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LESSON 1 – You, an artist?

In many cultures on Earth it is not very popular to speak well or even think well about oneself.

This fact is a great evil, since all your abilities come, of course, from yourself, and when you think less of them, you reduce them down and limit them.

And since, unfortunately, the creation of art is seen upon as a rare and special ability, instead of an ability native to us all, calling oneself an Artist is often seen as a big and improper self-compliment. Something one must not do.

Add to this that since art is so valuable, the vicious or simply small-minded of our population have a great tendency to cut down artists and art in whatever ways they can (of which many are disguised as help), it is seen as a thing to be proven strongly that you should be able to call yourself an artist.

We seriously need to change this.

Let me define it:

If you have ever attempted to create art, no matter successfully or not, and if you would like to continue to do so, if you have an urge to create art, you are an artist.

No ifs, ands, or buts about it.

LESSON 2 – Where to get ideas?

I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but:

Ideas are everywhere.

The problem is that most older methods of "getting ideas" promote looking inward to find them. This is a serious mistake, since the more introverted an artist is, the lower the productive ability is. And if this weren't bad enough, the introvert also tends to get entangled in personal traumas and problems from the past, and the art produced tends to become less interesting to others.

A better, but limited, option is looking at others' art for inspiration. This has temporary usefulness, but has the limitation that one loses sight of all the possibilities that do not happen to be present in the art one is being inspired by.

The best option from the long-term look is to get inspiration from the real world. The world is so wonderfully complex that even a split-second's view a small place could provide ideas enough for a lifetime.

Drill: go out, three steps from your front door, and look around. Write down ten objects that you see. Then go to another person, and ask him to select one of the objects. Make a work based on that object.

Drill: with your eyes closed, open the dictionary and point at a word. Then make ten different sketches based on that word. Pick one of the sketches and make a final work of art.

Drill: ask three people for the object they like the most and the object they like the least. Make a sketch for a work about each of the items. Make a final work based on the idea you think is the most difficult.

LESSON 3 – Confidence

Confidence is a funny thing, especially in the creative arts, for here you are dealing with creating something new, which by its nature is not understood yet, or at least not understood readily, due to the very fact of it being new.

An artist has to rely on himself. Many of the greatest artists of history worked for many years or even their whole life without having anybody but themselves and maybe one or two others who understood what they were doing.

You have to teach yourself to believe yourself. Believe in your perceptions, believe in your visions. The only people who don't have problems with this are people with divine strength, or people who don't give a damn what other people think. The former is very rare, the latter may be achievable, but will take a while.

When you think an original thought, one that most others would disagree with, and you catch yourself thinking "no, that can't be true, that's ridiculous", try simply saying to yourself: "OK, so it's against everybody else's convictions. But it is my belief, and I'll stick to it."

Most great things in the world were ridiculous ideas when they were first conceived.

LESSON 4 – The artist and a "safe" life

I heard a very famous rock musician who stood on the stage in a stadium, in front of 40,000 people. He mentioned his family, who were in the audience that day. He told that after several years of his solid mega-success as a musician, his parents were still trying to get him to go back and finish school!

It is the "safe" thing to do. If things don't work out as an artist, if the whole world grows tired of you, then you can always find work as an accountant or a lawyer.

You must realize that the bulk of the population does not understand why anyone would ever want to do something that is not safe. They may or may not ever understand that if you feel truly alive only when doing art, then giving it up would feel like living death to you.

Usually (though not in all cases) your family wants the best for you. But it may not be that they have the understanding to correctly decide what that is. You can pretty much guarantee they won't, given that the only person who has all data about your life is you. You are the the only valid decision maker.

Make no mistake, the life of an artist is not really very safe or comfortable. You have to really want it. Of course, there is always the compromise where you work with something else while trying to build a career. Few people can avoid this transitional period. Some people don't like it very much.

There are two separate, very different problems. Money and acceptance. Many people think that a big home, a car, a family, and all that is the only way of having a decent life. So they need quite some money every month to support this. But maybe they should consider whether all these things are really necessary. Living on less, perhaps they can make do with a half-time job, and go full time sooner putting all their energy into their art.

I would never suggest that not working full time as an artist is necessarily a second-rate life. I would only suggest that if it feels like it to **you**, then perhaps it is.

Acceptance a chapter of its own, but the essence is this: Do your damndest to make yourself understood. But don't be a slave to acceptance, don't sacrifice the essentials.

It all boils down to a decision. Or rather two: what do you want? And: what is that worth to you?

Only you can tell.

LESSON 5 – The Speed Drill

A drill exists that is not only an excellent for enhancing productivity, but much fun as well. Call up a handful of guys who work the same medium as you, and get together for 24 hours. During those 24 hours, you all have to produce a specific target. For writers, they have to write a complete novella. For comic book artists, a complete 24-page story, written and drawn. For painters, 24 paintings. For musicians, 10 songs. You get the idea.

Some people who have been educated to believe that a good novel takes at least five years to write, this may seem either impossible or despicable. It is neither. It is very possible, I have seen results from several different mediums of this drill, and not only were the results there, they were often interesting, and in some cases really good.

If you think about it, if you really go for making this target, no matter what happens, it is quite impossible that you would not at the very least learn something, isn't it?

What the drill does, obviously, is jar you out of all the strange and needless barriers that assert themselves when you attempt to create. Headaches, doubts, fear, needs and wants of other things, considerations of what should or must be, all that garbage. Everytime a barrier turns up, you just remember that you have a lot to produce before the 24 hours are up, and you decide to produce something, anything, and just go ahead.

It has even been done pretty successfully as an eight-hour drill when people couldn't make it 24 hours. But the purer the better, of course.

