

The Journey that is ...

Developing Your Artistic Voice



"There are no new ideas"

Let's stop this seminar right here. There are no new ideas, so why bother...

First we have to let go of this idea that there are no new ideas. This has become a thought virus infecting our community. It is not true.

People often quote: 'there is nothing new under the sun.'

-This is a three thousand year old quote. It's certainly not referring to artistic or technical innovation. If it were though, given it's context, it might make some sense. What kind of innovation would a person from three thousand years ago expect to see in their lifetime. The answer is none.

-We, on the other hand, live in a world where innovation is all around us: 3-d printers, driverless cars, killer robots in the sky,

-I believe that the people who say there are no new ideas are the ones with no new ideas...

-And holding this belief, the scarcity of new ideas, affects our behavior. It makes us lazy and fatalistic. If it's all been done then why bother...

-And believing there are no new ideas makes every idea out there too precious, and turns us into cannibals, eating each other's ideas while they are still alive.

I say hogwash, I say gobbledygook, I say bullshit.

-Believing that the only limits to creativity are our courage and our imaginations sets us free to explore our own uncharted terrain...



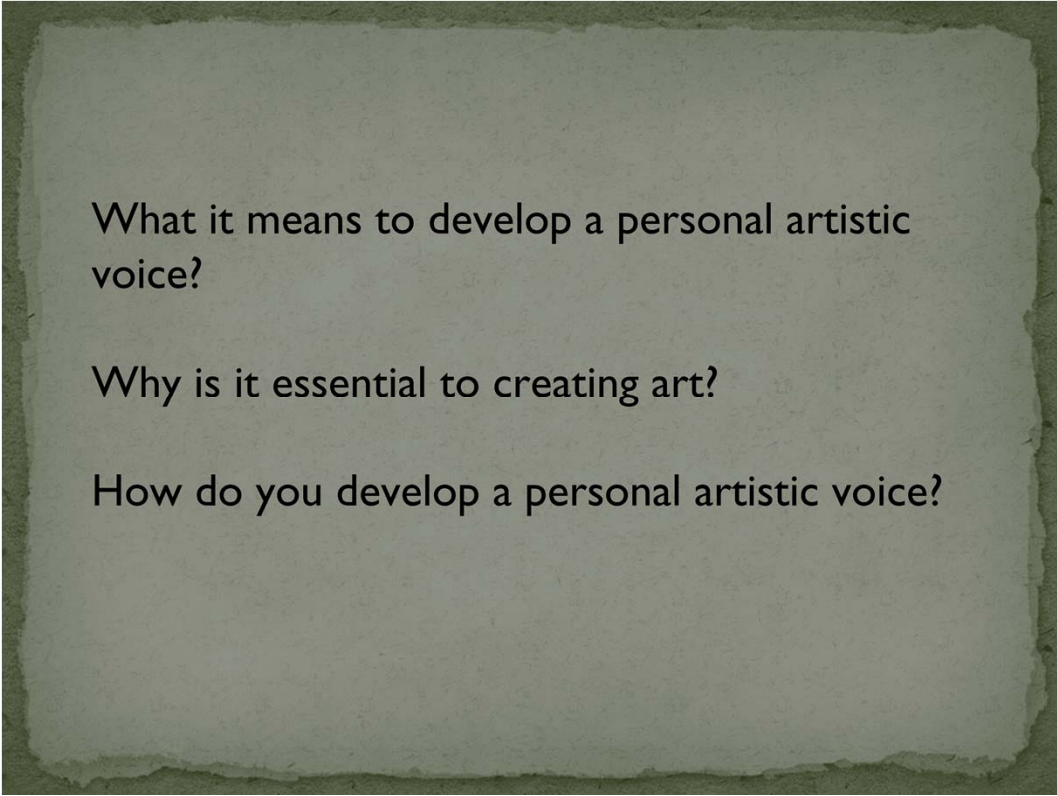
There are new Ideas!

There are as many new ideas as there are people in the world. Saying there are no new ideas is like saying there can never be another person who is truly an individual. Because new creative ideas come from the individual artist, their experience, their insight on the world, the way they think and what they have learned to love and treasure. Not two people will have the same set of experiences or see the world the same way. Therefore there will always be new ideas and new approaches to creativity.

This is the basis for your personal artistic voice—that uniqueness that is you, that inspires, informs and energizes the people who are exposed to your art in a way that no one else can. Developing an artistic voice makes what you do art and adds to the richness of your life and the lives of those it reaches. Anything less than that is just craft. Not that there is anything wrong with just creating craft but if all you want to do is work with the material, work for an artist and help bring their voice to the world. Otherwise, you will only be able to recreate what has already been created at which point you draining the power of the original artist's voice and diminishing who you are.

If you want to be an artist or more specifically and more importantly, if you want to add to the world's treasury of beauty, thought, challenge or inspiration, you need to make the journey to finding your Personal Artistic Voice.

Perhaps there are no new categories under which we can work but the subjects and the variation and the nuances beneath those categories are as infinite as the individuality of the human spirit.



What it means to develop a personal artistic voice?

Why is it essential to creating art?

How do you develop a personal artistic voice?

In this seminar we are going to try to answer three questions:
What it means to develop a personal artistic voice?
Why is it essential to creating art?
How do you develop a personal artistic voice?

The first two were summarized in what we just talked about in terms of new ideas and your resource as an individual but we'll explore that more by telling our own individual stories with particular views as to why we find this subject so important or what our process is.

