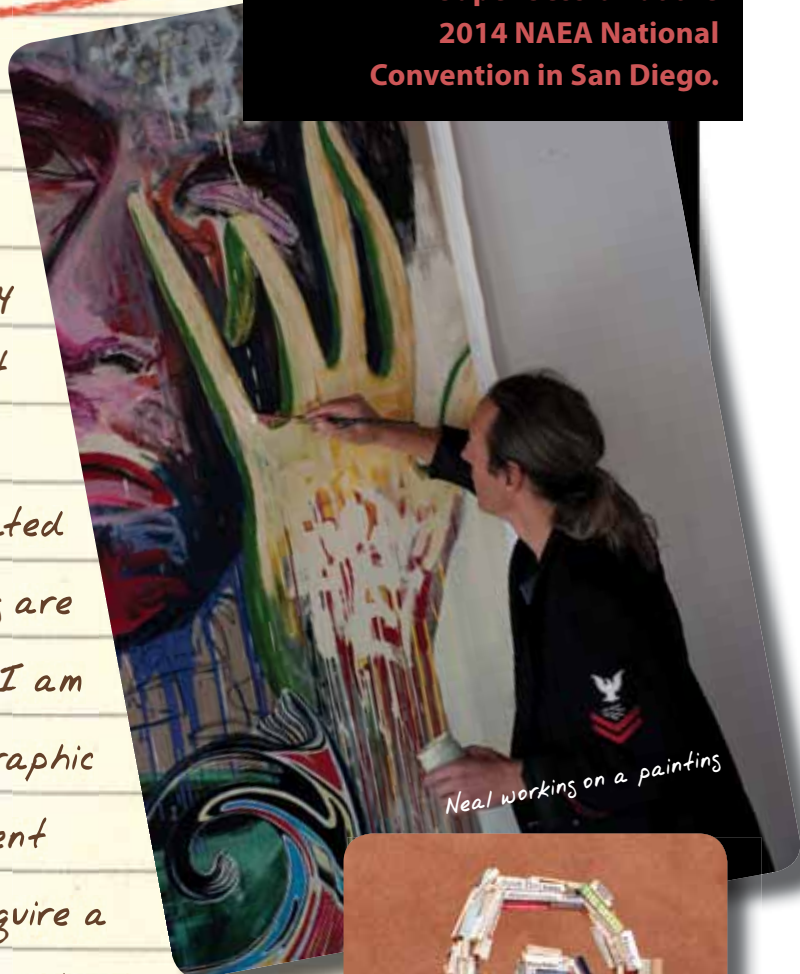


THE PRACTICE OF AN ARTIST WHO IS ALSO AN ARTS WORKER

My name is Neal Ambrose-Smith. I am a Native American from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation in Montana. I see myself not only as an artist with a studio practice, but also as an Arts Worker who pursues learning new knowledge with my arts-related jobs. Painting, sculpting, and printmaking are only three areas of my studio practice. I am also a jeweler, photographer, musician, graphic designer, educator, and an independent professor. All of these professions require a broad range of skill sets and intellectual tools that include the process of critical thinking and creative problem solving. Outside my studio as an Arts Worker I discuss my project with non-arts administrators for a city or an airport, I research, I write, and sometimes I make video demonstrations.

Many of these capabilities are skills learned on-the-job. Since I'm self-employed, every arts job is different,

This special Instructional Resources, written and designed by Neal Ambrose-Smith and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, is published in collaboration with Jaune Quick-To-See Smith's Super Session at the 2014 NAEA National Convention in San Diego.



Neal working on a painting



"Words come out my mouth but keep refilling my ears", sculpture



Neal working on a drawing



Neal's "Coyote goes hunting", drawing



Neal's "Map of the Universe", print

Notes from the Artist's Journal

Reading and art history.

Read about artists and their process. These are teaching stories.
Reading art history is the history of the world, before there were cameras to record images, there was only the artist's drawings to record and document events.
Reading about art history is the story of humankind.

which is not unusual for Arts Workers today.

Here are a few examples of favorite jobs:

NONTOXIC ART MAKING

Making art safely is on the rise. Today people and artists are sensitized to ordinary household compounds and chemicals. Many artists are looking for solutions. I studied new nontoxic printmaking techniques with Keith Howard, and have been teaching these techniques wherever I go. Nontoxic etching plates and water-based inks are the future. Safer ways to make art saves money, saves the environment, and saves health. In my studio and my house I have eliminated the use of chemical compounds, and reduced water consumption and waste disposal by over 90%.

