

Ep #122: Who Am I?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

[The Art School Podcast](#) with Leah Badertscher

Ep #122: Who Am I?

There is an age-old question, a philosophical question posed by great teachers, mystics, poets, artists, human beings throughout the ages. And you may have heard of it. You likely may have asked yourself this question and contemplated your response, or responses, to the question; who am I?

Who am I? Who are you? While this episode can't hope to answer that question, I do have a personal story that I want to share with you. And I hope it may inspire you to give yourself the time and space to reflect on this question and to get to know who you really are.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Hello everyone, and welcome to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. Oh my goodness, I feel like there has been an energetic corner turned. We're almost at spring. It's March-ish, early March. I forget the day. Oh my goodness, it's been an amazing week, a very full week, the first week of Art School.

And my heart is full. It has felt so fresh and so much beautiful energy, like throwing the windows open on a spring day, like the first day that you can and all that sunlight and fresh air comes in. And I'm soaking it in and getting to enjoy connecting with former members that are returning for the Art School, and then also getting to know all of the awesome new members we have this time around.

I'm also just excited for the growing things part of spring. We had quite the yard and garden things going on over at the old farmhouse site. We had transplanted things from my parents' farm in Iowa. Some of those

[The Art School Podcast](#) with Leah Badertscher

Ep #122: Who Am I?

transplants are over 100 years old and have been passed down from generation to generation. Certain different shrubs and flowers and bushes and fruit and vegetable plants. Well, not vegetable, but rhubarb and raspberry, to be specific. Those are the ancient ones.

And then we have trees over in these grounds, this area where our new home is. But mostly, other than we did plant some bushes and quite a few trees, I guess, like 50-something around the perimeter of the property, but otherwise no gardens yet. So, I am looking forward to digging in the dirt. And kind of geeking out over one of my favorite, of many awesome birthday gifts, was my mom sent me one of her favorite garden tools. Not hers, but a new one for me because she's not willing to give hers up.

It's a garden trowel with inches written on it and it's perfectly shaped for separating things that, you know, in the roots, if you want to divide plants or for planting bulbs. So, I'm kind of amused. I don't know that myself 20 years ago would have been so stoked about a garden trowel. But now, I am. And just looking forward to more days of being outside and I'm loving this weather, that even if it's in the double-digits, so much better to run in the double-digits and it's sunnier earlier, so I can run in the morning, or sunnier later, so I can run and be outside after work, either running or with the kids.

So, it feels amazing. And I hope wherever you are, you are also feeling that there has been a corner turned and feeling some amazing energy. And if you are not, I am sending you so much because I have more than enough to share right now.

So, today's episode, that question of questions; who am I? And like I said in the intro, it is an age-old question, thousands upon thousands of years that humans have been asking themselves this. So, obviously we're not going

Ep #122: Who Am I?

to get to the bottom of it in a podcast episode. But what I do want to offer you today is this story.

Because this story has been surfacing for me in my own mind and in conversations that I've been having in the last few weeks. And I've spoken recently about this concept of recalibration.

And I think it is an especially empowering concept if you know you are in something for the long haul and yet, when you are in something for the long haul, not and yet, inevitably you're going to be challenged.

If you're going for your dreams and you're really living fully alive, you know it's an adventure. You know it's our hero's journey. You know that you are going to be challenged.

And so, I love thinking about calibrating yourself to the energy of the goal or the dream or to who you really are and recalibrating yourself when it seems like you've been knocked back or you've lost your way a little bit. To me, it's so much more empowering and forward-moving and constructive than, I'm lost, or I've lost it, or the wheels have come off, or I've fallen off the wagon, or I've lost my way, calibration and recalibration.

And again, to that central question, who am I? Which is a question that we consider often in the Art School, and I think is something that you are just going to consider often if you are on a meaningful path and you want to make art that's meaningful to you, no matter what your medium. You want to create a life that's meaningful to you. It's this constant awakesness and awareness and going back and forth.

So, sometimes you may think you have answered the question and you go forth with your creation and you're like, "Oh wait, what? Why does this

Ep #122: Who Am I?

seem somewhat out of alignment? Why am I feeling the need to recalibrate?”

