

ACHA6013

Independent Inquiry

Automotive and Transport Design

Perfectionism a foe of Creativity

Nisarg Pathak (1904014)

Word Count:4145

Table of Contents

1	Summary	Pg 3
2	Introduction	Pg 4-5
3	Chapter 1	Pg 6-9
4	Chapter 2	Pg 10-13
5	Chapter 3	Pg 14-17
6	Chapter 4	Pg 18-21
7	Conclusion	Pg 22-23
8	Bibliography	Pg 24-26

Summary

This independent inquiry written for every creative individual struggling to find their creative flow amidst their own traps of mind. The independent inquiry contains four chapters for the readers to have a look at all the possible hurdles that prominent Artists, photographers, film makers and writers have gone through, their experience and varied opinion on perfectionism And creativity. The varied opinions give an insight into what perfectionism can do for your creativity And what aspects of it makes your creative imagination crippled. In the last part of independent inquiry we look further into the core reason of perfection curbing growth and creativity of an individual and develop tools to create a healthy balance between the two to attain excellence.

Introduction

Disclaimer: This piece of independent inquiry is not perfect but creative.

Many Artists or any person in any industry would have experienced blockages in their creativity at least once in their lifetime. The very reason this independent inquiry is written is to recognise how we ourselves become impediment to not just reach the best of our capabilities but also suffer in the process. My personal practice has led me to experience this urge of Creating one stroke smooth and fine lines on paper with minute attention to details, perfect lighting, shading Which somehow exceeds my desire to try something new or simply let creativity flow. Our minds have forced us to seek perfection in everything we do and have. From having the perfect home to perfect car, the perfect amount of money to perfect lifestyle nothing ever being good enough. The idea of being or having perfection has caused creativity and life to dissipate from our minds. The structure of this independent inquiry is designed in a way that it takes the readers to the different areas of creativity Contemplating the problems that creative people face by Scrutinising the opinions of beliefs of painters, ideologies or theories 4

published by photographers, opinions of film makers and critics and peeking into the world of writing by not only read but experience the struggles of exemplary writers. The chronological order of the respective creative fields is decided by how engaged it keeps the audience With their imaginative And creative side. While paintings are made to be admired and offers a doorway to creators thoughts and feelings, photography paves a path to relive and cherish moments of simple nature, films and plays play a very important part by engaging the audience and pulling them into a new world that could have been, books on the other hand Offer exclusive experience where the imaginative words written on the paper are no longer writer's words but new world of your own making. Hope this independent inquiry gives you a chance of taking a leap Beyond the traps and Prism of your perfectionist mind into the imperfect but creative future.

Chapter 1: Paintings a Vision to the beyond

Having centuries passed by paintings are still revered not only as a doorway to an artist's beautiful visions but also providing a way of experiencing the culminating essence of an artist's creativity. Although there have been innumerable styles and techniques of projecting your creativity on a piece of canvas the flow of *creativity* in a given moment has always been unidirectional. In his publication, 'creativity' Csikszentmihalyi(1996) Derived the concept of "Flow". He described the concept as The feeling of intense concentration and enjoyment that people experience after producing a satisfying work. He defined flow as "The state in which people are so involved in activity that nothing else matters, the experience itself is made so enjoyable That people will do it at any cost, for the sheer sake of doing it."(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.4). Flow is apparent in the Personality of prominent individuals. Though there have been certain limitations in Csikszentmihalyi's concept of Flow where very few 6

women of varied profession participated in the studies completed by Csikszentmihalyi, the concept stands true of all prominent creative personalities. irrespective of place of origin and gender. The concept of flow is not only experienced by prominent personalities but is very much common in creative field. Flow being one of the important factors in creating any masterpiece that captivates the eye, has been an important goal to achieve throughout centuries in any creative field. The biggest obstacle of achieving constant flow of creativity and innovation Has been an innate need of achieving perfection. Every painter that has ever been already recognise this innate need of striving for perfection. Though this urge of perfection has led to various impeccable art pieces throughout the history but it often has led to struggle and strife between artists and their art pieces. Not only denying artists their flow of creativity but also leading to unfinished projects that could have made a mark in history and our present world. There have been many instances where perfectionism has hindered creative spirits, Some of them leading to unhappy artists with a beautiful art piece denying any enjoyment in the wonderful process which is Whole point of creating art pieces itself. One of the examples that are very much alike but strikingly Contrary In their opinion of perfectionism and creativity are Leonardo da Vinci and Claude Monet.. Both being adept in their own ways.

