

# Artist Ideas for Commodity Cans

by

Neal Ambrose-Smith © 2009



## Appendix

### 1. Always keep your brush wet.

Any sign painter knows a dry brush means trouble. The end of the line. Besides a dry brush means you are not working and that's a bad idea.

### 2. Steal ideas.

Technically it's called appropriation or more specifically image appropriation. Picasso was known for his image appropriation, in fact it's well known that artists would hide their work when he came calling. Picasso once said people borrow images, but a true artist steals.

### 3. Read.

Read about other artists and read their reviews. Then refer to Dave Hickey. He'll put it all into perspective. I can't understand a word of any post modern review without the aid of a dictionary and hours of rereading. A good friend once told me to read Hickey's Air Guitar. I recommend it. Very entertaining. Which leads me to idea number 4. Of course if you don't have idea number 4 you're going to have to call a friend, but if you happen to read the review of my cans, get a dictionary.

### 4. Entertain.

As an artist, a human being, a person of color, and more specifically a Native American, I love to be entertained. While I enjoy craftsmanship and technical skill, content hits me right where I want it. In the brain. I believe one can have all those qualities wrapped into a single work. With a little practice you'll see what I'm talking about. Try it on your friends. They'll want more. This idea can and should be combined with idea number 2. They work well together.

### 5. Put your ideas in a can.

I did. They'll last a lot longer than in your head. Of course I gave most of my cans away, but good ideas come in packs. Pick up a sixer of good ideas. It'll do you good. You can use my can and collage this idea in your work. Now that's a lot like idea number 2.

### 6. Use this can to mix paint in.

Or wash it out and serve mixed nuts for your guests. That's a great coffee table idea. Remember, good art won't match your sofa, but snacks go a long way and that's a lot like idea number 13.

### 7. How much does a good idea weigh?

Is 30 grams adequate? Sometimes thoughts weigh heavy on my mind. Five sheets of glossy letter paper weigh about 30 grams, but that doesn't include text. Perhaps that's part of the irony in my Artist's Idea.

#### 8. Art history.

Get some. It'll do you good. Everything comes from something or somewhere. That's the basis of idea number 2. I think it's great to lock yourself in your studio, but do it with some art books. If you ever get stuck for an idea start flipping through some pages. See idea number 3. If that doesn't work you need new books. Take an art history class at the local college. Audit. Don't take those silly tests. Art history exams are another example of a failed educational system, but the lectures are priceless, especially if you get an excellent professor. A good professor will teach 30% fact and make up the rest. That's okay because then the class is entertaining. I'm hinting at idea number 4 here. Without art history you can't know where you're going if you don't know where others have been. Plus it'll help you dialogue about your work. Which is good for those late night studio visits over coffee. It also allows you the knowledge to understand exactly what you're doing.

#### 9. Teach.

You'll learn more about yourself and your work than you could ever imagine. A broad range of ages helps too. Elementary kids give you freedom and confidence. High school kids give you discipline and college students tailor your dialogue skills. ideas number 4 and 8 are really important here. Please be advised.

#### 10. Stuck with your paintings?

Then draw. Stuck with your drawings? Then construct. The point is to be an all around artist. I heard a commercial on the radio that said "punt, run, kick, jump, catch, play, get up and get out..." Artists should do the same thing. Paint, draw, sculpt, pull, letter, line, bend, meld, weld, cut, saw, get up and create. You can use that as your mantra.

#### 11. Lost.

An artist friend of mine once said, actually he says it all the time, but he said "If I knew where I was going, I'd be lost." That is one of the best art teaching aids I've ever heard. What a freeing thought. If that doesn't free you from total failure, you'd better get all the idea cans.

#### 12. Do every show you can.

Not only does it add to your resumé, but every single show is an opportunity for success. Exposure no matter how great or small is significant. A chance to see your work hung at hole-in-the-wall joints and museums gives perspective. Does it work? Does it fit? How can I make it fit? Does it match the sofa? How about that corner of the gallery? In 1915 Vladimir Tatlin used the corners of the gallery. Perhaps that may work for you? How does your art fit at your friends' house? The friends' house points to idea number 13. By the way if you're already famous disregard idea number 12 and trade with someone else.

13. Giveaway.

Give it away. Give your ideas, your secrets (especially ones made up), and your work away. How is anyone to believe it was ever your idea in the first place if they've never seen or heard of you? Holding back your "secret idea" out of fear and someone else will claim it, and give it away. Don't wait, act today and I'm sure you'll get the prize. Besides, no one can do it like you anyway. They'll be calling you for tips. Your email will ring off the hook. Here's a side note, kind of like a bonus round for the grand prize. In old Native American tradition the individual who gives it all away is said to be the wealthiest person because everybody owes them. And that's power. I'm sure you understand my meaning as you are reading this straight from the can. The can I gave away. Oops! Lucky 13!

14. Gamble.

Not in the casino fashion, but in the risk of the brush stroke. Don't question it. Take it on faith. After all, you're the artist and no one can tell you otherwise. Why red? Why not? Man Ray once said "Who cares? Who doesn't care?" My sentiments exactly. He was talking of course about Dada, but I think his point transcends more than just Dada.

