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ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS:
EXPLORING MY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH
THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THROUGH ART

By

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Essential Understandings: Exploring my personal relationship with the Multiple Intelligences through art

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The Theory of Multiple Intelligences holds that there are an array of different kinds of intelligences in human beings. Howard Gardner has identified 8 multiple intelligences: Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Spatial, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist. This project was designed to explore the practical applications of the theory through personal experience.

A series of five artworks were produced using the artistic mediums of oil and acrylic paints, clay, natural found objects, songwriting and musical performance. The artworks served as external documentation of the inner processes through which the eight intelligences were manifested. A public lecture was held describing the artworks and the intelligences used in their production. All eight intelligences were discovered to exist during the making of the art. Several intelligences were noticed working in conjunction with others, as witnessed during the songwriting, where intrapersonal, musical and verbal/linguistic abilities were processing information to complete the song, and painting, where spatial skills and bodily movements worked in unison.

The study showed that I used multiple intelligences in various ways for the task of making art.

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INTRODUCTION PART 1: WHY THIS SEARCH? WHY NOW?

Early in the second summer of The Creative Pulse, I made this notation: *Final Creative Project – Performance Piece...A work of art based upon an issue – Write a song and perform with each piece.* I was excited to have a vision for what I was to bring to my work the following year.

What clarified the following year's work for me was a hike that I endured with several of my fellow "Pulsers", that is, other members in The Creative Pulse graduate program. Meeting at about 6:30am, we proceeded up the Kim Williams trail, heading east along the Clark Fork River for approximately one mile, to a point where the trail branches off to the right and up the mountain. We climbed about three thousand feet, to a point high atop Mt. Sentinel. From that vantage point, with the 'M' located over half way down the mountain from where we stood, the idea germinating in my being took hold. I would alter my Final Creative Project from making a work of art based upon an idea or personal experience, to a series of works, either paintings or drawings, of different scenes of Missoula during various times of the day. I would then write a song based upon each of these segments and present them to an audience as performance art. Upon finishing my second five- week summer session, that's the essence of the proposal I placed before the faculty.

After several months of waiting for the acceptance of my proposal, I received my clarification letter. The Final Creative Project proposal was, to paraphrase, "too ambitious a project". Rather, a counter project was given: to do a series of eight portraits, each one of a person whose predominant intelligence is based in each of The Multiple Intelligences.

Intellectually I began to make sense of the suggestion that it was probably “too much”, but emotionally I was still prepared to begin. Images had been forming in my mind, and feelings of what the works could relay to the viewer were conjured up. But now what?

Portraits? Of whom? For over a year I tried to envision how to proceed. I had the drawing skills to capture some strong images, but painting portraits is a huge thing. I began thinking of various people to whom these Multiple Intelligences apply. I looked at the list of the eight Intelligences:

Verbal/Linguistic	Logical/Mathematical
Musical	Visual/Spatial
Bodily/Kinesthetic	Interpersonal
Naturalist	Intrapersonal

Who could I choose for Verbal/Linguistic, a writer or a speaker? Perhaps I could use my wife for the Logical/Mathematical intelligence. My friend Joseph was definitely musical, but he moves his body well, he loves gardening, and is noticeably strong in both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Which intelligence would I choose for Joseph?

I decided to speak at length with a friend, a professor of Sociology. The gist of our conversation was that no matter how *we* may perceive how a person predominantly receives information, it may be quite different from the manner in which the subject actually processes the impression. I decided that I was subject to my own subjectivity, and ultimately truth is questioned.

A year and a half into my Final Creative Project, I realized that I didn't have one. There was no way I could justify this new project. I had no emotional attachment, and intellectually there was no connection. There was not an ounce of grounding. It was time to make a new start.

COMING TO AN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING

My academic advisor agreed to meet with me, and ultimately her counsel sewed the seed of a new way to bare witness to my artistic life, and ultimately my way of teaching art. After listening to my frustration with the work set before me, Karen Kaufmann made a declaration and a suggestion that I will always remember. Karen told me. “Jeff, you overanalyze things. At some point you need to just go for it and make art”. And her suggestion was that I should consider making a work of art based upon my relationship with each of the intelligences as my Final Creative Project.

She recognized that I needed meaning to make art. Meaning, as defined by the Creative Pulse definition is: *a culturally mediated phenomenon that depends upon prior existence of a shared symbol system*. Essential Understandings was born.