After our stories we'll take on the third question with some ideas on how to develop your voice. There is more than one way to do this so after we yammer at you for a bit, we're going to open up this talk to a dialogue with you. So please start thinking about how what in our stories and ideas resonate with you or if you have already started or been on your own journey for some time, we would really like you to share what you have found works for you or how you approach developing your unique work or, if you are struggling with this, let's hear your story and your questions. Everyone's journey will be different but we can all inform each other's

path of discovery.



Sage's Artistic Journey

I'm going to tell two stories. The first I don't have images for because it is the story of my journey as a writer.

Sage's Writing Journey

warm water down my back
saves me
for now
the showers fall and steam
does not
cleanse me of my sins
the impatience with my children
stubbornness of my friends
it does not wash me of fear
all the responsibility
of being an adult, feeling
like a child

the warm water runs across my skin
fully and I am for a moment
in the womb again
a short reprieve
and a remembrance
of a slate blank

I'm going to tell two stories. The first I don't have images for because it is the story of my journey as a writer. This was not a difficult journey because I started writing at a very young age. I wrote my first book at age 9 and have not stopped writing since. As a child, you don't have the same tendencies to want to please others or follow what you see others do. You will want to keep the idea of returning to a child like state in mind in your when developing a unique—the child mind is so unencumbered with no critique, no feeling a need to 'fix' what they are doing and the world is still new and interesting to them.

Because of that my journey as a writer was very organic and effortless. But it did have it's challenges. My undergraduate college work was in art but I went back for my Master's in Writing in San Franscico, the birthplace of beatnik poetry and a lot of great but very edgy & alternative writing espeically in poetry. I specialized in poetry but I wrote for the average person. I wrote about normal things—nature, every day struggles, and just things I saw out my window or on a walk. I was heavily criticized by the other students for not doing something "different". Yes all these subjects have been written about thousands of times but not by me, not through my eyes. It actually never occurred to me to give into that criticism, again, I think because my writing was so ingrained in me and I grew up just writing what I wanted and not caring what others thought of what I did. As a result the department heads ended up nominating me for a number of awards and I continuously published for nearly 5 years. Half the other students in my master's program couldn't say that.

I actually stopped publishing because I ended up spending more time at readings and shows than writing and I wanted to return to writing more. That actually resulted in my

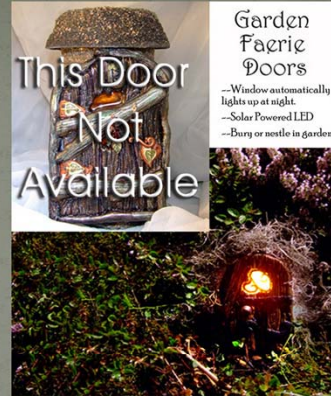
making a career out of writing and with this magazine now as well.

Sage's Artistic Journey



I actually didn't see myself as a visual artist until I was in my late teens. I accidentally ended up in an advanced Life Drawing class and couldn't get out of it right away but ended up finding that visual arts came quite naturally to me and I was pretty good. I just thought of it as something fun to do until college when I took art classes as fun extra classes and was eventually convinced by two different professors to change my major from writing to art. I was still able to draw on my childlike wonder and sense of exploration in undergraduate school. I worked in charcoal and fiber as well as multi-media for years but wasn't heavily driven until I found polymer about 8 years ago. That journey was quite different. I had lost a lot of my childlike tendencies and was out of practice having taken years off my creative endeavors to take care of my family. My writing was mostly corporate or training work now so I kind of lost my way.

Sage's
first
polymer
efforts



I found polymer and quit my job so I could be a full time artist and so needed to make a living. I learned as much as I could in 4 months then started doing shows.

It was not long before I started making art according to what I saw was selling for others. That resulted in some gimmicky faerie doors and other things that were more for and about the market than me. I sold well enough at first but I slowly began to dislike my work. And a lot of my newer pieces weren't selling. I went back to more freelance writing work and allowed my self to start making what I wanted. Not having to make a living off my work was very freeing.

I strongly suggest that you not put yourself in a position to need income off your art until you are at a point where you think your work is uniquely yours and you know the market that will buy it and have had a history of success financially before taking that plunge.

Strange thing was ... I sold a lot more for better prices when I just did what I wanted.

Finding my own style in polymer



What happened? For one I was happier with my work. And found so much more joy in what I was doing. I returned to combining other mediums in my work which allowed me really explore the medium in ways I had not done before. I sold out at nearly every show. I won awards at nearly every show I attended, taught classes and spoke at shows in rooms so packed that I was often moved me to bigger rooms to accommodate

Finding my own style in polymer



Eventually I got really brave and started making things that were rather large and not for everyday wear. I took them to shows thinking that would draw attention but probably wouldn't sell. They all sold. They were usually the first things to sell too. I had the right market and I think it was really obvious that the work was from the heart, that this was me and my passion and my vision. It was better for me as an artist and for my art and for my sales, and in the end for those that were exposed to or took my art home.

Dan's Artistic Journey



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Combinational Creativity
Insight Creativity
Confined Creativity
Evolutionary Creativity

These are not official text book textbook forms of creativity but just some patterns I saw reflecting on my own creativity...