15. More than One.

Do several works, even identical. If you're working on a series it helps you define what you're really after, plus you have a body of work. A novice can make a great work once, but a pro can repeat it. Besides if it's really good you'll have more to sell. More than one person should have your beautiful work in their house (idea number 13 can be applied here). Don't be stingy.

16. A treat.

As an artist, let's say a painter, you could work at two levels simultaneously. You move in close and make a mark, then move away to see it in perspective. You study the composition from afar. So here we have two layers. Now many works have multiple layers, but for the sake of discussion let's just stick with the two. If the painting is good and the composition succeeds, the viewer will be drawn in. This is where they get to see the brush strokes, under painting, or imagery that's not visible from across the room. They may ponder, study, and move from one end to the other. They may even smile, giggle in delight or say "ah". Perhaps they are reading some text buried in the composition. What ever the case may be, you've given them a treat for making the trek over to the painting for a closer examination.

17. The three Cs.

Composition, Content, and Craftpersonship. Aha! Forgot about those juicy tidbits eh? Refreshing isn't it? For those of us who forgot, Composition is essentially choreography or placement of color. Content may be imagery and Craftpersonship is learned skill or execution. Sometimes rules make it so easy it should be a crime!

#### 18. Finished?

Done? When is a piece finished? Who decides? Your dealer? A professor once said a work is never completed but rather in stages of pause ( This probably came from Kandinsky and he probably got from someone else. Sounds a lot like idea number 8 and idea number 2). With this in mind it might make it easier to put the brush down! Idea number 18 lends itself to idea number 19. These two ideas work hand in hand. That's not to say any of these 100 ideas shouldn't or couldn't be applied together. I look at it like mixed media. What ever it takes to complete your composition.

#### 19. Productivity vs creativity.

Yikes! That sounds like a J-O-B! Perhaps, but at what point should you put the brush down? (idea number 18 folks.) Have you ever painted yourself into a corner? I have. It's a real bummer, not to mention a waste of materials and time. Take a break and rest. This is where idea number 15 comes it handy.

#### 20. Repetition.

A fantastic tool. The repeating image is wonderful for backgrounds especially. Perhaps some of the images vary in size, alluding to a one point perspective. Magritte comes to mind here.

#### 21. The diagonal.

Such a simple word can do so much to the human eye. We are suckers for movement and a diagonal does that job nicely. Starting at the upper left of a painting create a weight, something compositionally pulling the eye to it. Then counter balance the upper left with something in the lower right and bingo! The viewer is forced (whether they realize or not), to make that eye journey every time. Take a peak at some Baroque paintings and compare it to some Classical paintings and you'll see what I mean. One might say that Classical paintings are balanced, and therefore Baroque paintings are out of balance, but I say balance is weight not shape.

#### 22. Identity.

If two people out of 100 identify with your work, perhaps a discussion on what it is the two identify with is in order. Remember, being an artist is still a job, so you want to keep your job and reaching a broader audience insures just that. People like to identify with things. There is a certain comfort level that we all require, especially in our home, with a painting. Crows are very picky about what goes in their nest. If I have to read everything you've read to understand your painting, you had better find another job. No matter how conceptual you are you had better have something for others to identify with, unless you are already famous, but even then you can alienate your collectors and ultimately, be out of work. Olafur Eliasson comes to mind. He has very conceptual work, but I still find something in it for me. A single idea that I can connect with, will retain my interest, and perhaps with any luck I'll want to investigate further, this Eliasson guy and his lights, water, or whatever.

### 23. What's the story?

Is there a story? Is there a beginning and an end? Perhaps not. Certainly, with Yves Klein's blue paintings I wouldn't get the story simply from the work, however, I would still get something, yes? The rich blue color (not to mention I'm a sucker for blue, and I think I read somewhere blue is the most sold color in the world) draws (no pun intended) me in anyway. I make up my own story. Yves does have a story, but it doesn't matter, my story is better because it's mine. I don't think he could be happier with that statement, because it probably means a sale, although he's not around to discuss it further. The point is the story. What I bring to the work and how that work rings my bell. This is a lot like idea number 22 in this way. Somebody once asked me how would an Italian viewer ever understand my tribal coyote stories from looking at my paintings? I said it doesn't matter. Let's say I was flipping through a Mimmo Paladino catalog and I liked his imagery, but I didn't know who he was or his story. Mimmo did his job. His work connected with me and perhaps I'll seek out more of it, or maybe even learn his name and his stories. If the Italian viewer looking at my work likes it, that's all that matters, I did my job.

### 24. Tool box of icons.

We all have them, our little treasured, magical icons that we pull out here and there. Sometimes we use them once, and perhaps we use them again ten years later, but the point is to be aware of your tool box. Don't forget about. Sometimes it's mental, a collection of images in our head, other times we actually have a container with a collection going. I've even seen shelves dedicated to this sort of thing, although people usually call it a shrine. There is one in my studio for a fact. Refer to your tool box on occasion, it'll do you good.

