
empty canvas : wondering mind

an artisan's workbook

compiled and written by miriam louisa simons

for all the extraordinary students
I have been privileged to work with and befriend

you asked for it: here it is

may it nurture your own creative questions
as they form the ground beneath your feet



Blind Men on a Log bridge
By Hakuin Ekaku
(The Gitter Collection)

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The riskiness of art, the reason why it affects us,
is not the riskiness of its subject matter,
it is the risk of creating a new way of seeing, a new way of thinking.

Jeanette Winterson

OUTSIDE THE SQUARE

**The riskiness of art, the reason why it affects us,
is not the riskiness of its subject matter,
it is the risk of creating a new way of seeing, a new way of thinking.**

Jeanette Winterson (1)

It is widely accepted that the course of Western art was turned on its head (sometimes literally) by Pablo Picasso. "Observation is the most vital part of my life, but not any sort of observation," he claimed. Yet few armchair art-lovers seem to fully understand what "sort of observation" Picasso was able to employ, and why.

It is clear that he had achieved mastery in the traditional modes of observation – his drawings of tiny sparrows done before he was six years old are evidence of his ability to see the *what-is* of a natural subject. But he was a curiosity-driven human, and for him the *what-is* was merely "what appears to be if I look *in this way*." The energy of his wondering mind was immense, and this is the kind of energy needed for *vital* seeing.

Vital is a word that implies life-sustenance. And perhaps we could go so far as to say that the kind of seeing we are exploring in this series of e-books involves perceiving the actuality of the life-essence of our subject, of our vision, and of the work unfolding beneath our hands. For Picasso, vital seeing meant being able to observe "the utterly familiar from a new vantage point." (2) And his vantage points were unlimited. They dispensed with conventional notions of perspective – thereby reinforcing the freedom of the artist to consider the surface of the work as an entity-in-itself, rather than the illusion of a recognizable scene of any kind. They freed him to create an entirely new galaxy in the universe of art.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, *perspective* refers to the *Art of delineating solid objects on a plane surface so as to give [the] same impression of relative positions, magnitudes, etc., as the actual objects do when viewed from [a] particular point*. But what if the maker is unconcerned about reproducing the "same impression"? And even more interestingly, what if the artist *does not see* the scene in the conventional way: what if his or her experience of the view is experienced inwardly in a way that defies the use of conventions altogether?

In **believing is seeing** we saw how people from different cultures and contexts see in vastly different ways. Consider this remarkable report from Lawrence Blair (3):

When Magellan's expedition first landed at Tierra del Fuego, the Fuegians, who for centuries had been isolated with their canoe culture, were unable to see the ships which anchored in the bay. They were so far beyond their experience that, despite their bulk, the horizon continued unbroken: the ships were invisible. This was learned on later expeditions to the area when the Fuegians described how, according to one account, the shaman had first brought to the villagers' attention that the strangers had arrived in something, something which, although preposterous beyond belief, could actually be seen if one looked very carefully.

We ask how could they not see the ships – they were so obvious, so 'real'
– yet others would ask how we cannot see things just as obviously real.

Many people, myself included, can report experiences of non-ordinary perception that have left their assessment of the 'real' world changed forever into a fragile fabrication poised to dissolve, disperse, disassemble. One's 'perspective' becomes understood to be a *tool* of perception rather than a description of that being perceived. A chosen perspective is seen as merely another kind of scaffold or structure upon which the optic input of the eyes can be ordered.

For most people, Renaissance perspective is the *only* way of viewing the world, the only possible way to see 'reality' as it 'really' is, but we have already discovered the fallacy of that view. The question that pops up at this point in wondering mind is this: *Does reality create our perspective, or does our perspective create our reality?* A famous Zen story puts it like this:

Two monks were arguing about a flag blowing in the wind.
One said: "The flag is moving."
The other said: "The wind is moving."

Hui-neng (Daikan) happened to be passing by.
He said: "Not the wind, not the flag;
mind is moving." (4)

Hui-neng's answer is interestingly aligned with the research presented by scientific writers like Gregory and Hoffman whom we met back in **believing is seeing**. It illustrates the subtle way that perception creates versions of 'reality' for us to experience. And that is what makes our diverse human experience such a rich source of inspiration for creative expression.

The visual records of people from diverse cultures – their myth-maps, their totems, their drawn and painted story-telling – reveal wondrously different ways of looking at the world of experience and of objects. And they often do so without recourse to Renaissance perspective.

An excellent example is *ukiyo-e* – the art of the Japanese woodblock print. These humble yet exquisite prints depicted the activities of the "floating world," the world of the entertainment district of old Edo. They employ no conventions of Western perspective, and yet, along with the invention of the camera, they had arguably the most far-reaching influence on the development of twentieth century art. Then there is Aboriginal art with its x-ray views, its planar renditions of the landscape, and its myth-maps of time and place – the Dreaming. There is no shortage of other fascinating material – including words and images recorded by people experiencing drug-induced alterations of consciousness. Read, for example, Huxley's description of drapery folds, in *The Doors of Perception*. (5)

space, time, place & persona: unearthing new koans and a personal artscape

In **outside the square** we will explore a few of the myriad choices of points of viewing that are available to us. We will see if there are other ways to perceive **space**, and **time**, and **place**. We will experiment with what it might be like to wear a different **persona**, and how that might change our view of the world. As we do this, we will become aware of our world opening up in three ways:

- We cannot help enlarge our awareness of, and sensitivity towards, the rich variety of ways people see/construct their world and thereby co-create it. This will generate a host of juicy questions and maybe a new *koan* or two.
- Our expanded understanding of different perspectives will provide rich material for our composition and design repertoire – something we haven't explored deeply as yet. And this too means more enticing questions for wondering mind, and for hands that *make*.
- Very important. We may uncover a perspective that resonates with our own inner *artscapes*. We might discover our *own* visual perspective and language, and we might be surprised to find that it is not at all related to the 'normal' way of seeing.

It was in Japan that I found the personal visual perspective and language that I could not find in my homeland. In Japan I found my aesthetic home. I met and worked with artisans whose work was so intricately interwoven with their *way of being and living* that to separate the two was, for them, impossible, indeed incomprehensible. I met artisans for whom, like myself, the traces of artistic processes were themselves the content of their work.

The native Japanese aesthetic tradition is of appreciation of surface, of texture, of tonality and material – and how they are played upon by light. Exploring that tradition first hand I recovered an aesthetic language buried deep within me, a language that relies upon texture, subtlety of tone, simplicity of form and a certain restraint or poverty (*wabi*), for its effect. Here, at last, was my own *artscape*. My *heartscape*. It was a monumental discovery, and it changed my life as an artisan forever.

impeccable attention: the way of the artisan

There was another quality demonstrated by the artisans I met and with whom I worked that impressed me deeply: everything was done with the utmost care. It seemed impossible for the Japanese artisan to do a sloppy job – even the simplest task was performed with 'presence', with full attention.

Sometimes I had the feeling, watching a master at work, that he or she inhabited a different time-frame. As though they possessed an *expanded* inner time in which they performed their actions with meticulous care. The works thus made carry a quality of timelessness, which manifests as excellence, and which impacts the viewer prior to recognition of the material properties. Even the most humble object is rendered powerful by this attitude of the maker.