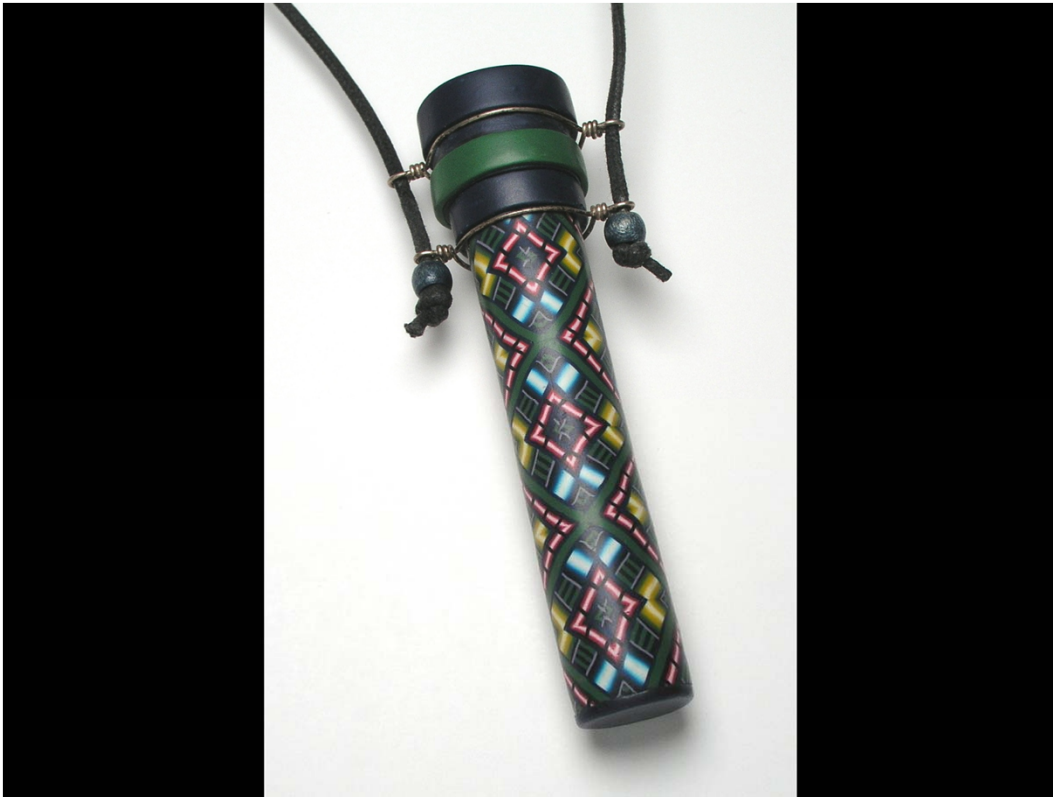
Combinational Creativity

-Combinatorial Creativity is about combining different, often disparate, forms of inspiration into a new combinations. The synergy from novel interactions can create new, often unexpected, ideas and forms.

-Reese Peanut Butter Cups

-The remix, mash-up

-Watch Ratatouille! If you've seen Ratatouille this is what Remi is always doing, combining foods in novel ways to create new flavor interactions.



-One of my earliest interests in polymer was structure. In The early nineties people didn't construct vessels from polymer, they covered things with polymer.

-Interest in vessel construction.

-One of my first wearable containers.

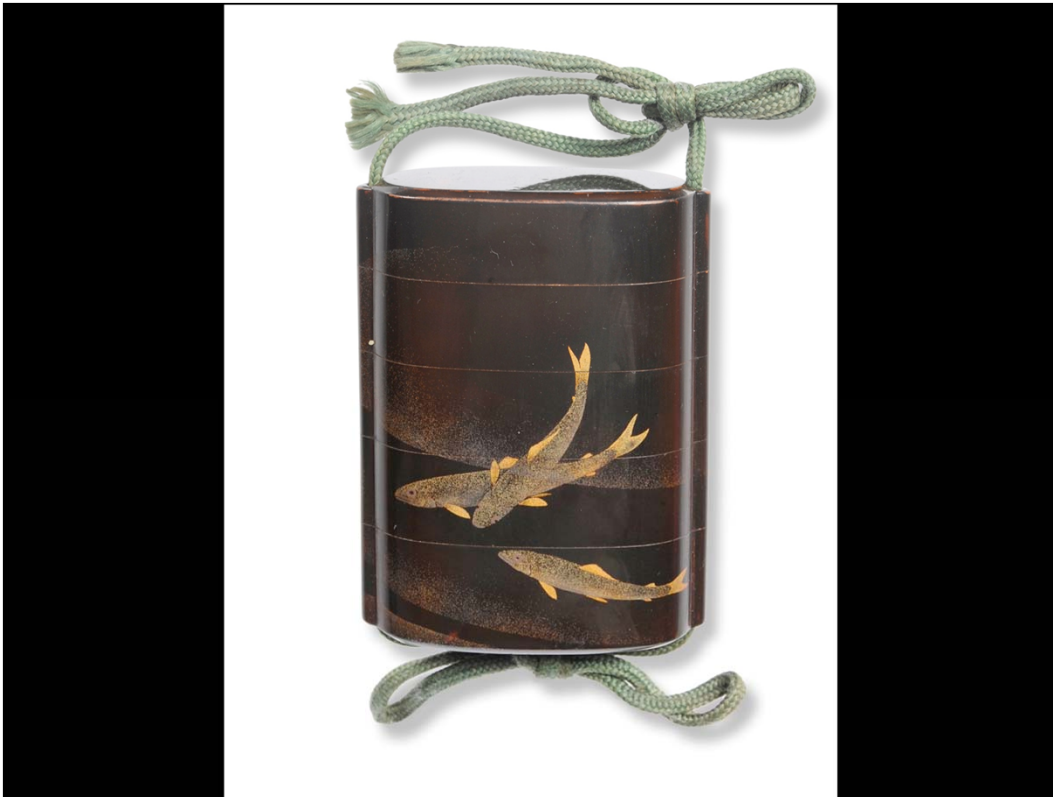
-My first major workshop was making these... called 'Cylindrical Box Pendants' I taught it at the first Ravensdale Conference in 1995.



