

# AN ARTIST IS EVERYONE

—  
Sharon Houkema

'Artist' is a title of great weight.<sup>1</sup> An artist is making something exist by observing it.<sup>2</sup> The artist does not tinker with the universe, he recreates it out of his own experience and understanding of life.<sup>3</sup> Subjective artists are one-eyed, but objective artists are blind.<sup>4</sup> An artist is not paid for his labor but for his vision.<sup>5</sup> All artists are illusionists of one kind or another.<sup>6</sup> What the rest of us see only under the influence of mescaline, the artist is congenitally equipped to see all the time.<sup>7</sup> The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.<sup>8</sup> The stupid believe that to be truthful is easy; only the artist, the great artist, knows how difficult it is.<sup>9</sup>

What an artist is trying to do for people is bring them closer to something, because of course art is about sharing: you wouldn't be an artist if you didn't want to share an experience, a thought.<sup>10</sup> Art should not be a space shut in on itself, but rather a magnetic field that attracts the energies of artists into space, and possibly into the cities in which they circulate.<sup>11</sup>

Although an artist sets out to convey a viewpoint or emotion, that is not to say that the viewpoint or emotion has a single meaning.<sup>12</sup> The role of the artist is to ask questions, not answer them.<sup>13</sup> The artist must say it without saying it.<sup>14</sup> The artist simply reveals, he doesn't explain.<sup>15</sup> The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery.<sup>16</sup> Only he is an artist who can make a riddle out of a solution.<sup>17</sup>

3 The point of art is participation, by the artist in his work of making the artwork, by the observer in his work of making the artwork a part of his consciousness.<sup>18</sup> It's artists that set the agenda.<sup>19</sup> It is our function as artists to make the spectator see the world our way not his way.<sup>20</sup> All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work into contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.<sup>21</sup>

In order for the artist to have a world to express he must first be situated in this world, oppressed or oppressing, resigned or rebellious, a man among men.<sup>22</sup> The artist is not an outcast from society, not a maladjusted, stubborn, impassioned fugitive from civilization.<sup>23</sup> In any society, the artist has a responsibility.<sup>24</sup>

The idea that an artist might be able to make things 'better' is still a very commonly held notion.<sup>25</sup> What the artist owes the world is his work; not a model for living.<sup>26</sup> The true artist can never be pressured by society; his compelling art shirks-off all pressure except the pressure of Art!<sup>27</sup> Under any kind of regulation, an artist can always find his creative space.<sup>28</sup> If an artist is touched by some social condition, what the artist creates will reflect that, but you can't force it.<sup>29</sup> Artists are not engineers of the soul.<sup>30</sup>

An artist should distance himself from power so that he can think independently.<sup>31</sup> When we see ourselves as artists, we no longer feel the need to impose our story on others or to defend what we believe.<sup>32</sup> The artist is the opposite of the politically minded individual, the opposite of the reformer, the opposite of the idealist.<sup>33</sup> The form of government that is most suitable to the artist is no government at all.<sup>34</sup> All Artists are Anarchists.<sup>35</sup>

For an artist freedom is as indispensable as talent or intelligence.<sup>36</sup> Artists talk a lot about freedom.<sup>37</sup> However, an artist is not free to do as he or she pleases and works, in fact, under definite historical and historically shaped intellectual

- 1 Irwin Greenberg
- 2 William S. Burroughs
- 3 Henry Miller
- 4 Georges Rouault
- 5 James Whistler
- 6 Mike Svob
- 7 Aldous Huxley
- 8 Pablo Picasso
- 9 Willa Sibert Cather
- 10 David Hockney
- 11 Maurizio Cattelan
- 12 John O'Nolan
- 13 Anton Chekhov
- 14 Duke Ellington
- 15 William Eastlake
- 16 Francis Bacon
- 17 Karl Kraus
- 18 Carl Andre
- 19 Hans-Ulrich Obrist
- 20 Barnett Newman
- 21 Marcel Duchamp
- 22 Charles Baudelaire
- 23 Svetlana Racanovi
- 24 Luis Buñuel
- 25 Liam Gillick
- 26 Harry Eugene Crews
- 27 Francis Newton Souza
- 28 Ai Wei Wei
- 29 Susan Sontag
- 30 John F. Kennedy
- 31 Huang Yong Ping
- 32 Miguel Ángel Ruiz
- 33 Henry Miller
- 34 Oscar Wilde
- 35 George Bernard Shaw
- 36 Maxim Gorki
- 37 John Cage

conditions.<sup>38</sup> Left on his own, free to do anything he likes, the artist ends up doing nothing at all.<sup>39</sup> Some sort of pressure must exist; the artist exists because the world is not perfect.<sup>40</sup> The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realise its purpose through him.<sup>41</sup>