Bruce Chatwin, in his *Anatomy of Restlessness*, describes a prized possession from Japan:

...a round box, which surely represents the rising sun,
dates from the thirteenth or fourteenth century,
and has belonged to a succession of famous tea masters.

The story goes that the monks who used to make this lacquer,
would paint it in a boat moored out on a lake,
for fear the dust would spoil the final coat.

That is what I mean by impeccable artisanship. Whether we're making potato prints or stitching *shibori*, mixing up colors or making a book, this is the quality of attention we need if we wish to engage with the unknowable movement of the creative.

space

what if we could 'see' space differently?

We've made the acquaintance of 'positive' and 'negative' spatial conventions, and considered the concept of space being *something* rather than *nothing*. When we created a scaffold upon which to explore *form*, we experimented with the volumes of spaces contained within the room and the buildings around us. We know, then, the way that we can 'feel' into space. So we have a little experience from which to begin our wonderings.

When we put a mark of any kind down on a surface, we necessarily imply space. The space allows us to define the identity of the mark – we understand it by the relationships it forms with the spaces around it. A mark without any enveloping space is very difficult for the brain to perceive and identify, it simply has no meaning. Space is the *goes-with* of object, as Alan Watts would have said.

But according to our physicists, space is a great deal more than a convention enabling us to perceive objects. It is home to an awesome network of invisible information in the form of currents, rays, and waves, which find their visible or audible manifestation on our TV screens, our computer screens, our radios, our light globes. And what of all those microscopically tiny organisms that inhabit the air we breathe? And the quantum porridge of even smaller sub-atomic material? Space is very alive indeed, and very crowded. Our experience of it can be as varied as our imaginations will allow. To begin with, we will play with what is perhaps the most familiar variation on conventional perspective, the notion of 'flat' space.

Earlier I made reference to the Japanese wood-block prints called *ukiyo-e*. If you can find some examples of these prints it will be helpful, but if not, most examples of *naïve* art demonstrate this way of looking at the world. (Interestingly, the Oxford Concise Dictionary defines *naïve* art as *Artless, unaffected; amusingly simple*. So it's easy to see why a serious artisan might be subtly conditioned to have prejudices against working this way ...)

- **flattened space**

From the copiously full pages of your X-file, select a poem, a story, a list, written about an object you have studied, or notes about an idea you wish to develop. It should be something you are itching to work with, to make 'manifest'.

Identify all the pictorial objects – they might be trees, animals, people, anything. Hunt through magazines and cut out pictures that go with your objects, which represent them. Don't worry about sizes or colors too much.

On a sheet of paper, paint in the background areas of color – no details, just the colors that represent the mood and the 'stage scenery.'

Now play with your cut outs, placing them in their positions on the stage.

You can overlap objects to give a sense of "in front" or "behind," but otherwise ignore size relativity.

When all your cut-outs have found their place, glue them down.

How did you feel about the limitations involved in working this way? Were you frustrated that your cut-outs were too large, or too small, to represent the 'correct' relationships? Did you want to hunt for other pictures? Were you frustrated by the lack of depth in your picture? Did you find that colors came forward when you wanted them to recede? What does all this say about your programmed perception? It might be interesting to look at the work of Van Gogh and Matisse now, and see if you can identify ways Japanese wood-block artisans made a noticeable influence on their work.

If you enjoyed working 'flat,' try painting an interior scene in that way. Go through the same design play as when you used cut-out objects – but make them yourself in paint this time.

Use your knowledge of how color creates a sense of space: recall the way that warm hues appear to advance on the picture plane, while cool hues recede.

Include some writing in your composition, perhaps a fragment of a poem.

In **wildsight – the innocent eye** we looked closely at 'negative' space and filled it in with little squiggles. I mentioned that those squiggles reminded me of the photos taken of particles doing their dance in a bubble chamber. Let's take that idea for a run ...

- **deep space** (adapted from 6)

Take a few minutes now to make your own list of all the inhabitants of 'empty' space. Try to keep it scientific at the moment – there will be opportunities aplenty to play elsewhere with any other inhabitants of space you might believe exist.

Find at least 20 things to put on your list, all invisible to your ordinary vision.

Take a drawing pad and some sheets of paper out for a wonder-wander.

Try to find a place where there are colonnades or deep entranceways – a place where there is a mysterious sense of depth going back into almost blackness. Ancient churches with their archways are excellent. The scene can be indoors or out. Take a few snapshots for later reference.

Now settle down to draw – not the building, not the scenery, but the space. Do it the way you did in that earlier experiment, feeling back into the space and gradually moving out.

Fill the space with squiggles, lines, dots – any tiny marks that represent each of the 'inhabitants' of space you listed.

Where the space is deepest, your density of marks will be very intense, almost pitch black. As the space becomes less deep, closer to where you are working, your lines will be correspondingly less dense.

This might sound as though the whole spatial scene will be dead black, but it will not be so if you are really feeling into the depths of the spaces between yourself and the architecture.

Were you surprised at the drawing you made? Did it portray a sense of the dimensions of the scene – without your conscious intention to do that? Did you feel the space as something alive and full of interesting occupants?

That drawing task was concerned with the concave aspect of space. This one explores the convex, and it comes from Natalie d'Arbellof. (7)

- **lining-up space** (7)

Find a sheet of foam rubber about 1cm thick and 2 meters square. Paint the entire surface with horizontal stripes no more than 1cm wide. Leave about 1cm space between the stripes.

Crumple the sheet to form folds and troughs. This creates a wonderfully interesting surface that will remind you of all sorts of things – parts of the body, landscapes, buildings.

Now begin to draw from that surface, simply following the painted lines.

Up hill and down dale, no gaps, no sharp corners, just a sensuous undulating line-watching walk for your pencil.

Use your finder to isolate many small areas to study – do at least 10.

Now see whether you can use an extension of this cunning idea to draw convex objects in the landscape.

Find a suitable scene – perhaps the façade of a local cathedral has interesting carved reliefs. Isolate a detail with your finder and imagine that it is covered with lines the way your foam was.

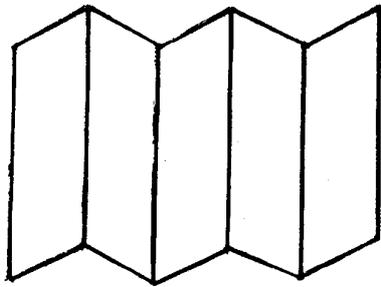
Take your pencil on a horizontal walk along those lines, crossing the surface of the scene where it meets space.

Then experiment with making your lines move in different directions over the interface between space and object – sensing, perhaps, the invisible flow of the space around the objects that are pushing themselves into it.

d'Arbellof suggests that "space can be invented, adapted to fit an idea." (7) Here we move from the realm of sensory perception into that of the imagination – the "What if ...?"

What if you folded space up, placed images on the folded surfaces, and then unfolded it again?

- **folded space**



Select one of your favorite paintings or drawings.

