

## Ep #205: You Are Not Your Work



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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There are times in the creative process where you may feel at one with your work. And that can be the best feeling ever; that feeling of losing yourself and merging with something else.

And then, there can be this part of the process, maybe closer towards the end, maybe a part that you find is a continual sticking point where you find a bottleneck, or you just can't get the work out the door. You procrastinate the deadline. You keep pushing it back. And that can be when we have moved beyond the stage where we're merging with the work, and instead we're identified with it, where it's actually not a part of us and it's meant to be the time where we separate and go our separate ways and the work goes out into the world.

So, if this resonates at all with you, you will enjoy today's podcast. I've got some ideas for you.

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 am recording this for you in advance of my mastermind retreat for the Art School and a few other big traveling events I have coming up. And I share all of that just to say that I won't be sharing what's most up-to-date in terms of what we're doing in the Art School, things that I have going on and available, free workshops and offerings and so on because I am recording this in advance.

So, to stay current and up-to-date, the best way to do that, as always, is to subscribe to my newsletter. I do not spam you. I always try to provide

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value, even in tiny little updates, and respect your privacy and the invitation to your inbox, always.

So, if you're not already a member of the Art School newsletter audience, you can sign up through my show notes, by going to the website, [www.leahcb.com](http://www.leahcb.com). Really, anywhere on my website, you'll find that little pop-up box that asks you if you want to join. And I would love to have you.

In this episode, it's inspired both coming off, again, the week of the writers' retreat, being immersed in this particular method that I was really so excited to learn more about. I was not disappointed. It was wonderful Jives very much with the way I operate and the Art School philosophy and it was incredible, like a spa treatment for the creative soul to be on the receiving end.

And, also inspired by coaching I did this week with one of my clients who is finishing up her book and getting it into the world. And also, I'm sure, so many creatives out there can relate, being in that process where you just can't seem to get it done and it feels terrible and you feel you're under a squeeze.

Let me say, it doesn't have to be that way. And it's very common. And especially when you understand why it happens, you can understand how common it is and also why it doesn't have to be that way. But what an incredible paradigm shift it is to move into a different way.

And so, the aspect of her coaching and the aspect of the retreat that come together in this episode for you today are this; that there is a time when it is so important for you to create a distance between you and your work, to understand that you are not your work.

It doesn't matter what your work is. Whether it's a goal, whether it is a dream, a book, a business, whether you're raising a child, we just have

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absorbed that anything we put our hands on, have created, or are responsible for, or are nurturing or raising, is like this reflection of us. It gets to be this heavy, moral, burdensome thing.

Whereas the freedom that comes with the truth of knowing the things that come through you, children included, have a life of their own, have a spirit and a consciousness and a will to live, a soul of their own.

And so, yes, it's just in our vernacular – and I use it too – to call it, “My work. My paintings. My child. My life. My business.” And then there are times when that can be a real hang up for us, particularly if we have ever been the recipient – and we all have – of being shamed and of having our work and what we do and our performance and our results conflated with who we are.

Like, maybe you got an F on your math test and maybe you had someone say, “Oh, this does not make you a bad kid or a bad student, it just means we're going to work on algebra some more,” that there's a difference between you and this external work, this external thing.

And I know this might sound so basic and obvious while I'm saying it, but it's the sort of thing that highly intelligent people who know this and know that it may or may not be basic or obvious, still we forget in the moment because we've been so conditioned that our value and who we are is tied up in what we do and what we produce.

And this has been a major lesson for me and still crops up from time to time. One of the healing practices with this podcast has been for me to just release it and let it go, and not make it a reflection of me. For me in my coaching practice, to not make my failures or successes, my awesome months financially or my slow months mean something about me as a person.

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And the same goes with our art. When we can see our work out in front of us, whether it's a piece of writing, whether it's a piece of music or a painting, when we can remove ourselves, uncouple ourselves from the work and put it out in front of us, it can become this thing we play with again, which is probably the reason we were called to it in this first place because it felt like play, because it engaged us in a way that made us feel alive.

And yes, we merged with something in flow to create it. But it was also this thing outside of us that we could get our hands in. Also, when we respect it as an entity separate from us with its own intelligence spirit, with its own soul blueprint, then it becomes so much more fun too.

We can't control it and make it into whatever we want it to be. Therefore, we can't entirely be 100% responsible for what it is. Instead, we are in relationship with it. We are in conversation with it. And that, to me, is a lot more fun than having to have the burden of being responsible and making up every single piece and part.

That to me too is so much more energizing and elevating an orientation to respect the consciousness and spirit of something, to have that kind of sacred orientation to it, rather than just assume it's all us, it's all on us, it's only about us, it can only come from us.

That always flattens me every time. That seems like way too much work. And if I am limited to just myself and what I can come up with, then I don't want to get out of bed for that. I want to dance with something else. I want to join up with something else.