And so, that is a great opportunity to come back, to pause and ask the question, who am I? And like I mentioned, as I have been thinking about this question again myself and revisiting it and working with clients and other colleagues and this question has come up, and it's interesting too, just a little sidenote, I think it comes up too during this time when there has been a lot of potential burnout.

That is maybe a different topic for a different time, but I do think it's related and that burnout can be this great invitation to come back and recalibrate and visit the question of, who am I? But burnout, oh my goodness, let's do six episodes on that. I'm actually pretty excited to talk about that later.

But back to the story that keeps coming up. So, a few years ago – actually, it must have been maybe five or six years ago, I went to a painting workshop hosted by this artist that I had followed for a while. I happened upon her work because I was at the campus bookstore one day and perusing some art magazines and these paintings, this spread about this artist's paintings. And I read the article and I was so fascinated by this woman's bio and what she had to say, that I bought the magazine because I wanted to take it home and cut out the article and keep it. It just was thought-provoking.

And then fast forward a little bit and we were living in London, our family was, for a semester while my husband was teaching abroad. And we lived right around the corner from the National Portrait Gallery in Trafalgar Square, which was amazing to have right around the corner. It was so, so incredible, so surreal.

Ep #122: Who Am I?

And obviously, I went there and availed myself of that being my neighborhood and went there as often as I could. And one of the events that I really loved was the international portrait exhibition. And I went and it was from across the room, I saw this stunning portrait, again, grabbed my eye like, why does that seem familiar to me?

And I went over and looked and I recognized the person's name. I hadn't seen the painting before, but I recognized the style. And it turns out to have been done – it was a self-portrait of the woman I'd read about in the magazine. And her name is Felicia Forte.

So, fast forward to when we get back to the states and I was like, "I must go to one of this woman's workshops." Because she offered live painting workshops, like three-day workshops in various locations. And the one that really appealed to me was an alla prima portraiture workshop. And alla prima is a technique where you do direct painting of layers of wet paint on previously administered layers of wet paint.

And Felicia was doing – these are oil paintings. And I had started in oil paints and then had moved away from it when I had children, and I have never done any formal portraiture painting, but I had wanted to. And again, was just really drawn to her style and what seemed to be her philosophical approach, I guess, to painting. And so, I was stoked.

And I went. And it was an awesome three days. Not all of my painting was awesome. The last painting I did, however, I really loved. And I was actually quite proud of, never having done anything like that before myself. And I looked through my files to see if I could find some of the photos of that work. And so, I'll put those in the show notes, because that might be kind of fun.

Ep #122: Who Am I?

So, long story short, I learned so much from that experience and had a great time. And here is the part that I wanted to share with you today. Here was one of my greatest takeaways.

Felicia really emphasized when she was doing portraiture, getting this area of the eye, the relationship of the eye to the nose, investing time and attention getting that right. Because, as she said, once you get that right, that eye to nose relationship, there is so much going on there. It's just really fascinating, once you drop into it, everything that is going on there.

And once you get that right, then it really helps to build out the rest of the relationship. So, if you can get that relationship right, you can build out from there. If you don't get that relationship right, you can build out from there, but everything is kind of off and it just feels kind of wonky and it's not working and it's not going to feel satisfying or look satisfying to you.

And the thing with alla prima in the way that Felicia ran these workshops was you would work in these times increments where you would get so much done in 20 minutes, and then you built out to 40 minutes, and then maybe the last session was 45, like working with one model. And you'd take these breaks. And then really work to develop something cohesive by the end of the cycle.

So, not likely that you're going to finish the whole face, obviously, or whole portrait in that amount of time. And it's been years, so we might have had a few more sessions in there. But it was definitely not enough to finish the whole face. But what sticks with me about those increments is that you had to commit to something and then move on.

So, it was this balance of paying close and careful attention to that relationship, that area of the eye and the nose, and then also with that time limit and needing to move on, it was that balance between paying careful

Ep #122: Who Am I?

attention and also not moving into paralyzing perfection and just needing to complete something, which allowed you to evaluate and learn something.

