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# The artist glasses

What and how leaders can learn from artists

# Inspiration

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## z ... seen through the manager's glasses

### Creativity

Managers consider creativity to be the most important personality competency. For 60% of respondents to the *IBM Global CEO Study*, creativity is the leadership quality that is crucial in the face of increasing complexity [1].

American researchers have found that linking, observing and questioning are among the five "discovery qualities" of creative managers. The ability to combine unrelated facts, to grasp details in human behavior, and to ask targeted, provocative questions is particularly pronounced in leaders who have established innovative companies or products [2].

### Mindfulness

The trend study *Corporate Management 2030* states that managers must interpret market data correctly and also include unpleasant truths. A company can only remain capable of action if its managers are attentive to details and can interpret them as warning signals, even if the situation appears stable at first glance [3].

Managers are expected to include interrelationships in their calculations and to think like an entrepreneur. They should have a keen sense of developments and trends, grasp reality holistically and make confident decisions even in unclear, ambiguous situations [4].

### Sensitivity

Almost all managers (97%) believe that a sense for nuances in conversations is (very) important for the success of a manager [5]. Every third manager (32 %) sees a need for personal development in the ability to listen [6].

Managers doubt their superiors' ability to interpret nonverbal signals. Only one in ten of the managers said that they understood body language very well. 54% rate this ability as "good" [7].

Management is a terrain dominated by ratio and logic. Passion and other emotions have no place there, "Concealing emotions is part of everyday life and demonstrating coolness is considered a strategic element" [8].

### Emotionality

" We talk about the importance of curiosity for the company and look for people who develop passion for their work and explore new things on their own initiative - because we believe that curious people bring fresh ideas and an inquiring mind to a firm whose goal is to solve creative problems. [9] (John H. Bell, Global Managing Director of Ogilvy & Mather)

### Spirit of discovery

"I like to ask things people don't think I'm going to ask. This is a little cruel, but I kind of delight in coming up with questions that nobody has the answer to quite yet. [10] (Michael Saul Dell, founder and CEO of Dell Inc.)

"You need to come up with ideas that establish communication, and for that you need the talent to make the seemingly unrelated to connect. That's why one of my guiding principles is: Connect the unexpected. [11] (Hubert Burda, owner of Hubert Burda Media Holding KG)

Lateral Denk

## z Inspiration seen through the artist's glasses ... Task

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> In the middle of the Qatar desert stand four steel panels, each more than 14 meters high. Together they mark a distance of over a kilometer. The creator of the monumental sculpture is Richard Serra. In the 1960s, in search of an innovative approach, he decided to for the large-scale work with lead and steel. Serra did not want to make sculptures with which one could have decorated side tables. He wanted to convey a spatial experience with his huge, sometimes walk-in works.

In Qatar in 2014, Serra was given not only the financial framework, but also the time and artistic freedom for his work and, above all, a lot of space. After the Qatar Museums Authority commissioned him with Sculpture 7, the emir's entourage suggested that he work in the desert.

Serra, who has always been interested in the sea, has no ambitions to create a work of art in the desert of all places: "I'm fairly obsessively internally driven. [...] Until now, I've never worked in a desert. [...] I live by the sea" [12]. The desert is not his subject, but the place fascinates him: "It's a desert like no other - the desert itself is just a mysterious place" [13]. On his exploratory excursions into the desert, Serra falls for a place in the Brouq Nature Reserve: "John Ford country, without the romanticism of the large plateaus [...] We went back again and again and again" [14].

Record weather

Serra searches the inhospitable area for something familiar. In fact, the terrain was covered by water in the Palaeozoic era. And so he places his sculpture *East-West/ West-East* in a lowland plain. The tops form a line with the surrounding plateaus, creating the impression along the stelae that one is not on an eroded surface, but under water. "This is the most fulfilling thing I've ever done. It's a piece that I'd really like to be seen" [15].

Artists like Richard Serra are always in mental motion in their profession. They always have a task that occupies them, and

often work in parallel on different themes and works. Normally, an artist finds a task by himself, unless he accepts a commission. In other words, he confronts a problem without being asked to do so by anyone or being beholden to anyone other than himself. If it is not a commission connected with a given theme, a work of art begins with a concern of the artist or a suggestion from his environment.

