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As you might imagine, this is a thrilling time for me. It is a personal affirmation, one that helps justify my forty years of teaching .

But apart from personal gratification, I'm pleased that the Sheedy Award has been given this time to someone in a non-verbal discipline. Some academics believe that thinking, by definition, is a verbal activity. But I know that through the use of visual form and images a soul can define its temperament (how much order can it tolerate, how much chaos), it can formulate a value system (what is really important, what is not worthy of notice), it can articulate its fears and yearnings, it can solve geometric problems, it can make fun of its own pretensions, explore its secret morbidity as well as its "joi de vivre", it can create order, send a love message to its mother. Surely there is the room in the word "thinking" for all this capricious, non-verbal capacity. Enough of my paranoia. What I really want to say is "thanks for the support of the non-verbal arts-we play a major role in humane activity."

I am also thrilled that, this time, this award is honoring teaching methods pretty removed from the large, formal lecture. I must confess that I can count on the fingers of one hand the written lectures I have given in the last thirty years (this one being one of them). More often I have talked extemporaneously while showing slides or, still more often, I have smeared paint on a sheet of paper as a demonstration in front of a group of a dozen students. But, as with my colleagues in studio art and music, most of my teaching contact with students has been tutorial.

Much of my work as a teacher has been setting up an environment that encourages creative work: developing studio space, tools and materials, organizing group crits, life drawing sessions, visiting artists and exhibitions. But my most important work has been simply looking at work; listening to and talking with students about their work and the problem of developing insight.

When a creative insight happens, an experience I'm sure you've shared, it seems to the person that the insight has come from somewhere else. It feels like a blessing from a muse. Decades ago, when I was an artist surviving in Berkeley, I envisioned three fates under the Berkeley hills: one spun thread, one measured it, and one snipped it. When a thread was snipped, I thought, someone in the Bay Area completed a successful piece of art. The only control I had in making a successful painting was to be working all the time, thus increasing the possibility that I would be working at the moment the snip occurred. The muse seems to strike those who are prepared; it is not a total gift of grace.

I say that an insight seems to come from elsewhere. In a way, it actually does. It comes from a part of one that is outside of his scheming consciousness. All complex behavior--and I include thinking as a kind of behavior-- is developed in parts. After each part is perfected consciously, it is seemly forgotten, but it remains as a part of ones habit pattern. The conscious mind of a high jumper, or a pianist, let's say, is then free to practice a new part without having to worry about that which is stored in the rest of his habit pattern. We do this constantly, but we need to have faith that those skills we have earned are stored --even if out of the reach of our limited consciousness. We need faith in our hard earned and carefully cultivated intuition. Our capacity for complexity of skill is far beyond what our consciousness can comprehend or manage at one time. It is from this unconscious part of ourselves that sudden new combinations of habitual thought occur, and the new insight is handed, as a gift, to consciousness.

This method of developing a good habit consciously and then allowing it to slip into the unconscious, frees consciousness of an overload. But how should an artist who is trying to develop skill towards an unknown direction proceed? The art academy's advice to develop traditional techniques and then worry about a direction isn't very helpful in that the selection of a technique dictates the direction. For example, if one learns to draw exactly what he sees, he may gain hand and eye co-ordination, but he also could be left with a skill that dictates a narrow, unimaginative style of painting. In order to create something imaginative, something made-up, designed to emphasize a particular emotion, one has to learn technique with that end in mind. One has to have some idea of where he is going in order to know what techniques to develop, and, unfortunately, there isn't time to learn all possible techniques. It is the "Catch 22" for anyone who is creative, anyone who is trying to discover a unique direction. Somehow the artist must discover his direction and perfect the appropriate technique at the same time. He discovers where he is anxiously going when he arrives.

How does a painter prepare himself to find a direction? By the word "direction" I mean the road towards finding meaningful content. For an artist this involves finding a suitable subject matter -if he feels the need to use a specific reference-- and the visual form that is capable of conveying his content. The question of direction, of course, is the same issue that preoccupies scholars and spiritual searchers. It is a key issue that different disciplines have in common. I have a few observations on the search for direction, though I am sure that none of them will surprise you.

To start with, one needs to be educated. One needs history, intellectual history, languages, literatures, science, and social science: all the liberal arts naturally have to do with ones search for a position. Art students in the university are much more fortunate than ones in art schools. Technical knowledge is not very useful unless it can ferment in a broader, informed atmosphere. Young painters particularly need to be sophisticated in the history of art, in the knowledge of art that has been made in the past. And of this history, the immediate past is the most important because it was born in reaction to the world in which we currently live. A painter today needs to be very aware of what others are doing now.

