

# Finding the Authentic Self



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I realized at an early age there are shades of morality; my path to clarity for a moral compass is a life's endeavor, not only because circumstances of similar situations at different times in one's life inevitably change, but because people change as they make new friends, acquaintances, coworkers and live life. To be true to one's personal beliefs, a person has to first figure out those beliefs, which for most of us are fluid and change over time, if ever so slightly, because as we experience life we continuously contemplate and evaluate our reactions. We make decisions based on all of our life experiences and as we get older, we have more experiences from which to formulate our decisions. As I continue to learn how to recognize situations where non-rational, emotional responses would be harmful to those on the receiving end and learn how to give myself the time to contemplate, react to and evaluate new ideas and situations, automatically my authentic self is more comprehensible to me, and my moral foundation and convictions become stronger and more stable.

In the fall of 1980, my father and I devoured Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*. I was 12, and decided then I was going to become a physicist. Because of that career choice I learned to question everything and everyone. I came to believe that any object or idea another human created or comprehended, I too, as a human, should be able to create and comprehend. I learned to visualize ideas, visualize objects for testing those ideas and then, made them! The scientific method and ethic, in regards to non-manipulation of collected data, became a part of my every day ethos. When I started teaching I knew I couldn't ask my students to be the best they could be, if I wasn't trying to be my best.

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The advice I always give to a prospective teacher is, "Be consistent. Everyone in the classroom has to have the same rules. And grading has to be objective with clear consistent rubrics." That was perfect for physics where there is usually one correct answer, but in 1999 when I switched paths and left physics for ceramics, the idea of objectivity for art seemed to be an oxymoron.

Over the past 20 years I have had the time to contemplate, react to and evaluate ideas in art, and I have come to believe that art can be both subjective and objective. I believe there is a clear consistent rubric for all elements of an artwork such as: balance of form, line and color; overall composition; and proportions of components, but it's also okay to "like" the art and not be able to express why. I also know that artists are students for life, most will get better at their craft, a few will get worse, statistically then, the odds are in my favor. And hopefully as my artwork evolves and improves, my authentic self will improve and become increasingly clearer to me, and as such, will come through in my work increasingly clearer, too.