

Ep #139: Artistic Inspiration and the Key to Finding It



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With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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“The object is not to make art. The object is to be in that state which makes art inevitable,” Robert Henri, American painter, and I’d say philosopher. This phrase from Robert Henri was also the one that helped me articulate my core functional creative philosophy. And it is also one of the fundamental teachings of the Art School.

And that it that it is by cultivating an extraordinary way of being in mind, body, and spirit that we make the extraordinary results, outcomes, dreams, visions we desire to create inevitable.

In today’s podcast, I’m going to focus in on a key element of what it is that we’re cultivating when we talk about cultivating this extraordinary way of being. In particular, we’re going to talk about the roles that presence and productivity have and the roles that we want them to have in our creative process and in our lives.

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*. I’m excited to visit with you about this topic today. And case in point, I am recording this on a beautiful summer day. I have the windows to my studio open. One of my favorite background soundtracks for painting is just to hear the insects and the birds and the wind and occasionally my very rowdy chickens, and children too. Although two of them are at camp and one is upstairs working on his own art projects.

The younger two come home later today from camp and I have a sitter there to help with that because I have sitters during the summer on

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Tuesday and Thursday because those are my go-to-town focus, create workdays. And then my husband and I navigate the other days of the week in terms of who's home, who's working, when we're all together, and things like that.

And so, my point being that I am right here in the thick of you with this conversation about the roles of presence and productivity. Because I live in the United States, in the western culture where it can often seem that there is a tyranny of productivity. And as an artist, I probably don't need to go into depth to speak with you about what that can do to your creativity, what that can do to your own way of being and your personal health and way of being.

And you don't have to be an artist to feel this way either. You could be creating anything and there is such a difference from creating when you are in creative mode, when your body, your mind are in homeostasis, you have coherent heart and mind, your biology feel safe, your central nervous system feels safe and is cooperating. And it's completely different when you are creating and feeling stressed and you are in survival or fight or flight mode.

And some of us create from a perpetual trauma response and we're able to get it done and we tell ourselves that we're pushing through and overcoming resistance, but there's a difference from creating from either a semi-traumatized state or just perpetually being in that survival mode versus the resistance that you can experience any time, including when you're in creative flow, but then you encounter it differently.

You perceive things as opportunities rather than problems. Your perception is completely different. And so, while you may have heard me say this before, it's one of my things, to me, spirituality must be pragmatic and

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pragmatism must be spiritual. If it's not spiritual for me, it's not pragmatic. And if it's not pragmatic, it's not spiritual.

So, I love being in the world and of the world and also connected and in and of a different world. And then channeling that into this world. So, that is to say I love myself productive days. I love that feeling. I love that feeling of completion and I also know that it can have a shadow side. It can have a side that is too near-term, that actually short-circuits something greater that wants to fall through.

And I also know that it can come from a place of scarcity, from a place of, "Well, let me hurry up and prove that I have evidence that I'm good at this thing, or that my vision is correct, or let me make some money so I don't forget how to make money," or any places of scarcity from which we create anything, versus what I truly want to cultivate in my life. And that is an extraordinarily creative state of being.

Meaning that I don't just pound things out and get things done. I'm tapped into something else and I'm considering the really great questions for my life. And to continue a conversation from previous episodes, I'm channeling my precious attention into something very meaningful for me.

So, I know this is a topic that will interest many of you because I know it is something that comes up with many of my clients and also friends and colleagues. So, I wanted just to offer you this continuing conversation and perhaps a pivot moment in your week as you hear this and go to your studio or sit at your computer.

For me, it is so grounding and can bring me back to my center to remind myself of what is the way of being that I'm cultivating. Because from that state, inevitably my art will flow. Whether that art be a painting, a poem, a story, a coaching program, a podcast, or for you, whether it be a song, a

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new service you're offering, a way to create income, a garden, a painting, whatever it is for you, an opportunity.

So, something I ask myself is what is the mind of the master? What is that like? What is the mind of the master? What is the way of being of a master? And again, I'm using that word not in terms of dominion over, but just in terms of someone who has cultivated, and by that I mean they have give effort to develop their faculties, their imagination, their mental capabilities, their emotional wherewithal and processing their spirit, their ability to love, their ability to perceive and their ability to receive and their ability to shift and see things differently.