-Another obsession of mine is space age tin toys from the fifties and sixties.

-I've always loved their bold graphics and use of primary colours.

-Themes of space travel and man pushing the frontiers have always fascinated me.

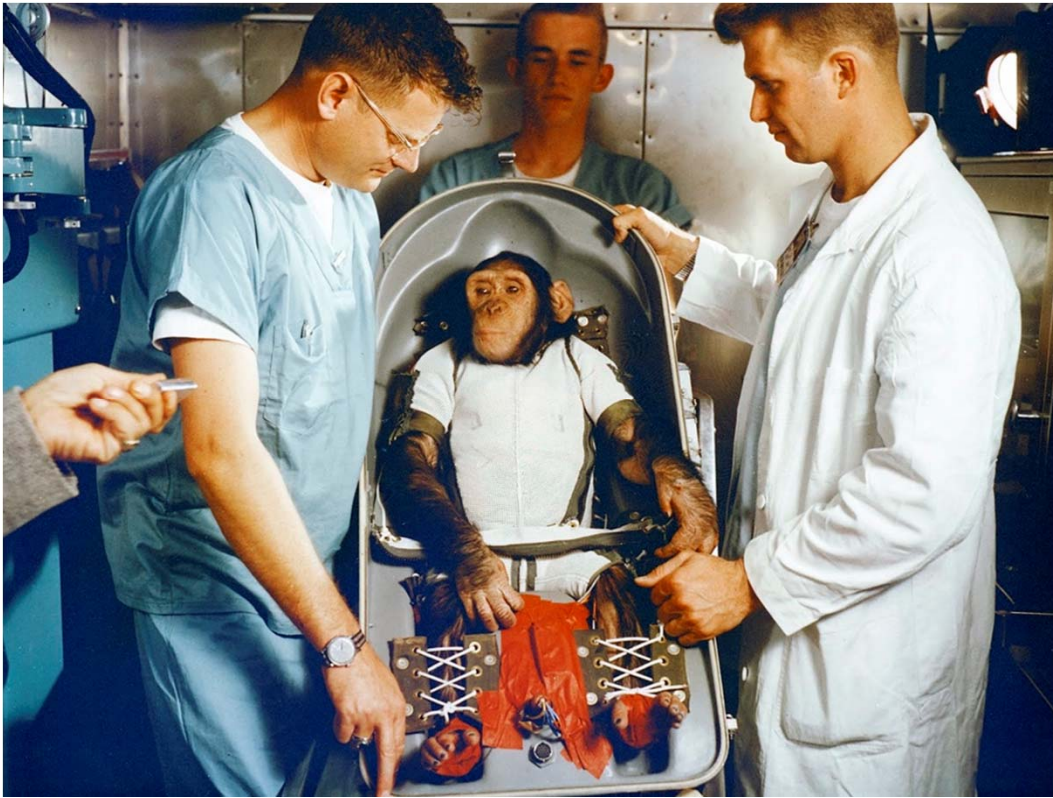


-This interest soon lead me to discover Inro. The 17th century artform from Japan.

-Inro were worn by men over the sash of their Kimono, creating a kind of exterior pocket.

-Inro translates to 'seal' basket. Seal meaning one's signature. They were also used to hold medicines.

-Intro are often thematic



-Space Monkeys. What more do I need to say...



-Half monkey, half fish. The Fiji mermaid was discovered in the South Seas. After the specimen was purchased by PT Barnum he made it the centerpiece of his collection of freaks and oddities and it was exhibited around the world.

-Only problem. It wasn't real. It was actually the head and torso of a monkey taxidermized together with the tail of a fish.

It was a hoax!



-So what do you get when you combine the form and tradition of Japanese Inro.