And like I said, it is a lot of fun, so go ahead. A little advice: no alcohol or other drugs. And get in some walking during the week after.

LESSON 6 – Composition One: Similarity

Composition consists of putting things together so they fit together, and make a whole effective unit together.

To compose means to put together. In the same way that building a car means to manufacture or acquire parts and putting them together so they will transport people around, so composing a work of art means to manufacture or acquire parts and put them together so the whole will accomplish the desired purpose.

In a universe as complex as this, anything that accomplishes something tends to be rather complex itself. Unfortunately this means that, while making the individual components, one can easily get swallowed up in the

components and forget about the whole. What is ideal is that this happens rarely and that you snap out of it quickly. Since the whole is the work itself, if you forget about it, you might easily do things with the details that bog down or even counteracts the purpose of the whole.

One good way of accomplishing good composition is through similarity. If you, walking on the street, see two similar looking girls together, dressed the same, you readily assume they belong together and may be sisters.

Similarity will work on a lot of different levels. A gnarled old tree next to a wrinkled, weather-beaten old man is an example. But it can also be simply a matter of style. If for instance you use similar brushstrokes to the different parts of a painting, you already have a good start. If you use radically different painting styles for different parts of the same painting, you are in trouble unless you are very sure of what you are doing.

Some might argue that the placement of very dissimilar objects together may create artistic ideas. There is some truth to this, as seen in "surrealism", for example, with big flying apples or faces with doors in them. But please notice that successful examples of such are normally made only by accomplished masters, and it is as difficult as juggling knives while balancing on a couple of chairs.

Drill: Look around and find at least three sets of several similar things, placed in proximity to each other.

Drill: Make sketches for five works, each consisting ONLY of similar objects. Make a finished work of one of them.

Drill: Make a work of dissimilar objects, which still fit together because of a very distinctive style they are all rendered in.

LESSON 7 – Composition two: What to leave out

What to put in and what to leave out is often one of the most difficult questions in creating works of art. Many of us have tried struggling with a work, unable to get it just right, and finally solving it when finding exactly the right thing that was superfluous or exactly the right thing that was missing.

The general rule is to leave out anything that does not contribute to the whole of the work. It is much more common to err on the side of complexity than on the side of simplicity, so streamline often and with enthusiasm.

It is impossible to make sweeping rules about what fit in and what doesn't, because of the different effects one may desire to achieve. But it should be obvious that the parts that are most alien to the rest of the work are more likely to be undesirable. If something has a tendency to go against the grain of the work as a whole, it better have a very good reason to be there.

In general, start out with an idea, and strip the composition down to the absolute minimum of parts it needs to work. And when building upon it, consider each addition carefully against the work as a whole to see if it helps or hurts. Just because a part is nice in itself, and works well in many circumstances, does not mean that it is right for that particular work.

Drill: Compose a completed work that consists ONLY of three parts, no more.

Drill: Take an earlier work that you have not been entirely satisfied with, attempt to strip it of superfluous parts and details, and see if you can improve it.

LESSON 8 – The significance of a work of art

The thing most talked about regarding any work of art, in the population at large, is its SIGNIFICANCE.

By that I mean its meaning. What does it mean? What is it about?

People look at a painting or a sculpture and say to each other: "What does he MEAN?"

It is also the thing most likely to be discussed in educational institutions. Long, involved discussions of the author's intent and the symbolisms of the work will take place in classrooms, often to the dismay of students who think that perhaps there is not always a single correct answer.

But regarding significance I will say now that it is not really that important.

Sure, it is not exactly unimportant either. Let's right away get used to a long, sliding scale of importance here. There are many grades of it, like there is of anything, nothing is black and white. And a scale is often longer than one realizes, a thing can be very important indeed, for instance, and still have another thing be very much more important.

A good significance to a work of art can be a great thing. And one can get a lot of pleasure by thinking and talking about it. But it is NOT the essential part of the work of art. If it was, it would no longer be art, but an essay, or journalism.

As I talk about elsewhere, the essential part of art is the creation of something new. That is why artists are also known as creators. If a creation is 100% about something pre-existing, it is not really something new, is it?

The reason I am stressing this, is that I myself have sometimes gotten trapped in non-production by getting desperate about the all-important significance of what I was doing. And I have seen a lot of very fine artists get all bogged down and lose the raw power of their earlier work, because they so badly wanted to make the most important work they could, and they thought this was about the significance of the work. So they start diving into the things that affect them the strongest personally, often meaning their own past and personal problems, and they lose the interest of the audience.

Listen, forget about all that. If you have a great idea with a lot of meaning, by all means use it. Otherwise just use your good old playfulness and do something fun. The aesthetics and the "interestingness" of your work will make people happier and more extroverted (looking outwards), and they will be able to make their own observations and conclusions, which is usually more healthy and durable than any used opinion they can take over from anybody else.

A lot of great art is totally abstract, with no thought from the artist about anything it was supposed to say about the "real" world. (Who decides what is real anyway?) It may be that it "says something" in any case, but maybe that "something" can only be expressed as art, yes?

And a lot of the best art is simply made with a lot of nonsense. You look at a picture or listen to a song, and it makes you feel great, and you don't care why.

Another thing is that you will find that you can hardly stop people from putting significance into your work. So why work so hard yourself at doing so? Relax and let them. People love to contribute, just try and stop them. And who cares whether it has any relation to anything you may have seen or put into it yourself? Freedom of Art is also freedom for the receiver.

LESSON 9 – About Criticism

Ah, here we have a sore point. It is impossible to reach outside of the range of family and close friends, and not receive criticism. And few are the artists who are so sure of themselves that don't take it to heart, and sometimes have problems with it.

The most basic point to remember is that while the cruder points of technique may be objective, the essential part of art will always be personal and subjective.