### 25. Text.

Now some folks don't like words in their work or anybody's for that matter. For what ever reason they just don't like it. If you are one of these folks you might consider taking a breath and giving it a whirl. This is idea number 14 for you. Anyway, many, many, many, many, (I can keep going with this) many artists have at one point or on a regular basis used text in their work. It's okay to disagree with their success, but I beseech you to reconsider. Now I'm getting at idea number 22. In fact text is like the easiest tool to use, because most of us can read! Text is like gold. Everybody gets it. I must warn you, however easy it is to use it can have disastrous effects if misused. People are sensitive to things they understand clearly and so if you dumb down your work by including text at the risk of alienating the viewer all may be lost. People don't need much to go on. Most can get it, with a little help. Perhaps just a letter or number? Donald Baechler did a wonderful print using just numbers to create a face. And we've all seen the numerous collages or the last hundred years using magazines and newsprint. Think Barbara Kruger.

26. Keep a sketchbook.

I don't. Well technically it is a sketchbook, but I don't sketch. Many people do and can sketch, but I fall into that Native American category of non-sketchers. It's a historical fact, not to mention traditional, that Native Americans don't sketch. Navajo weavers never sketch out a rug before shopping for materials. Anyway my point is a place to keep notes, phone numbers, coffee stains, etc. I use sketchbooks all the time. Sometimes I can't find the one I was using so I'll grab another. I have a two shelves dedicated to sketchbooks. They are kind of like a tool box of sorts although 3-d objects trash the binding. Refer to idea number 24. Sketchbooks are a wonderful resource while you are alive, and once you're dead and famous they'll become someone's collection.

27. Be social.

Go to an art opening and talk with a friend. There are many ways to dialogue about your ideas, but it important due to the nature of artists working in a vacuum (our studio), besides we get to see what someone else is doing in their vacuum. A first hand experience of new art from someone else can be explosive. It may require a moment alone in the lavatory jotting notes or running home to get to work! Idea number 2 is realized here!

28. Listen to music.

I generally can't work without the aid of sound, nor can I sleep. I usually have some sort mood altering sound moving through my head. When I work in silence I invariably end up singing the same line from a song over and over again. Stuck in a rut there with that. Besides, music can feed ideas you wouldn't have otherwise thought of, especially lyrics. Switch back and forth from instrumental music or sound to human voice and see what happens there. You may find that idea number 29 will come in handy!

29. Listen to silence.

Sometimes I can't hear anything but the noise I'm making anyway, so why all the fuss with music? Putting on music is just another form of avoidance from the real task at hand, making art. All that preparation, getting coffee, putting the dogs under the table with fresh water, opening a can of nuts next to a plate of fruit and cheese, turning the heat on and letting it warm up. Hey, this sounds like idea number 37! Although after a while of this idea number 29 idea number 28 sounds (pun) real good!

30. Cook.

Cooking is no different than making art. In fact cooking is an art. As an artist I love food. Preparing a meal, especially for friends and guests, is a wonderful tool to experience another art form. Refer to idea number 10. Half of the enjoyment of a meal is the aroma of what's coming and the other half is the presentation. Of course the company weighs in heavy as well, but the display of the meal is key to the presentation enjoyment and taste. Tastes as good as it looks? I'm not just



talking about Thiebaud, but some of those cakes looked darn good! How many apple slices, how they are cut, and where they go are considerations. The shapes of foods and their colors relative to their neighbors can be a battle with a balanced meal. If the plate consists of pinto beans and brown rice, perhaps a nice red sauce will complement the overarching values of the brown hues. A smattering of orange peel grindings might be nice as well. The point is we spend half of our day during meal time and so we might as well work out some ideas, after all the plate is our canvas and the food is our composition. Bon appétit!

31. Hang your work in your house.

Install, place or hang, whatever the case may be. This is a great place to study your work. You can visit it often without any hassle. Perhaps you are cooking dinner (refer to idea number 30). The lighting may change throughout the day, depending, and this can give clues to your overall success, what needs refinement, and ideas for new work. Note: this is perfect for guests, especially collectors!

32. Write about your work.

This could be seen as a lead into idea number 36, but it really draws (no pun intended) from idea numbers 13, 22, 23, 26, 27, and probably others. Don't fret, just begin from the end, middle or even the beginning. Compile, collage and paste, then hand it over to a friend to edit. This is the hard part, I mean how do you expect anyone to understand what the heck you are saying? All that gibberish, really? Now here's where the real investigation begins and where art historians love to dwell. Just make it up! Tell them what they want to hear, because nobody wants the truth, it's just not that interesting. Refer to idea number 23 as many times as needed.

33. Juxtapose.

Or conflict depending on how you look at it.

Put in an element that doesn't belong. Remember those elementary/kindergarten worksheets, Which one does not belong? Well that's music for art! On occasion a single element placed in your work that doesn't fit will do wonders, and make viewers bonkers. They'll be talking about your work for months! You'll surpass Warhol's expectations of minute success! Now that's fame!

34. Title.

Don't be untitled. Those days are over. That period has come and gone. Surely you have something to say about your work? If you don't, make it up. When I see an untitled piece it makes me think the artist doesn't know what they're talking about, or that they don't have anything to say. Give the viewers a little help here and something to chew on. If they don't understand your painting, "Untitled" won't help help them out at all. Perhaps the title is like idea number 33 and not connected to the work at all. That's okay, because we all like intrigue and mystery as they are powerful tools.

35. Grow up already!

Quit doing those kiddie images. How do you expect anyone (disregard Art News) to take you serious? Those squiggly, cute, colorful lines (disregard Kenny Scharf) are for school work. We all grew up with it, fell in love with it, and lived with it, but eventually grew out of it! You just can't keep painting those silly heart shapes if you want to be successful (disregard Jim Dine)! What you need is some adult content (disregard David Salle)!