were not only considered alike but had very contrasting opinion about perfectionism. The biography of Leonardo da Vinci stated that he believed, "Presence of God was proved by Perfection of nature In which nothing lacking or superfluous." (Isaacson, 2018, p. 47) Thereof Striving to achieve perfection in all of his work. Despite of creating Astounding pieces of art that has made its mark in history and remembered till date throughout centuries Leonardo da Vinci was notoriously well known for never completing his work. Although being very famous for his paintings Leonardo da Vinci was never satisfied with his work and would make minor changes even after the work was "completed" Leading him to believe he failed at life (Isaacson, 2018, p. 98). Looking through Leonardo da Vinci's Life one can assess that he was a man of many talents who perceived Science and art as complementary rather than different and followed logical and precise approach leading him to be perfectionist, constraining his creative abilities within a boundary. In spite of Not being remembered as a creative artist with no creative boundaries Leonardo da Vinci through his approach is still remembered as One of the greatest artist that we have had for centuries. Claude Monet another genius from a different era had different perceptions of perfectionism from Leonardo da Vinci. One might wonder being a perfectionist himself how would.

Claude Monet and Leonardo da Vinci be different from each other. The aspect that makes both of them different is creative flow Which was covered earlier and their approach towards creating an art piece. Unlike Leonardo Da Vinci who aspired To create art forms through his innate nature of scientific curiosity, Claude Monet Simply aspired to recreate the beauty of the world through his paintings. Monet describes his aspirations to paint as, "I would love to paint the way a bird sings." (Heinrich,2015,p.54) though He was a perfectionist striving for excellence he realised He loved his art pieces despite the fact He suffered through excessive self criticism. He refused to let his own tortured mind strifle his imagination and love for the craft. Claude Monet's Unprecedented love for his art Helped him go beyond the trap and limitations of his self doubting mind and enabled him to achieve excellence and his creative genius. This chapter takes the reader beyond the prism of their minds, Enabling them to self reflect and growing beyond their boundaries to flourish there inner genius.

Chapter 2: Looking at life through lenses

Throughout a few centuries photography has not only been a means of capturing an image but has become an art of teleporting past into the future. Though this is not an art that has been practiced extensively throughout history but has gained momentum since past few centuries. Although Unlike paintings photography is not really an art of creating a world of your own but it is a medium through which a person can create an illusion of a world as perceived by the photographer And project it to the audience, or simply capture a time frame of history to relive the experience. With thousands of available options of post processing within our grasp having perfection in the art of photography seems like the only way to achieve success. It is evident that certain prospects like photography of a product have to be perfect according to industry standards but when it comes to displaying photography as an art piece creativity trumps perfection. As an exemplary photographer Ansel Adams says in his book, “ You don’t take a photograph you make it.”(Adams,1995,p.102). In spite of pursuit of

perfection being the essence of striving for excellence, it has also become an illusive thing that holds countless photographers back As they are striving for something that doesn't exist. And this is aggravated with technology. Though Technology has proven to be useful it has got very less to do with creative side of photography. One of the most fascinating concepts of photography known as the "Decisive Moment" by Cartier Bresson Focuses on capturing the essence of a moment freeing the photographer of restricting boundaries of creating perfect photographs and empowering them To capture fleeting, quintessential, Instant flow of life, offering a chance to direct the flow of their creativity. According to the understanding of majority photographers Fleeting moment is the essence of decisive moment. That means capturing people or elements in a precise moment to capture the drama and fluidic motion of life without using any tools to perfect the image. Cartier bresson made frequent References of this idea as is suggested in his book And how staged and manufactured photographs did not concern himself.(Assouline,2012,p.112). Cartier bresson regarded perfection in photography as the instant at which the photographer captures the fleeting moment that can be never captured again. Manufactured or stage photography was not in Bresson's Interest and would absolutely shudder at the thought of using photoshop for perfecting an

