

Teaching (the creative process) Philosophy

Jere Williams

I want my students to exhibit, as the outcome of my studio-art teaching, curiosity in the world around them, creative reasoning, proficiency in developing symbols (artworks) to represent and exemplify ideas and emotions, and a growing confidence in the legitimacy of their expressions. Clearly part of this objective is inspirational, especially insofar as curiosity is a disposition the authenticity of which can't be manipulated by fear of assessment. Part of this objective is nebulous, as teaching creativity in thought or action is open for debate. And only part of this objective is measurable; public expressions placed on a pedestal, written on paper, or performed for an audience can be evaluated.

To empower students to this end is to model effective and safe machine, tool and material use, to discuss the nature and history of the discipline, and to thoroughly examine the various principles of visual expression upon which evaluative judgments are built. Collaborating with a student to develop artwork based on his/her own inquiry is what makes this job profoundly worthwhile.

Pages that follow

1. Primary Questions
2. Fundamental Relations
3. Creative Cycle
4. Exercising Reason/Emotion
5. Observation
6. Breakdown of Fundamental Relations
7. General Learning Objectives

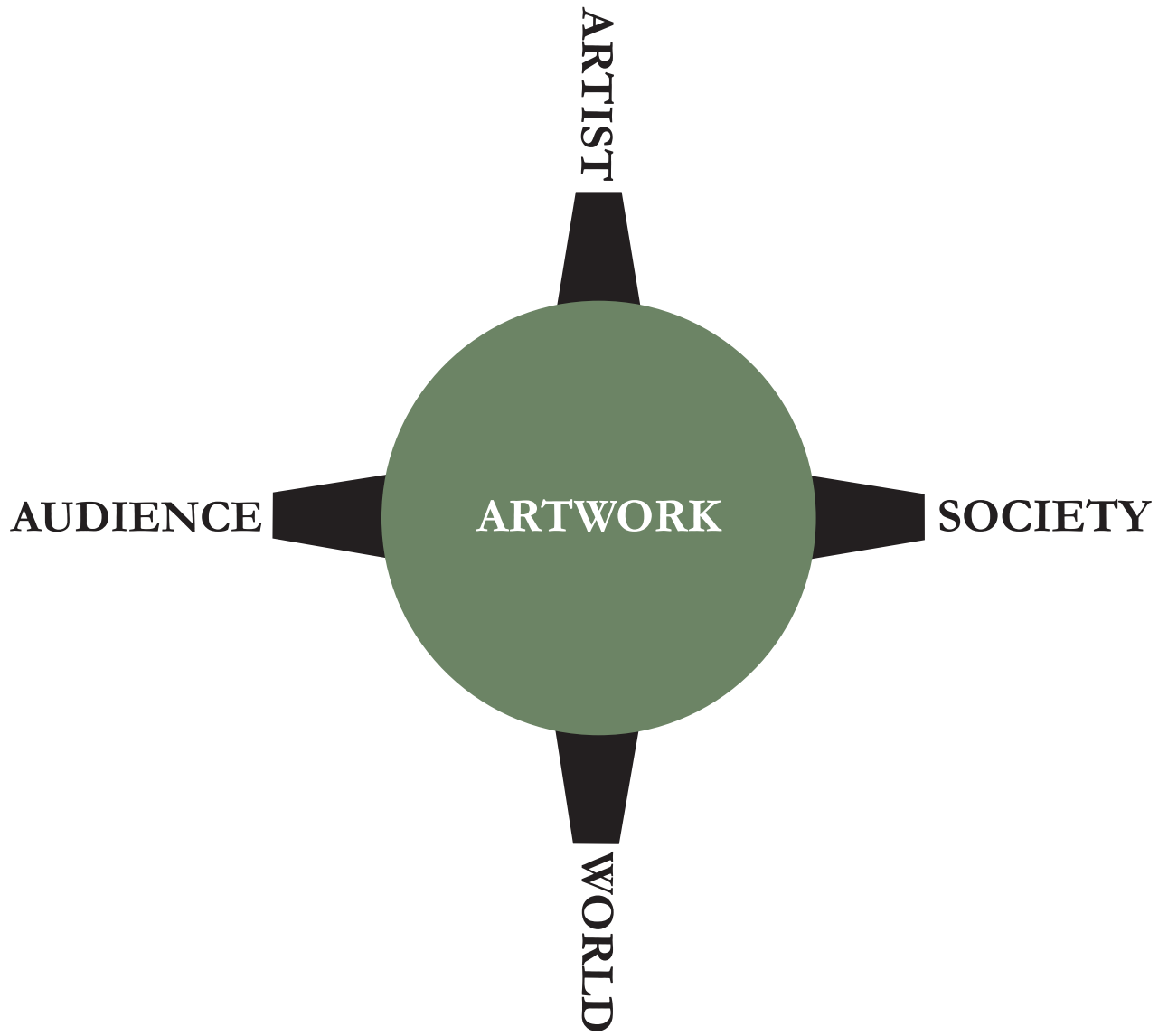
WHEN IS IT?