TRAVELING, TEACHING, AND RUNNING WORKSHOPS.

I have been teaching nontoxic printmaking workshops in universities around the country.

Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana suffered greatly from hurricane

Notes from the Artist's Journal

More than One.

Do more than one piece that is similar. This is a learning process where an artist changes what they did in the first piece to make the next piece similar but with some differences. Most artists do this and they call it a series. They begin to develop their skills this way and get better and better with each piece. An artist can't help themselves, they will never copy their own piece exactly, they will always want to make some change.

Katrina. The print shop lost their presses and more. For four days I worked with students and faculty teaching new

nontoxic printmaking technologies and techniques.

Together we were resourceful, practical, and shared new ideas and techniques.

DENVER AIRPORT, GREAT HALL TERRAZZO FLOOR

Twenty years ago, Salish Indian artist, Javne Quick-to-See Smith invited me to collaborate with her on designing a group of brass pictographs for the terrazzo Great Hall Floor at the then new Denver International Airport. I transferred the hand-drawn designs into McDraw on the computer. This was before I had Photoshop or Illustrator. Recently, she invited me to collaborate with her on designing a new section of floor in the middle of the old terrazzo floor. This time we used Photoshop and Illustrator to create the complex design. The airport art committee liked the design but they want to remodel



*Photograph of our
Tipi encampment*



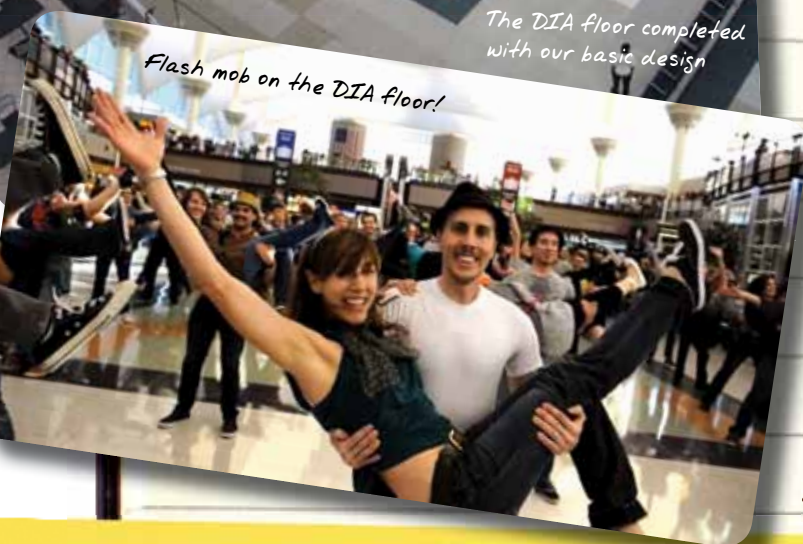
*Neal's "Abstract in your home",
neon installation*



*Neal doing a print workshop with the Very
Special Arts of Albuquerque, New Mexico*



*Neal doing a print workshop at
Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana*



Notes from the Artist's Journal

Keep a sketchbook/journal/notebook.

A sketchbook or journal is another tool like a paint brush or a pen. Every artist and non-artist should keep one. Taking notes and sketching ideas for the future are all important for the studio worker. Handwriting is exercise for painting and creative enterprise. Everyone from pre K to elder should be writing notes about their life, needs, wishes, future dreams. Instead of carrying all these ideas in our minds, which are cluttered with daily life, they can be committed to a page in the journal and leave your mind blissfully free for creating. An electronic device is not easily converted for sketching, collaging and other eclectic activities. To reread one's own journal is educational as well as meditative.

the area in three years so they asked for a very economical design. The completed floor has become a popular gathering spot. In fact, a flash mob gathered there recently. Here is a still from YouTube. There are always surprises when doing public art. We never know how the public will react, and in this case it was an exciting response to our design.

MAIZE MAZE

A couple of years ago Javne Quick-to-See Smith and I collaborated on a corn maze design for a Land Arts project. We met with a local farmer from our village to discuss using his cornfield. Javne and I researched the native plants, animals, and insects that live in our village of Corrales, New Mexico. The maze design had brown

bats, coyotes, jack rabbits, turtles, and sandhill cranes. We made informative signage talking about symbiotic plant and animal relationships. These signs



were placed in locations within the maze for adults and children to stop and learn something about the ecosystem in the village. One day Javne told

Coyote stories from our tribe at the corn maze. I dressed as Coyote, singing, dancing and acting out the stories. We told stories of Coyote and friends—Blue Jay, Magpie, Sparrow, and Raven. This was a very fun, informative, and interactive environmental art installation and performance.

