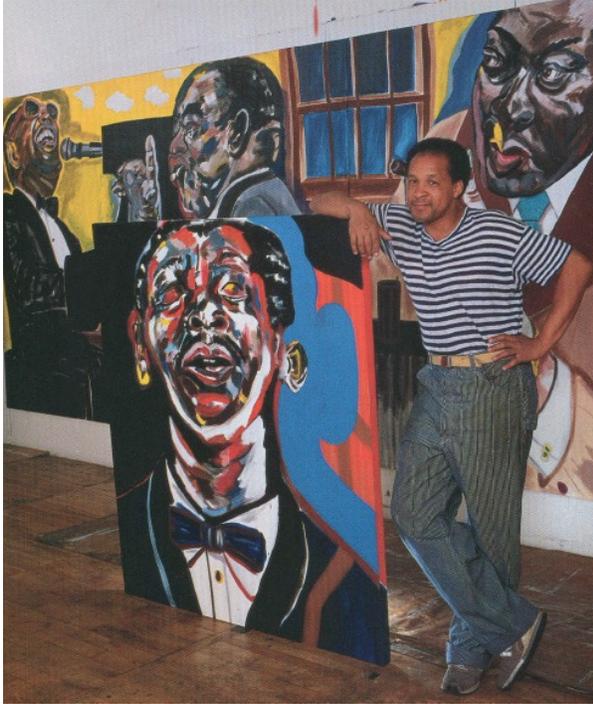


## LESSON 1

# Creativity in Art



*Fred Brown in his studio. Work Shown: The Piano Players from his Blues Series*

Art seems to come from a human urge or impulse to create. This human urge is a trait that animals do not have. There are five human traits that make people able to create art.

### THE HUMAN MIND

Scientists tell us that the human brain has two sides that work together. The left half of the brain helps organize our speech and coordinate our muscles. The right half of the brain helps organize what we see, feel, and remember. Human creativity comes partly from the brain's power to integrate, or put together, our thoughts, feelings, information, and actions. This means that all people are creative to some degree.

### AESTHETIC PERCEPTION

Aesthetic perception is what happens when you put together your sensations - what you see, hear, taste, smell, or touch - with what you know and feel. Aesthetic is a Greek word for sensation based on feeling and thinking. The opposite word is anesthetic, which means that you can't unify, or organize, your thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Your aesthetic perceptions begin to develop as soon as you are born. You begin to see, taste, touch, hear and smell things. You get thoughts and feelings about your sensations.

Aesthetic perceptions are what make your imagination work and help you appreciate art. All people can use aesthetic perception for creating and appreciating art.

### IMAGINATION

Imagination means being able to picture or visualize something with your mind. It is one way you remember things. Your mind can also imagine things that you invent or make up.

Imagination starts the creative process in art. Your imagination lets you see one thing as a symbol for something else. For example, you can make scribbles or doodles on a

paper. Then you can start imagining the lines as something else - faces, clouds, brooding land-scapes. Imagination is the trait that helps you understand and create symbols.

### **SYMBOLIC THINKING**

Symbolic thinking is the ability to understand that one thing (like the word "dog") is related to something else (like a real dog.) When you learn to read, write, speak, and listen, you are using a system of symbols based on words.

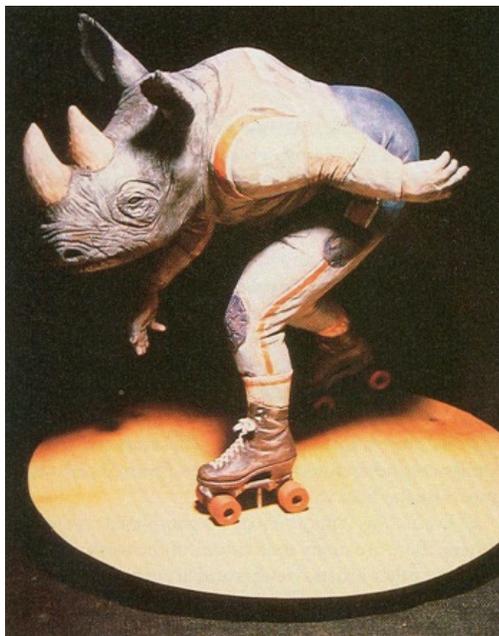
Visual art is also based on a symbol system that uses images. You communicate through lines, shapes, and other visual elements- things you can see. Visual elements can be put together using principles of design, which are guides that help visual elements work together as symbols. When that happens, the visual symbols become a form of communication. They bring out certain responses in the people who see the artwork.

