



SHiFT

**What the Great
Masters of Art Can
Teach Us About
Navigating the Second
Half of Life with
Vitality, Creativity and
Meaning**

October 4, 2010

Eric Erickson Adult Development Stages

- **6 Stages between Ages 0 and 40**
- **2 Stages between 40 and End of Life**
 - **Adulthood**
Generativity vs Self Absorption
 - **Old Age**
Integrity vs Despair

Gene Cohen's 4 Phases of Adult Development

I. Midlife Re-evaluation — Early 40s to late 50s

- Sense of mortality for first time—sense of quest

II. Liberation – Mid 50s to early 70s

- If not now when—sense of personal freedom

III. Summing Up --- Late 60s into 80s

- Motivated to share wisdom—finding meaning

IV. Encore -- Late 70's to End of Life

- Desire to restate and reaffirm major themes in our lives

My Journey

100+ Interviews
The Great Artists

Insights:

- Life Change is a creative process
- Life Change mirrors the creative process of the great artist
- Life Change takes specific creative skills
- These creative skills are learnable and applicable to our lives because they are life skills





1640 (34)



1669 (63)



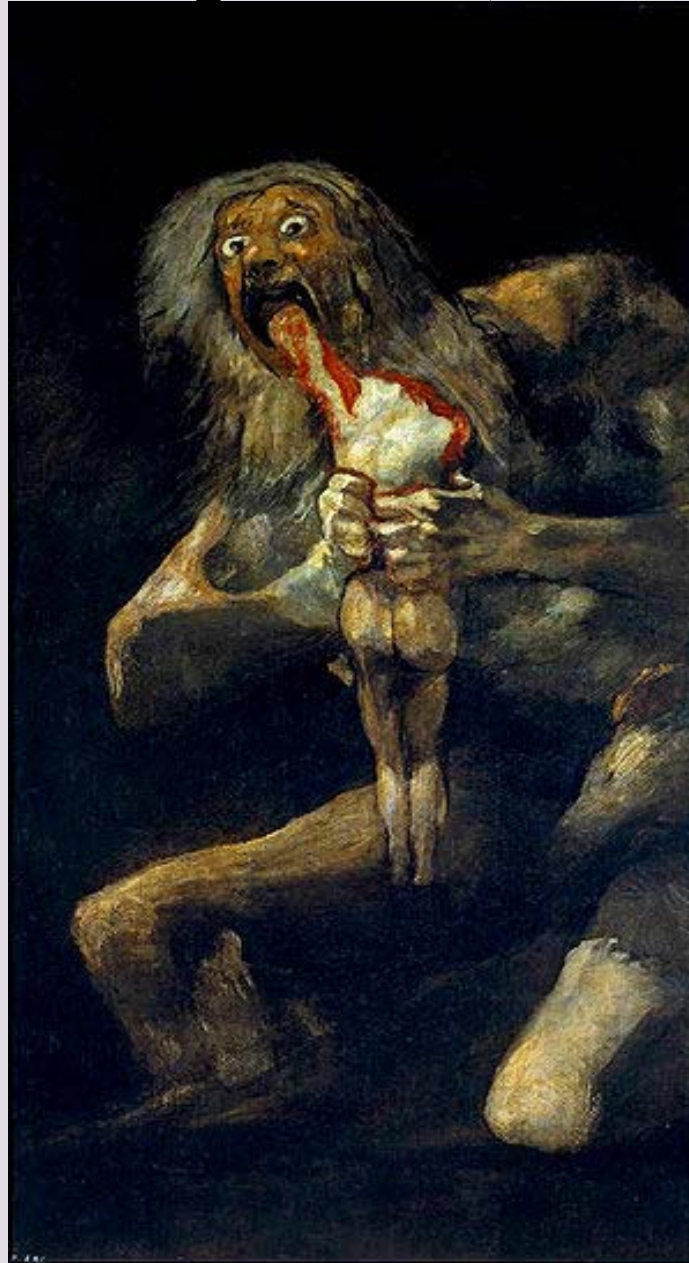
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Francisco Goya. 1746-1828