How am I cultivating that way of being with whatever is in front of me, using my vision to inform me? So, this is a continuation of the conversations we've had about spaciousness, about specificity, focus, and also about creating the opportunity in your process for there to be receptivity. Because I've spoken in prior episodes and with my Art School students about we are not just production machines. It's not just us doing it, extracting something from ourselves, but there is this aspect of reception in creativity.

How do you create the kind of presence, the quality of attention in your life where you are able to receive greater ideas, greater inspiration, and also how do you cultivate the kind of presence where you know inspiration and an idea when you get it, even when it's a golden thread? I think this is something that can happen a lot in the early stages when I'm working with a client is they'll speak and it's clear to me that they are receiving high quality inspiration, but they haven't yet slowed down enough to know too that that high quality information is already coming through them.

And when we allow ourselves to have presence be every bit as desirable and remarkable and part of our vision and our life as some sort of place at which we arrive, when we allow presence to be an activity of

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consciousness, when we allow creativity and art to be a way that we can practice presence, therefore when we allow art and creativity to be a way that we are actively being conscious and cultivating our consciousness and evolving our consciousness, then we come to value our presence.

And then, in that valuing of our presence, we stop or we tend to discount the things that are occurring to us when we are present, that we receive when we are present. But when we are constantly fixated on what we're producing and when we're going to get it done and if it's going to be good enough, then we are in judgment mode. And then we lack the nuance – and I'll say it again – the presence to be able to receive different frequencies of information and to translate those, receive those, sit with those and let them move through us and let there be mystery in our lives that develops on its own as we are dancing along with it and developing with it.

This again is the magic of art and creativity, no matter what it is that you're creating. When you get out of your head exclusively and into your body to pull something – pull is maybe not the right word. Sometimes pull. Sometimes it's participating in the evocation of, the elicitation of, the development of something from the invisible world into the physical world.

It activates entirely different aspects of you. You are so much more than your rational mind. And the act of creating helps reengage you, helps reawaken these aspects of yourself and helps reengage you with them, helps reconnect you with them.

Anne Lamott, from her book *Bird by Bird* – which I love. Some Instructions on Writing and Life – she writes that, “You get your intuition back when you make space for it, when you stop the chattering of the rational mind. The rational mind doesn't nourish you. You assume that it gives you the truth because the rational mind is the golden calf that this culture worships. But

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this is not true. Rationality squeezes out much that is rich and juicy and fascinating.”

And I would add too, just utterly life-giving. And as she said, the rational mind doesn't nourish you. Getting in touch with these other aspects of you nourishes you in ways that you cannot understand. Again, mysterious. But that doesn't mean that it's not real.

And if you look at what the word mysterious and mystic shares, I think too this is a place where so much of our modern society particularly modern western – that's the one I know the best. That's the one I'll speak of – when we have developed this culture that says, “Well you're not creative unless you're an artist. And by the way, an artist looks like this...” I think that already divorces us from an opportunity to participate in mystery, for the opportunity for us to be mystics, which is to say to have direct experience and connection with the divine.

And that is why I think art and creativity are for all humans, all humans with a soul, and that it reengages you with that, and that is so deeply nourishing, and again, creates changes and fullness and richness in your life in ways that you cannot understand.

So, I want to bring this back to presence, to the quality of presence. And I shared with you that a question I will ask myself is like, what is the mind, the way of being of a master here?

And I shared a little bit about what master means to me, but here is where I'm going to jump into the coach with me, where I want you to not just listen, but to lean in and really work with me, coach with me.

I use the word master, but it really is a shorthand for the vision I have of who I really think I am, what I really think is available for me in this lifetime if

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I continue to focus, you know. Here is my way out of the box thinking. What I really think, I am already inside me now, perhaps in some nearby neighboring dimension and that I just keep practicing waking up more in that dimension and less in this dimension where I am limited and I'm going to wake up one day in this dimension and it will be that dimension.

