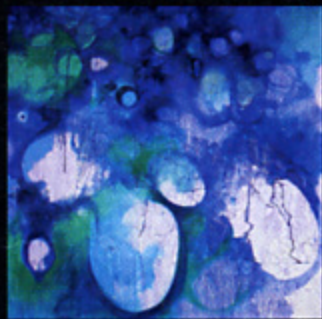
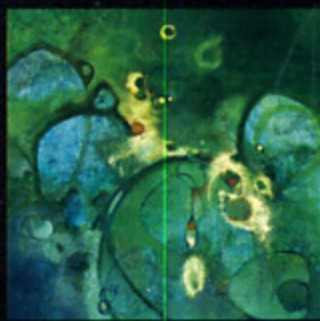
But if the solar-plexus chakra is clear, healthy, and strong, it can give provide a profound personal power that's not ego- or aggression-driven—a power to be a unique individual while celebrating a continuing connection with all of humanity.

Revealing the source of blockage

As I studied this chakra, which is developed between ages 11 and 18, images of my overly strict pre-professional ballet school flooded my head. My ballet instructors drilled their values into me for three to four hours a day, seven days a week, from the ages of eight to 18, convincing me that the only path to becoming a successful, worthwhile person was a professional ballet career, which requires an anorexic body, perfect technical ability, and a silent stage mask. Any enjoyment of play, creative expression, and imagination that had developed in my second chakra withered as my third chakra took over in these developmental years.

I had to learn of my misstep the hard way after five years as an unhappy professional ballet dancer; but a momen-

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Leah Fanning Mebane's chakra paintings (starting from top left): the red root chakra, orange womb chakra, yellow solar-plexus chakra, green heart chakra. Second row: blue throat chakra, purple third-eye chakra, and the violet crown chakra.

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tary epiphany eventually led me to close that door and open another into art school (and eventually modern dance). But even then, after years of trying to find ways to create art purely for the joyous, playful act and not for the pretty final product, I've finally discovered the cause and the tools to free this blockage at its source.

Personal and global shifts


As I painted this final large yellow image, I felt a subtle shift inside as this color filled me with a sense of strength and comfort. The canvas turned into an earthy golden yellow world with swirling browns and coppers that at once soothed and empowered me.

After dreading going into this

chakra, I realized that by strengthening and stimulating it, you can reach a state where you shake off the fears of rejection, criticism, and standing apart from the group to create your own unique identity. An identity founded on self-acceptance, self-respect, and the ability to take risks with the knowledge that you can handle any situation you face. By clearing the connection between this personal power and the creative, playful sacral chakra, you become balanced, whole, and joyful.

These personal insights brought to light a more universal truth. What would shift if everyone on this planet worked with his or her solar plexus—to clear it and redefine what power means? Would healthy communities evolve and come together to work for the good of the planet and humanity,

instead of working just for themselves? What would happen if every person released all parental, authoritative, and societal judgments and felt strength and personal power only from the inside? Would fear dissipate and connectedness spread? Would the 1% of America that owns 40% of the wealth discover philanthropy? What would happen in a world without fear?

These questions filled me with hope. The possibilities that awakened within me from working with the solar-plexus chakra have also awakened my desire to spread the word about this little golden ball of energy between the navel and the base of the sternum. Go ahead and let it shine! 

Leah Fanning Mebane lives in Ashland, Oregon, and has been commissioned for over 400 portraits and murals over the past 14 years. View more of her work at fanningart.com



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