Perhaps even more important to remember is that even the worst work of art ever produced is a good work of art.

I will repeat that:

Even the worst work of art ever produced is a good work of art.

Please notice that I am not saying "even the worst work of art ever produced has a little good in it". Or that is "has some merit". I mean what I say: "Even the worst work of art ever produced is a good work of art."

There are people who are very fond of making harsh criticism. Some of these are even very good artists themselves (though I suspect it is very unhealthy for one's own creativity to be habitually a hard critic). These people often believe that most of the art in the world should not even exist. That the world would be better off without all the crap art that we are drowning in. To those people I can only say one thing: Grow up. Get some humility, all right?

One thing we could all learn a lot better is humility in the face of the Act Of Creation.

It is doubtful if we have readily available on the face of the Earth anything that is closer to the actual divine than creation. I would use the word "holy" if it had not been misused so badly and often. (To me, something holy is something that should get the highest respect and admiration, but not something that is Untouchable at all.)

Further more, the act of creation, by its very nature, cannot be destructive. This sounds redundant when put that way, but one can see people fighting violently for the censorship of some work of art or another, due to its "evil" nature. An ACTION can be evil, but a creation cannot.

Here we have a long scale of good only, not one of positive and negative.

LESSON 10 – Original vision

It has been my experience that all the data you need for a complete work of art is usually contained in the original vision. Original means "that which came first", and by original vision I simply mean what you saw in the instant you first conceived of the work.

When one has worked for some time on a work, one can easily get tangled up into the artistic or technical complexities that has turned up since one got started, and so one can lose track of where one is going. Get confused and not seem to know how to go on from there.

I find it helpful to close my eyes and mentally "flash back" to the very first impression I had of the idea I have for the work at hand. It seems that far from being a mere sketch, this idea or vision actually, when looked at closely,

contains all the information there is about the details there should be in the final work. I might not have been able to see it all in the beginning, but that is merely a result of lack of sufficient attention span, I think.

Perhaps the act of Creation is truly without time. Perhaps it is all really created outside the time stream, or just in such a minute span of time that we hardly measure it in the "real" universe.

However that may be, I find that when I look at the original idea I had, instead of all the considerations I have made since, I can see what still needs to go into the work, what needs to be changed, and what need not go there at all.

LESSON 11 – Negative/positive

The fact of not being broadly understood by others often tends to make an artist a bit depressed, especially when he is young (weirdly enough). So for many, the "deepest" art, the art that feels most intense and important to them, is dark art, pessimistic art, art about death and pain.

Yet if one thinks about it, the only things that can die are things that are alive. And if one has to notice feeling pain, one has to feel happiness first, otherwise he wouldn't know anything has changed. So it follows that life and happiness comes before death and pain, and therefore they are more basic.

So if you want to be as basic as you can with your art, and to accomplish the most you can, maybe you should consider the positive.

If life is to be made tolerable or happy, it takes a lot of work. While it is surely possible to work while being depressed, it is much easier to do it while being happy. So positive art tends to go a long way towards making life better for us all.

Drill: Make a work with a negative idea.

Drill: Make a work with the same message as above, but presented from the positive viewpoint.

LESSON 12 – The importance of training

Some artists put a fantastic lot of faith in technical training, and others have a great disrespect for it. The truth should probably be somewhere in between.

It is true that some art has a very high value of technical skill to show, and yet may have no more artistic power than some work done by an artist with hardly any training at all. But the following facts modify it heavily:

1: A high level of technique convinces people to at least pay some attention to your work.

2: If you don't know your technique, it consistently gets in the way of your realizing your vision, and you end up with a ton of compromises or no product at all.

3: Researching and learning what you can do technically will show you and open up a lot of possibilities that you had no idea were there. Your horizon will broaden, and you will have much less trouble getting ideas.

Drill: Think of an area in your medium(s) that you have never bothered to learn. Then find teaching materials about it and learn it. Learn it thoroughly. Then pick one of the ideas you got in the process, and create a new work of art from it.

LESSON 13 – Patterns

This is something that I have researched primarily in the world of visual art, where it is the easiest to observe, but it actually has much greater importance in other areas than one might think.

If you think about it, what we call Rhythm in music is actually a type of Pattern, only in time. And rhythms and patterns have a perhaps less-than-obvious, but very strong influence in writing, and in films and storytelling, and in time-based media in general. (When I say time-based, I mean media that exists primarily in time, like stories and music, as differentiated from images and sculptures, that exists primarily in space.)

Patterns are basically repetition.

Repetition has a tremendous power, we know that from advertising. In some languages the word for advertising literally means "to say something repeatedly". That explains a lot, doesn't it? Also, a famous dictator said, quite truthfully, that if you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth (...that people believe).

This power can be used in art to give power to a detail or statement that otherwise would not have enough impact. You repeat it a lot of times, and it gains a presence that it would never have on its own.

Strangely, at the same time, when something is repeated a LOT of times, it also gains a "wallpaper" effect. It recedes into the background. That is, it has greater power on people, but they notice it less!

In other words, you get a sort of hypnotic effect from patterns and repetitions, influencing people more or less without their consent. This again tells you a lot about advertising, and it also tells you that you have to be careful about your ethics when using this tool. Hypnotic effects are very powerful, but one should carefully consider what one really desire in an audience: Do you want mindless puppets, or do you want conscious beings who participate voluntarily? (The answer to this will seem obvious to most people, but they will not have the same answer!)

The "wallpaper" effect also means that a pattern is a poor thing as a main motif of a work of art. It has a tendency to "not be there" in people's minds. So it is best used for backgrounds on which you put the main composition and subjects of the work.