image and calling it photography. Cartier bresson is regarded as One of the most exemplary Photographer that has ever been, and has inspired innumerous photographers worldwide But there have been few prominent Photographers that perceive the concept of Decisive moment as outdated In the current world of Stage photography, Conceptual strategies, Digitally manipulated images. Scruton's Scepticism of artistic standing of Photography has sparked innumerable debates all around the globe. Two books that have been recently published Dominic lope's *four Art of photography*(2016) and Costello's *On Photography*(2018) Suggest immense change Supporting new theory of photography In turn Welcoming the opportunities of digitally enhanced aesthetics In photography While debating Scruton's And Bresson's Opinion on aesthetics. Both the books rely heavily on a question Of why can't a photographer express his or her thoughts On a scene or an object through the choice of tweaking aesthetics of lighting, framing, point of view, other camera variables? While both the theories Have gained outstanding amount of support from large number of photographers and stand true in their own respective ways, It is a matter of fact that Adding aesthetics would often lead to process of creating an "ideal" Image losing all originality which is the creative essence of photography.(Sontag,1997,p.87) Scruton states there is

a clear boundary Between a painting and photography and their non overlapping nature. The problem with the responses is that people are more Inclined to support new theories and deem old theories as Orthodox. Though Digital aesthetics should be embraced with changing times It is important to remember creativity of a photographer lies with that capability of capturing moments that will be forever cherished, such moment are often found in ambiguity and are uncertain. Old theory or new theory or many more that are still yet to come, the art of photography unlike painting Blooms from Being at the right time and place with a pinch of capabilities rather than idealness of aesthetics.

Chapter 3:Life is a Play

There are very few other art forms that engage as extensively as films/play with our thoughts, emotions and our life itself. Filmmaking is one of the art forms which has power To engage, influence emotions and thoughts of vast amounts of population. Not only in terms of engaging with the audience film making also holds the combined essence of both paintings and photography. The essence of painting being projecting thoughts or an idea To the audience and essence of photography Helping the film maker to capture symbolism, objects, people and creating a new life resonating with audience. With film making being such a vast art form With thousands of elements and the power of creating a long lasting impact on the audience and in turn in the society Perfectionism and creativity are seen as same entities. The creator of spirited away *Hayao Miyazaki* Says this in an elaborate way when asked about creativity, “ Making films is all about, As soon as you are finished, continually regretting what you have done. We look at films that we have made, all we can see is flaws. Unless I start working on a new one I’ll never be free from the curse

of the last one.”

(Available:mgt.threadless.com,2017,Accessed:30th November 2021)This isn't Surprising as creative genius are often their own harshest critique. This urge of being perfect comes from our need of not tolerating mistakes And accepting them as a part of the process.Though perfectionism is very much needed in film making certain aspects of perfectionism have been blamed for dysfunctional feelings, cognitions, and behaviour such as anxiety, depression, negative affect, and lower psychological well-being (Chang, 2006; Stoeber & Eysenck, 2008) Which is very much responsible for failure at cultivating creativity and one of the main reasons of unfinished projects. Clearly there's a need of artistic perfection in any art form that you create in order to achieve excellence. But how much of perfection it's better not only for your creativity but also well being and the very process that makes any art enjoyable? Ira Glass a radio Personality defines this struggle perfectly And calls this phenomena by the term of “The Gap”. He terms the Gap as, “ The space Between the work we are currently creating and our ambitions and visions.”(Brown,The gifts of Imperfection,2010,p.87) This is something that every artist that has ever been or will be has experienced and struggled with. Choosing between perfection or creativity is an impossible task. In film making perfection is not to be looked at as a blockage