And I was really amazed at how much I was able to learn and improve in just a few days. And again, something that has stuck with me ever since, not only for its application to portraiture and to drawing, but really the universal application, is when you can identify a master key area, which in that painting exercise, practice, is that that eye nose relationship is.

If you can really get that right, it helps so many of the pieces downstream come together, or at least makes it possible for them to come together so that the whole piece, the whole work, the process, the project feels more satisfying, and looks more satisfying to you.

And I love the metaphorical application because it's the eye, right? So, it brings me back to the question of, who am I? And that it is okay if we're like, "Oh, this is who I am." And then we go out to, from that place, from that identity, from that self-concept, from that story and that narrative, we go out to build our life and we do the best we can with what we have and where we are and what we know about ourselves and the world.

And then, we live into and we are like, "Oh, alright, time for a revision, things feel a little bit off. What should I do?" And rather than moving around the parts – because that's the thing with the portraiture. You could say, like, "Oh my gosh, the chin and the mouth look off," or the cheek looks off, or the skin tone, the color, the palette looks off.

And you could try to redo those and fix those, but if the fundamental issue is stemming from an improper relationship of the eye, like of everything to the eye, then none of those adjustments is going to do the trick.

Ep #122: Who Am I?

So, there is that story and that metaphor for you this week. And that, my friends, is my coach with me. So, this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really work with me, and coach with me.

Spend some time thinking about that, just thinking about that story and what it means to you. I don't think that I should even belabor the point, but let it unfold for you, and think about whether you allow yourself enough time to integrate what you learned, to reflect on what you learned. If you allow yourself the kindness, the grace, the abundance to revisit how you have drawn your eye, yourself, into the central aspect of your life, your self-portrait, how is that central eye drawn in? What is the relationship of that central eye and how is that affecting everything that comes later?

And again, I think this is a topic that we revisit time and time again throughout our lives and we're so fortunate to, and it's different than a self-centered navel-gazing because it really is honoring the dignity of your life and knowing that that also deserves that time for reflection and revisiting and that also, your relationship to that eye determines your relationship to everything else in your life.

So, if things downstream seem off, off-color, out of relationship, it's just the picture is not fitting the way you sense it should, come back and pay some loving attention to the eye.

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you've enjoyed this podcast, if these episodes have been useful for you – and I hope they have been – the best thing you can do to pay it forward is to share, is to subscribe, is to go to iTunes and leave a review. And let me just say again this week, the truly, truly best thing that you could do to pay it forward is to do the coach with me, is to not just take this in and be a consumer of information, but really take it, if it is useful for you, if it is

Ep #122: Who Am I?

relevant, and use it to be an empowered, beautiful creator of meaning, of depth. Create something rich and beautiful and strong in your own life, for yourself, and then others if you want to as well.

And I know the kind of listeners we have and I know many of you are already doing that. So, thank you for being a part of this community. And when you want to dive in deeper, you know I would love to have you join us in the Art School.

We have currently started the March 2021 session, the next 12 weeks. But stay tuned and send us an email if you are interested at support@leahcb.com or go to my website and sign up for our newsletters and you will be the first to know about any free upcoming workshops. We have one every month and I would love to have you join us for that.

To close today, I wanted to share this quote, which I actually had written in a journal from that I went to Felicia's workshop and was reflecting on her process and my experience there and what I really appreciated about it. And it was a quote from an article by Pema Chodron. And I think you'll understand why I think it's relevant to include in a podcast episode about the question, who am I? Because it really takes this heightened level of awareness and then also compassion to be able to ask this question and the application of this quote, whether it is to that fundamental, philosophical question, or whether it is to how you develop your work in the world, your art in the world, and develop towards that higher expression of you and your gifts. I think you'll see the relevance.

“Work to achieve the highest level of your personal development, and do so while remaining judgeless, compassionate, and effective in your leadership. Remember, being judgeless does not mean being unaware. It means that you do not condemn that which your awareness leads you to see. This is

Ep #122: Who Am I?

the radiance of the new evolution of human consciousness. This is the pathway to the greatest possibilities of life.”

And that’s what I wish for all of you. May you find the pathway to the greatest possibilities of life. Have a beautiful week, a radiant week, everyone, and I look forward to talking with you next time.