Patterns can be of two kinds: Absolutely repetitious, and having variations (and of course graduations between). There is less difference between those two than one might imagine, due to the "hypnotic" effect, which dulls people's perceptions to any variations there may be. Still the absolutely repetitious patterns (where the different parts are not merely similar, but identical) are even more obvious candidates to backgrounds and parts that are not supposed to be noticed in particular.

Of course patterns is a good thing for areas that would be simply too dull if they were just empty, but would be distracting if they were filled up with detail.

One might also look at "patterns" in a deeper context, and if one does, they suddenly appear everywhere. Look at a tree with its leaves. Is that not a pattern of sorts? Look at the rooftops of the city seen from above. There is a lot of variation there, but still it is a pattern. One might say that anything you put in a work of art more than twice or thrice is a pattern. Many bodies on a cite square. Waves on the sea. Clouds on a sky. Birds in a tree. Trees in a forest. A specific sound or incident in a song or a story being repeated.

As such they become an integral part of Composition. Because composition may be said to be the act of putting things together so they fit together, and act as a whole. And similarity is a common and effective way of accomplishing this.

Drill: Look around you and note down ten different objects. Pick two of them and make a sketch of a Work with a pattern of each of them.

Drill: Look around you and notice at least ten different patterns in your surroundings.

Drill: Notice time-based patterns in your surroundings, like in sounds, traffic, and other changing things.

LESSON 14 – Emotion

"Emotion" is something which can easily be overdone in an work of art. Similar to the case with "significance", the audience is so good generally at putting emotion into something themselves that working hard at that is rather overkill, perhaps even counterproductive.

It might be that some would debate this. After all, emotion is dominating in human interaction. A great amount of culture, and a great amount of communication take place on our fair planet, which has little content except emotion. Which is a pity, for emotion is really rather limited in use. Sure, it is great fun to use, but it doesn't really lead much of anywhere, and it has a tendency to put itself in the drivers' seat, which is inviting disaster.

So anyway, when you present a good work of art that has relevance to the viewer, if he wants to be emotional about it, trust me he will. There is no need to work overtime.

If you want to create emotions just for the sake of emotions, personally I think you are just shuffling things around in the viewer's mind to no good effect. And if you are doing it to make him do something, frankly that borders on simple manipulation.

Anything you wanna do you should be able to do with good, open communication and a good aesthetic product.

LESSON 15 – How to know when you are finished

You are finished when you have achieved what you wanted.

If you don't know what you wanted, then you're in trouble. It is a bad idea to start out on anything without a clear idea of exactly what you are trying to accomplish.

Of course there is such a thing as experimenting, but in that case the goal is not a finished work, but learning something, and in that case you are finished when you have learned what you wanted to learn.

When you ask yourself if the work is finished, look back to your original idea. Then add anything missing or remove anything superflous, and that's it.

Then there is also the issue of of the intended audience getting what you want them to get. On this one nothing replaces some hard-earned experience. Get it out there and hear what people say. But have patience, often the best ideas are only picked up fast by minorities. That is why "layers" is a good idea.

LESSON 16 – Stuck?

If you are stuck in a work or in your career, most likely it is one of two: either you are missing some technical knowledge that you need, or you have lost sight of your goals.

Technical skill can be very important, especially when you don't have it (very like money that way). Further it can take quite some time and work to achieve. But really, you should not shy away from facing up to learning. Any technical skills within your area is a powerful weapon in your arsenal which will enhance your reach and your power.

Look at you life or the work that you are stuck in. Ask yourself if there is something you want to do that you don't have the skills to do. Then either give it up or start learning.

If it is not that, perhaps it is that you have lost sight of your goal. This is very central to anything and has a chapter of its own. But basically you look for it reaffirm it. Or you find that it is outdated. Usually that means that you may well look for a bigger one. Goals can never be too large. Anyway, find your new goal and go for it with renewed vigour.

LESSON 17 – The importance of Art.

To some people art is very important, to others it is nothing. To most, it is nice, but fades besides the everyday problems of physical survival, housing, food, money, children, etc.

As far as I can see, the value boils down to what you think you are: A meat machine or a spiritual being. For a meat machine, naturally anything that is not about physical survival is very secondary. For a spiritual being, who knows what is important? Basically, that would be up to the individual spiritual being to decide, wouldn't it?

But there appears to be something about art that really means something to many of us. The fact alone that some people are willing to spend more money on a single work of art than most people earn in a lifetime should make you think. It might be wrong or right or something else, but it definitely shows that something is goin on there.

One pertinent issue is that "art" is defined much more broadly than most people realize, but that is a separate chapter. The fact is it is an observable fact that art makes people happier, and also that happiness is one of the most important factors in life, even if you only look at bare survival. Just for instance, only unhappy people commit suicide, so it should be clear that being happy is great if you want to live long! Not to mention that happy people are more productive, and production is basic for survival.

Based on that I feel it pretty clear that art is not a mere "luxury", but rather a vital ingredient in the lives of the peoples of Earth. It probably does little good to go into great arguments with those who believe differently, for this issue, like so many others, easily borders on beliefs.

LESSON 18 – Being understood

...While a lot of artists, especially of a mainstream conviction, have no problems being "understood", sufficiently many have that it could be regarded to be an ordinary problem in the area of art.

Apart from mere human problems, the problem stems from the fact that art, by its very nature, involves the act of Creation. Creation accomplishes something that has not existed before. And how can you understand something you have never seen before?

Well, for a human being, that is pretty difficult (for some it borders on the impossible). So he has to be helped a lot.

How do you help him? By dressing up the unfamiliar or the difficult with something familiar or easy. You put in more immediate layers in your work which contain some things that the receiver already is interested in.

This is not "prostitution". It becomes prostitution only if you completely abandons the important stuff, and only feeds people "junk food".

