POETICS OF AGING

WHAT THE GREAT MASTERS OF ART CAN TEACH US ABOUT LIVING WITH CREATIVITY, VITALITY AND MEANING IN THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE

New Realities

- Longevity Revolution Means It's Not Your Parent's Retirement
- The Age Wave is Aging
- The World is More Complicated
- Creativity is the New Survival Skill

Given these new realities how can we live our next phase with creativity, vitality and meaning?

Blind Contour Drawing

Eric Erickson Adult Development Stages

Eric Erickson Adult Development Stages

- 6 Stages between Ages 0 and 40
- 2 Stages between 40 and End of Life
 - **Adulthood**

➢Old Age

Gene Cohen's 4 Phases of Adult Development

- I. Midlife Re-evaluation Early 40s to late 50s

 Sense of mortality for first time—sense of quest
- II. Liberation Mid 50s to early 70s
 If not now when—sense of personal freedom
- III. Summing Up --- Late 60s into 80s

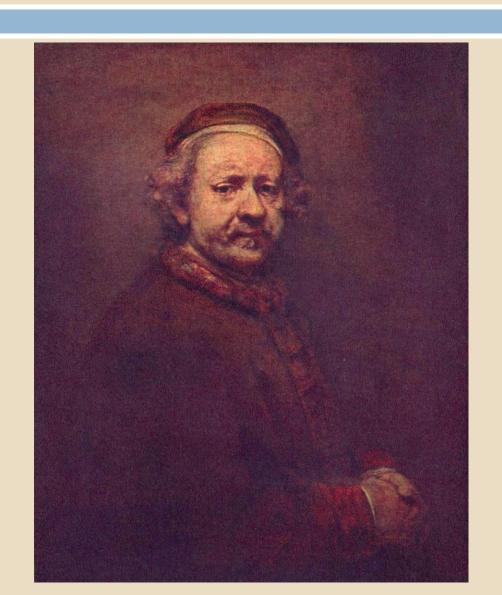
 Motivated to share wisdom—finding meaning
- IV. Encore -- Late 70's to End of Life

 Desire to restate and reaffirm major themes in our lives

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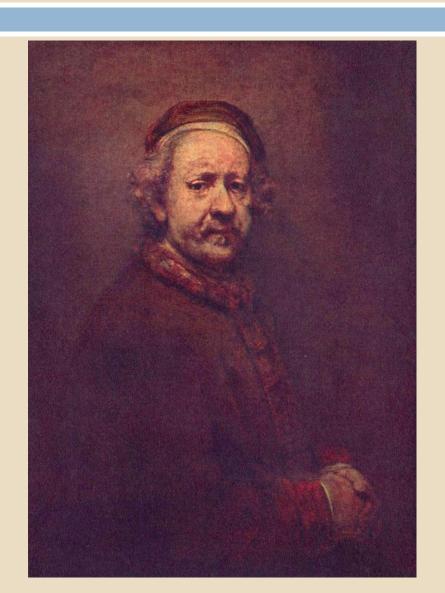


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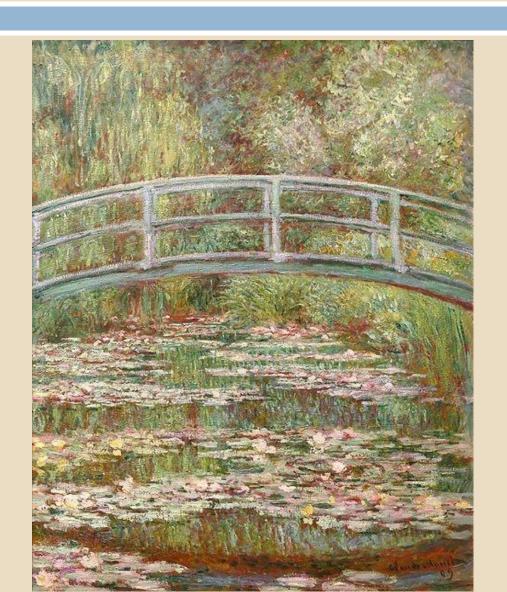