"I never used the word [avant-garde] about myself. I'm not interested in naming things or things being categorized that way.

But as far as my personal work is concerned, I have always been interested in new things. [16] (Merce Cunningham)

"I'm curious about other people. That's the essence of my acting.

I'm interested in what it would be like to be you. [17] (Meryl Streep)

### Be curious

It starts with curiosity. An artist is interested in a subject or a certain question, and this interest is always personal. Sometimes he has a leitmotif that runs through his entire work like a red thread, sometimes it is an object that occupies him temporarily. The more complex the subject, the better. In the beginning there is a problem that wants to be solved, a burning question, which is not so easy to answer, but has to be clarified in the creative working process. Artistic work is the attempt to answer such a question and to express the answer in a suitable form.

" Art is [...] to find a solution for previously unknown questions. [18] (Daniel Richter)

" I never paint a picture as a work of art. They are all works of research. [19] (Pablo Picasso)

"You're doing research. You're exploring, in the really deepest sense.

When I start to work on a piece, I talk to people, I read. [20] (Meg Stuart)

### Explore without intention

The examination begins with some impulse. This can be a phenomenon that grips the artist, a place or a stimulus that comes from the material and arouses curiosity. What is in this material? How can this place be played with? What is in this piece of theater or music? What can be done with it? An artist will approach his object impartially and without intention. He will examine it playfully and see what questions it raises. He will not plan and search for answers in his head, but he will simply act and see what happens.

" I would rather want to claim for myself that I am always trying out, trying new things - alone

## Task

and with others. At the end of the day, I try to do the things that fascinate me. [21] (David Bowie)

"When I decided in 1959 that I did not want to paint abstractly, but representationally, I could not at all not get excited about a certain topic or a certain direction or anything. I started completely from scratch. I just found a start by doing the exact opposite of everything I liked. [...] It wasn't long before I began to pursue only my most lively interests. [22] (Tom Wesselmann)

Sometimes an artist's interest is first awakened while he is working on something without commitment. He tries something out and suddenly has an idea of what it might lead to. He doesn't have a precise idea yet, but he may discover a connection to his guiding theme that wasn't obvious at first glance. He finds something that is relevant to him and continues.

"Whenever someone asks me what my next album will look like, I answer "protest", because I don't know what my next album will look like. have no more idea of how things will go on than anyone else. [...] I've always believed that I'm very deliberate in my approach to things, but I've found that half the time I have absolutely no plan. [23] (David Bowie)

An artist sets himself a task without knowing what the result will be. He has a theme and an intention, often he has a first idea, but he has no fixed goal. The motive or hunch that guides his actions is only the rough framework for the work. Artists do not act purposively according to a given goal. They do not follow a more or less detailed plan. They know that the goal cannot be planned. They know that they have to approach their task with all their senses and with an open mind. They are not mindless, because the material, the tools, their own bodies are ready. They have mastered their craft, but where it will lead them and whether something artistically valuable will emerge, they do not know. The result is completely unclear at the beginning. If it were not so, the task would not be interesting.

"If I knew how a project was going to turn out, I wouldn't do it. [24] (Frank Gehry)

No work of art is conceived and then simply realized. An artist has no idea of the work he will create. At the beginning, he cannot even say with certainty whether the impulse will lead to an end at all. There is no inner picture of the final product. There is also no work plan that prescribes the individual work steps. All this is still in the dark. Artists work without a net and with an open end. They have no logical sequence of

Unver bindlich consider

Start aimlessly

Acting haphazardly

handles and behaviors that they only need to apply in order to head straight for a good ending. There is no guarantee for any of this. In the beginning, there is only confidence in one's own ability and curiosity about a particular subject. Everything else is uncertain.

"The subject is there. But not in the sense that I have it and can write it down. It is in me, in us, in this very particular time. At the moment of searching, we are then not dancers and choreographers, but human beings. The fact that we have mastered the craft does not matter in the first place. [25] (Pina Bausch)

### Keep processes open

Artists deliberately go into this open, uncertain situation because it's the only way they can find the new. They go on adventures. When they work with an ensemble as a director, conductor or choreographer, they sometimes hide their vision, because if they anticipate, the players are more concerned with the result than with the tasks that lie ahead of them on the way to the big picture and are to be solved with an open outcome. Everyone arrives at a result by being intensively occupied with what they are doing at the moment. The result follows automatically.