All right now. 1: Making great art merely takes good creation. 2: Making popular art mostly requires a good technique and an understanding of what is popular. Both of these takes some work to accomplish separately. Yet it is even possible to do both at once.

Number one demands only that you are honest to your own vision, and work hard at it. Number two demands that you study a lot and practice a lot.

The real skill comes in when you attempt to combine them. And especially combine them seamlessly. The popular levels must not force out the deeper levels. And the deeper levels should be woven in so skillfully that they do not hinder the easy enjoyment of the easy parts.

The best works of art can be enjoyed on several levels, and be better understood as the viewer increases his understanding.

Drill: Make sketches for three works that are appealing, if superficial.

Drill: Make sketches for three works that are deep, if difficult.

Drill: combine one of the first ideas with one of the second set, and make a finished work.

LESSON 19 – Who's the boss?

Depends on who you ask, doesn't it? ("I am the man in the house. Aren't I, Maris?")

One problem an artist runs into, and strangely more and more the more successful he gets, is that others will start trying to make his decisions for him. His mother, his friends, his manager, his fans, his enemies, his critics, everyone will try to make him do what they believe is the right thing.

Perhaps the hardest is with the people you maybe think love you, and that you owe something. Like your mother. Or your fans. Especially when THEY believe that you owe them something. Believe me, you don't owe them anything. At least you certainly don't owe them your art, or your life. You are the only one who owns your life, and the moment your art is being directed by someone else, it becomes ownerless, and valueless to that degree.

The fans is a problem. Hell may have no fury like a woman scorned, but a disappointed fan is a close second. Many fans will think that they supporting the artist makes the artist owe them. Think again. That he has used X amount of money and half his life on your art was HIS decision, and you owe him absolutely nothing for it. The fear of losing the fans is of course very real to a popular artist. But consider: slavery is slavery, even when it is to something generally considered a good thing. And no good work is done in slavery.

In all of life's aspects one's control of one self is invaluable, but doubly so when the talk is about art. For art, by its very nature, only comes about by the creation of the artists, and no one else in the universe can do it for him.

LESSON 20 – Being universal

"Being universal" is a good thing. While it may or may not be possible to make art that is for all people anywhere, giving it a good shot is bound to enhance the scope and the power of your art. I am not saying it is a bad thing to make art that will mean something only to the people living in your own street during the first three weeks of this year, but I am saying that there will probably be aspects of your art that could be appreciated by others if they got the chance, so why not give it to them?

You can of course do both at once. If for instance you have the characters in a story speak a type of slang found only in a small community at a specific time, at least have them talk mainly about things that will be interesting to most humans most of the time. Or vice versa.

If you are painting or photographing a specific tree, try not only to describe that specific tree, but catch the things about its nature that says something about many other trees, or perhaps even talks about human nature, or whatever interests you.

It may or may not be impossible for one person to be interested in everything, but expansion is power and central to life.

Drill: make a sketch for a work describing a specific tree that you see or know.

Drill: make a sketch for a work describing a universal tree.

Drill: make a sketch for a work combining both of the above.

LESSON 21 – Defining "art", part one

Art, definition One:

Art is communication with beauty.

Firstly, art is not art without any communication. One might indeed create something entirely in his own universe/mind and get pleasure from it. This might also be a very worthwhile activity. But still it is not art.

Mind you, I am not implying that the worth of art is only measured by how many people see it or understand it. Far from it. I am only saying that if no man, no angel, and no demon ever sees the creation, then it is not art, it is simply a creation.

Of course, only communication is not quite enough. Giving directions to a stranger wishing to find the train station, you don't normally care much about the artistic presentation. You merely want to be clear and precise.

Art has to have something to do with beauty. It might not be obvious beauty, and it might not be universally recognized beauty, but beauty nonetheless.

Some art makes progress by pointing out or creating beauty in places and forms where it has not been seen before. When painters first began to paint poor peasants and whores, it was an outrage. How could anybody see anything interesting, not to mention beautiful, in those places and subjects? And avant garde music makes music out of strange sounds and noises that have not been heard in music before.

Note that "beautiful" does not necessarily mean "pretty". Pretty is Beautiful's popular sister.

LESSON 22 – Defining "art", part two

Art, definition two:

Any human activity bringing something new into the world, which is not directly related to physical survival.

This is of course a very broad definition. You make a cup, not art. You make it blue, that part is art. You run down the street, not art. You run in an interesting, dancing manner, it is art.

This also has the advantage of taking the "quality" evaluation out of defining art. I think that one of the most hurtful ways the word art has been used is when it is denying. When something thinks a work of art should not exist (for some reason), they will often say "that is not art!" What they should say, but are not honest and brave enough to say, is "that is bad art". This of course would make the attack clear and expose the attacker for what he is, an attacker.

Art is art, no matter how good or bad. No matter how popular or obscure.

LESSON 23 – Defining "art", part two

Art, definition three:

Art is communication married to creation.

You can create something for yourself, in your own universe. And you can make communication to others about things that already exist.

And when you combine those two, and communicate something you have created, it is art.

Of course anything totally newly created will be utterly unfamiliar, and so will not communicate well. What you do is to combine it with familiar elements to accomplish understanding. That then becomes the inroad to the heart of the work.

One way of doing it is to take something from the world in general, and make it your own. You decide how you would make it if you had made it, and then make it that way.

Another way is to create something new, and then put it in familiar surroundings.

Drill: Make a creation for yourself.

Drill: Make a communication without creation.