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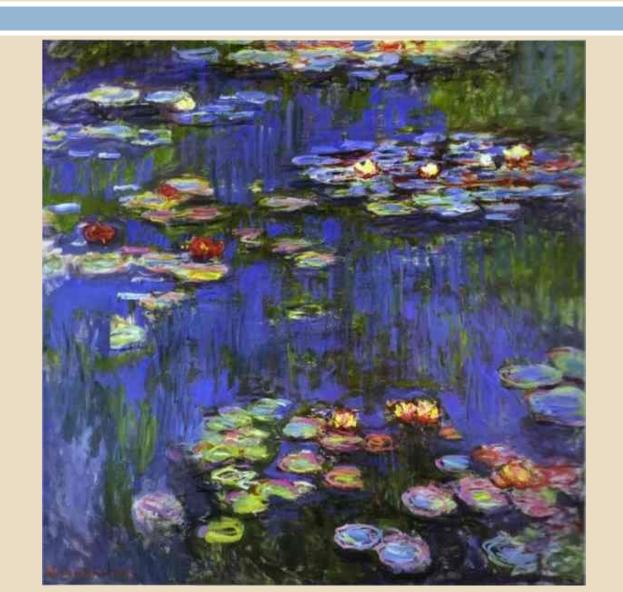




1899 (59)



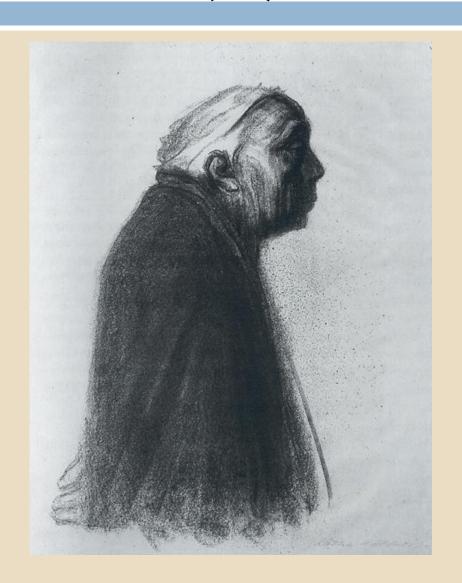
1920-23 (80-83)



Kathe Kollwitz The Weavers 1893 (31)



Self Portrait 1938 (71)



My Journey

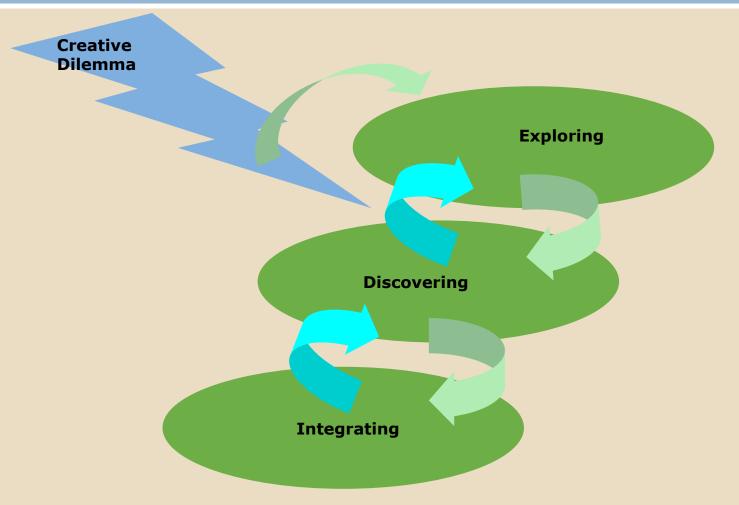
100+ Interviews The Great Artists

Insights:

- Life Change is a creative process
- Life Change mirrors the creative process of the great artist
- Life Change takes specific creative skills
- These creative skills are learnable and applicable to our lives because they are life skills



The 4 Dimensions of Life Change



DIMENSION	PURPOSE
Creative Dilemma	To Disturb
Exploration	To Learn
Discovery	To Discern
Integration	To Fulfill

How do we learn to navigate the Dimensions of Life Change?

Seven Creative Skills

- **Preparation** Deliberately engaging in activities which prepare our brains for creative work
- **Seeing** The ability to discern new connections, gain fresh perspective, and stay alive to new possibilities
- **Using Context** Understanding the environments in which we work and live and using that knowledge to make changes in our lives
- **Embracing Uncertainty** Acting on the opportunities, sometimes hidden, presented by change and uncertainty
- Taking Risks Acting without certainty of outcome
- Discipline Acting consistently whether or not one feels motivated
- Collaboration Engaging with others to help us make desired changes

Seeing

The ability to discern new connections, gain fresh perspective, and stay alive to new possibilities

- Are aware of preconceptions and biases about ourselves and others
- Look at situations as though we are seeing them for the first time
- Pay attention to our internal emotions and external relationships
- Pay attention to what we fear or are reluctant to face
- Make connections that were not previously there

Seeing Strategies

- Stepping Back from the Canvas moving yourself some distance from your day to day life or work to gain a fresh perspective
- Paying Attention to Negative Space tuning into thoughts and feelings we tend to avoid, deny or undervalue
- Looking at Things Upside Down radically shifting perspective.