"I do not act with intentions; I deal with sounds. [26] (John Cage)

### Float options

Artists focus on their task, not on a goal. The result is as open at the beginning as the process that leads to it. Artists strive to maintain this openness for as long as possible, leaving things in limbo. In doing so, they challenge the sense of possibility that a subject holds. Artists try to master the unimaginable.

> **The process is somewhat less fortunate than with Richard Serra in the case of a series by Gerhard Richter. Renzo Piano is building a pilgrimage church for the Franciscan order near the Italian Adriatic coast and asks Richter if he could paint some pictures for the space. The commission, which includes members of the order and representatives of the Vatican, wants figurative representations. They should have a reference to the canonized Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, on whose body the stigmata of Christ are said to have appeared.**

**Richter gets involved in the task, but does so without a formal commission that would bind him to any specifications: "I can't paint a bleeding wound. [...] So I could not accept a commission, but only try something and offer the result" [27]. The**

**The result is the cycle of paintings *Abstract Image, Rhombus* - six rhombus-shaped, red-orange abstract paintings. The work has museum quality and was shown, among others, at the Venice Biennale. The clients rejected it. They had imagined it differently. But this is not how Richter works: "I**

### Blow up ideas

I don't have a very specific picture in mind, but would like to get a picture in the end that I hadn't planned at all. [...] I would like to get something more interesting than what I can come up with" [28].

### Where do you get that igniting spark?

---

Leiko Ikemura receives a request to create two sculptures for the Berlin Cathedral. When she looks into it more closely, she remembers that she already made a similar work in small format years ago. This is "a very fitting starting point and stimulus and enthusiasm for the sculptures and also for the situation in the cathedral. An insane challenge [...] I mean, this is the Berlin Cathedral, after all. On the one hand, it's a great honor, on the other hand, it's also a momentous task. But at the same time I really felt like it and then I said: okay" [29]. Desire and joy in a new task bundle forces and arouse curiosity. The word curiosity contains the greed for something new.

5 What catches your attention?

5 What fuels your joy?

5 What subject matter would you like to dive into, regardless of your time constraints?

Write down on a small piece of paper what you are curious about and what topic you are in the mood for. Carry this piece of paper with you until you have started this topic.

With everything you see, hear, touch - it is your interest that controls your perception. Or the other way around: What doesn't interest you, you usually don't notice. Look around you and take in five things you didn't notice before. Become aware of what the air smells like. Reach for an object and feel its texture and temperature. Listen and try to hear five different sounds. Don't set yourself any thinking standards when you do this! Think about how you can connect all of these things to the topic on your note. Recall a situation where, without much thought, you didn't pick up on or even brushed off a topic that was brought to you because it didn't interest you. Deal with this topic in some way for 20 minutes. Engage with it and try to discover some delightful detail in it. A manager describes how she came to a new task: "I was not asked, but appointed for it by my superior. Of course I take on the task, but if it had been up to me, I would not have chosen it.

searches" [30].

Visualize your own work situation.

5 Do you prefer to wait until an assignment is brought to you, or do you find your own tasks?

5 How do you make friends with a topic that is assigned to you?

Feel the desire for new

Face the W awareness  
entrust

Endure uncertainty



Alberto Giacometti needs a clear framework: "When I accept a commission, I naturally try to stay as close as possible to the subject at hand. I even wish that I were given the subject as narrowly as possible, I don't ask for any freedom, and it would in no way interfere with my work" [31].

- 5 How do you make yourself open to a new topic?
- 5 How do you deal with suggestions from your environment?
- 5 Have you ever started a task without having formulated the goal and the result? If so, what was that like?

Enter openly

### Artistic imperative

Approach tasks with relish!

## Beginning

"Of course, I don't go onto the studio with the idea of 'saying' something - that's ludicrous. What I do is face the blank canvas, which is terrifying. [32] (Richard Diebenkorn)

"Starting for me is the most painful part of the composition. I've been composing for 40 years and I still don't know how to start. I can't believe how clumsy and bad my first stabs are. [33] (John Adams)

Fearless start

Starting a work is not always pleasant for artists, sometimes even frightening. There is only one antidote: to do something, and to do it without having a goal.