36. Daydream.

Marilyn Minter once said those who can daydream, lose themselves in the monotony of work, and even find it therapeutic. They have the "the knitting gene". When you go out to the studio, take some time and find your knitting gene. If you are at all lucky you'll forget what you came there for in the first place and wander into some unfinished idea or project that was due last month. Success will be yours! (I read that very statement once from a fortune cookie note pasted in someone's print.)

37. Ritual.

Ah yes, that word that describes all artists to a T. We can't escape our foundations and years of practice. Preparing to make art has long been a process, which whether we like it or not becomes half or more of our love of art making. Making a fresh pot of coffee or reheating this morning's pot is deeply rooted in our psyche. Perhaps checking your email first thing in the morning sets your process in motion, whatever the case may be realizing your ritual may ease your mind into a more productive art making day. At the very least it may reduce your time spent in professional therapy which could save you money, although if professional therapy is part of your ritual process, sell more work.

38. Sacrifice.

Yes, this is almost impossible for young artists and even seasoned professionals cringe when faced with this prospect, but there are times when the painting doesn't work for whatever reason and something has to go. In order for the composition to succeed sometimes, your favorite, most-bested mark, image, icon, must be cut. This is exactly why idea number 15 can be real handy. If you had followed idea number 15, making any sacrifice wouldn't hurt so bad. Artists ranging from Scholder to Diebenkorn have discussed this very topic and we all are subject to the very nature of it's reality. Don't fret, the light at the end of the tunnel is not a train, but the joy of success! You'll feel so much better when the cut is made and your work is finished! I wouldn't equate it to having a mole removed, but you get the idea.

39. Feel good.

Feel good about your work. Artists are at the very core to human existence. No matter what your parents say about artists, know that you are not alone. Know that you are important and needed. Where would the world be without painting, song,

color, or houses, toaster ovens, cars, clothes, and food? Artists dream them, design them, and create them. Artists build the world around us. Artists provide jobs and cure unemployment. Okay, maybe I'm over reaching here, but you get the nature of this discussion. Start an AA group (Artists Anonymous). Have regular meetings and group hugs. I like hugs, maybe not group hugs, but a hug is good.

#### 40. Reduce your palette.

I know I know, just a little of this and a little of that, and oh don't forget the other 248 colors! To reduce I will mix all the colors together and just use that as my black. Fritz Scholder would blend several colors to make a black (and he got that from someone else). A little Joseph Albers could go a long way. Sometimes we need a reminder to simplify, reduce and reuse. Wow, that sounds a lot like environmental conservation and sustainability! Well that's exactly right! Take that advice and stick it in your work. You'll begin a whole new series of works and have all this wonderful negative space (okay let's not say its negative, let's call it a wildlife preserve). Now you can take all these new words and add them to the sales pitch of your work! Pretty cool huh? (Take this new information and combine it with idea number 32, you'll be really happy) New paintings in Wildlife Conservation with built in Environmental Concerns.

#### 41. Print these ideas on T shirts.

What a great idea! Then you can wear them around. You'll always have an idea at your side, or where ever you print them. Now don't print them in any particular order. Get a nice random effect going, remember you are always making art. Make an art shirt of ideas. (Wearing this shirt everyday in the studio could be part of idea number 37, and a center piece for idea number 27.)

#### 42. Revisit.

Visit your old work. This is a good practice for study, and to lend a peek at some old toolbox ideas (remember idea number 24?). Sometimes you'll find a new way to represent an old idea, or perhaps just recreate an old piece, especially if it's a good idea (hinting at idea number 15 here folks).

#### 43. Humor.

Now this isn't always easy for some of us to put humor in our work, but that's like idea number 44. Following in good old Native American tradition, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith almost always puts a twist or dose of humor in her work. Native Americans have had a rough go of it these last five-hundred years and survival depended upon the humor in life. If we can't laugh we perish. Laughter is after all the best medicine. Native American medicine for that matter! This idea can be used with idea number 33 and reflects upon idea number 39. One might even say idea number 22 would help with this idea immensely! This idea could also be a tool for idea number 45. Furthermore, this is a great idea when you read idea number 4!

#### 44. Challenge.

Where is the challenge if you continuously do the same thing over and over again? Break away from those old habits! Now I know selling work is key to paying bills and maintaining your way of life, but at what cost? The Whitney isn't interested in your work if it never evolves or develops. Nope. Create a challenge and read idea number 46. Learn some new tricks. Take any one of these one-hundred ideas and do something you've never done before. Tall buildings in-a-single bound. If you had read (pun here) idea number 3 and idea number 8, you would be on your way to new pastures.

#### 45. Educate.

Not to be confused with idea number 9, this idea is about what's in your work for the viewer. Take a look at Cuban art, South American Art, some Native American Art (like, don't look to Santa Fe help here), and any art made from the heart and soul. There are many places to look to fulfill this quest. Reading the New York times can really aid in this, but surely there are events or stories (hinting at idea number 23 here) from your life and environment that can be identified here. I'm not talking about semiotics, but pure human condition. We are effected with daily trials and this folks is at the core of idea number 22.