WHERE ARE YOU?

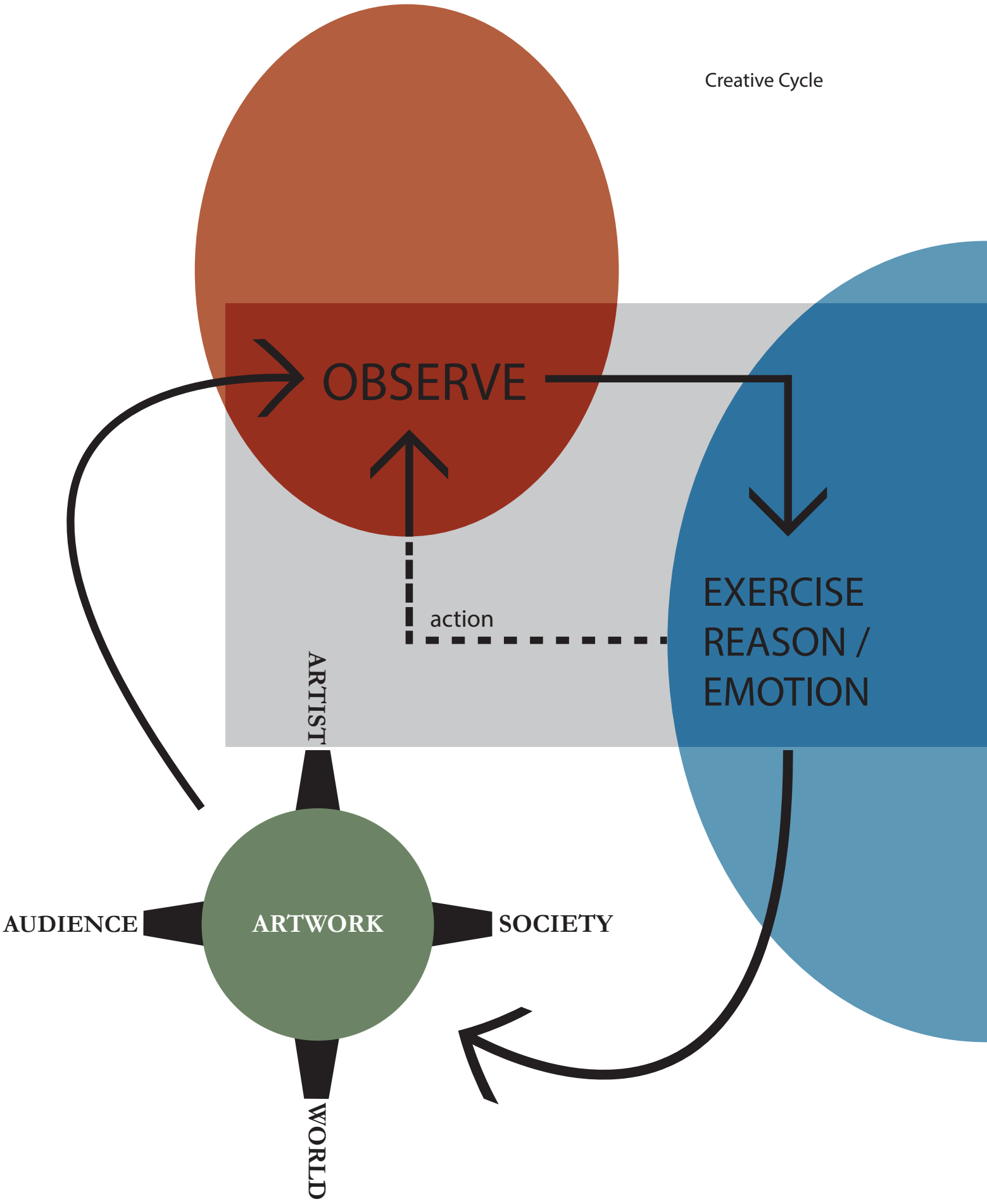
WHO ARE THEY?