Notes from the Artist's Journal

Listen to music.

It's a known fact that music unlocks ideas in the brain—especially Beethoven and Mozart. Music can help an artist or an arts worker get into the zone and their creative space. Music sometimes cures a headache or soothes a disappointing day.

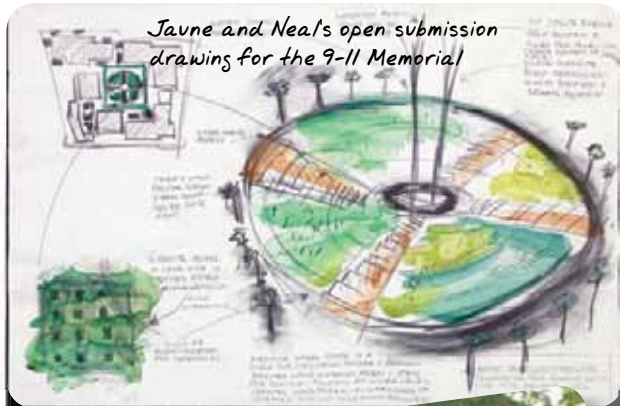


BIG MEDICINE KITE

Recently, I was invited to create a large kite that would be flown over the Montana buffalo jumps (called pishkuns by many tribes). The jumps are located on mesas or high flat top hills. For thousands of years our tribe would drive a buffalo herd over the rim to fall to their death below. We would harvest every part of each animal for robes, meat, glue, sinew and so many other uses. I chose to collaborate again with Javne. We painted a design of a white buffalo,



Javne and Neal's open submission drawing for the 9-11 Memorial



called *Big Medicine*, on a large Tyvek sheet which is a very strong manufactured material used in the building trades (as postal envelopes, lab coats, and many other goods). *Big Medicine* was a white buffalo born on our tribal reserve and he was considered to be a sacred symbol of hope. We felt this was a way to not only honor him but to honor our Salish and

Notes from the Artist's Journal

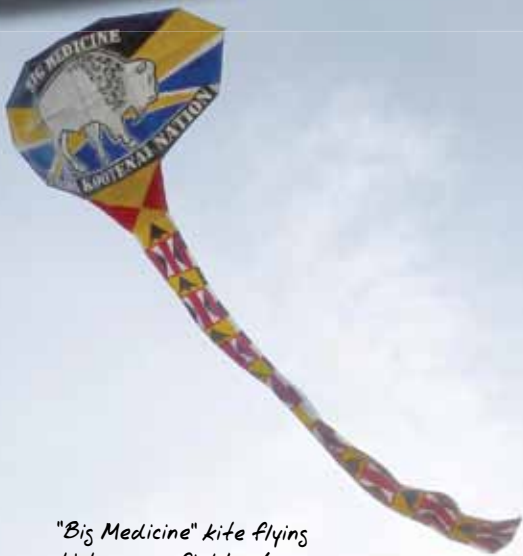
Steal ideas.

Technically it's called appropriation. Picasso was known for his appropriation. He said people borrow images, but a true artist steals and that's what he did. But in the eye-hand process of making art, the stolen idea transforms and becomes the artist's own work. That's how art moves through history, one artist stealing from another.

Javne and Neal's "Big Medicine" kite preparing to fly!



"Big Medicine" kite flying high over a Pishkun!



Kootenai peoples. The kite is 8 ft. by 3 ft. with a 12 ft. tail of painted Salish parfleche designs. This is an example of an art project that might be considered "off the walls." In other words, it does not appear inside a museum, a gallery or a building wall, but in the sky, which is an unusual location that is considered interactive. This was a different kind of project, but fun to see our painting flying high in the air.