Take a sheet of drawing paper and fold it vertically to form accordion folds 10 – 15cm wide.

Divide your own painting into similar vertical areas – you need not fold it.

On your sheet of paper, draw lines at the top and bottom of each vertical face as shown, to establish the perspective line.

Open the paper out. The task now is to translate the images contained in your painting onto the 'folded space' of the drawing sheet. This is done by transposing the horizontal lines in your painting onto the angled ones (that is, making them parallel) on each fold of the accordion, whilst keeping the verticality of the images unchanged.

As you do this, you will see how the images appear to advance and recede in a very odd manner. You have created folded space.

The next task is to employ that strange folded way of depicting space with a fresh composition. Start with the accordion, then experiment with folding the paper in different widths and directions.

Can you find out about any artists whose work might have 'unfolded' from experiments in 'folding space' in this manner?

Claude Monet did many paintings of reflected space, some of which we call the "Water Lily" series. He would sit in his little floating studio and look at the reflections in the water of the foliage on the bank of his pond. Did he paint the reflections of the foliage, the sky, the water lilies? Or was he simply putting down the reflections of an unlabelled and unidentified area of gorgeous space?

We can only muse about the inner workings of an artist, and stand lightly upon their shoulders whilst we make our own experiments. Reflections are a wonderful theme for spatial exploration – "a mirror image, endlessly repeated, seems to be a symbol of the reality/illusion enigma of space." (7)

- **reflected space**

Take your finder, your camera, some paper, and find a place where both buildings and natural objects are reflected. Those reflections might be found in smooth water, or in the mirror-glass of other buildings, or in the chrome on an automobile. Spend some time looking for views that interest you, views that consist only of the reflections. Take snap shots for later studio work on your drawings.

Use your favorite mark-maker to capture the reflected space on your paper. Use all the ways we have experimented with to build up your drawing, and don't be concerned if there isn't one vaguely recognizable object on your paper.

When you return to the studio, use your snap shots and your drawings as the starting point for a painting of reflected space. Let your selection of color be intuitive and spontaneous rather than imitative, enjoy the way that your colors will create further ambiguities in the way the space 'performs'.

Are you beginning to get a 'nose' for the unusual perspective? Keep notes of your discoveries in your X-file, along with your research photos. This material will be a rich resource for later work.

Gaining a wider perspective is like opening a window into a stuffy room –
the whole atmosphere changes and the fresh breeze carries
alternatives to our habitual ways of reacting.
Tarthang Tulku, quoted in (8)

In **creative constraints** we explored aspects of shape via a skeleton limited to geometry. Some of the different geometries that have been used by artists throughout time were mentioned then, and now we can explore one of them further.

The pathway of the 'unfolding' of geometrical systems as artistically employed was created, essentially, by the addition of accumulative view-points opening out onto the scene. Byzantine art does without any specific point of perspective, for, like naïve art, it is unconcerned with portraying 'realistically,' and so has no real use for perspective. In the Renaissance, the laws of composing on the picture plane using one point of perspective were discovered and put to use. Then it was discovered that if two horizontal 'vanishing points' were used the results would be even more realistic – a highly desirable result at that time. Much later a third 'vanishing point' – a vertical one – was added and the artist was liberated to create perspectives that do not exist in our everyday 'reality'.

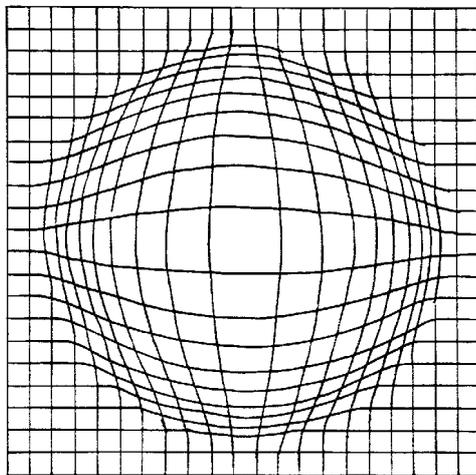
Still later, 'hyperbolic' geometry manifested an astonishing perspective wherein infinite vanishing points occur at the rim of a circle. (9) The artist Escher used this geometry in his works to great effect. He is also famous for his use of another geometrically inspired format – topology. As Gerstner says, "Topology investigates the properties of a form that remain unaltered when the form changes."

It is fertile ground for a wondering mind; we will explore one of its possibilities here and another later in this e-book. This experiment creates an astonishing sense of ambiguity in space – part of the picture plane bulges forward, while the rest appears 'normal.'

- **ambiguous space**

You will need a large sheet of drawing paper, a sheet of tracing paper the same size, and, if possible, a flexi-curve.

Select a drawing or a photograph that features something of interest in its central area. An urban landscape would be effective.



On the drawing paper, draw a grid similar to that illustrated at left.

It will consist of distorted 'square' areas. Don't worry too much about mathematical precision – in fact you could draw the grid by hand if necessary.

On the tracing paper, draw a regular grid. The measurements will correspond to those at the borders of your 'warped' grid, but be composed of straight lines, not curved.

Overlay your drawing or photograph with the tracing paper grid, secure it with tape so that it stays firmly in place.

To create your 'ambiguous space' drawing, transpose the contents of each little square that shows through the tracing paper onto the corresponding 'warped' square on your drawing sheet. You will need to adjust the sizes and shapes accordingly.

The French artist Vasarely is also well known for his experiments with topological formats. Instead of using them to create ambiguous landscapes like Escher, he chooses to retain the structure of the grid and fills the 'squares' with tonal gradations of color. Can you find other artists who have used ambiguous spatial effects?

Perhaps no other phenomena we are able to perceive can more easily create a sense of space than color. It does it simply by being present with its qualities of tone, shade and tint, its intensity or its subtlety. I agree with d'Arbellof when she says that whilst activities that explore color mixing and harmonics are valuable in themselves, the only way that we can really become sensitive to color, the mysteries of its relationships, and its expressive potential is to use it. But, we might protest, we do use it; we have done experiments with color as a skeleton in the last chapter. Yes indeed, but we have not used it from this perspective – from enveloping ourselves in it, drowning in it. Jump in the deep end with color as you explore the possibilities within this activity. It's important to put aside all ideas of making a 'picture' so that your secret senses can simply play with the colors.

- **colored space (7)**

Try surrounding yourself with large sheets of hardboard painted with household paints in various color relationships; just experiment with the 'feel' of different colors, on their own or adjacent to each other, uniformly or brokenly applied.

If this is difficult, try using large lengths of colored fabric, or wallpaper.

Make detailed notes in your X-file, including swatches of colors.

Let us say that you have painted three almost wall-sized surfaces red and placed them at right angles to each other. As you stand within this colored 'room', it occurs to you that you would like a window, or something to interrupt the monotony of the redness. So you paint a white rectangle on one of the red surfaces. Then you notice that it is not the right kind of white – it doesn't suggest distance – perhaps you make it a certain shade of grey, or change it altogether.

Continuing more or less in this fashion, you realize that color becomes a tangible experience in which you are participating – perhaps more fully than when you are working on a small scale and there is a separation between you and what is happening on the paper or canvas.

time

it's all relative ...

