

Exploring Your Art Making Priorities

By Mary Erickson

INSTRUCTIONS

As you select responses to the four questions below, think about an artwork you have recently made or one you would like to make.

Describe the artwork briefly:

QUESTIONS

The following questions are about four aspects of art making: ideas, materials, visual elements, and success. When you make art perhaps you consider these in a different order.

Select the two responses to each question that best reflect your own art making.

1. How do you get ideas for your art?

- A. I focus on things I feel passionate about.
- B. I find a visual reference and make my art look as similar to it as possible.
- C. I like someone (parent, teacher, friend) to give me inspiration to get started.
- D. I react to my environment or to current events.
- E. I want to be original – to think outside the box.
- F. I like to show or make my favorite things (horses, cars, doodles, patterns, cartoons, etc.)
- G. I get ideas from my own experience from personal history to dreams.
- H. I borrow, extend, or blend ideas from diverse visual art traditions.
- I. I consider whether I have the necessary skills to carry out my ideas.
- J. I experiment with materials or with lines, colors, forms, etc.

CREDIT

Mary Erickson and Faith Clover identified the Viewpoints in this activity drawing on the work of Michael J. Parsons. It has been revised in consultation with Laura Hales in conjunction with the Visions program at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.

2. How do you make decisions about tools, materials, and processes for your art?

- A. I choose processes that help me express a feeling or create a mood. I can show a range of feelings depending on how I use them.
- B. I try to be true to my materials – not force them to be what they are not.
- C. I use whatever is handy or assigned.
- D. I choose materials I'm comfortable with and/or that let me show detail.
- E. I prefer materials and technologies of my time – new media.
- F. I choose materials that are consistent with or that reinforce my message.
- G. I choose materials that are fun to work with.
- H. I experiment with materials to explore what they can do.
- I. I am drawn to beautiful or sensuous materials and/or to materials that are a challenge.
- J. I prefer media that allow viewer interaction.

3. How do you choose and organize visual elements (line, color, texture, form, etc.) in your art?

- A. I choose and organize elements to make my artwork beautiful.
- B. I choose and organize elements that work together visually within my composition.
- C. I don't focus a lot on elements because meaning and context are more important.
- D. I prefer to use my favorite color/s.
- E. I choose and organize elements to express a mood, feeling, or emotion.
- F. I choose lines, shapes, textures, and/or forms that I like.
- G. I choose and organize elements by matching them with what I actually see.
- H. I organize elements by layering, comparing, and/or changing the context.
- I. I experiment with elements to see how they complement, contrast, or interact with each other.
- J. I choose elements that symbolize specific ideas and/or to capture the attention of the viewer.

4. How do you judge that your work is successfully completed?

- A. I want my artwork to be socially responsible and stimulate viewers' thinking.
- B. I want my artwork to be visually intriguing or exciting.
- C. I want my family/friends/teacher/buyer to like what I make.
- D. I want my artwork to express a particular mood, feeling, or emotion.
- E. I want my artwork to present issues related to identify and society.
- F. I want my artwork to be beautiful and/or well crafted.
- G. I want my artwork to be respected in the artworld (by other artists, art teachers, art critics, museum curators, gallery owners, etc.)
- H. I know my artwork is finished when I like it.
- I. I want others to understand the idea/s I'm trying to communicate through my art.
- J. I want my artwork to be realistic and have good detail.

SCORING GUIDE

Each response you chose is associated with one of five viewpoints. Circle the viewpoint you chose.

Question 1

- A. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- B. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- C. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- D. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint
- E. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- F. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- G. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- H. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint
- I. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- J. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint

Question 2

- A. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- B. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- C. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- D. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- E. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint
- F. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- G. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- H. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- I. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- J. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint

Question 3

- A. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- B. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- C. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint
- D. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- E. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- F. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- G. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- H. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint
- I. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- J. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint

Question 4

- A. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint
- B. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- C. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- D. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- E. Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint
- F. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- G. (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- H. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- I. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- J. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint

RESULTS

Count the number of times you used the following viewpoints:

- ___ Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- ___ Beauty, Realism, and Skill Viewpoint
- ___ Expression of Feelings or Ideas Viewpoint
- ___ (Modern) Artworld Viewpoint
- ___ Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint

According to the results above, which one or two viewpoints did you use most often in your art making?

_____ Viewpoint
_____ Viewpoint

FIVE VIEWPOINTS ON ART MAKING

No set of four multiple-choice questions can capture all the interests and concerns of diverse artists. The purpose of this exploration is to stimulate your reflection on your own art making. As you read about the five viewpoints below, you may find that some viewpoints overlap with or complement others. You may apply different viewpoints depending on the type of artwork you want to make or the situation in which you are making it. Additionally, you may use different viewpoints at different stages in your art making process.

Non-Reflective Viewpoint:

Non-reflective artists make their artwork unselfconsciously without stopping much to consider decisions they make in process other than choosing what they prefer.

Beauty, Realism, and Skill Viewpoint:

Artists seeking to make beautiful realistic, or skilled artworks focus their attention on making decisions to increase attractiveness, represent accurately, or achieve a high degree of craftsmanship.

Expression of Ideas and Feelings Viewpoint:

Artists seeking to express feelings or ideas make decisions to ensure that their work effectively and compellingly communicates particular feelings or ideas.

(Modernist) Artworld Viewpoint:

Artists who are working in the Modern Art tradition tend to focus on truth to materials, powerful visual composition, and originality.

Other artworlds promote other norms.

Plural (Postmodern) Artworlds Viewpoint:

Postmodern artists' decisions are driven by an awareness of diverse norms in different visual art traditions and consider social, cultural, and political consequences of their art.

REFLECTION