There's this great story about William Blake when he was a young man, I want to say early 20s. And this wealthy person had seen some work he had some and so commissioned him to do these religious paintings for – the story goes – like a chapel that this very well-off person was building.

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And so, Blake painted what he painted and, apparently, the man was scandalized and aghast when he saw it. And he berated Blake and said, “This is almost blasphemous. You call this religious art? What is this?” And Blake was dumbfounded that the man could question him as if he had control over what he painted.

He said, “That’s what I painted, therefore that’s what there is, therefore that’s what wanted to happen. And aren’t you kind of ridiculous for thinking it could be anything other than what it is?”

I’m thinking too of another great story of Martha Graham when she was a young dancer and she was feeling crippled by her own self-criticism. And one of her teachers and mentors said, “Yours is not to judge yourself. Yours is just to dance,” and how liberating that was for her.

And now, this teacher did also say, “I’ll tell you if it’s good or bad. But even so, how liberating that that wasn’t hers to judge, whether it’s good or not. But it was hers to dance.

So, for you, what’s yours to paint? What is yours to dance? As I was coaching my client, what’s hers to write and share with the world and not to engage then in the sort of endless onslaught that judgment and shame can keep us trapped in and can shut our creativity down and stifle our expression with the weight of that, but instead purely and simply, what is yours to create?

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. Coach with me.

So, in today’s coach with me, I wanted to share a technique that I learned from this recent writing retreat. And because she is amazing and I want to give credit where credit is due, Suzanne Kingsbury, the founder of the Gateless Method, that is who led the retreat.

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She's the founder of this method. And it was such a joy to be in her presence and the presence of other writers that week, and again, to find a space that is so simpatica with the Art School philosophy and to see other creatives who I don't know who are also thriving in this space of radical nurturing and with an emphasis on the craft of writing, and that radical nurturing and craft going hand in hand.

Such a beautiful experience and one of my key takeaways was this method of approaching the sharing of the work, that when we gathered to read our work aloud, you would read and then people would offer feedback, only offering feedback about where there is energy, what they heard, where they sensed energy.

So, no critique. No saying, "I think you should do this," or, "I thought this character was a little weak," or, "Have you thought about reading this or sending this piece here?"

No opinions like that. Just noting, mirroring where there is energy. And also, this is the technique I'm referring to for today's episode that I really wanted to share, referring to the writer in the third person, like that person wasn't even in the room.

So, for instance, when I read and then listened to others' feedback, they wouldn't say, "Leah, this piece," or, "When you said this," or, "When you wrote that." They would say, "Here, the writer did X, Y, Z. Here, I really appreciated how the narrator did this," and, "The author," and, "The piece."

So, you see the removal of any personal pronouns, any personal references, and instead, what I felt like was that the work moved out from me like a body of its own and I really physically felt this distance and it as a separate thing from me by the time the retreat was over. It was four days of doing sessions like this, about three sessions a day.

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It reminded me too of the technique of third-person distancing in psychology, where if you are experiencing an emotion, particularly an intense one and you're wanting to soothe yourself, regulate your central nervous system, that talking to yourself in the third person really helps.

Like, "Leah, I see that we are feeling really anxious right now. It feels like a lot of heat in our body. It feels like a fog in our head, a buzzing in our ears. Leah, I see that we are experiencing this and I'm going to label it nervousness." So, you're talking to yourself in the third person and you're also labeling the emotions. Two ways of creating distance that really help energy shift from areas in your brain that continue to perpetuate a sense of being overwhelmed by these emotions, to maybe a place where you can experience them and process them.

So, I found it fascinating and highly effective to have this done in a creative circle where people are sharing their work, which can be so scary and can be so vulnerable. And why? Because we perceive that as an extension of us.

And then, when we're in that loop though, knowing that's going to happen when we share and we perceive that as an extension of us, that absolutely then impacts our ability to express freely when we are meeting the page, when we are meeting the canvas.

So, instead, changing the paradigm by changing the experience of sharing, by making it not something personal to you but instead looking at it as a work, looking at it as art then creates this very different experience when you go back to the page, that instead of it being about you, you're playing, you're working, you're participating with the art.

So, I wanted to offer that specific technique in this coach with me and invite you to find places this week where you can extrapolate upon that and apply it to your own life. If there something that you are taking so personally, and



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understandably so? Because we are all taught that, if you really care about something, then it's almost a given that you take it personally.

And though, what I'm inviting you to is this, like, nuanced shift. Yes, you can care deeply about it. I love to write. I love to create this podcast and to do the coaching work that I do. I love to create something that is actually valuable and meaningful. And then also, there is this point of which it creates space. And I've had to work on that. I still work on it plenty of times, trust me, and created attachment to what other people think of it, but also create this detachment and a knowing that it's actually something separate from me, that I have had the privilege and the honor of letting it move through me and now it's time to love it out into the world.