### **INVENTIVE USE OF MATERIALS**

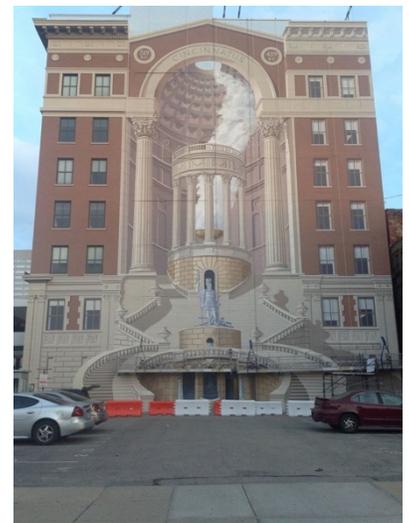
Experts think that art also comes from an urge people have for invention. People in all cultures have invented ways to shape materials into art. Folk arts and crafts are based on traditional designs and ways of using materials. Many self-taught artists - people who have no formal training in art - create art without following rules.

### **CRITICAL THINKING**

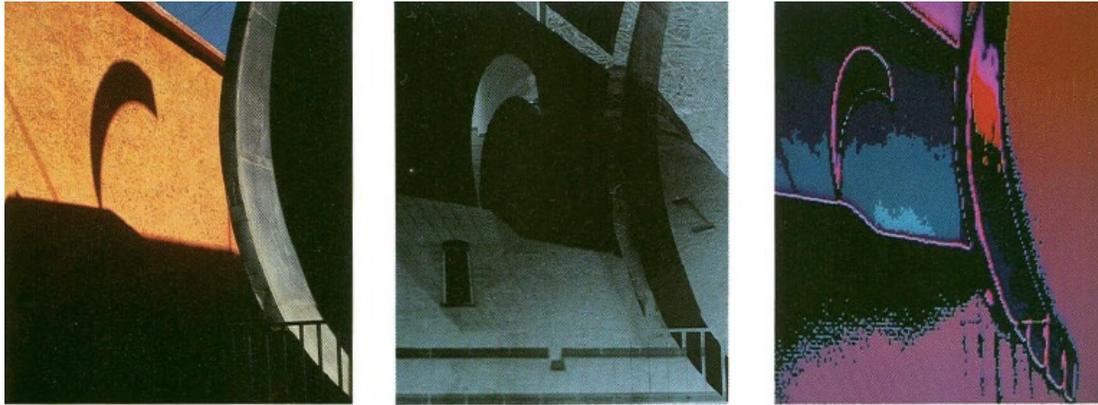
Imagine a world in which people did not have the five traits listed here. They would be uncreative. They would be unable to perceive their world aesthetically. They would be unimaginative and uninventive. They would be unable to use symbols to communicate. Describe what would happen to our world if these traits of people were not valued or developed.



*Richard Haas Restoration (1983)*



*Steve Geddes, Roller Rhino, 1984. Carved wood, 30" (76 cm) high. Courtesy of the artist.*



*Julius Vitale, The Defeat Garden Series. Julius Vitale uses photographs as inspiration to create a variety of artworks. He adapts the colors and shapes of realistic photographs into other media. While experimenting with different materials, unexpected mistakes often occur. Vitale uses these mistakes to plan and develop new artworks. Left to right: Photograph, oil painting and video image.*

## **FEATURES OF THE ARTISTIC PROCESS**

How do artists start to create their artworks? Researchers have learned that artists approach their work in very different ways. Some artists work quickly and seem to have no definite plan. They are sometimes called intuitive artists. Intuitive means that they create art but cannot explain how or why they do it. Some artists plan their work first and follow their plans without making many changes. Most artists seem to combine these two ways of working. They make intuitive choices, but they also have a general plan or idea.