The artist is likely to be looked upon with some uneasiness by the more conservative members of society.<sup>42</sup> Artists are the antennae of the race, but the bullet-headed many will never learn to trust the great artists.<sup>43</sup> It is frequently the tragedy of the great artist, as it is of the great scientist, that he frightens the ordinary man.<sup>44</sup> Artists are seen as one step above criminals.<sup>45</sup> Artists themselves are not confined, but their output is.<sup>46</sup> It's interesting to see the world's fascination with a troubled artist.<sup>47</sup> The artist is the world's scapegoat.<sup>48</sup> An artist is his own fault.<sup>49</sup> An artist has to pay for the gift of his genius.<sup>50</sup> The artists must be sacrificed to their art.<sup>51</sup>

Most artists are doing basically the same thing — staying off the streets.<sup>52</sup> Artists usually don't make all that much money, and they often keep their artistic hobby despite the money rather than due to it.<sup>53</sup> True artists are almost the only men who do their work for pleasure.<sup>54</sup> The reward of art is not fame or success but intoxication: that is why so many bad artists are unable to give it up.<sup>55</sup>

An artist is someone who produces things that people don't need to have but that he — for some reason — thinks it would be a good idea to give them.<sup>56</sup> Well, artists don't produce anything useful or practical for society.<sup>57</sup> Society pays the artist for that which enriches life, the artist uses the money to buy time to continue this work.<sup>58</sup> On the whole, money does artists much more good than harm.<sup>59</sup> Artists who speak negatively about commercial success never had any.<sup>60</sup>

Being a successful artist takes hard work, patience and good networking skills.<sup>61</sup> As an artist you're looking for universal triggers.<sup>62</sup> To stand out, the artist must either really believe in something and pursue it regardless of consequences, or the artist must figure out something that'll simply get attention.<sup>63</sup> And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul.<sup>64</sup> Being a good artist is the toughest job you could pick, and you have to be a little nuts to take it on.<sup>65</sup> Until you get to a certain point, being an artist is no luxury.<sup>66</sup> If you think you are an artist you must be a fighter.<sup>67</sup>

As artists get wealthier and more famous, often their work gets worse.<sup>68</sup> Not all, but too many of the best writers, composers, and artists of our time begin to be acclaimed only when they no longer have anything to say and take to performing instead of stating.<sup>69</sup> To be an artist is not about fame; it's about art, which is this intangible thing that has got to have lots of integrity, whereas being famous doesn't really take any integrity.<sup>70</sup>

The term 'giant' is used too often to describe artists.<sup>71</sup> An artist is no bigger than the size of his mind.<sup>72</sup> An artist earns the right to call himself a creator only when he admits to himself that he is but an instrument.<sup>73</sup> To be an artist is, by its nature, a spiritual endeavor.<sup>74</sup> But no artist is a church.<sup>75</sup> What an artist does in the studio is more primordial than religion.<sup>76</sup>

The artist should never try to be popular.<sup>77</sup> An artist discovers his genius the day he dares not to please.<sup>78</sup> The concept that an artist would be revered by popular culture is an immediate dismissal of his relevance as an artist.<sup>79</sup> Flattery of the people and incapacity to resist public opinion are the democratic vices, particularly among writers, artists, journalists and anyone else who is dependent on an audience.<sup>80</sup> As an artist, one must strive to become independent of judgment and familiar with the "ways of the Dragon".<sup>81</sup>

That is the mystery of the artist in the world: simultaneously servant and soothsayer.<sup>82</sup> The artist is still a little like the old court jester.<sup>83</sup> The sociability of artists is a paradoxical and precarious thing, and ceases the instant they begin their actual artistic work.<sup>84</sup>