in the path of creativity but rather as a doorway towards the path of excellence. This balance between perfection and creativity is best described by *David Fincher* one of the most perfectionist directors in film industry. David Fincher tries to attain perfectionism by completely avoiding it. Asked about his reputation for perfectionism, Fincher explains his approach succinctly. “I think that ‘perfectionism’ is a term that’s thrown about mostly by people who are lazy. We’re not trying to do something perfect. You know, perfect is the commercial,” he says. “You’re looking for stuff to be imperfect in exactly the right way. So what’s important is to be able to articulate what perfect would be, and then avoid it at all costs.” (Available on: moviemaker.com, mollify, 2021, accessed on: 30th Nov 2021). Creativity isn’t about getting it right, it is about making a whole new piece from imperfect pieces in the world, It’s about allowing yourself to play, Fail and then learn to grow from the process. It’s okay to have perfectionism play as rules just like a game to prevent chaos, where it doesn’t hamper creativity, growth or success. Liz Gilbert one of the talented Filmmaker around the globe says “Look around you, the evidence is everywhere: People don’t finish. They begin ambitious projects with the best of intentions, but then they get stuck in a mire of insecurity and doubt and hairsplitting... and they stop. So if you can just complete something—merely complete it!—you’re already miles

ahead of the pack”. Looking at Number of film makers having different opinions on perfection While having same thoughts on how excess of it could lead to blockages of creativity new film makers must grow beyond their insecurities and bounds of making the ideal project in order to attain their own flow of creativity.

Chapter 4: Writing your Magic

Every person in the world has at least had one book That they have fond memories of. This could have been the book you read at your bedtime in your childhood, or the one which gave you all the ideas of love which you resonated with in your teenage years, Or simply your school textbook! countless number of people Would agree there is nothing more comforting than a book and mug of coffee In your hands in the bright early morning. This book of your memories which is rather becoming a bit obsolete is an extensive piece of art itself. The fresh crisp pages and the neatly printed writing have undergone far more corrections than it is possible to imagine. The art of writing book or any literature is not just merely words scribbled across pages but is a combination of Creating your own world and sharing it with the audience for them to connote and relate with. A powerful book It is not only engage with the reader but could change their ideas, believes or could simply move their emotions. Anna Quindlen Famous author of black and blue describes her love of books By saying, “ In books I have travelled not in other worlds but my own.”(Quindlen, Evolution of a girl,2019,p.280) The beauty of this art Is that it attracts readers and engages them where artist is not the best

writer but the reader itself. While at the end the book opens the doorway to a new creative world, it begins with a tedious amount of cancellation of errors, constant anxiety, Lingering thought of whether the book is perfect enough for the reader to engage or not and endless line of doubts. “ Not knowing how to start, I don’t know the perfect way of starting this chapter, I’m not satisfied with this work are common phrases amongst writers.”(*Read like a writer*, Union books; later edition:2012,p.234) this struggle of writers of opening with a captivating sentence to enamour the audience And the failure to do so in the first couple of times is beautifully encapsulated by *Ann Lamott* in form of a funny essay “shitty first drafts” in *Bird by Bird*(1994).In the essay she describes the process of writing a piece of art as follows, “Now, practically even better news than that of short assignments is the idea of shitty first drafts. All good writers write them. This is how they end up with good second drafts and terrific third drafts.”(Lamott,*Bird by Bird*,1994,p.98). This is definitely not a news to many writers That the first drafts are almost always unsatisfying. But what distinguishes a good writer amongst those that never complete their work is good writer expects First draft to be child like, second draft to fix those mistakes and third draft To check for errors slowly progressing, striving for excellence and slowly letting the creativity flow by tuning in to the process whereas other writers

Are often entangled in achieving perfection during the first draft progressing but never really completing their literature in the first place. Tuning into the process and enjoying every moment of writing does not mean giving up on quality or perfectionism entirely. Alina Tugend writes in her book *Better by mistake: The unexpected benefits of being wrong*, "Being a perfectionist isn't a bad thing; in fact, it may mean you have very high standards and you often meet those standards. Those who have perfectionist tendencies without having those tendencies rule — or ruin — their lives are what psychiatrists call 'adaptive' perfectionists. They find it very important to do certain things in the right way, but this need doesn't hinder their lives and can actually help them achieve great success...." Perfectionism in small doses is definitely required to achieve success, to strive for excellence and can clear the path to achieve constant flow of creativity. In large doses perfectionism leaves creativity crippled and not only restricts from creating a potential masterpiece reaching heights of success in the world but also leaves the process of creating your own art very harrowing. Realising perfectionism in limits can help in achieving vision but being aware of detrimental possibility that unbridled urge of perfection can have on your literature and well being. Maintaining balance between perfection and creativity all while knowing managing perfectionism is a lifelong