"I always panic when I start. I am very afraid to start, to say concretely: Today is rehearsal.

And I shirk it. I always put it off for as long as I can and then start around the corner. Maybe then sometimes I just order a dancer and say:

"Could we perhaps try something out?" [34] (Pina Bausch)

Track hunches

In artistic work there is basically neither a starting point nor a foreseeable end. There is not the one moment in which the work takes its beginning. The first brushstroke on the white canvas is not the beginning. The beginning is a process. This process does not begin with a concrete idea, but with an interest in an object. At the beginning there is an idea, a theme, a question, something that occupies the artist. Often this has no clear contours and cannot be grasped mentally. It is more a hunch or a diffuse mood. You have a vague idea of what you want to do, and in the process of doing it, possibilities suddenly come to you. With these possibilities one can

play. So the work sometimes starts before an artist even has an idea.

"I am an artist because I want to do something. Unfortunately, there are always long phases when I can't do anything, because I can't think of anything. At some point I just start making something, no matter if it's a good idea, a bad idea, no idea. I just make something out of what's lying around. And it is precisely these things that arise out of a speechlessness, out of despair, that are often the most important. They lead to the core, to the question of who I am and why I want to do anything at all. [35] (Bruce Nauman)

An artist is not suddenly inspired and starts working, but he will create a situation in which he can make a beginning. He will mentally and physically adjust to the work, get materials and tools ready and await an impulse. Perhaps he will first drink coffee and read the newspaper, perhaps he will tidy up and sweep the floor of his studio. Maybe he stirs different colors without knowing what he will do with them. This procrastination and postponement creates tension. The inner urge to do something increases. At the same time, such activities make one empty and unprejudiced. One has settled in, can approach the work with concentration, and can get involved in what is happening.

Tuning in

"The truth is that sometimes I sit there [in the studio] for days, listening to records, sorting singles, reading books and seven Minutes male. [36] (Daniel Richter)

"I prefer to go into the studio without having anything specific in mind. I then immerse myself in very everyday visual worlds, that we encounter everywhere, in the newspaper, in magazines, on the Internet. Some images I save I forget again, others won't let me go. Then I begin to work with the material. [37] (Thomas Ruff)

An artist faces the situation well prepared. He takes a step that leads him into unknown territory. Awake and attentive he will react to what he perceives. He will do something with it and thus glide into a new beginning. He knows that something will develop from it with the time. Ideas do not appear abruptly in order to be executed immediately. They develop in a larger context. Ideas appear in the doing and want to be considered attentively.

Enter carefully

> In 1937, Joan Miró creates a huge abstract mural for the pavilion on behalf of the Spanish Republic the Paris World's Fair. Miró paints on six sheets of cellulose joined together. He is inspired by the structure of the

Registers

fibers and the unevenness in the soft material and refrained from sketches: "I tackled [the painting] straight on, at the risk of falling off the scaffolding and breaking my neck!" [38] *Le Faucheur (El Segador)* takes as its theme the peasant uprising in Catalonia. "Thus, the bit of a fiber can set a whole world in motion" [39].

### Start with an open mind

The artist playfully opens a dialogue with his object. He will take his material, for example a stone, in his hand, walk around with it and explore it curiously. Everything that comes to his mind, all thoughts and emotions that come up from the unconscious, he will allow. He is on reception. His attention is directed not only to the nature of the object, but also inward. Which inner images and diffuse ideas appear? This phase can last seconds, minutes or hours, sometimes even longer. One does not find the beginning, it comes by itself - or not. Then one puts it off or looks for new material.

"I go to the studio and sit down at the piano and play chords.

Whatever I feel like playing, you know? And then a melody starts to happen, and then the lyrics start to happen, and then you've got a song. [40] (Brian Wilson)

"I always start in quite a loose and free way. I often put down one ground color to begin with and then play off that. For the first day or two, everything moves very quickly - sometimes almost too quickly - then there's often this very protracted middle period of moving things around, changing things, editing. [41] (Cecily Brown)

The first step can also be a conscious setting, a first movement, a brush stroke. It reduces the number of possible actions, but it happens without intention and intuitively. The first building block for the work is not rationally selected from a set of several possible openings, but follows an intuition.