- 38 David Walsh  
39 Federico Fellini  
40 Andrei Tarkovsky  
41 Carl Jung  
42 Ben Shahn  
43 Ezra Pound  
44 Loren Eiseley  
45 Paul McCarthy  
46 Robert Smithson  
47 Jim Rowe  
48 Jacob Epstein  
49 John O'Hara  
50 M. Owen Lee  
51 Ralph Waldo Emerson  
52 Edward Ruscha  
53 Linus Torvalds  
54 Auguste Rodin  
55 Jean Cocteau  
56 Andy Warhol  
57 Ai Wei Wei  
58 Lawrence Weiner  
59 Robert Hughes  
60 Bob Ragland  
61 Valerie Atkisson  
62 Damien Hirst  
63 Peter Plagens  
64 Kate Chopin  
65 Charles Saatchi  
66 John Baldessari  
67 Todd Plough  
68 Martin Parr  
69 Clement Greenberg  
70 Damien Hirst  
71 Martin Scorsese  
72 Jack Shadbolt  
73 Henry Miller  
74 Alex Cook  
75 Jonathan Meese  
76 Saint Clair Cemin  
77 Oscar Wilde  
78 Andre Malraux  
79 Thomas Kinkade  
80 Allan Bloom  
81 Sheila Packa  
82 Margret Elson  
83 William Faulkner  
84 R. G. Collingwood

When artists make art, they shouldn't question whether it is permissible to do one thing or another.<sup>85</sup> The great artists of the world are never Puritans, and seldom even ordinarily respectable.<sup>86</sup> In art, the only one who really knows whether what you've done is honest is the artist.<sup>87</sup>

One doesn't need to know the artist's private intentions.<sup>88</sup> The artist must be in his work as God is in creation, invisible and all-powerful; one must sense him everywhere but never see him.<sup>89</sup> The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.<sup>90</sup> God and other artists are always a little obscure.<sup>91</sup>

Being an artist is being an isolated individual.<sup>92</sup> All artists are self-sacrificing human beings, and to become an artist is nothing but to devote oneself to the subterranean gods.<sup>93</sup> The artist one day falls through a hole in the brambles, and from that moment he is following the dark rapids of an underground river which may sometimes flow so near to the surface that the laughing picnic parties are heard above.<sup>94</sup> To be an artist is to disappear in a way.<sup>95</sup>

The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.<sup>96</sup> Good artists exist simply in what they make, and consequently are perfectly uninteresting in what they are.<sup>97</sup> What's an artist, but the dregs of his work—the human shambles that follows it around?<sup>98</sup> The artist does not exist except as a personification, a figure of speech that represents the sum total of art itself.<sup>99</sup> Artists are, above all, men who want to become inhuman.<sup>100</sup> As a human being the artist may have many moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is 'man' in a higher sense—he is 'collective man'—one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind.<sup>101</sup> An artist is only an artist on condition that he neglects no aspect of his dual nature.<sup>102</sup> Artists do not run away from non-being, but by encountering and wrestling with it, force it to produce being.<sup>103</sup> The artist is behind the mirror and everybody is looking at him saying, "Oh, it's me."<sup>104</sup>

5

All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness.<sup>105</sup> It's this in-between... this frontier country between the tangible world and the intangible one—which is really the realm of the artist.<sup>106</sup> An Artist is an actual State of Being, one that moves both inside and outside the realms of a studio or creative work.<sup>107</sup> It's the artist's responsibility to balance mystical communication and the labor of creation.<sup>108</sup>

The tools of an artist can be many things.<sup>109</sup> If a person is an artist he can use the most primitive of instruments a broken knife is enough.<sup>110</sup> The simplest means are those which best enable an artist to express himself.<sup>111</sup> The most important tool the artist fashions through constant practice is the faith in his ability to produce miracles when they are needed.<sup>112</sup> It's extraordinary stuff—what an artist has to do.<sup>113</sup>

The ideal artist is he who knows everything, feels everything, experiences everything, and retains his experience in a spirit of wonder and feeds upon it with creative lust.<sup>114</sup> Artists are fiery, they do not weep!<sup>115</sup> If artists and poets are unhappy, it is after all because happiness does not interest them.<sup>116</sup> If you're an artist, the problem is to make a picture work whether you are happy or not.<sup>117</sup>

The artist is nothing without the gift, but the gift is nothing without work.<sup>118</sup> There are no holidays for art; and that's just fine with the artist.<sup>119</sup> Most artists work all the time, they do actually, especially good artists, they work all the time, what else is there to do?<sup>120</sup>