Einstein's relativity theory is well impacted in our Western world view today, and there is scarcely a youngster to be found who does not know that space is really curved, and that time as we know it is a mere illusion. But, as Zohar points out, it is very seldom that we ordinary folk experience our daily reality differently as a result of this knowledge. (10)

We still experience something linear and continuous that proceeds at a rate which is proportional to our sensations of pleasure or pain. When we are bored, hurting, or impatient, time drags. When we are having a great time and the world is interesting, it flies by too fast. And on very rare occasions, it seems to stop altogether – we 'surface' to find that the hands of the clock have miraculously stood still whilst we traversed the universe. Or – they have raced around the hours when we thought we had only 'spent' a few minutes.

Clearly, there is a very intriguing relationship between consciousness and time, and this has been pondered for centuries. Perhaps our scientists will eventually clarify this relationship with their ever-deepening expeditions into the interior of the human brain.

It is fascinating and fruitful to wonder about altered experiences of time in the arena of the arts, and hard to avoid being curious about it. For without even setting out to do so, the artisan experiences all sorts of ambiguities in relation to time as he or she works. There is the time slow, when preparations are being made, conceptual and technical possibilities being explored, and assessments being considered. Then there is time fast, when the process itself seems to take over and one's intuition presents the perfect resolution to a problem – when the brain is 'driving', so to speak. It is within that time fast capsule that the timeless state sometimes occurs and all separation from the act, the work, and the world dissolves.

This 'experience' is so familiar to artists of any media, whether writing, dance, music, poetry or painting, that to consider it the property of the enlightened few is clearly out of order. It is a capacity of consciousness, and consciousness is something we all share.

We can explore for ourselves the experience of time slow and time fast. Once again, d'Arbellof has some good ideas.

- **time slow**

The task is to stretch out the seeing-thinking-drawing process, break it down into a sequence of impressions.

Select a very simple subject such as three pieces of the same fruit.

First you'll notice that what you have already learned from the activities in the previous e-books will surface in your thoughts – you'll be seeing the lines, the shapes, the forms, and the lights and shadows that you explored on those recently erected scaffolds. So this is a good point to begin from – look slowly and closely at the lines and put them down on paper with great deliberation and care. Look from every angle and from above. Remember, you are not drawing a picture of fruit. You are experiencing time as being stretched out.

Continue to work like this, looking at the shapes, then the forms, and finally the lights and shadows. Follow the ideas that flow. You might want to work on a long scroll of paper rather than a series of sheets, to emphasize the flow of time.

As you work you might begin to be aware that we actually perceive our visual information in a series of 'stills', and that they only appear to be an unbroken whole because the brain works so fast.

Our brains work at lightning speed. But birds' brains out-speed us by many times over. Recently I heard a radio interview with a sociobiologist with a fascination for time who has spent a great deal of his time researching the way animals and birds 'spend' theirs. He explained the difference between our human experience of time and that of a bird, by suggesting we imagine that a blackbird is watching a movie at the cinema. Whereas the humans are experiencing the film as one seamless celluloid event, the blackbird is seeing a very drawn-out series of stills. (This explains how those birds on the highway manage to fly out of the way of our car's path at the very last minute – for them the car is approaching at a snail's pace.)

Cont ...

As you continue your experiments with **time slow** imagine yourself inhabiting a bird's brain. See if you notice any difference in the way those stretched perceptions are influencing your 'normal' way of looking. And notice too whether you could feel any physical sensations in your brain when it was looking in this way.

Make notes of your observations in your X-file, and compare them with your colleagues' notes if you are working in a group.

Make a list of animals, insects, and birds, and think about what kind of time their brains might experience. What about a sloth, a tortoise, a flea?

Think about other people you know who seem to inhabit a different time reality. I well remember the way my parents would shake their heads and complain that our relatives from the high-country sheep runs had "no idea of time." They would arrive at all hours of the day or night and were no respecters of the constraints of city time. Perhaps their clocks ran to a more natural rhythm?

And then consider different cultures – what kind of time do the Indians of the Amazon or the Aboriginal people of Australia know?

Next, instead of stretching time, try squeezing it. Set yourself time limits. Remember the way we explored edges in **wildsight – the innocent eye**? We first drew contours in time slow, then we set the timer and did gesture drawings from a magazine in just one minute. (Did you notice how long that minute became?)

In the following experiments, use the same subject as you did before, but don't give yourself time to think and analyze – or even recognize. "At first, the mind goes blank: you do not seem to understand what you are seeing if there is no time to analyze it. But then you find that you can rely to a large extent on sensation and memory – in fact, the presence of the subject becomes almost unnecessary." (7)

- **time fast**

Experiment with a variety of different drawing tools.

Explore the fruit in basically the same way – line, shape, form, and light/shadow – using your previous drawings as a jumping-off point.

Cont ...

Limit yourself to 30 seconds per drawing, and make at least a hundred of them.

Yes, 100.

Your drawings will be true 'gesture' drawings – records of the inner and outer dynamics of the fruit and the relationship of those dynamics to the surrounding space. You'll probably recognize their similarity to the gestalt drawings we explored earlier.

Branch out beyond your simple pieces of fruit and apply your time fast and time slow experiments to drawings of people, landscapes, and interiors. And also to subjects filed away in your memory. Use time as a tool.

Having experimented with ways of speeding-up and slowing-down time as we draw, let's now explore some artifacts that have time as an important element of their **structure**. Flip books and films consist of a series of 'still' pictures that we see in fluid sequence. Time-lines and the *phadas* of Rajasthan record a sequence of certain events and relate them to a wider context of events.

Most of us will remember making flip-books as children. Sometimes we called them movie books, because when one flips the pages fast, the sequence of 'still' pictures upon each page blends into what appears to be a seamless event.

- **make a flip-book** (8)

Make a simple book, or buy one that has blank pages and a flexible cover. The optimum size is a maximum of about 10cm square.

Think of a story you would like to tell in this 'flip' format – a little version of a movie of your own.

Decide how many 'stills' you need – you'll obviously be limited by the number of pages in your book.

Design the Title page, and then proceed to fill the pages with pictures. "Anything you put on the page is a picture." Be adventurous with your images – **resist the familiar!**

To 'run' your movie, hold the bound edge of the book in your left hand, and flip the pages fast. "The rapid succession of images will make a movie – a series of frames with continuity." (8)

The idea of making films is a favorite for many art teachers, but I particularly like this approach by Kent and Steward because of the emphasis on connecting and relating – vital elements, as we have seen, of the process of allowing the unexpected and uninvited to play. This activity can be done individually, but it also works well as a group task.

In this art form photographs, words, and music are taken out of their original context and put together in a new way for the first time. This could be a definition for the art process, as it moves beyond matching and labeling.

- **make a film** (8)

Gather the elements for a film: Find ten photos of people you are familiar with. Find pictures of flowers and relate them to each person's photograph.

(The job is to connect and relate, not only to match and label.)

Gather words from the following sources: poetry anthologies, poetry found or made from newspaper headlines, the surprising muse on the labels of canned goods and bread.