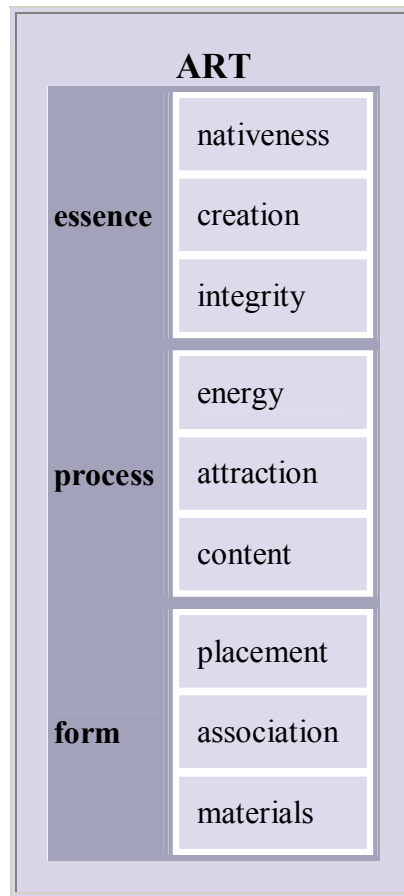
Drill: Make a creation combined with a communication.

LESSON 24 – AoA part one: The Architecture of Art.

The "Architecture of Art" is the name I came up with for a scale I worked out which describes the basic components of art. I liked the symmetric look of the symbol "AoA", and I could have called it "Anatomy of Art", but Anatomy is overused, and I liked the implication of **building** something that the word "architecture" has.

In this lesson I will give brief definitions of each of the parts of the AoA. This will be rather insufficient for good understanding of a scale that covers such a big subject, so therefore a separate lesson will be dedicated to explaining each part. And after that there is a lesson on the use of the AoA.

First, here is the schematic illustrating the **AoA**:



Art is divided into three parts:

- Essence
- Process
- Form
-

The three main parts are themselves divided into three:

- **Essence:**
 - Nativeness
 - Creation
 - Integrity
- **Process:**
 - Energy
 - Attraction
 - Content
- **Form:**
 - Placement
 - Association
 - Materials

Art is essentially a tool for spanning the gap between the material world we understand most easily and the less material, spiritual if you will, world of pure creation.

The Architecture of Art is a description of the crossing of that gap. When you look lower on the scale, things get more and more material. When you look higher, things get less and less material. Not "unreal" but rather made of finer sorts of energy. The bottom is like an entrance point, the top is like a destination.

Essence: The "essence" is the basic qualities of the work.
Process: The "process" is how the work of art does its work.
Form: The "form" is the physical expression of the idea.

From the bottom:

Materials: Paper, paint. A piano, soundwaves. Rock, a hammer and chisel. Includes lightwaves and electrons from the work.

Association: The thoughts, emotions, and concepts connected to the content of the work. Includes the literal things the work may "represent" from the physical world.

Placement: is the idea of the work as it looks when it has been represented by physical materials.

Content: What the work is. The basic form and content.

Attraction: What makes the work desirable, what attracts attention and admiration.

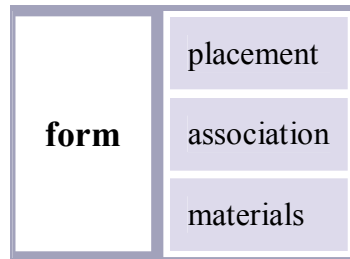
Energy: The innate power of the work to move emotions, ideas, and thoughts.

Integrity: How well the work functions within itself, how well the different parts work together.

Creation: The amount that has been created.

Nativeness: The extent to which the work extends naturally from the artist's own universe.

LESSON 25 – AoA part two: "Form"

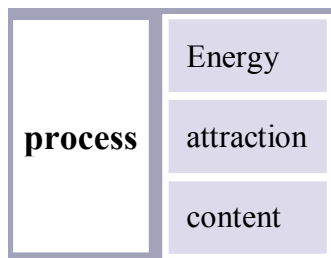


You might notice that the Architecture of Art has a three-split character that is repeated in the smaller parts. The lower of the three parts is the more physical part. The upper of the three parts is the more ethereal, or spiritual, part. And the middle part is a sort of energy flow between the two. This is true of the overall view, and it is true of the smaller partitions.

The lower part of the overall view, "form", is that part that makes the idea appear in the physical universe, to make it real to other people than the artist himself. It is the content of the idea as represented in physical materials, and all the associations and connections that immediately appears as soon as something is brought into an already existing universe.

You can create something entirely for yourself, and indeed these are sometimes the finest creations, for they can be without compromise at all, but it will not actually be "art" until it has been exported into physical form for others to see.

LESSON 26 – AoA part three: "process"

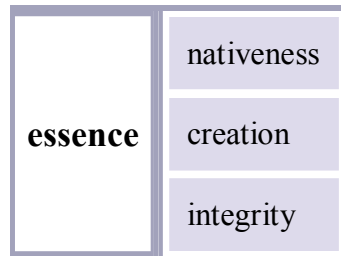


The middle third of Art, "process" is just that. It is what Art does.

It is the process of going from the material to the spiritual.

In an ideal universe, perhaps we could all create and manipulate what we wanted, and have it be experienced by others. Art is a way of approximating this condition. The "process" of art is how it takes the viewer "by the hand" and helps him create (co-create) something that makes him happier, or more aware. It pulls him with his own help into being able to create.

LESSON 27 – AoA part four: "essence"



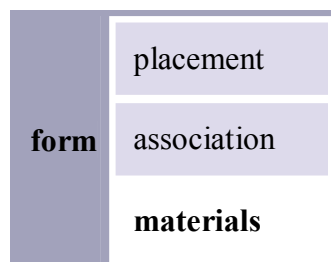
The upper third of art, "essence" is the qualities that belong to the work itself, without consideration of other people or the physical universe. The other two parts are what helps this part reach into the physical universe and do something for others apart from the artist.

