

## **"Creativity", by Adelheid Mers, 2007**

paint marker on plexiglas, 16'x 20'



### **1. Cosmogony**

In the "Theogony", Greek poet Hesiod (800BCE) writes about the creation of the Universe (a cosmogony) and about the history of the Gods. Chaos (the gap) was first, then Gaia (Earth), then Tartarus (the underworld), and then Eros (Love). I envision those four as comprising the shape of the Venus of Willendorf, head, breasts, belly and sex.

Earth spawned Ouranos (heaven) and Pontus (sea). Ouranos and Gaia were the parents of Kronos, who was the father of Zeus. Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus attempted to keep their children from being born, which was thwarted by the mothers' ruses. Both Kronos and Zeus overpowered their fathers and then took on the reign. Zeus, who had exiled his father, Kronos, (who had killed his father, Ouranos) swallowed his pregnant wife, Metis, which leads to Athena being born from Zeus' head. Zeus then continued to spawn hundreds of children.

I first looked closely at the Theogony when I studied Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author", after noting that Barthes evokes language from Greek mythology. I see the Theogony as a contest for the creation of meaning, something that is also addressed in the "Death of the Author."

### **2. Divine Inspiration – to have a genius**

According to Plato (424 -348 BCE), an artist is inspired by the Gods. The names of the nine muses represent this inspiration. The artist needs practical skill to execute artworks, but does not need knowledge about the content of the work (one can paint something without having to know how it works). The artwork in fact is not held in very high regard, since it is only a copy (painting of a chair) of an earthly copy (a chair) of an item that initially exists in the realm of ideas (the idea of a chair). Artwork needs to be evaluated in regard to its function in the state. If it is deemed untrue or dangerous for the youth, it should be censored.

### **3. Genetic Predisposition - to be a genius**

Roughly from the Renaissance on, an artist is more likely to be seen as a gifted person who is predisposed from birth to create works of genius. Stories about artists often mentioned how their genius became apparent during childhood already. The names of the four bases found in DNA (discovered much later, of course) represent this idea of pre-determination. Though predisposed, the artist still has to be schooled to develop knowledge and skill. The resulting artwork is a cultural as well as a social and commercial good. People who have developed good taste can assess the quality of a work of art.

### **4. Creativity as Process**

In the 20th century, educators and psychologists began to interpret creativity as a process. The six steps appear in similar form in various theories. Preparation is often the perception of a lack or a need after knowledge has been gained in a field. Incubation is the subconscious mulling over of this situation. Insight is the conscious, theoretical inception of a solution. Concretization is the material implementation of a solution, resulting in a product. The product is then assessed and has to prove itself in the marketplace. If successful, it may change the domain of knowledge, and the process may start anew.

### **5. The Market**

Part of the cycle of "Creativity as process", this image of tables and prize ribbons was inspired by a visit to a State Fair.

### **6. The Trojan Horse**

The concept of "Creative Industries" is spreading throughout the world. It is based on the assumption that creative work in the fields of art, entertainment, digital production and beyond can build new, post-industrial markets and help regions that are blighted by the loss of industries. It was recently pointed out to me that Ronald Reagan made the claim to have coined the term "creative society". In fact, the speech is published on-line. I find it worrisome that he pitches this "creative society" against Johnson's "Great Society", which was founded on notions of social responsibility and sought to eradicate poverty, guarantee health care and education and instate civil rights. I find the conditions the "Great Society" seeks to be conducive to creativity, not contradictory. The Trojan Horse expresses my unease.

### **7. Metaphor from Procreation**

There is a long tradition of referring to artworks as children that one has created and that will then have to go on to prove themselves in the world without their father. This view privileges ideas of competition and of the possibility of unerring quality judgments. An entirely different understanding is also possible. What if artworks are at all times part of a conversation, and mean different things to different viewers at different times? This is a view that sees art as a network and as a system that constantly fluctuates. Artists who subscribe to either view create works and shape careers that are very different from each other. An essay by feminist writers Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert explores beliefs about creativity as based on gendered metaphors. Following their line of thought, the well-known notion that "all men are brothers" took on a whole new meaning when paired with the realization that all women can be seen as mothers, a view that is extended in Buddhist thought to the idea that all beings may have been ones mother in previous incarnations and thus need to be honored.

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