So, again, master for me is like really a shorthand for the energy and the idea yes, but really the energy, the emotion, the way of being of potential for me and my soul and my humanity in this lifetime. So, for this coach with me, I would invite you to come up with what is the nuance, what is the extended definition of master for you, so that when you ask yourself, what is the way of being of a master here? That it really is a shorthand for you of this knowing you have of the potential that is you in your humanity and that you're in touch with that.

You know what the thoughts are. You know what the feelings are. You know what the feelings are not. You know what the level of freedom feels like. You know what layers of suffering and oppression and limitation and holding yourself back, how those are gone, what it is like to vibrate at a frequency where those are absent.

Other shorthands I will use that get me in touch with – you know I like the sacred twin intention approach. I've talked about that in previous episodes and all the time in the Art School. But using the vision as a way to inform the evolution of your consciousness, your spiritual evolution. That's one sacred twin intention. And the other twin intention is the actual physical manifestation. Because that helps you focus and that helps you keep it real.

So, you may know, if you've been following along, that one of my visions and intentions is to be an affluent artist, a highly successful, wealthy artist, writer, author, teacher, coach, entrepreneur, and to begin that, to have my

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baseline be making two million a year doing that work, you know, flowing from that, flowing from me, that I get paid to be me and to live what I love in the world.

So, another shorthand question I will ask myself is what is the mind of a multimillionaire artist? What is the way of being? What is the state of being of that level of creative powerhouse? And that's a question – I was even asking myself to get myself into the flow this morning because rubber meets the road, you bring it back down, what I was doing this morning, I wasn't producing, quote unquote, a finished product.

I'm making studies. I'm doing color studies. I'm experimenting, I'm playing. So I'm currently, in the last week or so from this, I probably have a pile of 200-plus different just color studies and mark-making, jotting ideas down. And then I'll go over to a few bigger canvases and try some things out. It doesn't look like an orderly coherent production line now.

But when I ask myself, what is the state of being of somebody who is next-level creative, next-level artist and also making money to boot? Her presence, her level of presence is she's in love with what she's doing. And it keeps coming back to that for me, that I'm deeply in love with the moment, deeply engaged with the moment. And it's a completely different orientation too to the obstacles that arise.

Like when something – I have a hard time finding the words because my mind is toggling back and forth, the way that a person describes who's trying to get somewhere, who's separate from their goal describes it is, "Oh gosh, this isn't working. This is a problem."

Whereas the way that someone who knows they are a creative powerhouse, knows that they are abundant and well supported and the ideas keep coming and the cultivation keeps coming and that this is such

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an amazing beautiful fun courageous fulfilling meaningful profound alive awake way to live life, when you're in that state, I don't think of it as a problem anymore. It's interesting. It's having a conversation with what's in front of me.

So, to bring this full circle, let's go back to the quote I shared from Robert Henri at the beginning, "The object is not to make art. The object is to be in that state which makes art inevitable." And then, from that, my functional creative philosophy, which is that it is by cultivating a way of being in mind, body, and spirit that those extraordinary results we dream of become inevitable.

And today's topic revolves around our relationship to presence and productivity in our work. And this could be the second half of the coach with me, is just for you to reflect on what are the roles that presence and productivity currently play in your own creative process and in your life, and when you go to that place where you are waking up in that dimension, when you are at your next level as an artist, at your next income level, at your next level of creative freedom and abundance in your life, at that level, what are you allowing yourselves?

In terms of quality of presence in your life, the quality of attention, the quality of your mind and state of being, and what's your relationship to productivity? And also, just an additional cue or prompt here, how does trust play into this for you?

Because for me, I know that part of this cultivation of my desired way of being, the extraordinary way of being, there is such a deep level of knowing and faith and trust that those definitely are hallmarks for me of my most extraordinarily creative way of being.

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And too, I'm recording this in the summer, so summer for some of you, and for those on the other side of the world, I know you are also in different seasons. So, I'm just thinking about how to make this applicable to your whole life. Because this week, I could give you a list of everything that I have done and then everything even today that I quote unquote have to do.

So, for instance, I am spending four hours in my studio today. I'm recording this podcast. Also, I have a dear friend whose birthday was during COVID, and so I am making dinner for her and her family tonight. They are coming over. I have a chiropractor's appointment to help me with a back situation that came on from lots of driving. I'd also like to go to the pool and swim.

