

Art Is A Verb, Not A Noun

Most people don't realize how much *courage* it takes for an artist to show their work to people. Courage, as defined by Mark Twain, is not the lack of fear, but rather being able to move forward in spite of it. In my previous article, [If You Are Addicted](#), I introduce the notion that there is a difference between making *art* and making a *painting* (sculpture, photography, or whatever your medium is). Expression of your unique form of creativity is an addiction that very few artists have any choice about. It's the need that drives you, identifies who you are as a person to yourself as well as others and keeps you centered. But, creating ART, takes more than just making the object. After years of talking to artists too timid or too scared to show their work, I've heard just about every excuse in the book... fear of rejection, lack of time, not interested in exposure, not ready, the list goes on and on. But for some, there comes a point at which they can no longer ignore the need for their artwork to be seen. It's as if the artwork itself is demanding exposure. It is here, that the distinction between an object that sits on the wall begins the transition into becoming art.

As I define it, *art* is the activity that occurs in the space that exists between my eyeballs and that object you have created. It is the interaction between the collective experiences in my brain, as I process the way you have chosen to express the collective experiences in your brain. It is only when this exchange takes place, that your work becomes *art*. It is when you share your creation with the outside world that you truly become an artist. Sadly, for many artists, this is an experience they will never have. My goal, therefore, is to help prepare you to take the leap from being an object maker, to being an artist. By understanding the responsibility you have to get your work seen, you can begin to take the important first steps in becoming an *artist*.

1. **Self Evaluation:** Spend some time thinking about what your real goals are as an artist and write them down. Nobody has to ever see it. Don't let yourself limit the possibilities just because you think they are impossible.
2. **Excuses:** Try to define as many reasons as possible that you haven't made a consistent effort to show your work...again, write this down. (No cheating, showing your work to one or two people that are friends or relatives doesn't count)
3. **Objectivity:** Try to make a realistic assessment of the quality of your work. This is not what other people have said about your work, including teachers or mentors. It is an honest, naked, look at your process, by YOU, to see if there is any room for improvement or continued exploration.

Now, the hard part begins. If in the self evaluation you discover, that for you, true satisfaction comes from merely *making* the work, with no one EVER seeing it, then you can stop reading this article. But, if you are like most artists, this exercise will help you to determine the level of commitment you have to showing your work, in relation to the readiness of your work. For example, if in your self evaluation you find that your fantasies include gallery or museum shows, or people appreciating your work in any public context, the need to share your work is an important element in your ultimate satisfaction. If you also feel this work is the best quality work you are capable of making, then you have an OBLIGATION *to the work* to deal with each and every one of the things you have listed in Step 2. For the work to

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become art it *must* be experienced by others and you must assume the responsibility of making that happen, at whatever cost to you or your ego. (For suggestions on how to make consistent efforts to market your work, read [Doing your Homework](#)). The most important thing to remember is whatever reaction people have to your work is irrelevant. But, it is that necessary reaction that breathes life into your art and completes the process of your original intention, making *art*!