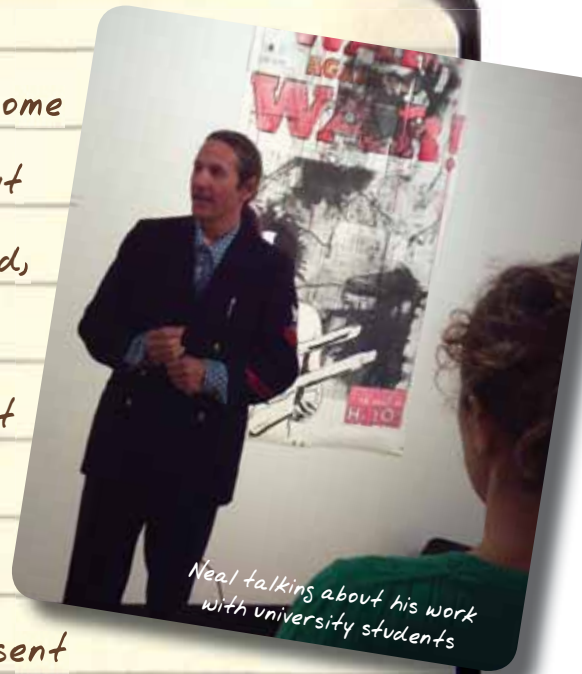
ARTS WORKER

In today's world, artists are rarely studio stay-at-home artists. Contemporary artists may have a studio, but they usually don't spend all their time there. Instead, they make art outside the studio with a multiplicity of arts-related jobs. Further they may not

Notes from the Artist's Journal Process.

Some artists concentrate on producing a product, but true artists put their energy into the process. Process is involved in the doing and that's where the gratification and reward lives. Native Americans have been known to leave a finished carving in the woods to be recycled in nature, seeing that their time with that piece of art is over. It has served its purpose by providing the artist with many happy hours of creation, enjoyment or meditation. The process is where an artist learns, develops his or her skill and does their critical thinking and creative problem solving. When the piece is finished, that's the end of the process.

have a
gallery
to represent
them, but instead may have a
website or an Internet presence

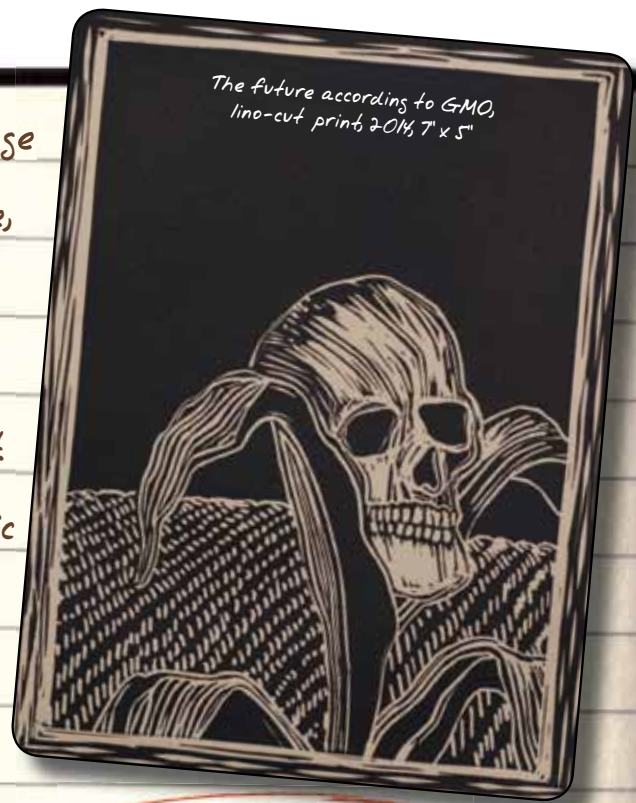


that advocates for them. Often they create their own opportunities, apply for grants, solicit projects, and sometimes collaborate and work in teams.

RENAISSANCE ARTIST

The titles artist or designer no longer fully describe today's artist, who is more of a renaissance artist. A person knowledgeable in multiple areas such as music, literature, math, film, natural science, computer science, chemistry, medicine, dance, graphic arts, performance, and much more. A more appropriate title is Arts Worker. In fact, the Greeks called such an artist a polymath, meaning a person whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas. A polymath would draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems which today's artists must be able to do. The term Arts Worker can be applied to great thinkers not only of the

renaissance, but to those in the Golden Age of Islam. Other cultures such as Chinese, Incan, Mayan, Russian, Asian Indian, Japanese and Aztec also developed renaissance eras or ages of enlightenment. They advanced knowledge through scientific methods and educated their intellectuals in philosophy, literature, music, astronomy and fine art.



NEW ERA

Notes from the Artist's Journal Ritual.