### Start intuitively

> **Jackson Pollock often began his early works with figurative elements such as letters and numbers, which he took as a starting point and then usually buried under several layers of paint. In July 1943, Peggy Guggenheim commissioned him to paint a mural for her townhouse.**

**Pollock will work "with no strings as to what or how I paint it" [42]. He wants to be finished by the time of an exhibition in mid-November, but has not even begun work. He complains to friends that he is blocked, and seems to them as obsessed as he is depressed.**

For weeks Pollock stares at the blank canvas, "that goddamn surface" [43]. Suddenly he has a vision of a herd of animals fleeing in panic. He begins with the contours of the figures, combining the painting technique of an easel painting with the format of a mural. Around New Year's Day 1944, Pollock paints *Mural*, his largest painting, in a veritable frenzy of creativity. It measures about 2.5 × 6 meters and is considered a masterpiece of abstract expressionism. "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of get-acquainted period that I see what I have been about" [44].

Endure blockades

Painters and sculptors usually approach a new work by drawing. While drawing, they develop ideas that they later implement on the canvas or in the material of a sculpture.

"I've made so many mobiles that I pretty well know what I want to do, at least where the smaller ones are concerned, but when I'm seeking a new form, then I draw and make little models out of sheet metal. [45] (Alexander Calder)

Such sketches and studies are like small experiments. Artists use them to sound out whether an idea or detail is effective, what effect a variant has, and how individual parts fit together. For artists, making sketches and studies of a motif is a way of dealing with a subject. They familiarize themselves with the object and gain experience with the material.

He gain experience

> **When you drive your car at 35 miles per hour over the Julia Tuttle Causeway to Miami, you hear a rhythmic sound on the bridge. The Bee Gees translate that into music. Robin Gibb recalls: "We'd already thought up the title for this song, but it wasn't until Barry, Maurice and I drove from Biscayne Bay to Miami that we realized what the tune was going to be. We had the idea as we passed over a bridge. Some tar noises made a rhythmic sound on the wheels of our car, which created the feel to the type of song we wanted to write. We finished the song at the Criteria studios that day" [46]. This is how *Jive Talkin'* is born.**

When composing, a few notes, a strange sound, a word or a mood are enough as a stimulus. The new sometimes arises from a chance find. Sometimes it appears when you see or hear something you know in a new way and discover new possibilities in it. To consciously change the starting point can be the beginning of a new work. The beginning is as free and unpredictable as the whole artistic process. There is no ideal beginning. There is also no beginning routine that you only have to go through step by step to get into the process.

Proven v ergessen

"For me the most difficult moment is always the beginning of a new piece. Even if I'm lucky enough to have come up with a striking opening idea, the first attempts at developing the material and making coherence often sputter and implode. [47] (John Adams)

"The pretty, initial position which falls short of completeness is not to be valued - except as a stimulus for further moves. [48] (Richard Diebenkorn)

### Sensitive search

The beginning is usually a completely open and uncertain situation. There is no goal, no idea of the direction and no point of reference. Artists can stand the fact that they don't have to see and look for everything right away. For artists, uncertainty is liberating, because it makes them permeable to ideas.

### Act spontaneously

➤ **Andreas Gursky finds his motifs unintentionally.** "I have acquired a spontaneous access to reality. [...] [This means] not directly evaluating, not subjecting the search for motifs to a rigid concept, but simply photographing things that catch my eye" [49].

"I got the idea for [the *Ocean* series] when I traveled to Australia for an exhibition opening and stared at the monitor with the maps on the plane at night. At some point you could see almost nothing but blue, hardly any land, the world was like a monochrome picture, it reminded me of the paintings of abstract American expressionism. I had an idea for a picture, only you can't photograph what I wanted to show" [50]. He makes sketches and does research. "I'm pretty slow about it" [51]. For the series of images showing the oceans from above, the photographer works for the first time not with his own photos, but takes satellite photos as a template, which he processes digitally. "If India was no longer visible in the picture, I would have moved it a few hundred kilometers to the left" [52].