WHAT OUGHT TO BE?

Fundamental Relations



Creative Cycle



EXERCISE REASON / EMOTION

This is as much a process of prediction, of forecasting the possible outcomes of what you might do, as it is a process of trusting in a feeling without further explanation. It can range from making your first move to bringing a project together as a whole.

It involves imaginative thinking and attention to feeling.

It involves the processes of inference and reasoning.

It begins with and gains momentum from your curiosity.

Inference: The suggestion of a direction or a solution to an observed problem or perplexity. That is, the inclusion or exclusion of a line, a color, a form, a material, a thing, a function, a type of joint, a context, a reference, a perspective, etc. as the next step in creating an expression (an artwork).

Reasoning: To work out the relevance of and implications of the suggestions (solutions). That is, what are the consequences, what interpretation / meaning / feeling will emerge and do you find it of value? It's CRITICAL THINKING.

JOHN DEWEY *The essence of CRITICAL THINKING is suspended judgment...[which] cultivates a variety of alternative suggestions...A large part of the technique, as a skilled practitioner, is to prevent the acceptance of the first suggestions that arise. [Practically speaking,] acceptance of the suggestion in its first form is prevented by looking into it more thoroughly, [that is, by reasoning]. (Dewey, How We Think)*

This is also known as Divergent Thinking.

The process ends with an action (a mark, an erasure, an exhibition, etc.) that in itself begins the exercise anew.



OBSERVE

LOOK
LISTEN
REFLECT

Follow your natural curiosity

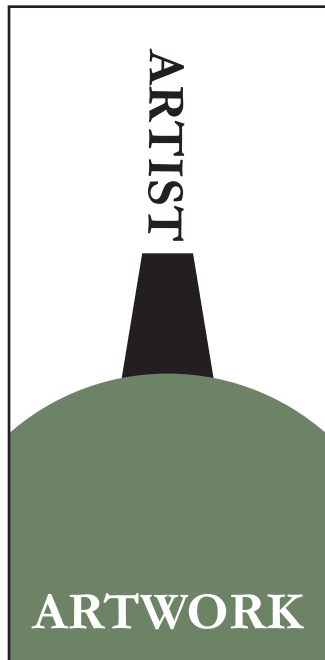
Paula Scher: If you're not in a state of play you can't make anything.

*John Dewey: Resistance is not an obstruction to be beaten down.
Resistance is an invitation to reflection!*

*William James: Genius in truth means little more than...perceiving
in an unhabitual way.*

*Robert Rauschenberg: The role of the artist is to see what is in the
world today.*

*Joseph Beuys: Everyone is an artist [because we all] know the language
of the world, [the feeling, the smell, the taste, etc.]. Find
the form-giving concept in the essence of things...be it
in the meaning of life or the meaning of relationships in
the world.*



Can creativity be taught?

Does creativity stem from outside or inside?

(God inspired vs. subconscious)

Can a creative act come from nothing or nowhere?

Does the establishment of norms (traditions) shackle creativity or do they make creativity possible?