When you go to the library, walk down any aisle and write down the titles of the first ten books with red covers that you come to.

Relate the words to the pairs of photographs in a way that best describes your feelings about each of the pairs.

Add music. Music can be any sound you think relevant.

If you are a student, show a group exhibition of all the films made by your class.

Time-lines can be seen as a skeleton upon which a mass of data is presented within the context of unfolding time. Those we are most familiar with proceed in a linear fashion across paper or perhaps a wall, but some artists have seen the unfolding of time as a spiraling process, or depicted it as concentric circles. (Look again at *mandalas*, and at Dante's vision in *The Divine Comedy*.) Most modern books on history will include time-lines to assist readers to view the wider, global context of events being studied. Books on Art History often show time-lines that include the historical dates of major artists, the pathway of changing artistic styles, and the major events and discoveries occurring concurrently in science, politics and religion all over the world.

We can be a little less ambitious with our time-line, but it will be helpful if you can take a look at some examples as part of your preparation for the next activity. Again, I draw upon the inspiration of Corita Kent, who "used the term time-line for any project whose purpose was to show layers of relationships." (8)

- **make a time-line** (8)

Try making a family history as a time-line wall. You will need a very long, wide sheet of sturdy paper, strong enough to take glue, paint, be drawn on, and to hang without tearing. If you have to use smaller sheets, just work on one section of the line at a time and tape all the pieces together when you have finished.

Where were your ancestors born? Where did they live, work, have children? What work did they do?

Collect pictures; articles in the newspaper; birth, wedding, and death announcements; favorite sayings; favorite music, food, books, pets; current events; famous people ...

"Visual materials – facsimiles of handwriting, photos, paintings – [can] show how the people looked, how their houses and their tools looked. We see their words written in their own hand. A flavor, a pulse, a rhythm of life emerges. We relate the richness and complexity of their lives and times to our own. With a time-line, maker and viewer are both greatly enriched." (8) Life has been viewed from an alternative perspective.

If you enjoyed that project, why not form a group and make a time-line of the history of your school? Or, make a time-line of the story of your own life. Will it be linear, spiraling, or unfolding, blooming like a rose?

In Rajasthan the most important 'stage prop' for traditional storytellers is a large painting on cloth typically commemorating the deeds of a hero from the past. It's the vital visual backdrop that accompanies the storyteller, and it's called a *phadas*. I was spellbound by a performance I saw in India where a *phadas* was used by a group of school children who had adapted the traditional idea to their own purposes. They had been on a study trip to Rajasthan and were making a presentation to the rest of the school and the parents about their trip and what they had learned. They used the *phadas* to illustrate their own journey, rather than the life of a mythical hero.

The *phadas* was a long piece of canvas about 2m wide. It was rolled onto bamboo sticks at each end, and the surface was covered with scenes from their trip painted in the natural earth pigments of the desert. As they presented their story in poems, songs, and dances – dressed in gorgeous traditional costumes, the two students who held the huge scroll erect at the back of the packed earth 'stage' slowly unfurled the painted time-line. As the pictures accompanying the performance appeared a little dancer in traditional Rajasthani skirts skipped about pointing to the appropriate scene.

Traditionally the *phadas* is used by the storyteller and his family, with everyone playing a part. I was told that once a story has begun and the *phadas* has been unfurled, it is very inauspicious to discontinue the telling of, or the listening to, the tale. And that people believe that misfortune and disease can be avoided by listening to the Bhopa's tale.

- **present a *phadas* performance**

This is a good project for a small group.

Write a story that tells a tale from a very different perspective than your own. (Think about, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Watership Down*, and science fiction stories.)

How could you interpret your tale to include 'time fast' and 'time slow'?

Prepare a long sheet of paper as for your time-line, and divide it into the spaces in which you will paint your 'episodes'.

Plan how you want to move the story through time visually, so that when the story is told, or sung, the pictures follow the performance accurately.

Paint (or collage) the pictures onto the paper, and wind it onto two poles.

Think about your musical accompaniment. Remember – music can be any appropriate sounds.

Choreograph dances to go with the tale, and design costumes.

Arrange a performance and have fun!

Probably the images on the *phadas* served to remind the storyteller of the sequence of his story. What if we reversed the procedure and drew a picture from the images of a remembered story in our mind's eye?

Think of a story from a long time ago, so that your memory will be a little hazy, allowing your secret senses can fill in the gaps! It should be a tale from your personal experience.

- **time travel – distant** (adapted from 6)

It might be helpful to write down your story first so that you can think about the events in their context.

Start by doodling down the characters and the places where the story takes place.

Then take a really large sheet of cartridge paper (or four joined together). You will do your drawing on this one sheet.

Don't be concerned about mapping out the sequence of events realistically, just put down everything that happened and especially what the surroundings looked like.

Draw all the views of buildings you remember – inside and out, forgetting about perspective and proportion.

The easiest way to do this is to remember how children paint a story: *they tell it to themselves as they draw*.

- **time travel – recent** (adapted from 6)

This time think of a story that is very fresh in your memory. It might be as mundane as your trip to the supermarket yesterday.

Write it down if you want to, gathering up all the details in your mind's eye.

Make your drawing in the same way as before, ignoring classical perspective and proportion.

Why not play with the same theme and explore the future with your secret senses?

- **time travel – future ...**

As you see it ...

place

here, there, and everywhere ...

What if we change our position from the 'ordinary' when we view something? What if we were to look from several positions at once? What if we looked from overhead? What if we could look right through the surface and see the interior of something? What if we dissected or magnified our subject? What if we could see inside and outside simultaneously? All these altered perspectives involve our looking from a different place, and often from several places at once. We'll begin with what is perhaps the most well known altered perspective in art history. It is also the movement we largely associate with Picasso's revolutionary way of looking – cubism.

When Picasso and Braque unveiled cubism in Paris in 1908 even the most sympathetic supporters of avant garde art were left speechless. Cubism, it seemed, was the final insanity of the artistic revolution that had begun in the latter half of 19th century Europe with the (then) outrageous work of Manet and the Impressionists. In cubism, forms were dissected into geometric shapes and then put back together again without regard for their original identity or relationships.

There was a kind of beauty in this arbitrary assembling of flat patterns, but, like the Fuegians who failed to see the tall ships, most viewers unable to see it. Ninety years later it is all rather quaint and dated – we have moved so far into the world of the 'liberated' painting that perhaps we no longer fully appreciate the work of those who set us free. They did so by choosing to wonder about altered perspectives, and by experimenting with them.

The curious artisan who has arrived at this page by the route we have taken – a rather devious route that has been concerned less with philosophical ideas about art or the works of important historical makers of art, and more with the experiences of looking, seeing, and making – might well wonder why we are suddenly opening the window onto the subject of cubism. The answer is simple. To look at cubism is to come face-to-face with the automatic, conventional, conditioned processes of perception that are on auto-pilot in our brains. We see how all those actions of perception we explored in **believing is seeing** and **wildsight – the innocent eye**, the actions that isolate, match, sort, and interpret the information of our visual world from a mass of ambiguities, are thwarted.