#### 46. Competition.

Have you ever had that feeling that you'll never achieve what Picasso or Louise Bourgeois achieved, or paint like Philip Guston, or be as profound as Man Ray or Duchamp? Of course! That's the spirit of competition. But where would we be without these masters? Where would they be without their masters? If you're unsure of my meaning consult idea number 2 and idea number 8, which would lead you to idea number 3. We are striving for new and beautiful ideas, but ultimately they come from somewhere. Outside of the studio we share these feelings of meek as we study other masters, but within the confines of our space we channel them through us. We become one with them and find peace, happiness (don't forget idea number 47 either!) and at times something new. Rejoice and breathe the clean air of prosperity (and read idea number 39 over and over or perhaps have a friend read it to you, with feeling).

#### 47. Process.

This is a rather large idea or category here, but let's keep to the forum and put a little perspective on it? Now I know this idea embodies many ideas from this list, if not all, but we can still visit the core. What ever it is, idea numbers 1,2,3,7,8,9,10,13,14,18,etc., that we include in our process, we often forget. Brushing teeth is an automaton operation, and so becomes many of our daily lives. What we need to remember, and most artists are selfish enough to remember, is how we get from A to B. It's exactly all that junk in between that at times is lost in translation. Revisit the process. The joy of making art. (I wonder if there is such a book?) remember why it is that you create in the first place. Many people are interested in the product, or results, but for most all artists it's the process that we enjoy most.

48. Artist statement.

What? What the heck is that supposed to mean anyway? Well we all are subject to it, and for good reason. (Please refer to idea numbers 4, 9, 3, 2, 8, 16, 23, 22, 34, etc. Not in any particular order either!) This statement will represent you when you are not there, yes? You can't be everywhere and let's face it, isn't it better to sell an idea in person? Well, here is your answer! Put it in writing. Is your title not long enough, then extend it into the statement ( please read idea number 34). Is your work so outer-space conceptual that art books, novels, dictionaries, movies, music, and encyclopedias won't help? Then put it into your statement (please). The statement is where you are more accessible to the lay person, and if they like to buy art it's in your best interest.

49. Grants.

As a starving artist we must look for ways to ensure our future. We cannot always depend upon sales, well I can't anyway, but there is money out there. Grants, awards, lectures, competitions, private foundations, corporate sponsorships, individual donors, and other gigs have provided income for many artists. There are grant writers in every artist community. Some have the golden touch while others are still learning. Seek these individuals out. The local universities are an excellent source many income opportunities. Once you're on the list you have many resources coming your way so don't wait and find them today. Artists who have received a previous grant are more likely to receive another. Fact. Hey, I don't just make this stuff up!

50. Public Art.

Holy popsicle stick! Are you telling me that you've never thought of public art? Of course you have. This is one of the most useful tools for artists and much like idea number 49, if you've done one more will come! Not only are you hitting multiple ideas from the list here, but another source of income is absolutely wonderful. There are always public art projects in every city. Seek them out. Track them down. Smoke them out of their holes, well not in that way, but you get the idea!

51. Functional non Functional?

Under what criteria do we adhere to? Years of arguments between craft and fine art here, yes? Hmm, if we leave it up to the individual to decide for themselves their criteria can and may change over the course of time. My final offer is this: All art is functional, physical, spiritual, mental, social, and any combination of these. The true argument should be how is art non functional? Republicans have been trying to prove art as non functional forever! Perhaps we should battle them instead of each other?

52. Create a Problem.

What? Are you crazy? All I have are problems! What I need are answers! How do you expect me to get us out of this mess anyway? Well, it seems problems create themselves, especially after solving the previous one? So this is our job, problem

solving. Bruce Wayne's dad always said, "Why do we fall down Bruce? So we can learn how to pick ourselves back up again." Sometimes the answer lies within another problem. If I've been studying a painting for weeks and still can't figure out why it doesn't work, perhaps I'm asking the wrong questions? The wrong problem. I say, ask a friend what they think about the piece. Getting someone else's opinion always creates problems, new ones. So the next time you fall down, instead of getting your self up, solve a different problem, and ask a friend for help, but don't forget to enjoy your down time.

#### 53. Layering.

Ah, as much as I enjoy those very flat, mono chromatic, color field paintings, that are so soothing to the migraine, a closer examination would reveal layers. What? Yep, for sure buddy, layer after layer. Do you really think these rock star status artists of our time and from before, always make their mark right the first time? \*#@\$% no! Once in a while they've hit it on the money, but you have too. All I'm trying to do here is free you from attempting to create unnecessary problems, see idea number 52. Layering is good. Besides the old adage, "I meant to do that" is as fresh as ever. If you've read idea numbers 14, 19, 18, and 16 you'll see what I'm talking about.

#### 54. Make it Jiggle.

Okay maybe that's a bit bold, or weird, but that may be exactly what you need! A little out-of-the-box thinking. A shift in the Paradigm of your expectations or rules. How can we move forward in our work without influence? We can't. We always need something. Something to keep it alive and fresh. No artist works within a vacuum of any change. I don't consider those who do, artists, no offense, but history will prove my point. Any artist historically recognized has had regular input or change from outside. Influence from society, environment, family, etc. Let it in. It will provide movement in your work and career! It will make it, jiggle!