So, there are all these things. And I can easily turn my life into a checklist of things to do. I also did podcast interviews earlier this week. I taught a couple classes. I had a few private coaching calls. And not to mention too, the days when my kids are home too because it's summer here.

So, my point being, I am doing this too because I watched my mind go into, "I have so much to do," mode. Versus giving myself time both at the beginning of the day and then throughout the day to recenter myself and reconnect to the quality of energy that I want to have, the quality of attention that I want to bring to whatever it is that I'm doing, the quality of energy that I am contributing to whatever it is that I'm doing, and then also how much freedom there is in being present. Because then you're free to enjoy your life and enjoy yourself along the way.

When I'm in check-off, over-productive, feel like I've got to just churn and burn mode, I don't really enjoy it that much and I tend to be a lot more critical of myself and just not enjoying myself or my life versus presence for me, it is staying awake and aware. Because I'm still piecing this out, but I notice there's a high degree of correlation between when I'm in productive

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mode and how critical I am and how stuck in the analytical and rational mind I am. Which is not my strong suit.

I can do those things and I can do those things when necessary. But I think my real genius and my real superpower is in this other way of knowing and being where I feel awake, alive, connected, ready with whatever is going to flow through me, not feeling like I have to be productive as a way of being defensive against the world or going on the offensive because things might not turn out.

But when I am present, there is a quiet of the chatter, as Anne Lamott said. There is a deep inner peace and it's from that calm still place that then a torrent of creativity can flow. Because just this morning, I reconnected with that calm still place and I had some peaceful-looking color studies, but then I also had this riot of color and activity that wanted to erupt on another canvas.

But the quality of energy is completely different from when I'm in productive mode and feeling scarce and like I just need to get something done because I haven't finished one yet, yada, yada, yada.

So, again, for you, what is your relationship currently to presence and productivity in your life and in your creativity? And what would you love for it to be?

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you are interested in learning more about my work, about the Art School, about anything you've heard on this or other podcasts, please visit our website www.leahcb.com. You can also connect with me on Instagram. I'm @leahcb1 and you can also email us, support@leahcb.com. We are happy to answer any of your questions and point you in the direction of the information that's most relevant for you.

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So, I was thinking about the close for this week and I was thinking about how much lately I have been revisiting and contemplating one of my core beliefs, which is that the act of creativity is an act of experiencing consciousness in your own particular consciousness, flowing through you. And there is something inherently enlivening, healing, so profound, mysterious, and also, we could say mundane because it could be available to us every day.

It's available when you make a meal. And you could make dinner without consciousness or you could bring a different level of presence to it. And I really think it's this being aware, that we are aware, being intentional with being present and the ways that we can be creative. And then also, just acknowledging that creativity is this – I don't say high art form in terms of that it's not available to most of us, that it's back behind some red ropes and elitism. But just in that it elevates us.

That it allows us to access these parts of ourselves – I know I'm continually surprised at how I'm surprised when I'm messing around in my art journal or with a painting and I will make things and I think, "Where did that come from? I didn't know that was within me." That's fascinating.

Also, I've been able to spend more time in my studio making and playing these last couple of weeks after being gone for a few weeks and before that was really immersed in teaching with the Art School and the mastermind. And now having this opportunity to be even more immersed in creation, and I feel this – it feels like an exhale moving through my body. It feels like rightness. It feels like, "Oh, why do I forget? It's so mysterious how it works." But the ways that I can feel off and my mind, my rational mind wants to assign all sorts of different meanings, blame, out in the world to different things.

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But if I can just give myself time to connect, to center, to plug in and create, then so much in me feels righted. And I think too, it reteaches me what presence really is, what my own presence really is, and also reminds me that there is more to me than I've even experienced, that there's more presence that I haven't even touched yet and that just being in the presence of myself helps more of that be revealed.

And so, I came across this Henry Miller quote and that's what I thought of when I was thinking of all of you and this topic about being present with yourself, your life, your art, and what it means to cultivate a deeper presence.

He wrote, "To make living itself an art, that is the goal." I hope you all have a beautiful weekend, beautiful next week, and join your magnificent blessed presence. Thank you so much for being here and I will talk with you next time.