The Essence has characteristics which are independent of the physical universe and what happens there.

Without the lower two parts (function and form) the Work will accomplish very little. But without the Essence there is no work at all.

Imagine two bubbles over each other, connected by a shaft. In the upper bubble, the artist creates his work. This is pure, and solely his own. In the lower bubble, the physical universe, he places a model of what he has put in the upper bubble (his own universe). Others see the "model", the physical representation, of his work in the physical universe, and if he is successful, this will help them see the actual work in the upper bubble. The shaft is the doorway. The Essence is the qualities of the work in the upper bubble, the "form" is the qualities of the physical representation in the lower, and the "process" is the qualities of the energy flow in between.

LESSON 28 – AoA part five: "materials"



Materials is just what it says: The physical materials you use in the real universe to make the physical representation of your idea.

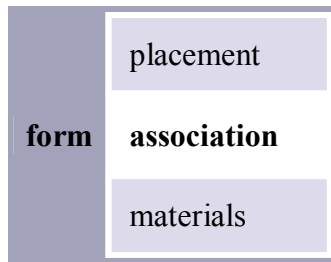
Plus the additional fact that this does not only include canvas and paint for the painter, and the piano for the pianist, but even the light waves from the picture, and the soundwaves from the piano or a recording. In other words, "materials" includes all the things that are strictly physical and measurable about the work of art. (It may be noteworthy that this includes only one ninth of everything about the work!)

A simple rule about this: Know your materials.

Study your materials. Play with them, drill with them. Read books about them. The better you know them, the better your control will be, and the easier the creative process will seem.

This includes the small specifics of each part of the materials, but it also includes the more general things: A painter must understand what light is, and what color is. He must know the definition of a "line" and a "shape". A musician must know what a sound is, what a note is, what rythm is. You get the idea. The more thorough your basic and specific knowledge is of that you are working with, the easier a time you will have producing. (And you ought to do yourself the favor of including the understanding of how humans and the physical universe works in general.)

LESSON 29 – AoA part six: association



Like is usual in this course, I am talking about "association" in a broader sense than it is normally used. I am not just talking about associating violets with spring or apples with fall. I am talking about associating a picture of a violet with an actual violet, and the word "apple" with an actual apple.

This is what is often termed "representation" as in "representational art" (also termed "literal art", different from abstract art), but really isn't. You would normally not try to eat a picture of an apple, so the picture clearly not a representation or a substitute for an apple.

Association is basically anything and everything a given work will bring to mind in the audience. And given the fact that even the most abstract of works will bring *something* to mind in most people, it should be indicated that one does not have to work nearly as hard at this as some might think.

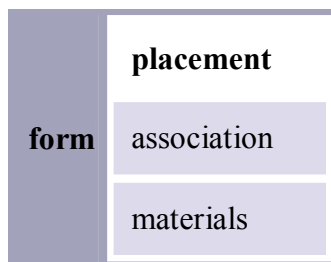
It also should be said that this a very powerful tool, and should be used wisely. The audience hardly have any power over many associations a work of art will bring to mind (a picture of a face will always make him think of a face), so this can be used and abused equally easily.

To put it succinctly: "association" in the AoA is EVERYTHING in the real world that is connected or associated with the work at all, including those things that are most literally shown. This is very broad. This is the WHOLE of the connections to the rest of the physical universe. (Again, notice that this is only one ninth of the work all in all!)

The division between abstract art and literal art can be seen to be quite artificial. There is only a long scale of how easy it for the audience to associate the work with things they know already.

Drill: Make a work with three elements, as abstract as possible. Ask five people what they see in it.

LESSON 30 – AoA part seven: Placement



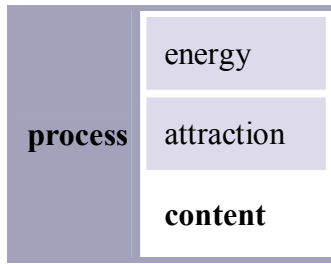
"Placement" is the fact of and the degree of success of placing the idea in the physical universe.

A pure idea exist in a seperate universe we could call the creative universe, for lack of a better term. In here, it is as perfect as the imagination of the artist lets it be. In order to make it seen by others, you PLACE it in the physical universe, by shaping a "model" from elements in the physical universe.

It should be rather obvious that right here we have one of the difficulties, because naturally such a simulation can never be perfect, because it is limited by the possibilities on physical things, not to mention the skill of the artist in manipulating these.

Obviously the better the simulation is, the better the work of art works. Less obvious is it that it is not the physical simulation that does the actual work. It is merely sort a door that lets people easier see the actual idea in the "creative universe". Which immediately tells a lot about why some people are very sensitive to art, and some are not. Because people have very differing abilities to perceive other universes, so to speak. Not to mention the fact that an individual's ability to do so can change drastically during his life, or even from hour to hour.

LESSON 31 – AoA part eight: Content

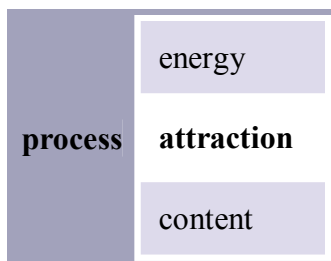


"Content" is what the work consists of. For music, it is the notes, melody, rythm, etc. For paintings, it is colors, lines, shapes, etc. For stories, it is characters, events, plot, etc.

Content, simply. It is what it is.

It should not be hard to see that this is rather central to the workings of the work. Because different individuals in the potential audience have strong relationships with certain things, and not with others.