#### 55. What is Art?

#### 56. Fear No Art.

The slogan from Chicago yes, but what does it mean? I think the intention is a marketing tool guided at the masses, or non art educated. The general populace. Cool, Chic, etc. What does it mean to the artist? Ahh! Have no fear young Skywalker, may the force (art history) be with you. Take a moment and realize your fears, in art, let's say painting. The fearless brush stroke! Sounds famous. I know I've seen them in paintings for sure. We don't know how they got there or their initial intention, but the result for the viewer is, fearless! You've made them before, and the reaction is OMG! Did I do that? The real issue here is to embrace that feeling (brush stroke), and accept it. Keep it. You created it, and it's your baby. "I meant to do that," is the idea, although it's hard to accept and live up to, but you'll find a way! When in doubt (or fear) read idea number 55.

#### 57. Let Them Dictate?

Why on earth would I let someone tell me how to make art, my art? Good question. I'm sure this one will come around repeatedly. I was recently in this very position. I guess this could also be titled Choose your Battles. I fight for my decisions 99%, but I'm always open to critique. There are those one percent moments where you have to decide to let go. You may never agree, citing major one percent decisions that are diametrically opposed to you and your art, however. Consider the one percent as a token or minor alternative to your art and whatnot. At first it may seem big, huge, ginormous! Then step back and see the whole picture and weigh or look for the gains. My recent experience shows me gains compared to the sacrifices, and believe me, having a gallery director or whatever, rewrite your statement about your piece is huge! However, when measured against my career level at that point, I had to rescind my rejection at the idea. I look at it like a review, some are good and some are bad, but they are always written by someone else, who most likely won't understand you or your work. Don't worry, they'll get theirs. I never forget, and you won't either! See idea number 68.

#### 58. Are You Crazy?

Probably. I won't list the statistics because I'm trying to keep this light, although one or two heavies may slip through among the hundred. What I'm looking at here is how crazy feeds your art? How does being crazy feed your art? If you have been reading one through one-hundred artist ideas you'll flow to this point and say, "yeah, I'm crazy. I'd have to be if I'm still reading this." This isn't group hug time or an outreach program and its not a Native American Sun Dance Retreat Weekend blog. Perhaps taking a peek at what you do and how you do it, will reveal much. This is for you. Don't tell anyone, besides they won't understand anyway. They'll just call you crazy. I remember trying to explain how I see time to someone once. They said I was crazy, well wrong anyway, but crazy was next, I could smell it in their eyes! This is for your eyes only (I can hear that soundtrack already!)

#### 59. Readymade.

Okay folks you know this one. In fact, if this idea was printed on a t-shirt and purchased, it has become a readymade indeed. Just pick it up and sell it! Go to any flea market, look around, and you'll see-what-I-mean. At a glance at anyone's table and you'll wonder "Who-in-the-world is gonna buy this crap? I just threw that very item away last week,...hey maybe that's mine?" Marcel knew what he was talking about, in more ways than one. Perhaps he was being cynical with the introduction of the idea, but it flew like bees of the summer. We are faced with this idea, this "thing" that is named, Readymade, everyday, but most of us never, really realize. "Okay enough of that, what does this mean to me, the artist?" It means, halt! Stop! Wait! Give it a second! Do you really have to paint everything that crosses your brush? Nope. Some things need modification and others don't. Don't be afraid to represent what you or we, actually see. It could be a dose of the refreshing.

60. What to do with all those left-overs.

Ah yes. Stolen from an American cook book commercial. A recipe for success. If you've invested in idea number 63 and 62 then this makes a hamburger helper. First, take all those unfinished, unwanted, forgotten ideas and have a second look. Recombine the elements. Perhaps these left-overs work together? Recycle. In fact the whole notion of making art is to recycle. Paul McCartney and John Lennon would take their left-overs and recombine or recompose. Not to be confused with a remix, or directors cut. Remix is like idea number 15.

61. Reinvent the Wheel?

Why make wood from metal. Technically, amazing I'm sure, but consider that the song Yesterday, has been recorded over 3,000 times by over 3,000 artists and none of them sound like Paul McCartney. That sounds a lot like idea number 2. I'll never sound like Paul, which is good because then you'll just hear me. If you make it, it's yours.

62. Surrounded by good art?

My mom always said bad friends equals bad influence. I disagree with the friends aspect (because I'm a rebel) but you deserve good art. If you hang bad art in your house, you won't feel right. You'll start eating too much, drinking too much, fall into depression, and eventually begin to make bad art. However, if you hang good art, you'll probably make good art. Can't afford good art, only bad? Well get posters. I did. And finally hang your good art when you make it. Refer to idea number 31.

63. Travel.

Get up. Go out. Go see something. Wow. Stay in crappy hotels or even better stay with friends. Visit your friends in France, Spain, Egypt, China, Japan, New Zealand, Paris Texas and Las Vegas New Mexico. Where ever they are. If I'm not saving money to buy art books, then I'm saving money to travel. Don't forget the wonderful museums everywhere too. Oh and the food!

64. Make art from art.

Did you ever get bad art from somebody? A lousy trade or gift? For instance those portfolio shows where your piece is the best one out of twenty artists. Don't forget what idea number 2 is telling you about bad art! Let's apply idea number 60 to 64. Take these bad art pieces and make something with them. This idea does not always guarantee results, in fact rarely, but you might get a good idea from the idea anyway.