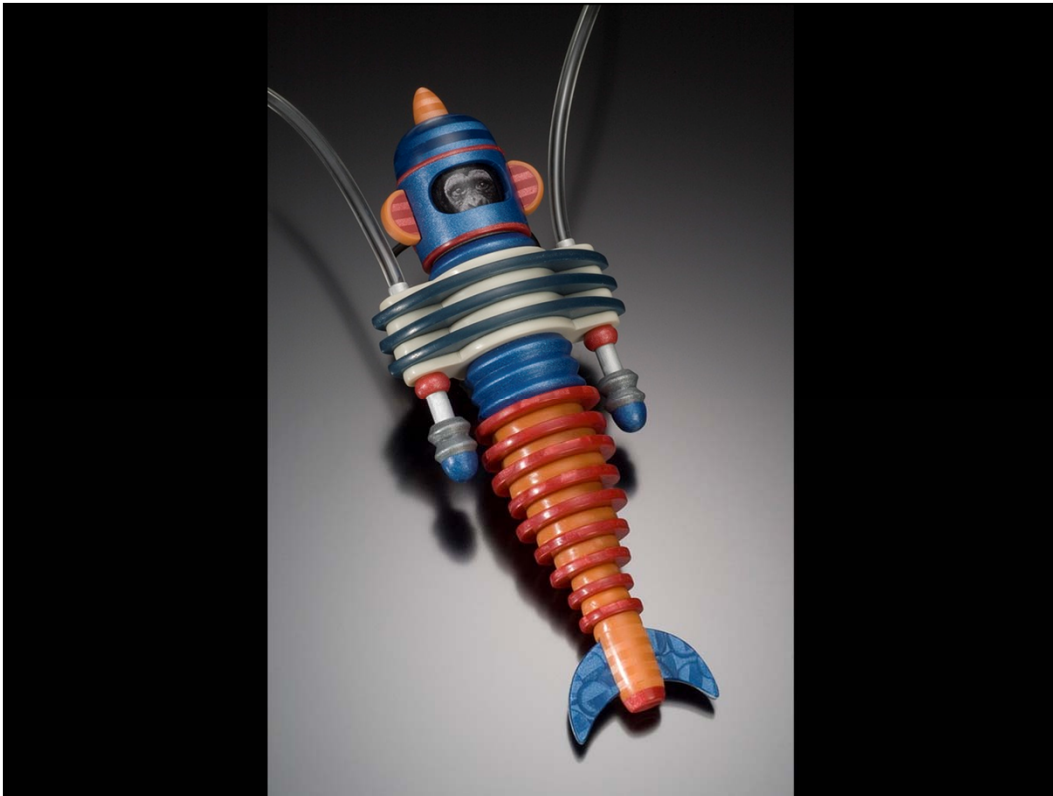
-The colour, bold graphics, and themes of Space Age Tin Toys.

-Space Monkeys

-And P.T. Barnum's spectacular hoax?



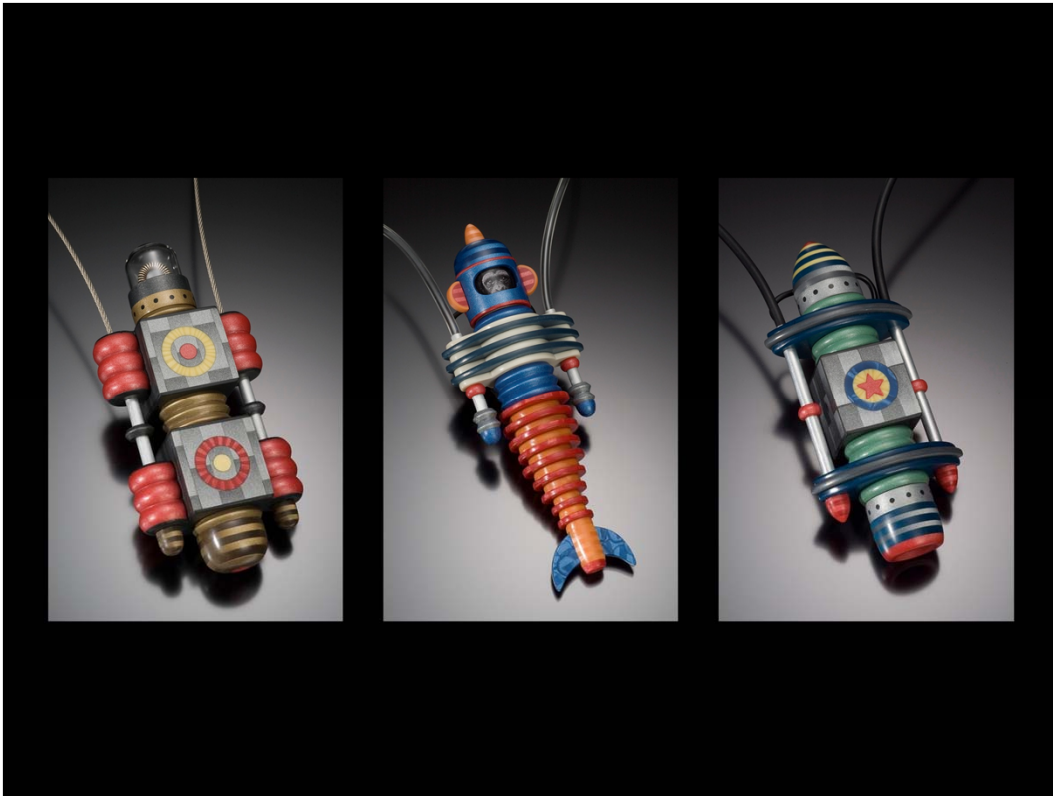
The Fiji Mermaid 2000!



Every developing artist should make a piece where they push their skills to the max. Set no limitations on time or effort. If the piece needs five more hours to make it right you give it to that piece. Let the piece tell you what will make it great and give of yourself. Show generosity to your work..

Strategies for Combinational Creativity:

-Google image search three random things you really like. Take the images and see if you can find connections between them, a way to mix or fuse them together... The key is making new connections.