Saturn Devouring His Son, 1819-1823 (77)



Francisco Goya. 1746-1828
I Am Still Learning, 1828 (82)

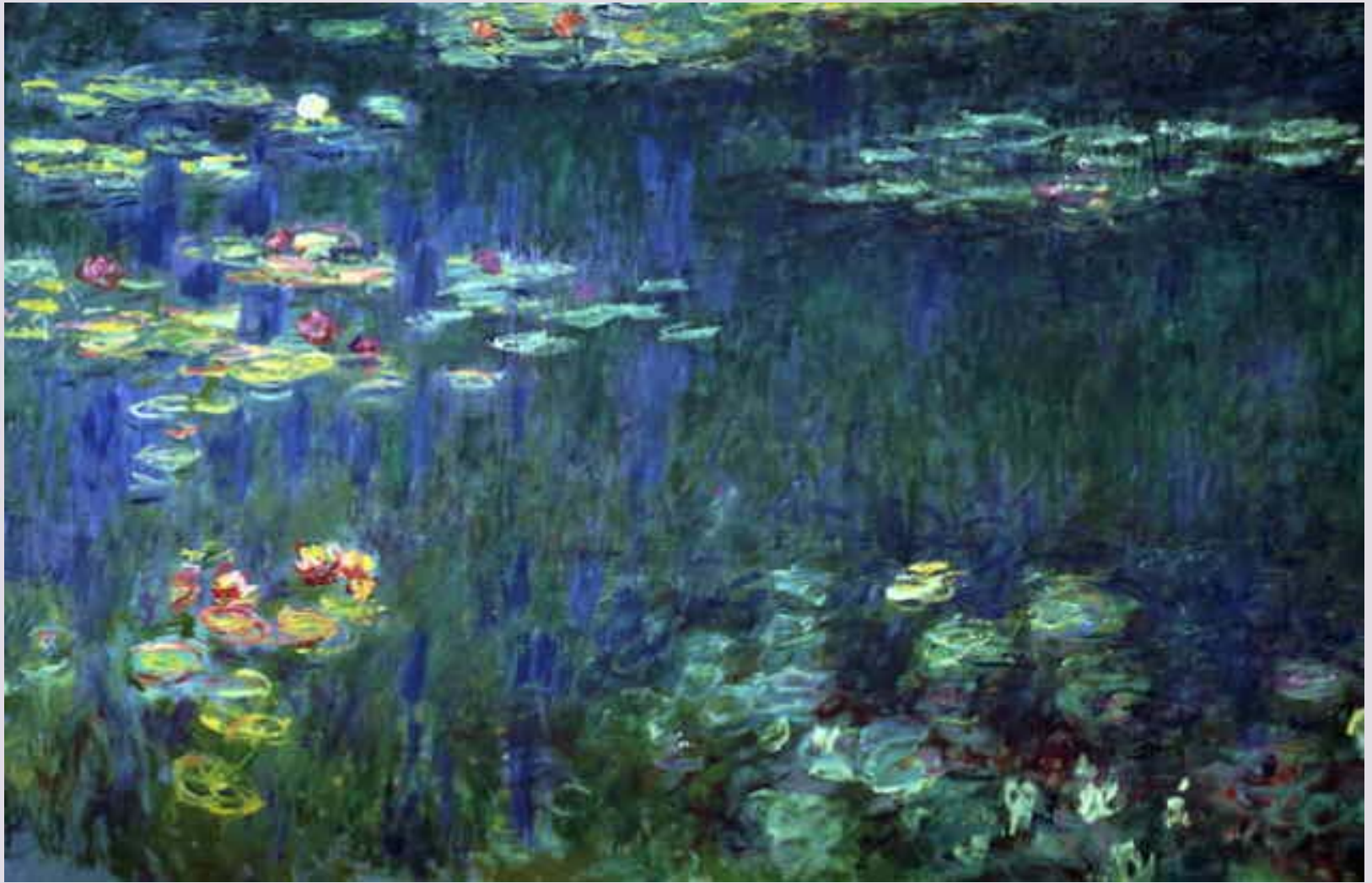


Claude Monet, 1893 (53)





