

# **Rubber Meets Road: On The Ground of Integral Art Theory**

**By  
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In my work, I describe a filing system for the people in the art world, a system I call the **Integral Stories of Art**. To briefly describe this, I suggest that when we take a general look at the literature of the art world, which includes accounts about art of any kind, stripe, culture, tradition, or medium, I suggest that to inclusively look upon the depth and span of the world's art literature is to see the Integral Stories of Art. It is the gift of the Pluralistic worldview that the Integral Stories of Art can be absorbed by contemporary artists and lovers of art.

All that is needed is for an account to be part of the Integral Art literature is that it have truth, wisdom, insight, useful information, or resonance for people, more or less verifiable by others. To look upon this literature is to see deeper patterns, or what I believe are various themes that appear to be consistent, generally speaking, no matter what the culture of origination. I group these primary themes into the Integral Stories of Art. To ignore an aspect of the Integral Stories of Art is to not be as inclusive and comprehensive as you can. And it is simply to miss what is likely a great story!

I often cite three particular Stories. The three kinds of Integral Stories are: The Integral Story of Artist Consciousness, The Integral Story

of Artwork Production, and The Integral Story of Art Interpretation. (I believe there is a fourth Story – the Integral Story of Art Institutions. I will leave that aside for this moment.) Each of these stories are supported by countless seminal books, essays, interviews, first-person dialogues, biographies, interpersonal exchanges, learning materials, workspace guidance, self-learned knowledge, and more. The Integral approach is to find truth in all of them, and to coordinate the truths and insights according to the Integral Map, which comes from the fundamental work of Ken Wilber.

I suggest that as each of these Stories are absorbed by Integral Artists and Integral Art Lovers, the need arises for a practical ground point to begin. That is, to apply the truths, wisdom, insights, and suggestions that accounts in each of these Stories has to offer, certain initial questions, or inquiries, should be asked. We ought to do this, I believe, because it is one thing to have a mental filing system for the informational and technological glut in the world of art. It is quite another to learn from them in a personal way, at our personal edges.

The Stories of Integral Art is just that sort of mental filing system, to help us sort through the diverse artifacts of pluralism. But to micro-genetically apply the world's truths into one's practice, this is a different matter. Here we need to address practical concerns, or what I call 'ground points'. The rubber has to meet the road. To sort through a vast amount of truths and information (which I believe the Integral Stories of Art helps

us do) is not enough. We need to be able to apply the knowledge and wisdom to our lives. Thus the need arises for stable ground points, or stable **initial inquiries** that address each of the Stories.

## **INTEGRAL ART INQUIRIES**

For example, to apply the truths from the various **Stories of Artist Consciousness**, a stable ground inquiry might be, "How much time do I have to devote towards a deepened and more inclusive consciousness?" If you have 30 minutes a day, then a certain kind of Integral Artist practice is possible. If you have 3 hours a day, then that is a different practice, constitutionally. If you have one hour per week, you would have yet another kind of practice. The answer to this inquiry opens the practical application of the Stories of Artist Consciousness to our lives. We assemble our Integral Artist Practice with the truths from these Stories, based upon the available time we have outside of our jobs, families, and overall daily business. The determination of one's available time helps ground what we can practically absorb and apply from the Stories of Artist Consciousness.

To apply the truths from the various **Stories of Artwork Production**, a stable ground point might be, "What is my purpose with my art creation?" I suggest that the artist ask this question as soon as possible. If your purpose is to paint on the weekends for your personal enjoyment, than you will absorb a certain amount of insight from these

stories, applicable to that purpose. If your purpose is to have your artwork distributed around the world, then other aspects of the Stories of Artwork Production will resonate with you. The question 'what is my purpose with my art?' in fact can help clarify a great deal of what you ought be to concerned about, and what you need not be concerned about. Obviously, the weekend painter does not need to be concerned with those stories that talk about strategies to enter the worldwide channels of distribution.

To apply the truths from the various **Stories of Art Interpretation**, a stable ground point might be, "How much interpretive material is available right now?" Sometimes it is possible to adequately ask an artist about his or her intent with a piece of art. Sometimes this is frankly not possible at all, because the artist has passed away, or is not able to express the intention very well. Other times, it is possible to adequately gauge what people's general viewer responses are to a piece of art. Sometimes it is not. With formal schools of interpretation, some kinds of art, especially classical forms, have a great deal of formal methodologies that a critic can learn about, and thus enrich the interpretation. Newer kinds of art do not have a long formal tradition, so one's interpretation does not rest on what does not exist. Overall, it is crucial to gauge, as a first step, how much interpretive material is actually available. Our potential interpretive terrain is vast and wide, but the available sources of meaning for particular artworks varies greatly.

## CONCLUSION

All in all, the use of stable ground points is an important first step towards the application of Integrally-born potential insight and wisdom into one's practice and life. These basic inquiries can be used by practitioners, artists, coaches, teachers, and art theorists as a way to quickly gauge what kinds of truths are imminently applicable to a given situation, and to the edges of particular people. We all have our unique edges, and the stable ground points help us understand them. From these points, these inquiries, a path emerges, different for everyone, and perhaps just the path a person can take towards the enrichment of their creative lives, and their own native enlightened engagement of the world. Ask a question, and if it is a good one, you just might find something out that is deeply of your Self.