 Turning the premise of our thinking completely around
- Cultivating the Mind of Child introducing the spirit of play and spontaneity into the way we look at things, unbound by rules. Allowing ourselves to return to what gives us joy and energy without pre-judgment

Stepping Back from the Canvas

"Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer. Go so



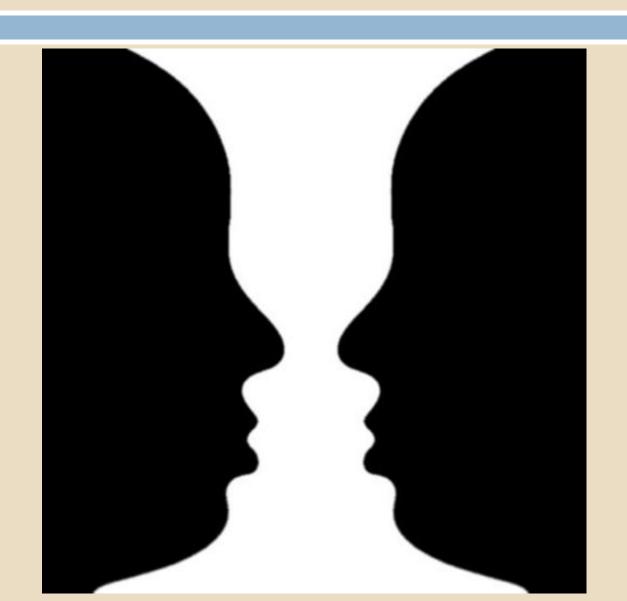
your judgment will be surer. Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller and more of it can be taken in at a glance, and a lack of harmony and proportion is more readily seen."

Stepping Back from the Canvas Questions

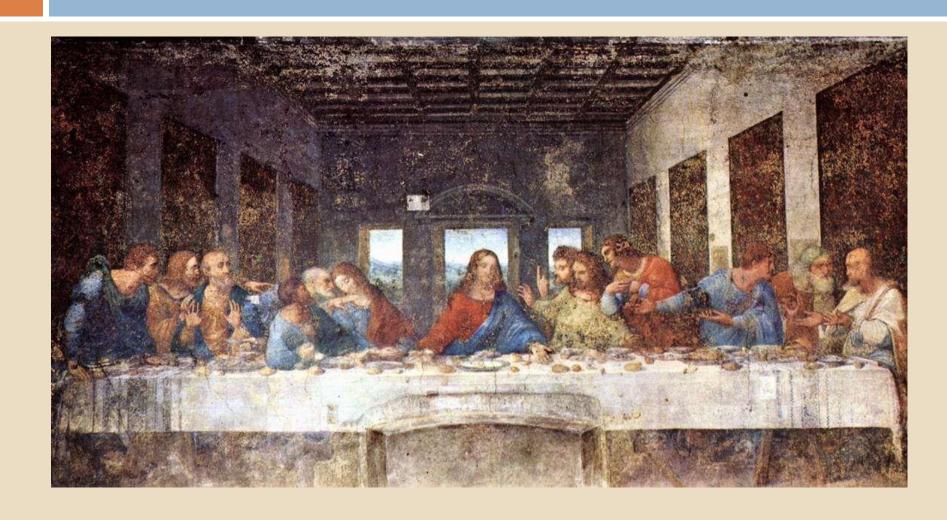
- What do I really want to do in my life?
- How do I really want to be in my life?
- Am I in alignment or out of alignment with what I want to do and how I want to be in my life?
- Are there things inside of me that want to get out that I am not allowing to get out?

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Paying Attention to Negative Space What's Negative? What's Positive?



Leonardo Da Vinci The Last Supper, 1495-1498

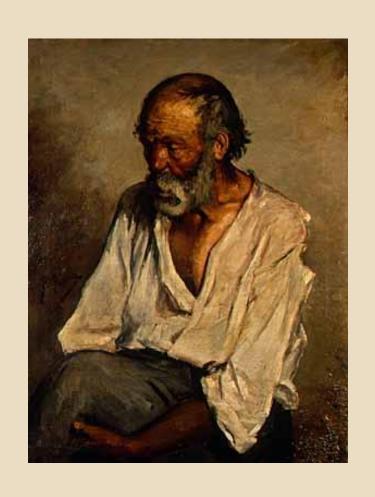


Negative Space Questions

- When you think of change what fears and anxieties come to the surface? How are they influencing the way you approach or hesitate to approach change?
- What values do you hold dear that are not being fully realized or expressed in your life?
- What joys have receded from your life?
- What has disappeared from your life that is important to you?