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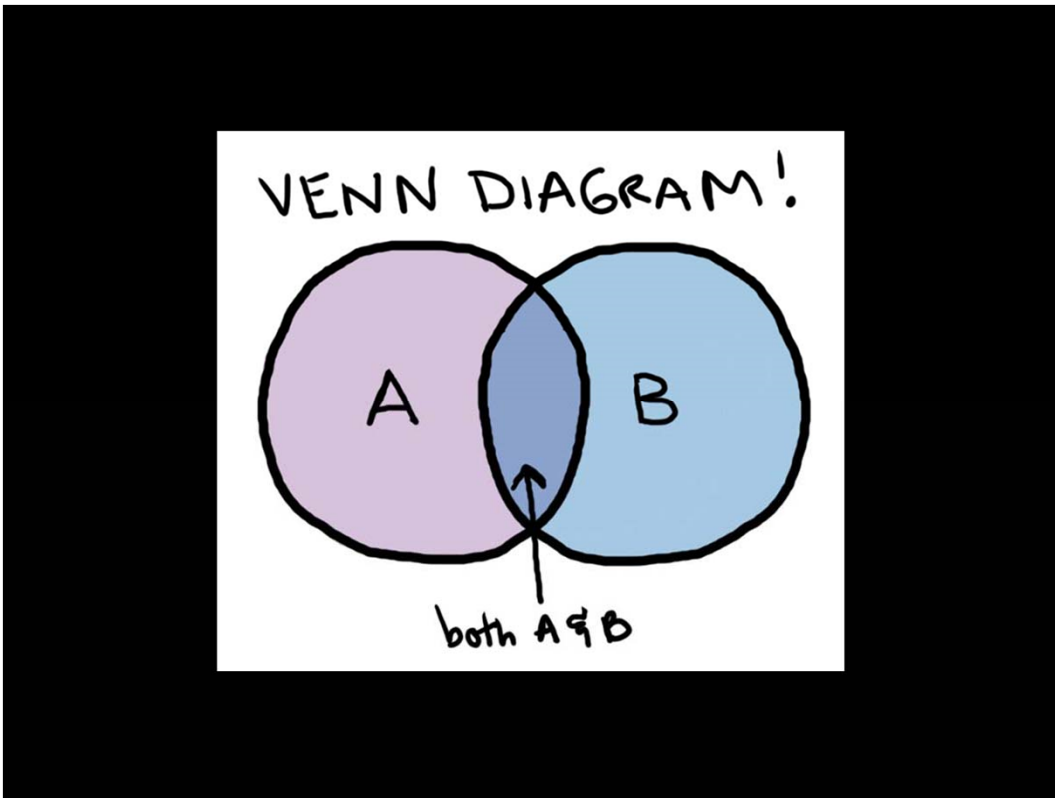
making new connections.



Combinational Creativity
Version 2



Influence of sea creatures with pentaradial symmetry: Urchins & sand dollars

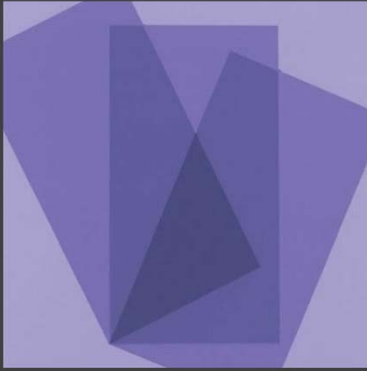
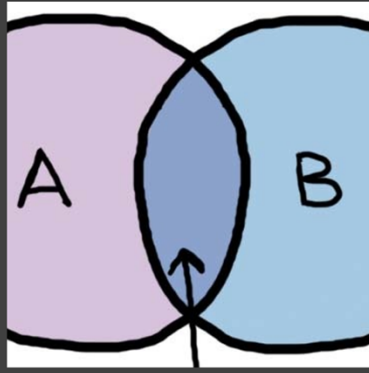
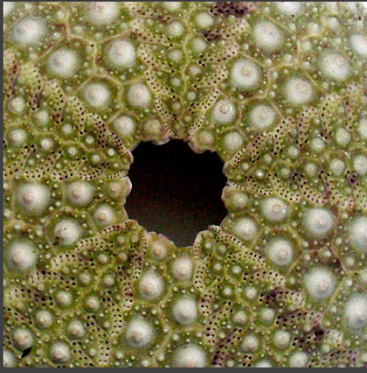


I also like Venn diagrams...