An artist must work constantly and consistently with his media. He cannot afford to wait for motivation. In fact, motivation seems to be a reward for effort, not a prerequisite. Motivation and a sense of direction emerge out of work, out of thinking with the hands. A scholar learns what he has to say by writing; a scientist experiments with materials. This is another way of saying that one should have confidence in his own intuition. Play and experimentation present one with exciting possibilities. One works, or plays, always watching carefully for a promising element which he can nurture and improve.

One of my old teachers, Jack Tworok, a New York Abstract Expressionist from the 50's, described his process of painting in this way-and I paraphrase: "I stand in front of my canvas, and I take to it another material (presumably paint) and apply it somehow-- with no preconceived ideas. After a while, I sit at a distance and look at what I've done and think about it. I never analyze and work at the same time; they are two different ways of thinking. After this break, I return to my work and continue with no plan."

Tworok was a man who consciously followed his intuition. Of course he had preconceived ideas, and he had developed habit patterns, in spite of what he said. I think he was simply de-emphasizing the role of planning. I believe that his description is a classic model for creativity. This model may seem like an inaccurate one for a kind of painting that requires a lot of planning and tight drawing. But Tworok would argue that even that kind of painting starts with faith in intuition before the idea evolves into a plan. The beginning probably starts with drawing in a sketchbook and later the idea is translated into paint on canvas. Even with a carefully planned work, the beginning is a mysterious delving into new territory for the conscious self.

Though I am not a writer, I suspect that something similar to this model for painting might be applicable to writing. Like an athlete, a writer needs to be in shape with the daily practice of his skill. He needs to read constantly, and he needs to fill his mind with information on or around his topic. In starting a paper, he might avoid trying to plan or outline and simply start by writing. He does not need to 'know' what he is doing. Later he can switch to an analytical mode, evaluate what he has done and think about structure. Then without a clear formulation, he might return to writing, consciously separating creating from analyzing.

Another activity that is helpful in developing one's direction is interacting with other people who are trying to do the same thing. A free interchange of ideas opens up possibilities for both parties. Not only are my ideas clarified by understanding the reaction of another to my work, but my mind is broadened by putting myself into the shoes of another and discussing his work. Part of one's education is learning both how to find like-minded friends and how to encourage a sense of community among them. Sometimes the most helpful friend for a painter might be a musician or a poet. Having the same craft in common might not be as an important bond as the kind of content for which one thirsts.

And finally, anyone trying to develop his direction has to understand his own temperament and taste as it exists. It always amazes me to look around in a painting class and see the similarities between the colors and textures of what a student is wearing and the color and paint surfaces on his work. A person appears to have a developed aesthetic unknown to himself. I encourage a student to introspect, to observe himself, and to focus on the kind of imagery and formal language that can project how he feels.

Sometimes I ask students in a beginning drawing class to withdraw from the class activity during the class period and to make some kind of marks with a bush and ink on 5 pieces of paper from a stack on a table in the corner of the room. Each student does this in private. I give no instructions about what kind of marks they should make, how they should do it or even whether or not they should use subject matter. They are told to take the papers when they are finished into the hall and put them on the floor. At the end of the period, I ask one student to go into the hall and thoroughly rearrange the sheets. Then as a class we go into the hall, and we find that we can easily agree on how to sort the sheets into groups of five related pieces. No one was asked to express himself, but because of his habit patterns and temperament, each person consistently expressed something personal. Self expression seems to be automatic, but self awareness needs to be achieved.

Is the artist's individual personality important for his art? I don't think so. Basically people really have a great deal in common. A person's understanding must come through his own experience. If he can project his own experience, he will probably communicate with many others. If he tries to project something that really isn't in his experience, it's unlikely that his work will have authenticity. The individual artist's life may not be of great interest to others, but I think his coming to terms with his life can make what he has to project significant to others. When an art student first realizes how related his work is to his own life, sometimes unintentionally, he feels a sense of integration. This can be quite satisfying and a source of motivation for further work. I said that I didn't think personality was important in one's art. But I do believe that integrity, being at one with the work, is very important.

A teacher tends to be a role model for some students. I am aware that my own painting and my work in developing a direction is sometimes much more important to an art student than what I have to say. At this point I want to admit that I am aware of the irony that I, who by my own admission am not primarily involved in verbal communication, should be standing here lecturing in broad generalizations. Consequently, I would like to conclude by showing -yes, and talking about-- a painting of mine. Hopefully I can illustrate visually some of my points about the search for a direction.