### Let go

"At the beginning there is [...] always the real visual experience, it is godfather for the image finding. Last year I drove through Bangkok because I wanted to expand an as yet unpublished series. I photographed from a two-story commuter train, for five days. Then I realized that this material was unusable. It didn't match what I had in mind. A day or two later, as I stood at a boat landing waiting for the shuttle, I was struck by the unusual color of the Chao Phraya River on. These were strange, very abstract reflections on the water, I was completely fascinated. That was it, this moment was important, from it a new, different image idea emerged" [53]. The result is the series *Bangkok* - nine

## large-format photographs in which the city is not visible at all.

### How do you get the ball rolling?

---

No sooner has the current project been completed than the next one often comes up. It would not be good to continue without a break. To start on demand would be just as bad. The new needs a beginning. A manager has been given a new area of responsibility, although he is more than busy with the existing tasks. The new task is complex and requires time and concentration. Both are missing and so he only does the most necessary things. He describes his difficulties in getting off to a good start: "In the office, I don't have enough time to think my way into a new subject. It takes me a long time to get a feel for it first. I like to immerse myself until I am emotionally in it" [54].

When it comes to a new opera role, Elina Garanča also goes slowly. She sits down at the piano and studies the new part note by note. And she travels: "When I record a role [...] I must have felt the place of origin and its history once. I have to be able to walk the streets and speak the language" [55]. Thus, she approaches her role physically and mentally. It takes time for the role to mature.

Visualize a work situation that is new to you. This can be a task, a project assignment, a work area, a new position or even a new job.

5 How do you prepare for this new situation?

5 Do you have certain rituals? If yes, which ones?

5 How might you start the task differently than you are used to?

Toni Morrison never starts writing unprepared. "I don't sit down and start thinking. I have so many other things to do that I can't afford to do that. I ruminate in the car, on the way to work, on the subway, or while mowing the lawn. Then, when I sit in front of my sheet of paper, I already have something - I can produce" [56]. By musing, she sets the mood for writing. Peter Handke, who often cannot sleep at night, does something similar. "There I lie happily awake, and then the projecting starts. After two or three hours I already have the next day's episode pretty much inside me" [57]. He has put himself in the best possible mood for his upcoming work. Curl up in your favorite corner and imitate Peter Handke!

Do you have monotonous activities that make little mental demands on you? Weeding or ironing? Hiking or cross-country skiing? Rowing or riding a bicycle? Choose an activity that you can do for about 20 minutes. Take one aspect of your new task and try to mentally tune into it in rhythm with the recurring physical movements.

Get familiar

Take time

Prepare casually in  
front of

## Undermining the beginning

When working as an artist, starting out means not knowing the goal at first. Every draftsman knows the inhibition threshold of putting the very first stroke on paper. Thomas Schütte overcomes this initial moment by simply starting to doodle. He sketches things that occur to him or draws his head. Sometimes he imagines drawing for a certain person. Every now and then he jots down his thoughts in the margin of the page. He concentrates and forgets that he has already begun.

## Enter sideways

What can you derive from such doodles for your professional activities? Schütte doesn't start a new work too coldly. He warms up for it and begins with verve. That's how he gets into a flow. He doesn't draw linearly from top left to bottom right, but starts somewhere. So if you don't quite know how, where, or what to start with because your task is complex, just start with something and work from that point. Think circularly, once looking forward, sideways, and backward. Starting means approaching the goal from different directions.

### Artistic imperative

Swing into the beginning with a ritual!

## Perception

Painting accounts for only 10 to 20% of a painter's work. The rest of the creative process is looking and recognizing. A painter deals with his motif before he starts working. He perceives its shape and internalizes it. When he paints himself, he permanently records the effect of his actions and how the work develops. It is similar with actors who are working on a role. The scene is ultimately the least of it.

## Penetrate topics

When artists begin their work, they are not interested in solving a problem, but first of all in perceiving the problem. Sometimes they come to the realization that the initial question is not the real issue at all and that the context is much more complex. In this way, artists perceive things that are invisible to others.

