

TEN TIPS FOR CREATING VISUAL DIALOG

Cherry Jeffs

OVERVIEW

As artists we can use our own imagery - as well as that of others - as a starting point to stimulate 'visual dialogs' that help us better understand our work, our process, our career needs and our motivations. These dialog techniques also allow us enhance our knowledge of the creative work of others and to reflect on the position of our work in the context of contemporary and classical art. In addition to techniques of visual dialog, we can also use written and oral dialogs to further deepen our insight into our work and to increase the awareness and appreciation of our visual work by others.

TIP ONE: STEP IN TO DIALOG WITH YOUR ART

This exercise provides a novel, detached vantage point from which to explore our art and improves our compositional skills.

- Choose one of your artworks.
- Imagine yourself standing within the composition.
- Contemplate the rest of the artwork from within this space.
- Move on to another part and repeat.

Sense the space as you would entering a room, noting fields of activity and energetic patterns. Write notes about what you discover.

TIP TWO: STEP BACK WITH POSITIVE QUESTIONING

Positive questioning helps us see our art-making in a motivational light and stimulates a list of 'next actions' to take our ideas forward.

Simply contemplate your work and consider phrases such as:

“The exciting part of this is/was...”

“The surprising discovery I made was...”

“I have found that I might be interested in...”

Develop your own questions to use whenever you are unsure how to proceed with your work.

TIP THREE: YOUR ARTIST'S STATEMENT FOR MARKETING AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Writing your Artist's Statement creates dialog with your subconscious about your artistic direction as well as a means to connect with your audience. Keep your statement vibrant by letting it evolve and mature alongside your work. Make it brief, clear, and avoid "art-speak." Remember that your statement should intrigue viewers and make them want to look at your art.

TIP FOUR: DIALOG WITH YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Changing the way we view our surroundings stimulates new qualities of perception and direction.

Try this exercise:

1. Place a rock in the middle of your garden or floor.
2. Move around it slowly, noticing how its appearance changes according to your vantage point - different angles, higher, lower, closer and further away.
3. Imagine looking out at the world from within the rock.
4. Imagine the rock looking at you!

TIP FIVE: DIALOG WITH THE MASTERS

Exploring the works of artists who went before us shouldn't end when we leave school. Researching a particular artist or movement lends greater depth to our understanding of both contemporary and classical art and the position of

our own work within that context. We have access to a permanent source of learning and inspiration by observing how the Masters have answered universal questions of theme, light, colour, composition etc.

TIP SIX: CREATE LIVE DIALOG WITH INTERVIEWS

Interviewing another artist is a stimulating experience which deepens our knowledge and understanding of the creative practices of other artists and gives us insights into our own. Conversely, agreeing to be interviewed ourselves allows us to share our own perceptions and help others better comprehend our work. We can further broaden the scope of the dialog by using these interviews in blogposts, podcasts, catalog texts etc.

TIP SEVEN: CONCEPT DRAWINGS FOR INNER DIALOG

This quick exercise keeps the channel open between your conscious and subconscious mind:

- On a blank folio, draw a rectangle with a pen or pencil.
- Below, write a question that is bothering you.
- Within the rectangle make marks as a response to the question. Use gestures and strokes not symbols to convey what you feel.
- When the drawing feels finished, note down the insights/answers it offers.

TIP EIGHT: JOURNAL DAILY

Keeping a daily journal - visual and/or written - is key practice for artists. Here we express ourselves honestly and deeply without fear of scrutiny or ridicule; we experiment with new marks and concepts; we voice hopes and fears about our artwork, devise goals and visualise how to achieve them; we keep the channel to our subconscious open even as life's pressures squeeze our creative time; we listen to the quiet voice within.

TIP NINE: GALLERY SHOWS AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIALOG

Showing our work is a fantastic opportunity to dialog with our audience about our art. When the gallery space is busy, listen out for comments viewers make - they are valuable clues to the questions people might have about your work. Take notes and prepare responses in your mind. When the gallery space is quieter, approach viewers and talk to them about your work using your prepared responses.

TIP TEN: BLOGGING AS DIALOG

Blogging enhances awareness of our artwork; it encourages interaction with our audience reveals their likes and dislikes and permits them to pose questions. Blogging generates information for publicity material and our Artist's Statement; it stimulates us to catalog our work so that quality images - with all their vital statistics - are always to hand. In blogging we refine our answers and increase our confidence in speaking about our art.

RESOURCES

[Positive Questioning Art Review Sheet](#) - Cherry Jeffs

I'd Rather Be In The Studio, *The Artist's No-Excuse Guide to Self-Promotion* - Alyson B. Stanfield (2008, Pentas Press)

The Creative Habit, *Learn It And Use It For Life* - Twyla Tharp (2006, Simon & Schuster)

ABOUT CHERRY JEFFS

Cherry is a mixed-media artist and artist-empowerment coach living in Southern Spain. In her former lives, as a graphic designer and jewellery designer-maker, she cleverly disguised the subconscious block that kept her from her true passion of making art.

Cherry transforms everything she learned from this experience into coaching alchemy to empower artists treading a similar path, helping them fight blocks, set achievable goals and discover hidden meaning within their personal stories and myths.

Cherry runs her BLAST YOUR BLOCKS course and other online courses regularly throughout the year. Visit www.dialogvisual.com for more information or drop Cherry an email on dialogvisual {at} gmail {dot} com.