

# Aspects of Artistic Process...

## 1. How we build a disciplined approach to making visual art:

- practice careful observation of the world around us, and record graphically what is seen to help build a broader and deeper visual imagery bank (**practiced perception**)
- **search for pattern**, in both the visual and conceptual sense
- utilize **selective attention** in order to learn more deeply about unique aspects of what is being seen or studied
- draw (formally, expressively or mimetically) as a form of **daily self-disciplined artistic exercise**
- **continually edit** one's work to correct schema
- concentrate and stay with a problem until it is solved (**persistence, or sustained focus**). Artists work hard to become good. They see failure as an opportunity to learn something new.
- take care of our tools and materials because we have respect for our calling in life and are aware of our finite resources (**responsible stewardship**)

## 2. How we become self-initiating, independent artists

- **determine our own questions** to explore, problems to solve
- **do research** in preparation for a task - investigate ideas, themes, materials and media, other artists, literature, other art forms, historical documentation, etc.
- **constantly investigate** topics, aspects of the world and environment, ideas, etc. through multiple means; in other words the eye is always restless and the mind is always inquisitive, looking for connections in the least expected places
- talk and write about art, using the tools of description, analysis and interpretation because we are passionate about it, want to learn more and share our ideas with others (**critical practice**)
- **critique** or **reflect** upon one's own work or peers' work in some informal or formal way at some point during the task to improve the work, or at the end of the task to understand it more

## 3. Ways that we expand our skills and concepts

- not judge right away so that many possible ideas can be considered (**delay or withhold judgment**)
- **set our own constraints and limits** to help prod creative juices – a too open field encourages floundering; most artists thrive under constraints of some sort whether self-imposed or otherwise
- **experiment and explore** techniques, media and ideas independently, because we enjoy doing it and want to be able to discover and/or choose the right effect to communicate our ideas

# Aspects of Artistic Process...

- **take intellectual risks** - both practice a new skill/concept and then "play" with it too – the play is purposeful and investigative in nature (**purposeful play**)
- **practice, practice, practice** a new technique or media before using it in a final product or performance

## 4. Active strategies for making connections and prompting creativity

- **transform, transfer and metamorphose** one idea or image into another
- **use metaphoric and analogical thinking** to help develop and/ or understand visual imagery, and make connections to other disciplinary areas
- put things together that don't usually go together to open the door to fresh ideas (**juxtaposition or illogical combination**)
- **disrupt the expected order** of generally accepted definitions of identity, space, etc. in order to find new meanings and new levels of order
- **utilize strategic opposition** – combine in one image ideas or images that oppose one another to explore the boundaries and ambiguities of each and to reach fresh understanding; or think of opposite possibilities or other points of view in order to gain insight
- **attend to nuance and emotional charge**, in order to more clearly understand, express and communicate those things that matter to us and to others
- **actively operate our intuition**; listen with the "inner ear"/see with the "inner eye" those things that are hidden from immediate view, and are manifested through symbolic forms and actions
- recognize and put to use chance occurrences (**serendipity**) to initiate new ideas, and sometimes actively seek such strategies for being open to the moment
- immerse ourselves in **sensory experiences** in order to build a deeper and more complex neural net, that can access disparate feelings, memories, associations, etc. intuitively and directly
- **actively operate our rational mind**, in order to be objectively aware of structure in thought processes, concepts and the physical world
- **analyze** visual and written information in order to see the different parts and how they work together
- actively **synthesize** visual and verbal parts and pieces into a new and different whole
- **create a series** of work to explore many possible permutations of a single idea, which may also lead to new ideas
- **purposefully change our perspective of things, experiences and ideas**, to force new understandings and connections

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- **recontextualize** objects and images into settings that shift their meaning from that which was originally intended; often in pointedly ironic ways
- **the other "re's"**: Reshape, rethink, redefine, restate and reconsider - all these "re-" tactics are part of the artistic trait of considering problems from many different angles to get at some kind of visual and/or conceptual truth
- **develop visual hierarchy** in an object or image, or series of images
- **utilize stable systems of reference** or **destabilize a system of reference**; for example, an artist may use a grid-like composition to rigidly control an image, conversely, they may impose a grid but then oppose it with other visual aspects in a work – Elizabeth Murray and Frank Stella's breaking of the picture plane and canvas square are examples of the latter
- **develop one's own set of symbols**, personal icons, alphabet and even an entire language

## 5. How we "grow" a work of art (but not always in this order)

- brainstorm many different ideas - thumbnail sketch (**graphic ideation**) before settling on one idea
- work through a series of preparatory sketches to try variations, enhance, expand and/or strengthen original concept (**iteration of idea**) – often leads to better ideas or new directions
- **"think" through the act of work** – as one immerses oneself in work, new ideas form that couldn't have been reached through abstract thought alone; the media an artist works with "mediates" the ideas being explored, and offers new possibilities
- **postpone interpretation** or final meaning of one's own work until it's done – letting the process and idea "grow up" together, as frequently in the course of artmaking, ideas can and do change
- reach **fusion of idea** - when the work hits that moment of "gel", which is a synergistic solution

## 6. Artists approach artmaking in several ways. They may ...

- **prefer and ensure a particular work environment**, whether it be social or isolated; and create a work routine that helps structure thinking and doing
- become aware of certain **patterns of behavior that best enhance inspiration** and manipulate or repeat those patterns to open up the creative thinking space on a consistent basis
- **choose problems that require struggling with the work in progress**; this is generally a signal that new ideas are in the process of being born
- **create metaphors** to more deeply describe and understand the process of working; i.e. "building a painting," "battling the canvas," etc.

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- **use self-talk** to monitor work and problem solve
- **create work for a particular audience**; consciously or subconsciously; very common and very positive; artists must however find a balance between audience and personal need.
- **create work just for themselves** or just for the hell of it; however, an artwork is an expression of human thought and is empowered and amplified through the act of being experienced by others.
- work at any point along a **interactive continuum** from very solitary to full collaboration with others
- **exemplify the field** through sustained practice and study, bringing current artforms to a peak level of achievement
- **break the boundaries** of the field by creating new synergistic possibilities, that had not been considered before

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## And...

- **Contributions from the Summer 2006 - Summer 2009 AED 522 Theories of Art Education classes, and**
- The author's personal experiences as an artist and teacher, and observations of artists and teachers at work.