65. Leave the gun, but take the cannolis.

"More darker on the left. Now more light. Red, definitely red. Do you paint horses? You really should paint horses." Everybody has an opinion and most people are quite generous with theirs. I admit I have a free opinion at times, but what if I really had an excellent idea and never let it fly? The world would never know if



we had an important or useful idea, if we kept our mouths shut. For instance, these one-hundred ideas are just my opinions I'm letting fly, good and bad. Actually these are my opinions of other peoples' ideas! Groucho Marx once said "Those are my principles. If you don't like them, I have others." Principles, opinions... you get the idea!

66. Amuse yourself.

That's funny. (See idea number 43, which could present an idea number 44 and ultimately leads us to idea number 4.) Are you serious all the time? Well, laughter is good medicine and being an artist is even better! I was reading something the other day and eyed an advertisement asking, "Nagging doubts? Trouble sleeping? You need Ethic-Eze! Fast acting relief for your troubled conscience!" Well, I thought it read Ethnic-Eze, and I was superbly amused! After all I'm always interested in things of ethnicity. I was so amused by this little ad that I put it into my work, but changed to Ethnic rather than Ethic, making it easier for me to read!

67. Faux the People.

This title is another of those misread or misheard things of mine. I could swear my friend Jeff said faux the people, but perhaps I heard the French version of the American slang version. Anyway, once in a while you get an idea that could be something. Now I'm not pro at this and for good reason. One, I could never live up to those expectations, and two I haven't had the time. Time as in years. I should be writing this stuff when I'm eighty, and then it wouldn't matter if I was pro or not! Everyone would just assume an eighty year old person is pro, and so therefore they would read my stuff.

68. Pick your own canon.

Don't let history books tell you what's good art and what's not. They're all wrong. (See idea number 57). How could they possibly know what you like? Let's say you don't like blue, highly unlikely but for the sake of argument, no blue. This would have a tremendous impact on the products you buy and the art you collect, for instance you wouldn't purchase any Yves Klein paintings. Aside from blue I've seen some bad Picasso's, and Pablo would probably agree with me about that, but those textbooks won't! So begin by assembling your own notebook, collection, cheater pictures, or canon of your favorite things. It'll never match the Janson standard, but if you become famous then you'll be the Janson standard. You become the canon!

69. Just one good idea.

"If I had just one good idea, that's all I'd need." Really? Just one? One idea can be troubling to procure, and two can be daunting for the iron-hearted! Well, that's not fair to think about demanding upon yourself right this second. I'm sure you've thought of thousands of great ideas over the course of your time on earth. It's a matter of recalling them when needed. One leads to another and then another. I'm writing about one-hundred, perhaps you should too?

70. Level of commitment.

How much do you really want to do art? Is this decision a choice or out of necessity? Are you willing to sacrifice? Are you pushing yourself over the threshold? Idea number 3 can help clarify these questions in your mind. Idea number 8 will provide even more support. To know that you are not alone making these decisions is a relief. You are in good company.

71. Imperfection.

Where does an imperfection come from, and how do I get it into my paintings? What? Are you crazy? (See idea number 58.) We are walking talking imperfections, cloning ourselves every time we meet. You are what you paint. Perhaps the questions should be, where is it? Where's the beef?

72. Balance

Weighting and area or side to balance the piece as a visual consideration, not especially the physical aspect, although they can greatly work in unison. Content, color, composition. Koyaanisqatsi, the Hopi word for out of balance. Yin and Yang. (see idea number 17) Balance is a learned visual technique and once you have a hang on it, can be applied and combined with idea number 71.

73. What is composition?

I don't know either. Not really an easy answer, but we all know what it looks like.

74. Don't apologize.

Why would you be sorry for your art or making art for that matter? Please see idea number 78. I love making art, don't you? Be sure of your work. See idea number 48 and idea number 32. Make art, not war.

75. Question yourself.

But not your work. See idea number 74. I may be unstable and dysfunctional, but I can still make good art. I can even be of questionable character and still get into the Whitney. Well, I'm okay really, but I'm still not in the Whitney.

76. Make Art. Make Science.

Make art make science make art make science, get it? This is a two part process where you create then think then create then think again. Not necessarily in that order, and it should be noted that some states may last for extended periods. For instance mixing paint may combine both of these states in quick secession. Like a toggle switch or a strobe light. Wow that hurts my eyes to think about.

77. Make art

Where ever

You go.

Repeat as necessary.

Picking different starting points encouraged.

(you go make art where ever)

78. Practice.

What? How does one practice art? Well, technically, anything you've made that nobody sees or you refuse to show, or that you plan to destroy or that you have destroyed,..is practice. This falls in line with idea number 15. See idea number 74 for advice.

79. Color theory.

If Joseph Albers doesn't ring a bell, then refer to idea number 8 before proceeding. Color theory sounds more like a band name than a practice anymore. "A favorite color" is another great topic exposing elements of Humanity and our relationship to color. Perhaps your reason and everyone else's is similar or even identical.

80. New work for every show?

Absolutely! Or not. A great artist once said, "think of all those people who missed your show? You might catch them at the next one, so no reason to make fresh work. Especially state to state shows or even out of the country. On the other hand I feel like its my responsibility as an artist to create new work" As an undergrad I was once accused of using the same work for several classes, when in fact the work submitted was usually wet. Perhaps I'll use the same work for my retrospective. Or not.