Like my client was saying about her book, that it's a baby that has been wanting to be born for week and she was just holding it in. We hold it in because we're scared of what the world will do to it, this thing, this precious thing we love so much. It's so understandable why we do this.

And also, while not everybody wants or needs to have their work go out in the world, it's truly for some people, it's not a part of their desire or life at all. And that's a beautiful thing too.

And then, there are those of us too who, for some reason or another, seems like we are fed by getting it out. And by doing so, then something else comes through.

But there is something within us that is fed and satiated and satisfied and strengthened and grown when we are able to move it out into the world. And so, knowing this, knowing that you get to care deeply about it, and that there are also these practices where you can respect its sovereignty, you can respect the sovereignty of the work happening through you.

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And it's not yours to judge it. It's not yours to shame it. It's not yours to look at it and think, "Oh my gosh, I should be able to do much better than that." No, it's like a sovereign being.

And you are a cocreator, perhaps, or a steward or a guardian, and then from that place of honoring its sovereignty, as a guardian, as a steward though, you don't condemn it and keep it in. You look for where its strengths are in order that you can nurture it and help it move out into the world as it stands on its own legs.

What's available to you is for the whole process to be free of shame, free of harsh self-judgment. The beautiful moment for my client today was when she realized that her writing isn't actually this torturous process, that there's the writing, there's the creating, and then there's this overlay of judgment which sneaks up and attaches itself to us when we personalize and are so close to the work.

And that actually isn't part of the creative process at all. It's something different that has come in. And we can begin to notice that and notice that it's unnecessary and uncouple it from the creative act and instead of feeding it, we can feed our nurturing instincts, to nurture and support the work. And these third-person distanced practices and techniques are a great tool, an ally in that process.

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. I so love that you are listening. I greatly appreciate your support in spreading the word. And if you want to nurture your own creative genius – because at the heart of it, that's what's at the heart of it for me – I am so fascinated and in love with finding what is waiting within people, still waiting to be born, waiting for them to discover or reclaim or own or express.

And if you're desiring a place where your greatest potential and your fullest expression of life, a life that is truly yours from the inside out, if you're

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looking for a space in which the depth, the breadth, the light, the darkness, the power, the beauty, the wisdom, the intelligence in you is radically seen, understood, known, and nurtured, nurtured, nurtured to the greatness that you are capable of, then you would love what happens on the inside of the Art School or one-to-one coaching.

And I would love to support you. To learn more, you can go to my website, [www.leahcb.com](http://www.leahcb.com). Sign up for my newsletter so that you receive the latest about what's coming up, events, workshops. And also, connect with me on social media. I'm @leahcb1 on Instagram and, as always, you can reach us by email, [support@leahcb.com](mailto:support@leahcb.com) and we'll take great care of you.

So, for closing today, I have a nugget for you, an observation that I've made through years of coaching myself and others. And that is that when we have the stakes too high, our prolific level goes down. We tend to concentrate on whatever this next work is in front of us, whether it's you're offering a nine-month coaching program or it's a book or it's an art show, we make it such a big deal.

The stakes are so high that, then again, without meaning to, we tend to deeply tie it to who we are and what it means and says about our potential and our potential for future success or the potential for our dreams to come through.

Whereas, when we lower the stakes and are like, "You know what? I'm a creative person and I can iterate, I can try this, I can try that, and also, my ego is not in it." Because if your ego is in it, its head's probably going to be on the chopping block and you're going to pull back, and it's really going to stifle your creative process, your ability to make money, your ability to be prolific, and your ability to grow and evolve as an artist. And most of all, just your enjoyment of your life and your freedom to explore as a creative and an artist and to really just soak in the joy and the wonder that this process and their journey can be.

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So, if there is any place in your life where you find yourself where the stakes are so high, where you're like, "This must be my opus. This has to be the thing. This has to work," just play with, what if it doesn't? What if it doesn't? What if I'm carrying so much that I am actually harming rather than nurturing the thing that I love most dearly? The underlying thing that you are truly devoted to, the true love?

Oftentimes, the stakes can seem high because we're telling ourselves it's because we care so much. And it also could be that we are scared and we want some proof, we want some validation. So, it can be very helpful to come back to, what would love do? What would devotion to this thing that I really love, what would that look like here? Would I loosen my grasp a little bit? Would I zoom out and take a long-term perspective?

And I have found again and again that when people do this, when they lower the stakes from knowing that it's from a place of loving and honoring that which is important to them, that their levels of creativity and their own prolific AF output goes through the roof.

So, try it out for yourself. Don't just take my word for it. And have a beautiful week, everyone. I look forward to talking with you next time.