1899 (59)



1820-23 (80-83)

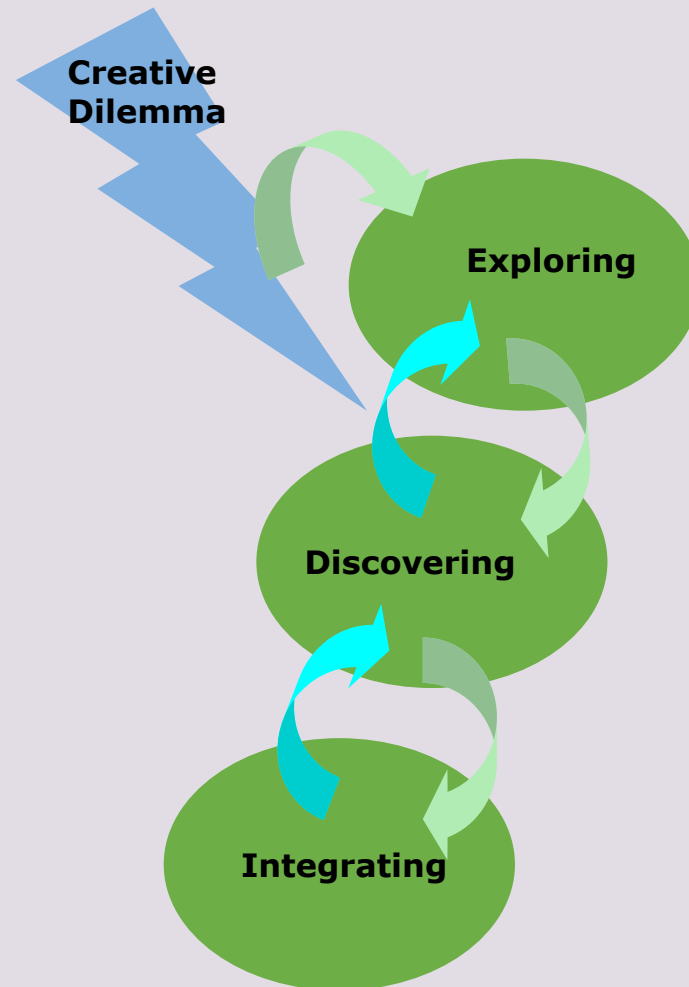
Henri Matisse, 1869-1954





Snow Flowers 1951 (82)

The 4 Dimensions of Life Change



The Creative Dilemma

- Arises out of tension between our current reality and a sense that things can be different
- Presents a choice between a known and an unknown
- Poses the question: “*Do I act or not act on this choice?*”
- Saying no keeps us in a state of tension
- Saying yes launches us into the next dimension— **Exploration**

Purpose: To Disturb

Exploring:

- Searching for and experimenting with new directions
- Reconnecting with an earlier interest or passion
- Expanding our sense of what is possible for us
- Surfacing old emotions and experiencing new ones

Purpose: To Learn

Discovering:

- Using the raw material of our exploration to discern what is meaningful to us
- Unlike exploration, discovery is focused and evaluative
- What we learn through this dimension usually sets off a new cycle of exploring and discovering

Purpose: To Discern

Integrating

Combining elements of our past experiences with what we have now discovered about ourselves into a new way of living our lives

This new way of living may include:

- New capacities

- Enhanced emotional range

- New forms of personal expression

- New public identity

Our new self is the perch from which we view our next creative dilemma

A sense that we are becoming more whole

Purpose: To Fulfill



**How do we learn to navigate
the dimensions of life change?**

The Seven Creative Skills™

Preparation *Deliberately engaging in activities which prepare our brains for creative work*

Seeing *The ability to discern new connections, gain fresh perspective, and stay alive to new possibilities*

Using Context *Understanding the environments in which we work and live and using that knowledge to make changes in our lives*

Embracing Uncertainty *Acting on the opportunities, sometimes hidden, presented by change and uncertainty*

Taking Risks *Acting without certainty of outcome*

Discipline *Acting consistently whether or not one feels motivated*

Collaboration *Engaging with others to help us make desired changes*

Seeing

The ability to discern new connections, gain fresh perspective, and stay alive to new possibilities

- Are aware of preconceptions and biases about ourselves and others
- Look at situations as though we are seeing them for the first time
- Pay attention to our internal emotions and external relationships
- Pay attention to what we fear or are reluctant to face
- Make connections that were not previously there

Seeing Strategies

Stepping Back from the Canvas — moving yourself some distance from your day to day life or work to gain a fresh perspective

Paying Attention to Negative Space — tuning into thoughts and feelings we tend to avoid, deny or undervalue

Looking at Things Upside Down — radically shifting perspective. Turning the premise of our thinking completely around

Cultivating the Mind of Child — introducing the spirit of play and spontaneity into the way we look at things, unbound by rules. Allowing ourselves to return to what gives us joy and energy without pre-judgment

Stepping Back From the Canvas

“Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer. Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller and more of it can be taken in at a glance, and a lack of harmony and proportion is more readily seen.”