This is an oil painting I made in 1996 entitled Open Kitchen Diptych. The over-all dimensions are 6 by 8 feet. "Diptych" means that there are two separate canvases. When they are attached together, a physical line is created down the middle. Many of the paintings I have done since I came to Notre Dame 30 years ago have had this diptych format. The idea of this broken format occurred to me because I enjoyed the break-up of the panels of Japanese screens. It tends to undermine the illusion of reality. The break down the middle gives the canvas, even before I begin to paint, a symmetry, an arrangement of two equal parts. On top of this I could paint something asymmetrical, something with its weight distributed unequally that would make a strong contrast or tension with the symmetrical structure.

On the right you see a blown up image of a black & white newspaper photo from the NY Times, January 1995. The caption reads, "Many of the people made homeless by the earthquake last week in Kobe, Japan have taken shelter in makeshift campsites. At one camp, a family ate dinner last night. Hundreds of shelters have sprung up, many at whatever public buildings are still standing." This, obviously, is the source of the painting. My subject matter is identical with the photograph. Even the composition of shapes in my painting is derived from it. My drawing from the photograph has changed its character somewhat. But the painting is clearly a painting, the brush strokes are not hidden, and it is clear how it was made. The process reveals the temperament of the painter-it's filled with my habitual hand, my speed of working, my taste for textural contrast. The color, of course, is a total invention.

My attention was particularly drawn to this catastrophic earthquake because eight years before my wife and I had spent a year in the Kobe area, and we knew well several families who lost their homes and suffered physical and emotional trauma because of the quake. But this kind of news photograph, pictures of "outrageous fortune," has interested me more and more in the last 20 years. Maybe I'm attracted to it because tragedy tends to bring us together; it calls for sympathy. At any rate, I often select photographs that show people drawn into community as they are facing hardship. I like to juxtapose the coldness of a documentation to the hotness of the human experience. It's fashionable for artists today to "appropriate" material from past art and from popular culture. In using photographs from the daily news, I'm using material from my everyday experience just as much as painting the cup of coffee on my kitchen table.

Now I would like to describe this painting in a way that emphasizes techniques that have implications for the meaning, the interpretation I've built into the work. This painting has an unusually large range of color intensities: some colors are very bright, some are dull, and some have almost no hue at all. I have done this for a liveliness, to create visual excitement. But the broad range of intensity also helps create space: dull color tends to recede into the picture plane, bright colors advance. Bright color is also used to emphasize certain areas. The most salient, immediate feature of this painting is the diagonal produced by the relationship of the bright colors of the coats of the two women who are serving, one above and the left of the other. Diagonals in paintings are what we call "dynamic". That is, a diagonal looks unstable, it has the potential of falling. It gives the feeling of movement and hence life. This major diagonal, the pink and teal shapes, dominates the painting.

Behind this diagonal, as it were, is a subtle grid of vertical and horizontal relationships. Horizontals and verticals as architectural elements are strong and secure. Unlike diagonals they give a sense of stability, maybe permanence or even security. The balancing of horizontals and verticals against diagonals is a little like using sugar in salad dressing to counteract vinegar. The opposition of the two tastes, the two feelings, produce a rich ambiguity, a mellowness, if you like. However, it's important, I think, that one taste slightly dominates-as the diagonal does here. Of course, this painting has many other minor diagonals both supporting the one I mentioned and opposing it, creating small tensions.

I have included in the broken chaos, the debris is this painting, small bits of traditional Japanese textile patterns. I wanted to suggest that there is cultural destruction here. The inclusion of two carrion crows, difficult to see, I know, supports the same idea.

Most of the shapes in this painting are organic; they are complex with curvilinear edges, a quality with which we tend to identify more than with geometric shapes, probably because our bodies are organic. They are not strongly modeled leaving them more two dimensional than three dimensional. These flat overlapping shapes on top of the dark, low intensity background, suggests a shallow space like a proscenium stage or like a bas relief. This space, with its slight appearance of a collage, is a traditional short-hand in painting for a theatrical event. Goya's painting, "The Third of May," is a good example of this kind of space.

Hopefully this painting will suggest to the viewer that in spite of the fact that catastrophe happens, the spirit and quality of human community perseveres. This may not be your popular post modern sentiment, but it is a value of this painter-who is also a teacher.

Thank you.