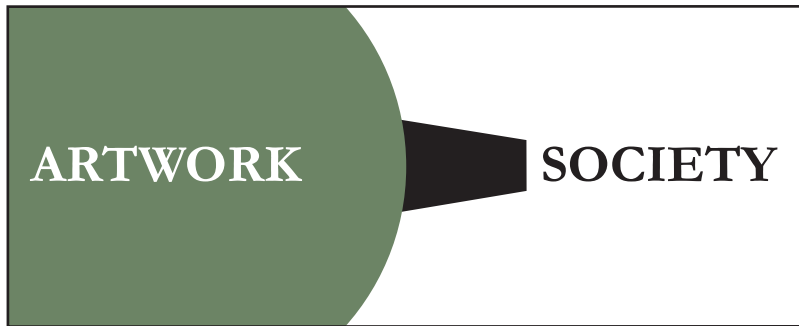
To what degree does the artist need to have an idea of the finished work?

Is it important that the artist “know not from whence it came” for an artwork to be creative?

Is the avant-garde a defunct scheme or does it remain a viable working methodology?

Is originality necessary for art?

Is the “Ordinal Fallacy” really true? “First I will master my medium then I will find something to say in it!”



Does novel art production drive cultural change? Does cultural change drive novel art production? Neither? Both?

What is the responsibility of the artist to society?

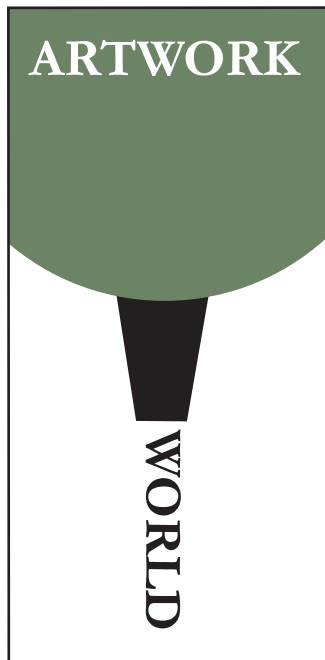
Should the artist consider the public's art sensibilities when proposing public artwork?

What is the responsibility of the public, and the government, regarding public artworks?

How are Monuments and cultural Documents related and what significance does the passage of time have for them?

Does private funding or public funding for public artwork promote better artwork?

What rights (and roadblocks) do artists have with regard to the first amendment, copyright, appropriation, public funding, etc.?



What is the identity of an artwork?

Is the artwork a mental or a physical thing?

Is an artwork replete?

How important is the presence of the hand of the artist?

Is an artwork necessarily an artifact?

Is artifactuality a matter of degree?

Can a duck or a computer create an artwork?

Can a work of art be created accidentally?

Is there a real distinction between art and craft?

Is the classificatory use of “art” more or less powerful than the evaluative use?



Is beauty a property of an object or the product of our imagination?

Is there a standard of taste which we ought to agree upon in evaluation?

Is beauty (in some respect) necessary for “great” artwork? How can we know an evaluation for an artwork (as “good”) has sufficient support?

Is art a language?

Can artworks contribute to knowledge?

Does an artwork mean what the artist intended it to mean?

How many interpretations for a work are possible (maybe probable), and is there an arbiter of truth?

What is the job of the critic, and what are the boundaries?

How important is art historical reference?

Is non-exhibited information relevant to an interpretation?

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVE -- STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

- Understand how to think metaphorically, to turn on the aesthetic attitude such that recognizing relations and patterns in experiences becomes a practical means of learning about the world.
- Understand how to think in terms of materials and processes and how these contribute to meaning.
- Understand how to manipulate various media and to develop direct, physical skill/control of the means for visual expression.
- Understand that following a creative process results in expressions such that the end is not necessarily known in advance and that experimentation and discovery (and the ability to trust and manage resistance) is primary.
- Understand composition, the organization of elements in a design, is an analysis (measuring, weighing, ordering, etc.), an exercise that is transferable as a process to other areas of life.
- Understand how to describe visual and emotional experience.
- Understand how to interpret visual and emotional expressions.
- Understand how to evaluate works using description and interpretation as support.
- Understand how to give and receive constructive criticism.