We are entering a world for which we have no decoding tools, no schematic archive in which to find coherent 'matches', no maps to refer us back to the 'real' world. As Gombrich writes, "In cubism even coherent forms are made to play hide-and-seek in the elusive tangle of unresolved ambiguities." (11)

If the thought of experimenting with cubism is daunting, try this activity. It will let you in by the back door – a door with many different faces.

- **curious cubism** (adapted from 12)

On a table that won't be disturbed, and that you can easily walk around, set up a grouping of items that interest you.

Try to have a variety of things with different shapes and forms: circles, cubes, cylinders. Look for sensuous curves too – guitars were a favorite of Braque.

When you are satisfied with your selection and the way they are arranged, take a large sheet of drawing paper and attach it to a drawing board.

Find your first viewing point. Look for all the vertical 'lines' you can see in the grouping, and mark them on your paper. No shapes! Just a few vertical lines.

Move around the table to another viewing point and look for more vertical lines. Put them down on the same sheet, disregarding the other marks. Continue to move around your grouping in this way, recording vertical lines.

Then begin to look for any horizontal lines, and put them down. Move around the grouping as before.

Next, look for diagonals in one direction, then the other.

Then put down curves, moving around the table and stopping at least 4 or 5 times to look for them.

Your paper will be covered with a network of lines – some of them will connect up to others, some will interweave, some will stand alone.

Cont ...

The fun begins. Turn away from your table, and begin to play with the lines. Decide which ones you will keep, and which ones will be erased as you make connections and follow 'doodle mind.' Forget totally, for the moment, about the objects on your table.

The paper is now an independent thing-in-itself, waiting for the work of your wondering hands. Continue to work in this way until you feel satisfied with the marks that cover your paper.

Now return to your grouping with your abstracted drawing, and isolate some details that you could include, perhaps as fragments, in your drawing. For example, some words on a label, the carved bridge on a guitar, a shaft of reflected light.

Finally, leave your grouping again and play within the flat shapes you have drawn with the ladders of light we explored in the last chapter. This will create shapes that advance, recede – further ambiguities of space, place, and forms.

Add texture by using the technique of 'frottage' – putting the paper over a textured surface and rubbing with a soft pencil. Create contrasts within your composition by playing with light and shade, pattern and texture.

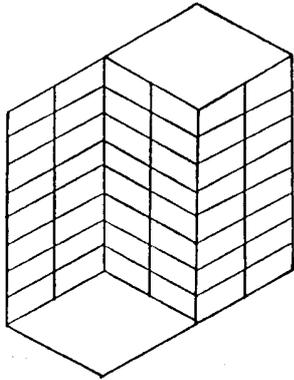
You've done it – your own cubist drawing.

Use this experiment as a starting-point for further play: add collaged scraps, textured paint, printed scraps, photographs, writing, stitches ...

There are many theories about why cubism appeared as and when it did on the time-line of artistic evolution. While a discussion of them is beyond the scope of this book, it is interesting to consider that the cubists were perhaps intentionally preoccupied with attempting "to stamp out ambiguity and to enforce one reading of the picture – that of a man-made construction, a colored canvas." (11) To do this they employed such an overuse of ambiguities that in the end they all cancelled each other out, instead of offering clues to the viewer.

When we looked at visual ambiguities in **believing is seeing**, we met the *Necker cubes*. Remember how they seemed to turn themselves inside out and upside down regardless of our intention to 'see' them a particular way? In the next activity we will meet another of these strange configurations called 'Thiery's figure'.

- **Thiery's figure**



Look at the figure and notice how difficult, if not impossible, it is to keep it fixed.

It presents conflicting clues to our perception.

What happens to your attention after some time of 'back and forth' movement?

Did you find that your attention was drawn – forced almost, back to the picture plane? That is exactly what occurs when we look at a cubist work. Gombrich believes that this figure "presents the quintessence of cubism". (11)

Let's explore this figure further. Earlier in this chapter we looked at different ways of seeing and depicting space. In the activity called *folded space* we did an experiment that you will recognize as a good lead-in to this one – but here we are adding further ambiguities, scrambling the clues even more.

On a large sheet of paper, draw 'Thiery's figure.' It will form a grid system for your composition.

Select a subject. Choose from these alternatives:

- transpose your cubist drawing onto the grid and make a painting
- work directly from your grouping of objects using markers or paints
- develop another work from your X-file
- transpose a photograph or picture that interests you, done by someone else
- work with colors and their tonal steps only, to create further ambiguities
- work with words and letters only, to create an enigmatic poster or statement.

As in your 'folded space' experiment, make the horizontals in your 'real' picture match the diagonals on the grid, whilst keeping the verticals constant.

Most of us have experienced seeing the world from the windows of an aircraft, and we have looked, probably with wonder, at the photographs of the surface of our planet taken by orbiting satellites. The Aboriginal people of Australia have developed the use of aerial perspective in their paintings – a remarkably creative achievement since it occurred well before flying machines had been invented. They use these aerial, planar perspectives to record their travels through the landscape, and particularly the Dreamtime landscape. This is an idea we can play with.

- **bird's eye views**

Write a story about a voyage you have taken – one that was significant for you in some way. It could be a pilgrimage, a trek, a sailing holiday, or an inner voyage. Include plenty of details about everything – the landscape, the colors, the animals, birds, reptiles, insects, the people, the buildings.

Invent symbols to represent the things and people in your story, as you did when making *pictogram* stories in **making fun of play**.

On a large sheet of paper, and pretending you are looking from a great height in a hot air balloon, map out your voyage across the terrain.

Lay down colors to form the 'ground' of your painting – you can always adjust them later if necessary.

Paint, draw, and/or collage your symbols in the appropriate places.

The Aboriginal artist uses another interesting device. We call it the 'x-ray' view, although Aboriginal artists employed this perspective thousands of years before the invention of x-rays. Interestingly, small children often use this view, and in their drawings of their pregnant mothers have no problem portraying the fetus within the womb.

- **x-ray views**

Experiment with x-ray views. Give your secret senses full permission to play the "What if ...?" game, and put your anatomical knowledge on hold.

Find a picture that portrays either a lot of animals or people in an interesting context.

Cont ...

Make an enlarged sketch (it doesn't need to be a perfect copy) of the picture concentrating on the outlines of the shapes.

Now imagine that you can see through the clothing, or fur etc, and through the skin, to the interior of the forms depicted. Draw what might be there.

How could you incorporate this kind of viewpoint into your own compositions?
Experiment.

The botanical or scientific illustrator uses dissected and magnified views to accurately record data, but they also provide fascinating altered perspectives for the inquisitive artisan.

- **dissected and magnified views** (adapted from 6)

Take a small pumpkin and cut it in half across its width. Study the interior that is revealed to view for the first time in the history of the world – this pumpkin, this day, in participation with these eyes and this brain.

Sit with this miracle for a while.

When you are ready, begin to make small studies of the pumpkin, using your finder to isolate views. Bring all the ways of looking and exploring that you now know about to your work, and make notes if you notice anything significant.

Select one of your studies showing a good deal of detail and texture.

Using a microscope in the science lab, magnify your drawing 100x. Make several drawings of what you see in the lens when you look at different parts of the original drawing.