Researchers have also found similarities in the way all artists work. They say there are the four main steps in the artistic process:

1. Developing ideas. Artists get ideas for their work in many ways. They may observe the natural or constructed environment. They may use their imagination, dreams, or fantasies as inspiration. Some have ideas and feelings they want to express. Others have practical problems to solve.
2. Exploring and refining ideas. This part of the process often involves making sketches or creating models for an artwork. Sometimes ideas are refined by experimenting with materials and processes.
3. Using art materials and techniques effectively. At some point in the artistic process, the artist shapes materials into a form that others will see as artwork. Designers and architects create their finished plans and supervise the final work.
4. Evaluating. After the work is completed and seen by others, there are many evaluations of the work. These are made by other artists, viewers, and art experts such as critics and historians.

## **SKETCHBOOK ASSIGNMENT 1-1**

Watch the video [Why Man Creates](#). In your sketchbook write a brief paragraph explaining what it is that prompts people to create.

## ART HISTORY AND YOU

To understand an artwork completely, you need to do more than just look at it. You need to look beyond it. You need to know when and where the work was done. You need to know something about the artist who created it. Searching of this sort is the job of people in the field of art history. Art history is the study of art from past to present.

When they study art, art historians often use the same four steps art critics use: they describe, analyze, interpret, and judge. Unlike art critics, however, art historians do not use these steps to learn from art. They use them to learn about art.



*Figure 1* What makes this work more than just a realistic picture of two people in a room? How do these people behave toward each other? How do their actions make you feel?

Edward Hopper. Room in New York. 1932. Oil on canvas. 71.1 x 91.4 cm (28 x 36"). Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska. F. M. Hall Collection.

### Describing an Artwork

In describing an artwork, art historians answer the questions "Who?" "Where?" and "When?" In other words, "Who painted the work, and when and where was it painted?" Look at the painting in *Figure 1*. Acting as an art historian, you can answer the first two of these questions by reading the credit line. The "who" is, again, Edward Hopper. The "when" is 1932. A visit to your school or local library will give you more information about the artist. There you will find that Hopper was an American painter who lived from 1882 to 1967.

### Analyzing an Artwork

In analyzing an artwork, the historian focuses on questions of style. Style is an artist's personal way of using the elements and principles of art and expressing feelings and ideas in art. Two typical questions the historian asks when analyzing a work are the following:

- What style did the artist use?
- Did the artist use the same style in other works?

## **Interpreting an Artwork**

In interpreting an artwork, the historian tries to determine how time and place may have affected the artist's style. Usually, this requires some research on the art historian's part. A trip to the library would reveal that:

- The painting in *Figure 1* was completed during a period called the Great Depression.
- The Depression was a time during the 1930s when many people were out of work and money was scarce.
- To many people living through the Depression, the future looked hopeless.

In this work, Hopper captures the loneliness many people felt during that bleak time. The painting shows two people in a room. Notice that they do not face one another. Each, in fact, seems to be ignoring the other. A large door seems further to separate them. The people share the room but little else. Each is neglected and alone.

## **Judging an Artwork**

In judging an artwork, the historian notes its place in all art history. The historian decides whether the work and its artist make an important contribution to art. One way in which an artist can contribute is by introducing new materials or perfecting a style. Hopper is noted for developing a style that captured the mood of the times more effectively than most artists of that period.

## **SKETCHBOOK ASSIGNMENT 1-2**

Watch the video [The Evolution of Art History](#). In your sketchbook check your understanding by answering the following questions after watching the video:

1. What is art history?
2. Explain describing, analyzing, interpreting, and judging as the terms are used by art historians.
3. Define style.