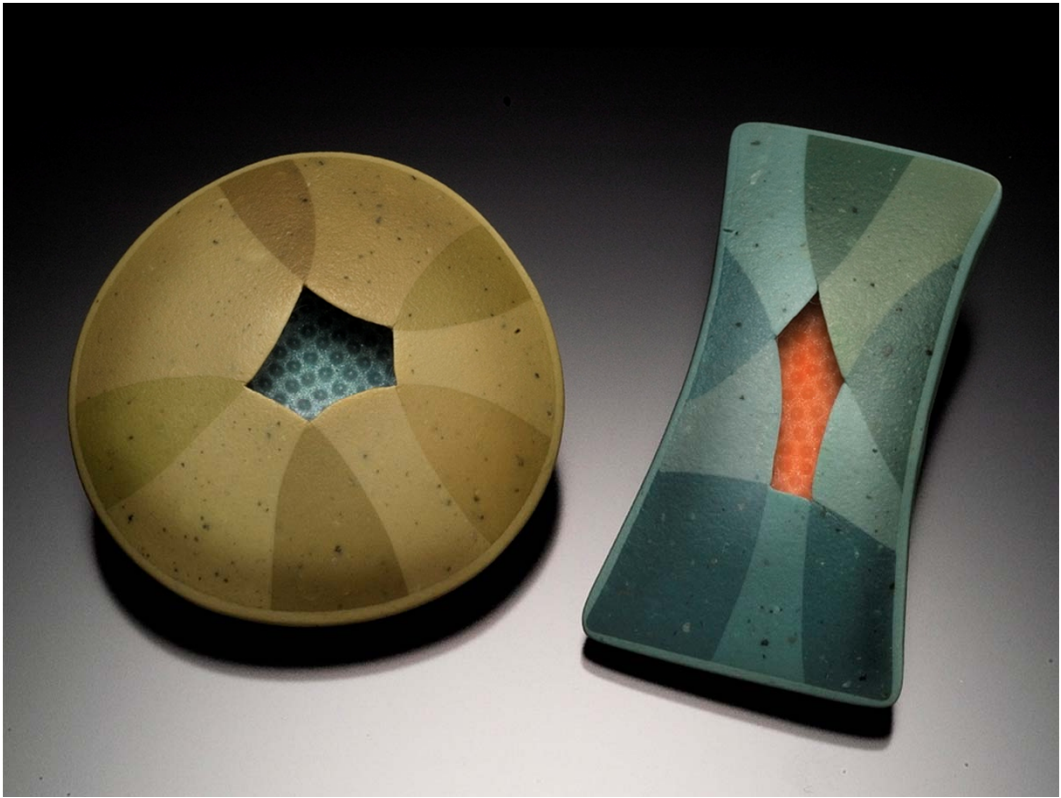


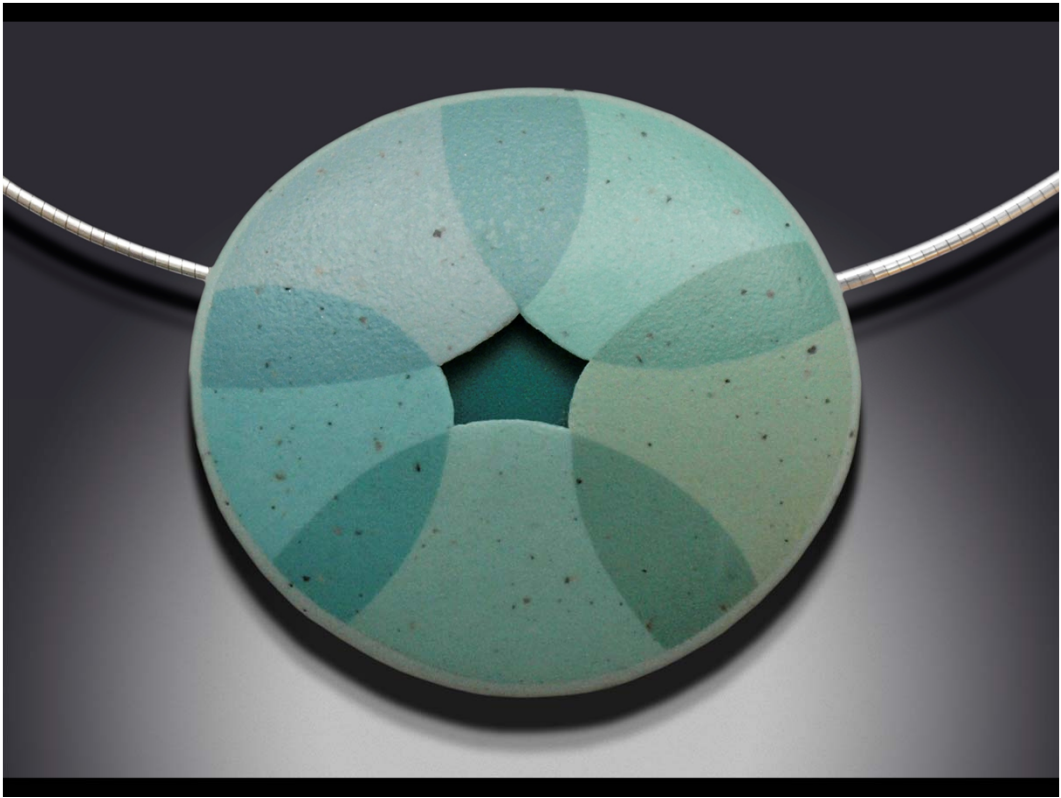
Add the influence of German born American and artist Joseph Albers and his studies in transparencies.