Choose one of these drawings, and magnify it 100x. Again, do several drawings from different parts of the 'original'.

Repeat this process once more with a drawing selected from the last magnifications.

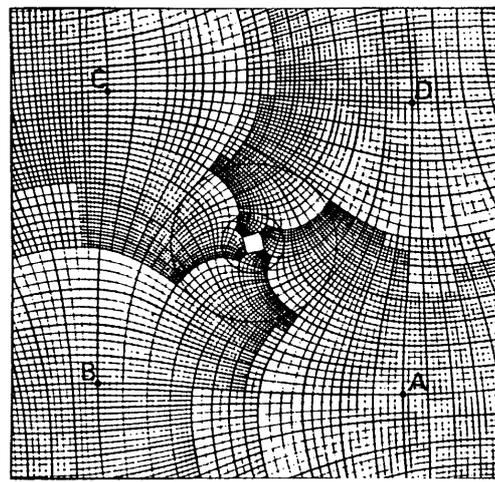
Take your first drawing, the second one (100x), the third one (100x), and the final one (100x), and mount them together on a sheet of card.

Can you see any relationship at all between the first drawing and the last one?

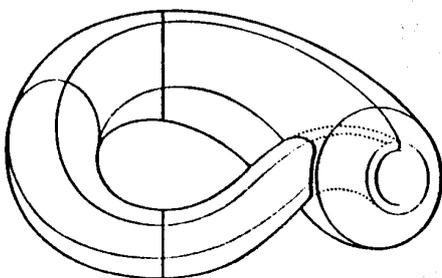
Write down 10 things that surprised you as you did this experiment.

By this stage I'm sure nothing can surprise the intrepid artisan – not even the prospect of a 'viewpoint' where interior and exterior views are included in one picture! We have seen how artists manipulate geometries to create pictorial formats to serve their purposes.

Escher must surely be the star in this visual theatre, and we will look here at another of his topological devices, manipulated to create an astonishing picture that offers us multiple views. In *The Gallery* we can see the picture that hangs on the interior wall of an art gallery grow out of itself into a picture of the exterior of the gallery and the village, and back again into itself on the wall being observed by a viewer.



The graph grid reveals the way the artist manipulated the surface of the picture plane. And it, in turn, is derived from the topological form called Klein's bottle.



"The Klein bottle is a one-sided surface distorted to form a solid that enters and passes through itself.

Like the Mobius strip it has no inside but is closed and its surface is endless, a bottle that can never be filled." (6)

- **inside & outside views** (adapted from 9)

Borrowing Escher's grid format, play with the idea of portraying both inside and outside views of a building with which you are familiar. You might find that your camera is a helpful tool as you select views that can 'unfold' into other views. Try to include as much information as you can – as though you were writing a visual report for someone who has never seen the building.

Use a large sheet of paper and if possible draw with a flexicurve to make the grid lines fluid. Great care with accuracy will be necessary if you wish to achieve a remarkable effect of unfolding vantage points the way Escher does.

The next activity is similar to the *time travel* drawings. But we stay in one location – your own sitting room. And the time is now.

- **a fly's eye view** (adapted from 6)

On a large sheet of paper draw everything in your room – on the floor, the walls, the ceiling, the furniture, the lot. Draw without concern for classical perspective or proportions.

Place things in their correct place, but draw them as though you were a fly looking from all kinds of viewpoints.

Do this in such a way that you cover all the paper.

persona

what about perspectives on people?

We've had many opportunities to explore some of the ways that other people perceive their worlds, and it's clear that there is sometimes a vast difference between those worlds. We have looked through the eyes of naïve artists, Aboriginal artists, cubists, and artists like Escher. This gives us a rich repertoire of ways to re-view our own little world, to re-assess its coherence or lack of it, and perhaps to re-form it according to a new perspective. In the last part of this e-book we will experiment more directly with the viewpoints of other people – both their persons and their personas. And finally, we'll have the opportunity to become a little bit more familiar with the face that we present to the world, as well as the one we keep to ourselves.

Corita Kent used this next activity to demonstrate the way our work can be sourced from that of an artist who has gone before us, and still have its own life and individuality. I would like to add the element of time, and suggest that you set your timer for one minute per drawing so that you don't get caught in the copying-to-perfection trap. And, just to spike the challenge, ask that you choose a work that you don't particularly like as your starting point.

- **borrow someone else's eyes** (8)

Make five contour drawings, using as a source a drawing (or painting or photo) by someone else.

Make one contour drawing from each of the five previous drawings.

Make five more drawings from the second set of drawings.

Compare the last set with the original source.

What was the relationship, if any, between the original and your last set?

What did you learn about the eyes of the original artist or photographer?

Shifting out of our habitual personal viewpoint isn't easy, especially when we might not be aware of exactly where it is. The easiest way to find that out is to notice where it isn't. And that's where experimenting with other viewpoints might help. So just relax and allow your imagination to invent the way fifteen other people might view a commonly observed object – a popular magazine.

- **fifteen sets of eyes** (8)

Choose a popular magazine such as Newsweek, Women's World or OK, and look at it in the following ways – one at a time – imagining yourself to be the eyes behind each point of view.

Write at least three lines about each perspective.

Cut out an illustration that relates to each perspective.

If you are in a group, you could role-play, acting out the responses from the various readers.

What does the material in the magazine say

sociologically

historically

anthropologically

as a parable

meditatively

as a directory

as a work of art

as a fairy tale

as a revolutionary treatise

as humor

as poetry

as layout and design

as lettering

as political indoctrination

as an instruction book

Can you think of even more ways to look at the magazine?

Were there any ways of looking that were difficult for you?

Which ways were easiest?

Does that tell you something about yourself?

In your X-file note ten things you have discovered about yourself and your worldview during this exercise.

This time we begin by choosing a poem written by someone else – someone from a different culture and time from your own. It will be more interesting if you choose a culture with which you are unfamiliar or that you aren't attracted to. There will be more to find out that way, and you won't hold very deep conditioned ideas. You will probably have to work with a translation.

- **poems + pictures + poems**

Find a poem written in another time by someone from another culture. Ask at your local library for help. It should be full of interesting imagery and feeling, and not be too long.

Immerse yourself in this poem; try to get inside the head and heart of the poet. What inspired the words, the lines? Write about the poet's worldview, trying to avoid overlaying your own feelings about the subject.

Try to find 10 pictures that you would use to visually express what the poet was saying and feeling.

Make these pictures into a collage, gluing them down onto a sheet of paper.

Two weeks later look at the pictures again, and write a poem of your own, inspired only by the pictures. (Try not to let thoughts about the original poem influence your writing.)

What moods and memories *of your own* are evoked by the pictures?

Compare your poem with the one by the first poet – any similarities, differences? What do they say about the different ways the two of you see the world?

Experiment with synthesis:

Using any of the techniques you played with in **making fun of play** make a large work that expresses your poem without copying the original pictures.

Try mixing media – use prints, crayons, paints, fabrics.

Add the words from both poems, not necessarily using the form of the poems themselves.