The artist must not love his own work too long.<sup>121</sup> An artist has got to be constantly in a state of becoming.<sup>122</sup> The refusal to rest content, the willingness to risk excess on behalf of one's obsessions, is what distinguishes artists from entertainers, and what makes some artists adventurers on behalf of us all.<sup>123</sup> That's the artist's role—to strike out always for something new, to break away, to defy, to... grapple with the unfamiliar.<sup>124</sup> An artist needs the best studio instruction, the most rigorous demands, and the toughest criticism in order to tune up his sensibilities.<sup>125</sup>

- 85 Sol LeWitt
- 86 H. L. Mencken
- 87 Bruce Nauman
- 88 Susan Sontag
- 89 Gustave Flaubert
- 90 James Joyce
- 91 Oscar Wilde
- 92 Asger Jorn
- 93 Friedrich Von Schlegel
- 94 Cyril Connolly
- 95 Christian Boltanski
- 96 T. S. Eliot
- 97 Oscar Wilde
- 98 William Gaddis
- 99 Harold Rosenberg
- 100 Guillaume Apollinaire
- 101 Carl Jung
- 102 Charles Baudelaire
- 103 Rollo May
- 104 Christian Boltanski
- 105 Eckhart Tolle
- 106 Federico Fellini
- 107 Patrice Donnelly
- 108 Patti Smith
- 109 Mark K
- 110 Joseph Beuys
- 111 Henri Matisse
- 112 Mark Rothko
- 113 Gilbert & George
- 114 George Bellows
- 115 Ludwig van Beethoven
- 116 George Santayana
- 117 Willem de Kooning
- 118 Emile Zola
- 119 Elfriede Jelinek
- 120 David Hockney
- 121 Serguei Ouissik
- 122 Bob Dylan
- 123 John Updike
- 124 Brian Aldiss
- 125 Wayne Thiebaud

Artists who seek perfection in everything are those who cannot attain it in anything.<sup>126</sup> With an artist, there's no such thing as perfect.<sup>127</sup> All artists will humiliate themselves sometimes.<sup>128</sup> There is in every artist's studio a scrap heap of discarded works in which the artist's discipline prevailed against his imagination.<sup>129</sup> To be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail.<sup>130</sup> To be an artist you have to give up everything, including the desire to be a good artist.<sup>131</sup>

Being an artist and having to be responsible for the art that you make is really quite challenging, and as you get older it becomes more and more difficult.<sup>132</sup> As an artist grows older, he has to fight disillusionment and learn to establish the same relation to nature as an adult as he had when a child.<sup>133</sup> Being an artist is a very long game.<sup>134</sup> There's no retirement for an artist, it's your way of living so there's no end to it.<sup>135</sup>

Every time an artist dies, part of the vision of mankind passes with him.<sup>136</sup> Dead he is not, but departed, for the artist never dies.<sup>137</sup> Dead artists always bring out an older, richer crowd.<sup>138</sup> In an artist's life, death is perhaps not the most difficult thing.<sup>139</sup>

*The majority of these (mis)quotations were found on various websites and blogs attributed to their alleged sources without any reference. This text can also be read at [sharonhoukema.info/everyone](http://sharonhoukema.info/everyone), where the quotes that reference a source will hold a link.*

Kunstenares Sharon Houkema verkent 'gemeenschappelijke grond'. Terwijl ze ons meevoert van het ene standpunt naar het volgende, komt de materie als in een vorm van animatie tot leven. Haar werk onderzoekt uiteenlopende vormen van betrokkenheid. Houkema studeerde aan de Gerrit Rietveld Academie en de Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam.

Artist Sharon Houkema navigates the 'common ground'. While she takes us from one viewpoint to the next, we perform a kind of animation, in which the objects of focus come to life in the process. The work explores divergent forms of engagement. Houkema studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam.

- <sup>126</sup>Eugene Delacroix
- <sup>127</sup>Alexander Calder
- <sup>128</sup>JR Dunster
- <sup>129</sup>Robert Brault
- <sup>130</sup>Samuel Beckett
- <sup>131</sup>Jasper Johns
- <sup>132</sup>Tracey Emin
- <sup>133</sup>Charles E. Burchfield
- <sup>134</sup>Anish Kapoor
- <sup>135</sup>Henry Moore
- <sup>136</sup>Franklin D. Roosevelt
- <sup>137</sup>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- <sup>138</sup>Elizabeth Shaw
- <sup>139</sup>Vincent van Gogh