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Who Painted These?

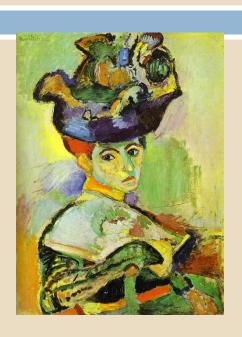




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Henri Matisse (1867-1954)

"The effort needed to see things without distortion demands a kind of courage; and this courage is essential to the artist, who has to look at everything as though he were seeing it for the first time; he has to look at life as he did when he was a child and if he loses that faculty, he cannot express himself in an original, that is, a personal way."



What does it mean to cultivate the mind of a child?

Cultivating the Mind of A Child

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into the way we look at things, unbound by rools.

Allowing ourselves to return to what gives us joy and energy without pre-judgment.

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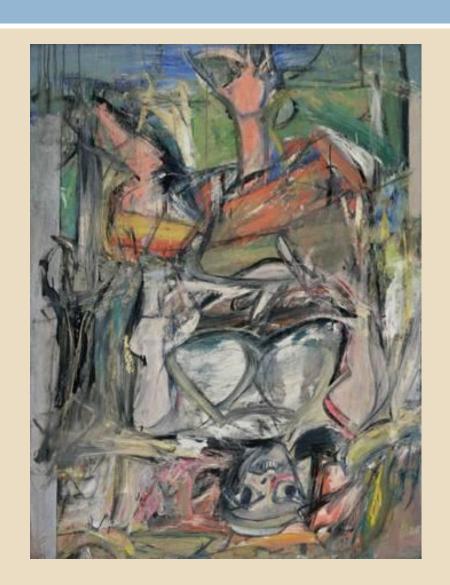
TooToo

Looking at Things Upside Down From Wilhem de Kooning's Biography

"He was extremely spontaneous, just turned things around, which is what I mean about how...he would take a pack of cigarettes and turn it upside down and say, "You see?" So he taught me to see in that sense. You know, he'd always turn paintings around. Every painting should work on all four sides. He loved seeing how things looked upside down, which was part of his vision."

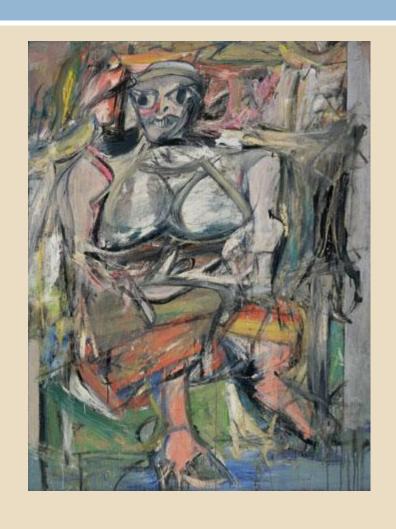
Wilhem de Kooning,

Woman I, 1950-52



Wilhem de Kooning

Woman I, 1950-52



Looking at Things Upside Down

Turning things upside down means focusing on possibilities not limitations.

I Changed..., but not really....

Renoir's Last Words

Becoming a Life Change Artist; 7 Creative Skills to Reinvent Yourself at Any Stage of Life (Penguin Avery)

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Quick Creative Vitality Test

Rate yourself on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)
l make an effort to engage in activities outside my normal
routine (for instance, take a class or workshop, attend an
event, meet someone outside my normal circle of friends and
family, eat at a restaurant I normally would not choose, etc.)
l regularly engage in physical activities
l regularly engage in creative activities (drawing, painting, music, crafts making, writing, cooking)
Taking risks comes naturally to me
I usually seek to collaborate with others on projects I
undertake
l easily adapt to changing circumstances.

What to do with your scores

- If you mostly scored 4s and 5's you are well on your way to living creatively and with vitality. Keep the momentum going!
- If you mostly scored 1s and 2s you have an opportunity to develop ways to tap into your innate creativity. It has been proven that every one of these areas can be improved. Start by picking the one which would most excite you. Check out the additional resources page.
- If you scored 3's select one of the items to begin to work on. You are on your way and it may not take much to move yourself to a 4 or 5. Next steps. Pick one. Additional resources: Bibliography, organizations CV, DWN, LPN.
- Keep in mind that research has show that all areas can be improved.

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