process and understanding that writers may not be perfect but are good enough can help the writer to create a world of their dreams. As Brené Brown writes “Understanding the difference between healthy striving and perfectionism is critical to laying down the shield and picking up your life. Research shows that perfectionism hampers success. In fact, it’s often the path to depression, anxiety, addiction, and life paralysis.” (Brown, *Atlas of the Heart*, 1998, p.142)

Conclusion

In the end all that really matters is Enjoying the process of making your own craft, and looking back at all your work not as a big failure but as a progress of an artist within you. As we have seen the problem of over perfectionism And the blockage of channelling your own creativity is not specific to any particular artistic field it is rather proven to be a hinderance In any creative decision you take in life. After reading this independent inquiry one would clearly understand that though perfectionism is a quality that should be cherished if in small quantities, beyond certain threshold it seems to curb artistic creativity And leaves the artist unsatisfied with a feeling of inadequacy. In order to create a balance between perfectionism and the flow of creativity obligatory for creating any masterpiece while keeping the sanctity of one's own well being and love for their art a painter, photographer, filmmaker or a writer must first look at the core reason of this urge of striving for flawlessness. "A lot of perfectionist tendencies are rooted in fear and insecurity"(Guise,How to be an imperfectionist,

2015,p.76) As a person in the creative field you would have noticed very minuscule percentage of artists free of this crippling fear of not being good enough which often reflects in their work or well being. The biggest tool in your arsenal is self reflection and acknowledgement. Without acknowledging the problem there will be no seeking for solution, and one will be stuck in continuous cycles of Hypercritique personalities, extended time taken for completing a task, Waiting for the perfect moment and will have hard time delegating. This can be easily avoided by Finding areas where you can easily let go – Perfectionists usually tend to focus on all the aspects of the project paying attention to every minute detail losing the focus of their art and creativity itself. Second tool is the most important one but it's vastly neglected - Separate your work from your inner self. However this cannot be done fully but allowing yourself some space from your work allows you to take criticisms in a better way as well as enabling yourself take a glance at your work with fresh perspective. At last making failure a game would not only allow you to tune into the process and make your experience a pleasant one but will let you to try out new things which is the whole point of creativity. These tools will not only help any person anywhere in any field achieve excellence but would also protect the love for your art and your dreams.

Bibliography

Books

- Milhalyi.C, Flow(1st edition,Rider,2002)
- Brown.B,Gifts of imperfection(1st edition,Vermilion,2020)
- Lamott.A,Bird by Bird(1st edition,1994)
- Brown.B,Atlas of the heart(1st edition,Vermilion,2021)
- Bites.A,A healthy mind toolkit(Tarcherperigee,2018)
- Isaacson.W,Leonardo Da Vinci(1st edition,Simon and schuster,2018)
- Heinrich.C,Monet(Taschen,2015)

- Adams.A,An Autobiography(Little Brown US,1996)
- Assouline.H, Cartier Bresson(Thames and Hudson,2012)
- Lope.D, Four art of photography(2016)
- Sonntag.S, On Photograph(1st edition, Penguin,1979)
- Quendlen.A, Evolution of a girl(1st edition,2019)
- Prose.F,Reading like a Writer(later edition,Union books,2012)
- Tugend.A, Better by mistake(reprint version ,Riverhead books, 2012)

Articles

- Shaw.D,Stanley Cavell on the magic of movies(2017)<

<https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/film.2017.0034>>

accessed 28th October 2021

•D.B Rassmusen,
Perfectionism(2012) <
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/perfectionism> > accessed
29th October 2021

•Wigert, Benjamin; Reiter-Palmon,
Roni; Kaufman, James C.; and Silvia,
Paul J., "Perfectionism: The Good,
the Bad, and the Creative" (2012).
Psychology Faculty Publications. 24.
<<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/psychfacpub/24>>