

Promoting Narrative in Your Work

©Robert Dancik 2008

These ideas about narrative are neither complete nor in an order or hierarchy of importance or effectiveness. They are just thoughts concerning the nature of stories and story telling in artwork. Whether worn on the body, hung on a wall, or placed on a pedestal you have the ability to make decisions as to the sort of narrative your work will represent. While not being able to exercise power over *how* a viewer sees your work, you can control *what* the viewer is seeing and give cues as to possible references and connections.

- Think of what you want to express (feeling)
- Think of what you want to say (qualitative statement about the feeling)
- Is your audience important?
- Try meditation (this may take many forms)
- Let yourself feel things not just think about them
- Use established symbols - but realize their limitations
- Draw a lot - then draw a lot more (drawing may take many forms)
- Draw the same thing over and over - things evolve by repetition - not just by the passage of time
- Listen to your dreams
- Watch a TV program (listen to a piece of music, go to a part of the museum) that you really don't like and start to make marks on a piece of paper or such
- Do the same as above for stimuli that you like, make you sad, joyous, ebullient, etc. these marks can become your emotional alphabet
- Write down observations of common occurrences - don't just report, but write about how you feel towards what you are seeing and think about the associations you make
- Sit quietly and close your eyes and see
- When you are focused on a project, and something comes into your mind, "out of nowhere", listen to it (akin to meditation)
- Pay attention to what you learn, do and use, as you work on a particular project. As Buckminster Fuller has commented, "Most meaningful and lasting progress is made at right angles to the path you're on"
- Be prepared to reveal yourself (to yourself and others)
- Corollary to above - find someone you trust with the above revelations
- If you're not sure, do it anyway - what the worst that can happen?
- If you are working on a project and you get part way through and look down and say to yourself, "Bloody hell, this is the best work I've ever done", STOP - LEAVE IT ALONE - YOU'RE DONE - take it as a gift from the Muses
- Making a model is a good way to start and can serve as a tool for comparison and decision making