LESSON 32 – AoA part nine: "attraction"

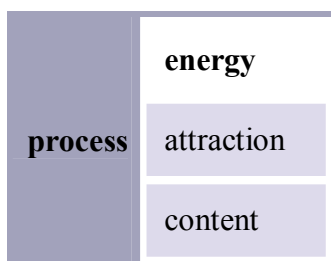


"Attraction" is the quality that is noticed more than anything else (apart from association) in a work. And it is probably the one that is the most important when it comes to the immediate success of the work, if we are talking about how many people notice and desire the work.

But it is quite possible to overrate the importance of this characteristic, for it is nothing by itself. In fact, when this characteristic is very strong, and most of the others are very weak, you have something that might be a commercial success, but still is rather destructive on a spiritual level. (A work of art will never be more destructive than creative, but still.) It is similar to "food" that contains only great taste, but no nutritional value. The audience gets nothing out of it, but he is almost trapped in it because of the strong attraction.

"Attraction" is easily confused with beauty, but it isn't. Real beauty contains attraction too, but it contains the other things from the scale also to nourish the soul.

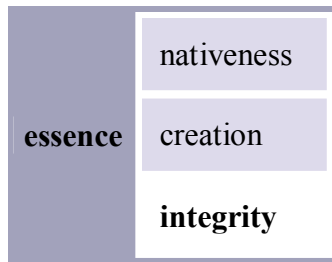
LESSON 33 – AoA part ten: "energy"



"Energy" is the raw power of the work of art. It is how much spiritual energy the artist has put into the work. It is what is moving the audience, and how much.

Since life is motion, and motion is similar to life, the "energy" of a work is strongly influential upon how much life a work contains, and how much life it creates.

LESSON 34 – AoA part eleven: Integrity

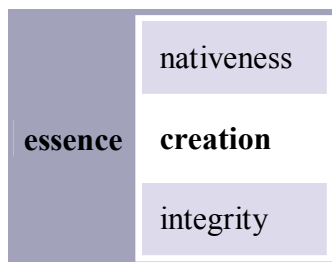


"Integrity" is the amount of "wholeness" of the work. It is how well it works with itself, how well the component parts are integrated.

Much of the rules of art are concerned with this. Like "blue does not go with green". Or "don't mix past tense with present tense in the same paragraph". Or "don't mix horns with guitars". Whatever. These are all more or less useable observations regarding the cruder parts of Integrity. It take some training to judge integrity well, which is why they say that you have to become a master before you can get away with breaking the rules. As a very experienced driver, you can get away with driving fast with one hand on the steering wheel, as a beginning driver you better keep both your hands on it at all times.

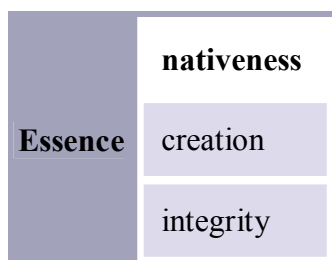
Integrity may be impossible to get perfect. If it ever became perfect, you might also have a perfectly boring work of art.

LESSON 35 – AoA part twelve: "creation"



"Creation" is the degree to which the idea is newly created. It is the "mass" of the work of art. A high level of creation is important to the ultimate value of a work, but is not easily observed, and so is rather hopeless to discuss. It just is what it is. The artist himself is the best judge of that, and not even a good one, often.

LESSON 36 – AoA part thirteen: "nativeness"



"Nativeness" is the quality of the creation being "native" to the creator. Which is to sat that it is fully his own creation, under his control, and in his awareness. This, like the other parts, if of course placed on a long scale, it is not an "either or" thing.

When a spirit lives in a universe he shares with many others, all of life is influenced by cooperation and compromise. Under those conditions one may easily forget that ones own creations are exactly that, ones own. But their very power depends to a large degree on exactly that.

In a funny way, this part is one of those that can be most absolute, most free of compromise. Strangely, it is very possible to create something that has a lot of reference to a pre-existing universe, is very understandable to others,

and **still** be 100% ones own and completely original. It is one of those mysteries which hint that perhaps universes are not the heavy, final, and absolute things they sometimes appear to be.

LESSON 37 – AoA part fourteen: Using the Architecture of Art.

The AoA came about as a result of the idea that the better you understand something, the better you can use it. So we better have an idea of what art is, and what it consists of.

As such it can be studied merely as a philosophical and abstract thing for people who are interested in art and creation in general, but it can also be studied by people who intend to DO something about it. The artist. It can be used as a tool in creation.

One word of warning: The AoA is a **very** powerful tool, and like any such, it can be very destructive if used for purposes it is not intended for. This especially goes for criticism. If I ever catch anyone using the AoA as a tool of criticising art, no matter how good the intentions are, I will personally hunt down that person like a dog. The main reason for this is that the AoA shows flaws in extreme magnification. And since there is nothing in the universe that is perfect, this can make even the most brilliant work of art look very bad. Which is an evil thing to do.

The AoA is for use in creation. It is not something to follow you about for the rest of your life, like riding a bicycle it should quickly become effortless and intuitive.

You can use it for entrance point when starting a new work, since choosing one part of it cuts down confusion. And more importantly it can be used for trouble-shooting in the middle and late part of a process.

The way you use it is simply to compare the work as it is against the scale, find the weak parts, and improve them.

Use it very lightheadedly. Don't think you can work over a work of art until every part on the AoA scale is 100%. That is impossible, as well as almost ridiculous overkill. Even very great works of art often have great weaknesses on several of the points of the scale, and getting any and all parts over a mid-point is a brilliant accomplishment. So it is used for rough adjustments.

Of course when I talk about "50%" and "100%" this is in itself rather silly. Most of this is very subjective, especially when you go towards the top of the scale. This can only be judged by the creator himself, on a direct-observation basis. Never ask anyone else to do this. This would be like an athlete or a dancer having someone else control his body, it simply doesn't work.