81. Have you made art today?

If you did, give yourself an ice cream, you deserve it. If you even thought about art making, you deserve an ice cream. If you looked at art today... Okay, so we'd be eating ice cream every day. Ice cream won't keep alive as long as art will. The point is Art every day keeps the doctor away.

82. Proof in the Pudding.

Cooking again? Perhaps, I do spend a lot of time in the kitchen. Louise Bourgeois once said, "Art is not a job; it is a life. It is what you do when you get up in the morning, and what you continue to do all day, through headaches and phone calls, breakups and breakdowns, silences and celebrations. It is what you keep doing after dark, and when you can't sleep at night..." Tired of erasing your evidence? Leave it, as proof in the pudding. Tired of repairing mistakes? Well if it meets ideas number 17 and or number 73, then leave it. Besides it lets people know how you did it anyway, and that's a lot like idea number 13. Lucky 13 again!

83. Change Up!

Steve Martin once introduced an idea that was so important that he'd never forgotten it and he always shared it with everyone...then he said, "Always, no wait... never!" That's a change up. Jasper Johns was once asked why he put a spoon in his painting and he said, "Because I wanted it there." That's a change up. The unexpected. It's a lot like idea number 33, but with a flare for excitement!

84. Sweep.

Did you do something amazing in your studio last night? Another masterpiece of global proportions? If so then you deserve a break. Treat yourself to a studio cleaning. Perhaps not the whole thing, but a good sweeping is nice. This gives you time to reflect and study your masterpiece from different angles.

85. Studio repair.

Whine, moan if you must, but something must be done about that wobbly chair, or perhaps a table needs wheels? If idea number 84 is too much of a shift or change, like idea number 83, then fix something. This does two things. One, it gives you a break from the struggles or frustrations of a sculpture that just isn't right. Two, you still accomplish something that needed to be done in your studio. Some artists will throw a ball for their dog or water their flowers. This can free your mind to solve the solvable!

86. Cheater notes.

What? I've never cheated! Well, perhaps not, so change the title. Hey that's cheating! I always keep a notebook of clippings and pictures from Art in America, the New York Times, or from where ever. This is a quick reference book of ideas. Taking idea number 2, idea number 3, idea number 24, and probably many others and putting close at hand. For a visual artist idea number 26 isn't always practical, but this one is. Put your clippings in those clear plastic sleeves and stick them in a three ring binder and keep it near your work area. Just remember to hide it when galleries or guests come to visit, you wouldn't want them to know you were cheating.

87. Ten Rules for a Winter Studio.

Rule #11. Don't put six dogs in your winter studio when the heat is up. Just an idea, mind you.

88. Put rocks in these cans for a stomp dance.

Then you can strap them to your legs and dance around the studio. Dance through your garden and water your flowers. People will think you're crazy, but they think artists are crazy anyway.

89. Community based art.

Here I'm taking ideas number 9, 45, and 50, and adding idea number 4. You'll find that idea number 49 will help quite a bit as well. You will learn so much about idea number 47, that your mind and sketchbook will overflow. This idea ties right into idea number 63.

90. Good art won't match your sofa.

My mom gave me a T-shirt when I was ten that had this written across it. Fred Babb made these shirts years ago to empower you. Believe it.

91. How to be an artist.

What every artist knows, but doesn't tell. If you keep making art long enough, you will have answered the question.

92. Your idea here.

93. Critique student work at the local College.

They need as much input, advice, encouragement, and positive reinforcement as possible. They'll respect your opinions and want to hear your stories (story time is a must). Besides, you might get some fresh ideas from just looking around!

94. Architecture is the thoughtful and meaningful making of spaces.

Louis Kahn said this in 1962. I think we could rotate the words architecture and art here? Perhaps we've spent too much time saying architecture isn't really fine art because architecture is too practical. Feng Shui comes to mind, but see idea number 51.

95. Figure ground relationship and letters in space.

More architecture here, but I'm onto something. How many times have we looked at a painting upside down or backwards? How many times have we looked at a building like a painting? What I'm getting at here is the next time you leave your house (dwelling, figure, element, positive space) and walk to the mailbox across the yard (ground, background, canvas, negative space) you've made a line, a mark, a brush stroke. Do we walk as carefully as we paint? Is there a place for the eye to rest in the painting like there is in the yard?

96. Combine any four ideas.

Just remember it's not my idea.

97. Public speaking.

Have you done any? As an artist public speaking is part of the job and the more famous you get, the more you have to speak. Heck, they might even write books about you, and you'll have to speak at the release engagement! Just remember that you're an actor and they've come to see you. That should get things rolling. Oh, one last thing, don't read line by line from something you haven't read before. You'll lose your place and stumble and mumble. It's better if you speak from the hip, which is honest and true. If you believe it, they will too.

98. Commission.

Get someone else to do it. Think about it like delegating. Combine this with idea number 50.

99. LOL

100. Support Art Education.

Art Ed is where it begins. If you teach college art, then K-12 Art Ed teachers supply you with students. If you don't teach, then consider teaching or at least doing some K-12 workshops. See ideas number 4, 9, 45, 77, 89, and 93.