It can be quite uncanny the way donning a mask can elicit an unfamiliar behavioral or emotional response from us. In this way, masks can be useful as another tool that enables us to experience the unfamiliar perspectives of our fellow humans.

"There is something about a mask that reveals and conceals at the same moment. Masks trick the viewer into being moved by the presence residing beneath the surface of the mask, even as that same viewer knows that it is only a façade of wood, paper, or tin. The same thing happens to the wearer of the mask; knowing full well that he or she remains intact behind the mask, the wearer nonetheless takes on the attributes of the mask that are most difficult to reach without it." (13)

As the name Janus implies, there are two faces (at least) to every person. This project will explore them both, and it will also present us with an interesting design problem.

- **Janus masks 1**

Let's return to our poet of the last activity – or, if you happen to be studying another historical character in another subject, you might like to use that person for this project.

You will need to do some research. The first task is to find out as much as you can about the person as seen through the eyes of other people. They can be people of the person's own time and context, or people of your own time. Make a list of the ways this person is described physically, as well as any personality traits attributed to them. This is the information you'll need to make your first mask.

The second task is one you might already have gathered some information for, if you are studying your poet. You will have listed your impressions about the poet's feelings and thoughts by studying their poem.

If you are studying someone else, you will need to find ways of learning about 'who' that person was beneath the exterior they presented to the world.

Find letters or poems they wrote, or drawings they made, and see if you can get sense of the private, hidden person with their sensitivities, their hopes, their fears. This is the information you will need to make your second mask.

Cont ...

The design challenge is to figure out a way that both masks can be worn at once. The first mask - representing the face that the person presents to the world - will cover the second one, which represents the 'hidden' face. But we want to be able to uncover the second mask somehow, without taking off the top one. How might this be achieved? Over a hundred years ago the people of Haida, Prince of Wales Island, invented a way:



Can you think of other ideas?

Use any appropriate media for your masks, keeping your choices in line with the qualities you wish to portray. In **notes & anecdotes** you will find instructions for making papier mâché. However, you might feel that tin, cardboard or plastic are more suitable. Allow your secret senses free rein – you are not trying to create a likeness, but to capture qualities.

If you are part of a group doing this activity, plan a presentation.

Each person dons the mask/s they have made and the others express their interpretation of the character portrayed. First, the exterior 'face' is discussed in terms of the relevant social and historical contexts. Then the group offers their 'reading' of the qualities expressed by the hidden 'face'.

This can lead to some interesting dialogue about reactions and responses to the characters experienced by the maker/wearer as well as by those who are viewing the masks.

The mask project inevitably brings our thoughts closer to home. As we wonder about another person's public and private faces we cannot avoid thinking about our own. So we will now make a very personal exploration, one that will be a little easier because we have first tried it out on a subject that was at a distance from us. It will be all the more effective, and we may very well be surprised at what we uncover when we make our own dear 'selves' the subject of our inquiry.

- **Janus masks 2** (adapted from 13)

As before, you will need to gather information in two areas. In order to gather the information needed for your 'public' face, you will need to compile a little questionnaire that your family, your friends, and perhaps your teachers can respond to. The information they provide may come as a surprise to you, for we often have little idea about the way other see us – it can be a truly altered perspective from our point of view. For our purposes here, we need to accept their views for they represent the person we present to the world, as seen by the world.

When you come to compile the information needed for your 'private' face, you will have the sole authority. What are you really like? What is precious to you? What do you hide for fear of scorn? What makes you truly happy? What do you powerfully dislike? Make lists as you did for your poet.

And in the same way, construct your masks with media appropriate to your task.

The opportunity to verbally express one's feelings about the two aspects of our person can be valuable. However, it is best shared within a more intimate exchange. The following idea comes from Jack London (13), and I have found it works very well with mature students.

Find a partner – someone who has also made a set of personal Janus masks, and with whom you feel comfortable. Make a mutual agreement to honor each other's privacy. Settle yourselves somewhere where you have a degree of privacy. Your partner puts on your mask/s. His or her role is to be silent.

As you look at the face which you (like it or not) present to the world, let yourself express any thoughts or emotions that arise. They will. Allow them voice.

Cont ...

When you are finished talking to your 'persona' mask, ask your partner to reveal the hidden mask – your private face.

Express whatever feelings and thoughts arise when you confront that image you have created of your 'hidden' face.

When you have finished, sit quietly for some time. There may be things to consider, surprising things. Let them settle. Avoid chatting.

When you are both ready, switch roles. You will now put on your partner's mask/s, and sit in silence as they express their thoughts and feelings at being similarly confronted by the two versions of themselves that they have created.

Now that we've had a chance to think about our unique personal qualities we are in a good position to take up the challenge of the last creative encounter in this section. It's a weird one. Usually when we speak of transformation, we assume that it is our dear selves who are undergoing the process. But in this activity we are required to shift the concept around. The qualities inherent in our selves will be utilized to transform something else – in this case, a humble number.

- **the number 11 problem** (14)

Transform the number 11 into an illustration as a personal expression of yourself. Use numerals, letters, metaphors, symbolism, or any other approach you find appropriate.

Your image size should be 6x9 inches. There are no limitations on the use of color or media.

The final solution must solve the given problem of being recognizable as the number eleven while at the same time transcending the number's literal meaning.

Was that tough? You could apply the idea to other things too – perhaps choosing a favorite object, or one you loathe. The key to a problem like this one is to approach it slowly and playfully. Let your secret senses do the work for you in daytime and night-time dreamtime. Look into yourself for the creative solution – you have all that is needed in the archives of your unique life experience.

Did you notice that as we moved through this section that we brought those vital strategies for true playing with us? We were relaxed. We weren't concerned with outcomes. We put our habits on hold. And we acted 'as if'. Acting 'as-if' allowed us to actually experience other realities. It doesn't necessarily mean we liked them or preferred them. It does mean that we have experienced for ourselves the key to creating – the key that not only fits the door to the visual arts, but the key to creating our lives. Think about this. It will make your skin go goosebumpy.

We set out at the beginning of this e-book to wonder about and experiment with the ways in which altered perspectives might open up views onto altered 'realities'. Our activities have given us many opportunities to see through the eyes of at least some of our fellow humans and peek at the worlds they inhabit. Along the way we have gathered up a rich variety of new ways of thinking about our compositions and their content. And perhaps a new perspective has been uncovered that resonates with our personal visual language – one that we can use as the spring-board for our future explorations into the world of wondering, and the world of creating.

How will we know?

There will be a rush of the energy of enthusiasm within the body, and we'll be thinking "Oh, I'd love to try that!" or "That really makes me feel excited," or "I can't wait to get my teeth/ head/hands into that". That is all the response you need, and it will flow up from the secret senses. It might be followed quickly by "But what's the value of that?" or "I can't/couldn't/shouldn't do that (for an infinite number of reasons)". But if you have come this far with a wondering mind, you will recognize these protests for what they are – shadows thrown by an outmoded and no longer useful personal worldview. Fold them up and put them aside.

Instead, celebrate the discovery of your newly found artscape, and take it with you into our next e-book, **creating from wonder**. Fourteen creative projects await your wondering mind!

references

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