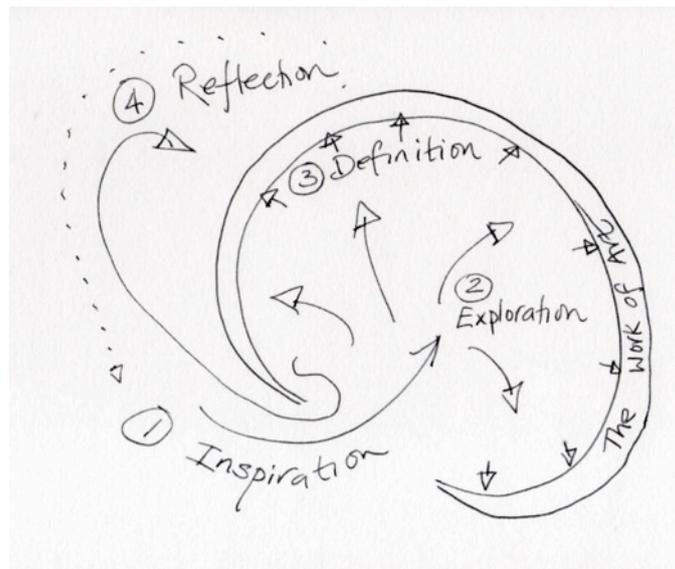


The Creative Process

Dr Maria Hayes

The Creative Process both is, and is not, a mysterious event. There are stages that can be identified by their specific qualities, which are, on the whole, sequential. Sometimes the stages overlap considerably, or go back and forth during the process, especially the mid stages. However, it is useful to tease apart the differences in the creative process and to learn to be aware of where you are during the making.



Stages: Inspiration - Exploration – Definition – Reflection (return to Inspiration)

1. Inspiration

The creative process begins when something touches us in a way that motivates us to action. To inspire, inhale – this is a movement inwards, a catching of the breath of energy. Something creates a response, a moment of awakening, connection, recognition, that becomes a point of departure. Inspiration may be experienced as an injection of energy that will transmute into individual expression. In the moment of inspiration we feel we ‘know’ - we have direction and energy. Once motivated we start on a journey.

2. Exploration

As the process progresses the intuitive knowing fades and is replaced with experimental experiences. The beginnings of explorations need to be playful, messy and childish and stir up the mud at the bottom of the pond of our inventive selves. We explore, experiment, try, fail, and try something else. When ideas become refined we begin to edit ideas and materials, which leads to ...

3. Definition

The transition from the second to third stage is notoriously difficult, as this involves letting go and making committed decisions.

This phase gives final form to explorations. We keep some ideas, develop them and discard the rest. We must finalize and limit decisions on material, shape, colour, texture, placement, etc. before the art work/event is ready for an audience.

4. Reflection

This is the moment we stand away from our creation and offer it to others to experience. Appropriate distance from the creation allows us to evaluate what the journey entailed and assess where we arrived. During the period of reflection we often see that the process moved in directions we did not anticipate and that the final object/event is not a manifestation of our original, inspired imagining after all, but something else. This can be difficult to accept. To do so, we must let go of our initial vision and attempt to assess the result of the process objectively. It can help to contextualise the work. Looking at other's artworks can shift perceptions and offer new insights. Often this is the moment that promotes new insight, fresh inspirations - and we begin again.

Each time we create something we engage in the creative process, yet each process differs in intensity and each stage of the process lasts different lengths of time. Every moment is new. Often, the transitions in a process cannot be easily identified during the process. There may also be movements backwards and forwards between the stages of the process.



Drawing Tomorrow – The Big Draw at Arts Alive 2013

Connection

According to Gerard Genette 'a work cannot be reduced to its object of immanence because what it is, is separate from what it accomplishes. The work of art is always already the work that art does.'

What is the work that art does as far as the maker is concerned? It makes connections, and it is the forming of these connections that have therapeutic qualities.

1. The making of the work forms an intimate connection – we come to knowing
2. The reflecting on the work forms a distant connection – we come to understanding
3. The renewed creative impulse and/or changed perspective form an integrated connection – we have grown in knowledge and experience.

1. Intimate connection (Creative process stages 1-3)

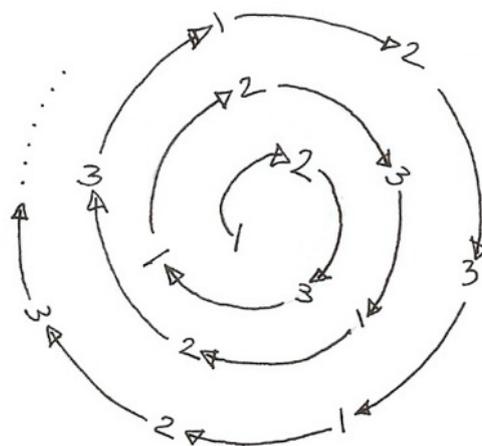
During this phase we engage directly with the creative process, which involves a convergence of subjective and objective decision-making.

2. Distant connection (Creative process stage 4)

During this phase we reflect on the process and the resultant product to assimilate the making experience and contextualise the work.

3. Integrated connection (Creative process repeated)

During this phase we assimilate the integrated experience, experience new energy and channel that energy into a new project.



It is a cyclical process, spiralling in an ever-expanding movement. Each phase informs and connects to the other. This is how we grow through the creative process. Although the process is repeated, we are never the same person going through that process. We gain experience and perspective each time we make something. As Tim Ingold says:

‘To know things you have to grow into them, and let them grow in you, so that they become a part of who you are’ⁱⁱ



After Hours at the Polestar Club 2013
With Christine Watkins and Sianed Jones

Dr Maria Hayes 2016

ⁱ Genette, Gérard *The Work of Art* 1994 (London: Cornell UP) Back cover page

ⁱⁱ Ingold, Tim, *Making* 2013 (London and New York: Routledge) 1