Planning to make art or a meal or going on a walk, all take some ritual to prepare. Ritual means the things a person does to prepare themselves for a task, a mood, an activity. Some artists make a fresh pot of tea or require special music to get them into the zone for art making. Some artist's ritual is to start by cleaning up their area, washing some brushes and feeding the dog. Going through the same ritual every time helps you to concentrate.

The Golden Age, Age of Enlightenment, and Renaissance, all terms similar in meaning, were spawned by trade routes, prosperous times,

the conquering of other nations and new technology. We are experiencing new technological times today which has great impact on artists. An artist may design a painting on a computer print their photographs on a printer and create an installation including computerized video. Artists armed with technology sometimes address new ecological concerns as well. Conceptual art, ephemeral art, environmental or land art are often combined with performance, video, theater dance and music. Artists who are lured away from traditional studio arts into these new arenas are sometimes found

working on projects for public buildings, airports, water treatment plants, as well as, parks, riverine areas, wildlife sanctuaries, and superfund sites. These artists must interact with city councils, architects, boards, and committees outside the area of art. Thus the artist becomes dreamer, creator, teacher, spokesperson, admin person, tech support, and researcher for a host of interactive jobs related to a specific project.

BACK TO BASICS

Nontoxic and water-based materials are commonly found in the new art vocabulary as well. New sensitivities to chemical compounds

Notes from the Artist's Journal

Public speaking.

Some people are more comfortable standing in front of an audience than other people. But it's good practice for everyone to do some public speaking. Usually everyone's job at school or in the workplace requires some public speaking.

It's a skill that is developed by doing it often and regularly.

Like reading and writing, it's an important life skill to be able to communicate your thoughts, your wishes, your ideas.

Notes from the Artist's Journal

Support Art Education.

Art Ed is where it begins. I mean the process of critical thinking and creative problem solving. If you teach college art, then K through 12 teachers supply you with your students. If you don't teach, then consider doing some art workshops for your local public schools. At the very least, support funding and legislation for Art Ed. It's our brain trust for our future.

and higher cost materials have led artists in safer environmentally conscious directions. Many artists are now referring to themselves as not only artists, but environmental artists. Some university arts departments

Notes from the Artist's Journal

Teach.

An artist will learn more about their own art by teaching. In the process of transmitting vital information, the artist will discover many things that were hidden in the recesses of their mind. Elementary students will give you permission, freedom and confidence. High school students will give you discipline and help you develop your dialogue skills. There are many studio artists who teach. It's a win win!

are shifting from traditional painting and printmaking courses for combinations of electronic media, archeology, global studies, sciences, ecology, and performance with an emphasis on intellectual pursuits deeming that this equips an artist for the 21st century.

Is this our Age of Enlightenment?

Are today's artists comparable to great thinkers and inventors of the past?

How do we train artists for this new practice?

Today's Arts Workers move outside the studio to work with teams of people into a community-based Social Practice. Whichever direction an artist chooses, it is clear that new technology is leading the way with a real concern about nontoxic measures at the forefront.

ARTS WORKERS: ARTISTS WHO WORK IN THE PROCESS

Judy Baca	Allan Edmunds	Mildred Howard	Lillian Pitt
Subhankar Banerjee	Mel Ziegler and Kate Ericson	Lynne Hull	Susan Rostow
Ron Bechet	Joe Feddersen	Jorge Lucero	Tanis Maria Seiltin
Willie Birch	Nicholas Galanin	Amalia Mesa-Bains	Buster Simpson
Mel Chin	Andy Goldsworthy	Alan Michelson	Sharon Siskin
Sue Coe	Bob Haozous	Samuel Mockbee	C. Maxx Stevens
Agnes Denes	Helen and Newton Harrison	Malaquias Montoya	Gail Tremblay
Patrick Dougherty	Stan Herd	Beverly Naidus	Marie Watt

SAMPLE CAREERS FOR ARTS WORKERS:

Art critic	Film Maker	Photographer
Art director	Florist	Poster art
Art educator	Fractal art	Public art
Art historian	Furniture maker	Poet
Animation	Gallerist	Quilter
Astronomy	Glass worker	Set design
Body art and Tattoos	Graffiti	Screen printing
Cartoonist	Graphic arts	Sculptor
Comic books	Installation	Technical drawings
Ceramics	Interior designer	Theatre
Commercial art	Jewelry	Video
Culinary arts	Lithography	Weaver
Dancer	Musician	Web design
Drafting	Museum curator	Wood worker
Fashion designer	Performer	Writer



Written and designed by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and Neal Ambrose-Smith.



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