

Advice to Candice Cook when struggling with perceptions of “good” and when relating her own work to her knowledge of art history.

Stop exercising certain control (that is, constant comparison with the past and judgments of “good work”) and allow something to happen. It’s an odd mixture of, or a middle ground between, caring and not caring, directing and not directing, knowing and not knowing. You cannot understand that this is actually the process that will account for anything you already have done that is considered “good” until you watch yourself employ it. It amounts to not getting in the way with prejudices, premature sense making, fears, and desires. You have to trust and allow the inflow. Experiment, play, imagine and the outflow will seem to happen outside of your control...you must make an effort not to second guess or get your ego wrapped up in what is made, or in most cases “fail to make good” as might be judged. Be present and alert, intense about working...it will feel right. You can know the process while not knowing what will come next. Being comfortable with the unknown is part of the effort you must expend (this is emotionally difficult). Allow so-called failure to come and use the emotional state and the physical outcome to your advantage. One thing happens after another and that is all really. Make one thing happen, be present, aware of the relationships you find in your actions, shapes, representations, general life and the answer will come as to what to do next – if allowed to happen, the so called “next thing” will not occur as an answer (as if it were an end) but as an action. This process applies to the development of a piece in your imagination and/or perceptibly, physically.

Advice to Walker Carpenter when struggling to develop work that isn’t derivative of other artists...his knowledge of photographic history.

So what is your inquiry? About what are you in doubt? You have chosen a particular tool with which to work and it will not prove to be the right tool in all cases. Employ it when it is the right tool, or use it in ways that transform it into an applicable tool. Drop the pretense that you are making a photograph or an image and begin to make expressions. Don’t be technique bound -- approach each shot from outside the rut, be aware of the conventions you employ. Ultimately, you will have to first understand your teachers and then deny them in going your own way, developing your own expressions (they may not recognize value and it is certainly difficult to stand on your own). In doing so, you will find that inquiry will relieve the burden of originality. You will discover upon reflection that when you make a legitimate expression, which is the overarching objective, that the piece will stand on its own as a consequence of the process. “Legitimate” refers to having integrity in the inquiring process, being genuinely committed to exploration, to resolution, to insight into that which motivated the inquiry initially – presumably something about which you are in doubt. Without doubt, as Charles Pearce and John Dewey would say, there is no impulsion – work in the realm of beliefs about the way the world is. That is the personal aspect of the creative process, being introspective enough

to recognize what needs to be investigated or made coherent and to allow it to be worked on without exercising constricting control of where it leads.