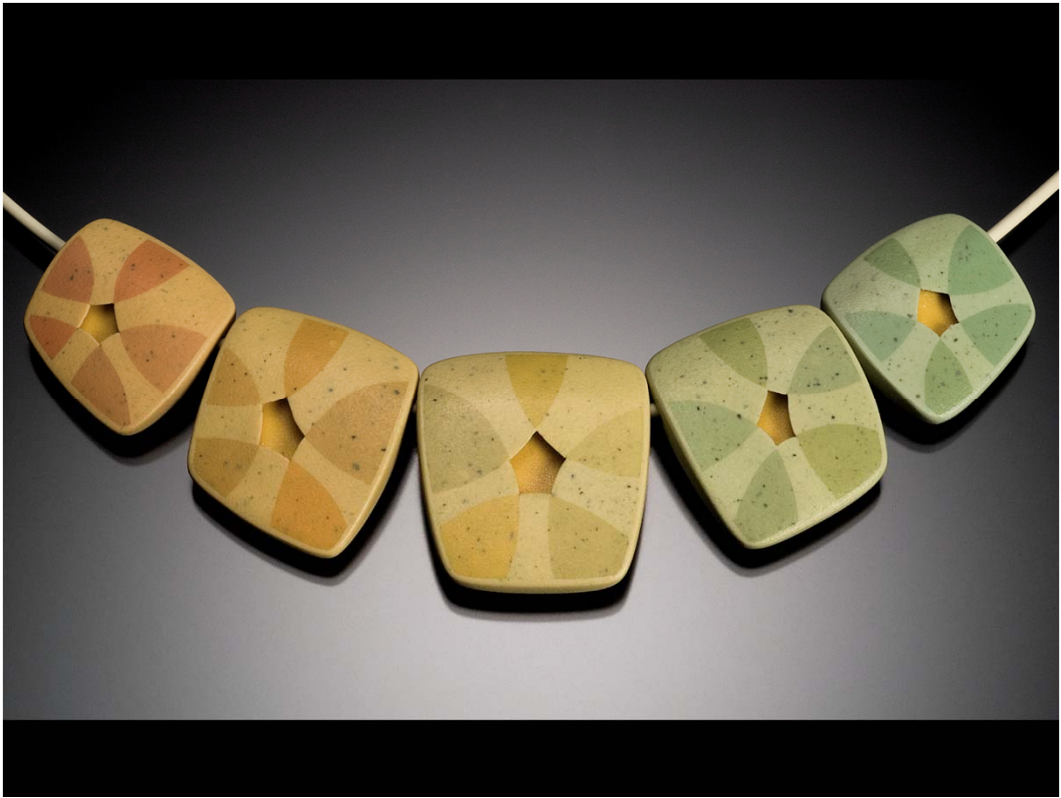












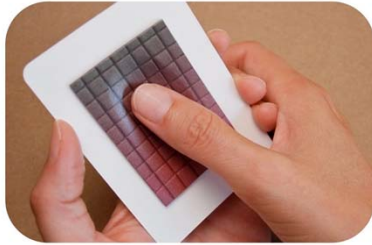


Insight Creativity

-Evolutionary Creativity: when new ideas evolve from earlier ones in your own body of work (sometimes also inspired by outside influence, or collaboration).

Example 1: Sponge Bezeling

Example 2: Dimensional Canework













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Version 2

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The right brain thinkers...

This is all about narrowing the
parameters...

Cutting Edge Necklace...

Broken Telephone Project...

Broken Internet Project...



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Confined Creativity

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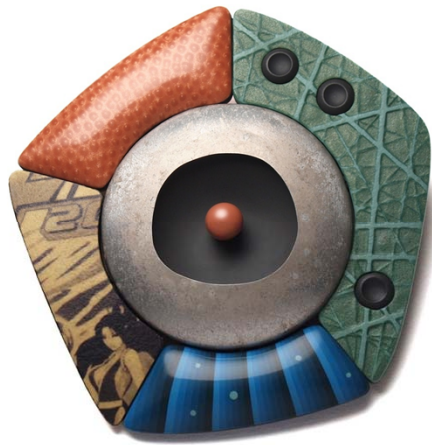
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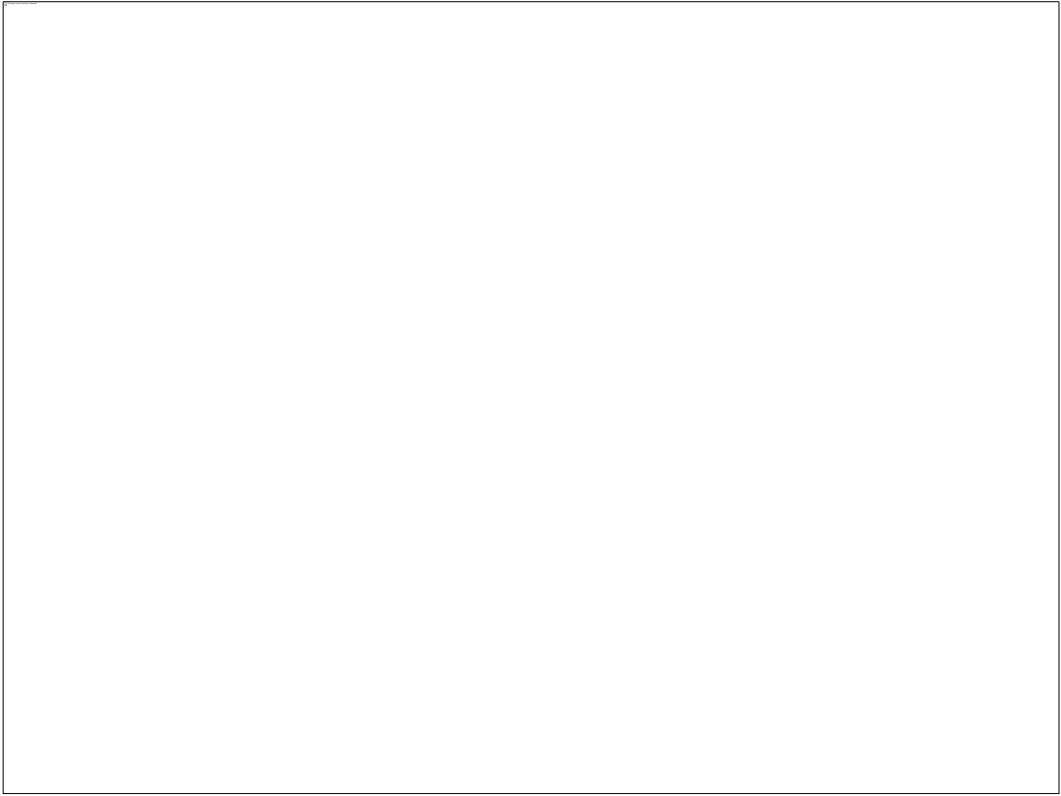














How do you develop a
personal artistic voice?