## Sink yourself

> **James Turrell's light sculptures are a challenge for the senses. Turrell plays with human visual habits and the limits of human perceptual capacity. The illusion reaches so far that overtaxed viewers lose their grip on imaginary walls of light. The light itself becomes the object. Chuck Close says of Turrell: "He's an orchestrator of experience ... not a creator of cheap effects. And every artist knows how cheap an effect is, and how revolutionary an experience" [58].**

Turrell's *Dark Spaces* are closed-off rooms in which there seems to be no light, although extremely weak light sources are placed there. The viewer initially perceives nothing but complete darkness. The artist is concerned with the experience of seeing oneself seeing. Even if one immerses oneself completely in the darkness, it can take up to 30 minutes before one perceives a speck of light. "My work has no object, no image and no focus. With no object, no image and no focus, what are you looking at? You are looking at you looking. What is important to me, is to create an experience of wordless thought" [59].

Perception is an important part of the artistic process. Artists are guided in their actions by their perception. They respond to what they take in with all their senses, whether it comes from their environment or from the work they are working on. Artists have learned to look closely and listen attentively. They feel and comprehend their material, recognize patterns and structures, connect to them and continue working. Sensitive perception brings a wealth of information with which to do something.

Use all senses

➤ **Henri Cartier-Bresson describes the "decisive moment" when he presses the shutter release of the camera as a peak of attention: "I am a bundle of nerves waiting for the moment, and it comes closer, even closer, and the knot bursts. This is physical joy, dance, union of time and space. Yes!! Yes! Yes! [...] Seeing is a whole" [60].**

There is a moment when things in the viewfinder organize themselves as if by themselves and form an aesthetically coherent ensemble. The photographer must recognize and seize this decisive moment. If he misses this photographic *kairos* because he hesitates or is inattentive, the photo fails. "You know with a terrible clarity exactly where you failed; and at this point you often recall the telltale feeling you had while you were actually making the pictures. Was it a feeling of hesitation due to uncertainty? [...] Or was it (and this is most frequent) that your glance became vague, your eye wandered off?" [61]

Capture moments

A work of art is created in a permanent interplay of perception and action. In the artistic process, an artist shapes things and gives them expression. In the process, he pauses again and again to take in what the previous action has changed. He takes up this change and continues with it. Through perception, an image of the work he is working on emerges. He does something with the work, the behavior again influences the appearance and so on. This usually happens in a flash and intuitively.

Perceive changes



## Be vigilant

To be able to work like this, you need a quick perceptive faculty. Artists are alert and highly receptive to visual, auditory, tactile and other stimuli. They are open to what comes at them, and at the same time they can process information quickly. Artists take in all sensory impressions without filtering out any with a specific intention. This does not mean, however, that they do not concentrate on certain senses.

" I am a director who works more with the ear than with the eye. When I was at the theater, during rehearsals I watched often on my feet [sic!]. The actors said to me: But you don't pay any attention to us. I then replied that I perceive them better that way. One hears immediately whether a conversation or an emotion is artificial. When you look, you are distracted. [62] (Michael Haneke)

Thinking  
Unschematically

Artists try to deal openly and without prejudice with what they perceive. They avoid classifying impressions into categories and schemes. If you want to create something original as an artist, you must not fall prey to the belief that you already know or have already seen what you have in front of you. Looking for parallels to what you are already familiar with or what has proven itself in the past prevents you from grasping what is new. Mental shortcuts are taboo.

Artists immerse themselves in an object without premises and without prefabricated media images. They detach themselves from opinions and superficial interpretations and renounce attempts at interpretation. Their very individual view of things is the basis for originality and independent action.

## Give up prejudices

"Ready-made pictures are to the eye what prejudice is to the mind. The effort that is necessary to get away from this Setting free requires something like courage; and for the artist, who must look at everything as if he were seeing it for the first time, this courage is something essential: he must look at life as he did when he was a child. [63] (Henri Matisse)

## Ignore knowledge

Artists dwell on their impressions for a long time, because if they move too quickly from sensory perceptions to their interpretation and classification, the perception becomes distorted. In order to be able to see or hear something in all its facets, one must forget all designations for what is perceived and ignore all knowledge. If you switch off logic and ignore the meaning of things, you will get a more exact view of reality. Who expects something certain, will overlook everything else.

> **There are also sounds in silence. John Cage realizes this when he hears his pulse beating in an anechoic room. Cage interprets the silence as the absence of intention and translates this lack of intention in 4'33", a piano piece in three movements.**