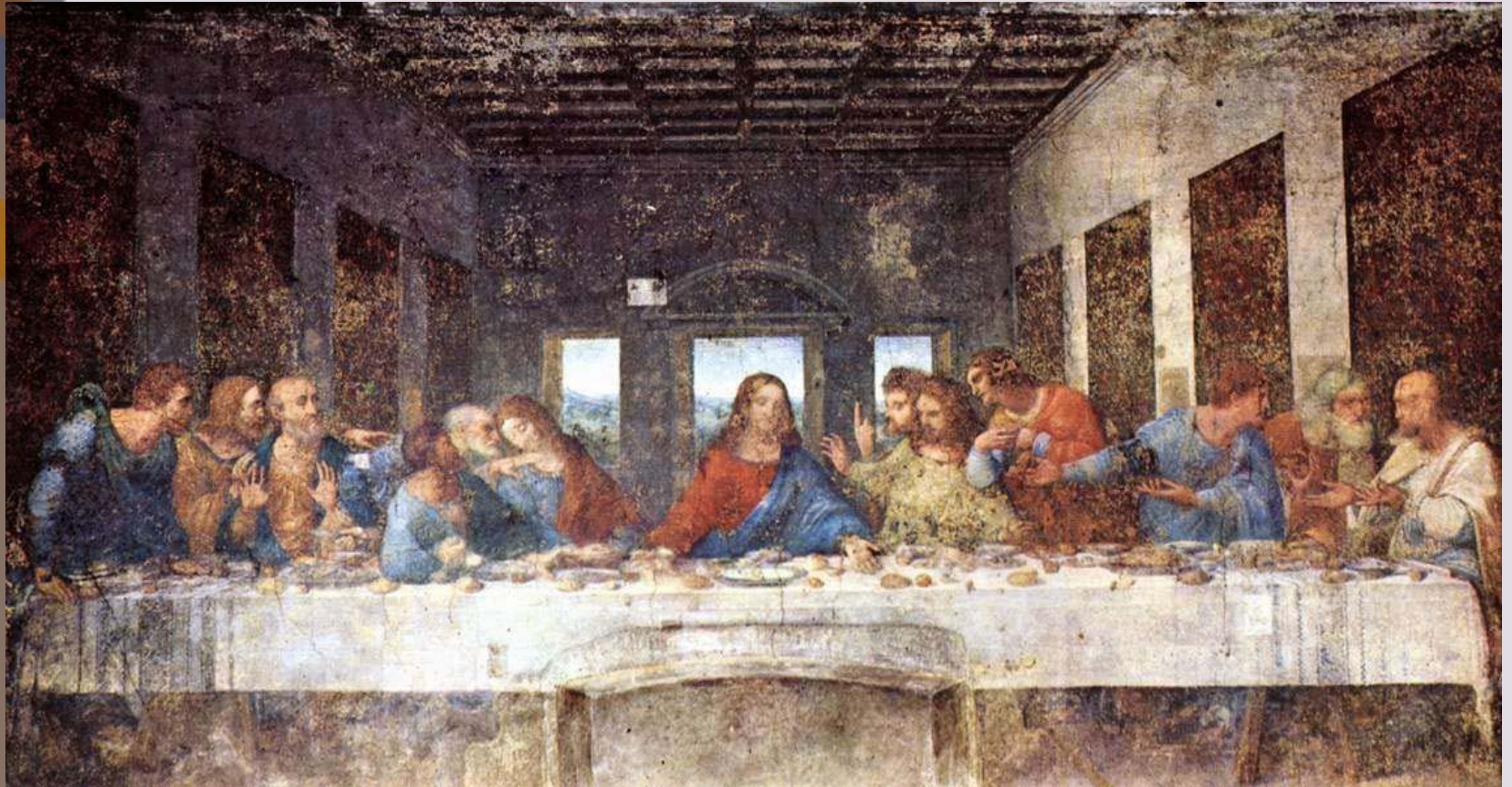


Stepping Back from the Canvas Questions

- What do I **really** want to do in my life?
- How do I **really** want to be in my life?
- Am I in alignment with what I want to do and how I want to be in my life?
- Are there things inside of me that want to get out that I am not allowing to get out?

Paying Attention to Negative Space

Leonardo Da Vinci, The Last Supper, 1495-1498



Negative Space Questions

- **When you think of change what fears and anxieties come to the surface? How are they influencing the way you approach or hesitate to approach change?**
- **What values do you hold dear that are not being fully realized or expressed in your life?**
- **What joys have receded from your life?**
- **What has disappeared from your life that is important to you?**

Who Painted these?





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“The effort needed to see things without distortion demands a kind of courage; and this courage is essential to the artist, who has to look at everything as though he were seeing it for the first time; he has to look at life as he did when he was a child and if he loses that faculty, he cannot express himself in an original, that is, a personal way.”





**What does it mean to cultivate
the mind of a child?**

Cultivating the Mind of Child

Introducing the spirit of play
into the way we look at things,
unbound by rules.

and Taneity

into the way we look at things,
unbound by rules.

Allowing ourselves to return to what
gives us joy and energy ***without pre-
judgment.***



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Finding Wholeness by Returning to the Child Within

When we cultivate the mind of a child it brings us back to our whole self:

- I didn't change. I allowed more of myself to come out
- The older you get the more like yourself you become
- All my life I cared more about what others thought. That no longer mattered. That's when I was free.
- I don't have to play a role anymore.
- As I let myself become more of myself I discovered I liked me.
- I am becoming more of who I am.
- Maybe I am who I thought I was.

“Developmental Imperatives” of Adult Life

- To finally get to know oneself and be comfortable with oneself*
- To have good judgment
- To feel whole—psychologically, interpersonally, spiritually—despite loss and pain
- To live life to the fullest right to the end
- To give to others, one’s family and community
- To tell one’s story
- To continue the process of discovery and change
- To remain hopeful despite adversity



Renoir's Final Words

Resources

Becoming a Life Change Artist; 7 Creative Skills to Reinvent Yourself at Any Stage of Life (Penguin Avery)

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