PART 2: I KNOW WHO I AM...DON'T I?

I thought I had a fairly accurate sense of self. After becoming acquainted with The Multiple Intelligences during my undergraduate work through books such as, In Their Own Way by Thomas Armstrong and Frames of Mind by Howard Gardner, I had received a clearer picture of both my adolescence and the current state of my adult life. Before my encounter with this theory I hadn't the framework on which to base either my strengths or my deficiencies. Now I have a basis for my understanding of my internal tendencies. My strengths are still there. And so are my weaknesses. I can now look at these aspects as simply areas of my personality that are either not as strongly developed as some other human beings, or that my essential nature is not wired like others'. A short synopsis of The Theory of Multiple Intelligences will be related in Chapter 1.

WHAT I IMAGINED I WOULD BRING TO THE PROJECT

As mentioned, I thought that I knew myself fairly well in regards to The Multiple Intelligences. In addition, I had been regularly meeting with a small group of people engaged in the observation of ourselves through the ideas and practices of self-study developed by G.I. Gurdjieff and documented by one of his students, P.D. Ouspensky. This teaching suggests that through the lifelong practice of observing the intellectual, emotional and physical aspects of our relationship to the world, we can perhaps begin to balance these three aspects of our nature through sincere self-observation. Additionally, the difficult task of recognizing but not expressing negative emotions will allow us save the energy we waste on such human attributes as anger, hate, frustration, boredom, envy, jealousy and many others. This energy can then be available to us to make positive efforts on self-observation. So between the two studies, that is, Gardner's theory and Gurdjieff's ideas on observation, my imagination told me that once I made the determination of which of the intelligences to choose first, then an idea for a corresponding art project would readily follow.

My imagination of what I would bring to this project is different from the unexpected impressions observed during the practice of making the artworks. It is for this reason that I entitled the project Essential Understandings. It is essential for me to have observed them, and it will be essential for me to practice them both in my parenting and my teaching skills.

CHAPTER 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING THE EXISTENCE OF THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

I have referred to The Theory of Multiple Intelligences that is listed in the Introduction. These are integral to the art making I did as I explored my relationship to each. I will refer to them occasionally as TMI.

Not completely satisfied with the educational theories prevalent throughout history, Harvard psychologist and researcher Howard Gardner, in cooperation with a research team identified as Project Zero, developed a theory that human beings process information in various ways. Through rigorous, disciplined psychological and physiological testing, he would show that I.Q. tests and the traditional methods of teaching and learning were not successful in identifying human intelligence. The three R's, reading, writing and arithmetic were only part of human intelligence. Testing and proving that reading and writing affected a different part of the brain than mathematical and logical applications, Gardner applied his theory to other knowledge receptors. When he finished Frames of Mind, he had hypothesized and scientifically identified seven different areas of intelligence in humans. He called this his Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Listed below are the intelligences originally proposed.

- Linguistic (word smart)
- Logical/Mathematical (number – reasoning smart)
- Spatial (picture smart)
- Bodily/Kinesthetic (body smart)
- Musical (music smart)
- Interpersonal (people smart)
- Intrapersonal (self smart)

The Creative Pulse definition of Intelligence is... *the ability to receive information (through a symbolic system), to organize that information and to utilize that information*

to solve problems and in so doing, to find, perceive and create new problems. There are many different kinds of symbol systems: words, numbers, sights, sounds, smells, touch, movement...all of these and more are methods in which I receive and process information. I see that intelligence goes far beyond thinking. Thinking has its place. So does movement, and the manner in which different sounds affect my psyche, or that when alone I think and feel differently than when I'm with others.

It has been universally recognized that we all have different skills and abilities. We marvel at the athlete and dancer. We look at a Michelangelo sculpture and are in complete awe. We turn to accountants to keep us on track financially, and lawyers to help us with legal issues. We recognize the great composers, the pilots, the great adventurers, or those of us who can fix almost anything mechanical.

What TMI does is to recognize these intelligences as specific areas that can be nurtured. TMI also helps us see that while we may indeed acquire knowledge of a subject, we may each understand different aspects of it, each unto his or her own way.

The book, *In Their Own Way*, by Thomas Armstrong, a former school psychologist, shook me to the core. Mr. Armstrong relates his experiences with students he had dealt with throughout his career, and how through TMI he helped them understand their individual intelligences and become more successful in school.

Suddenly, after reading this book, puberty made sense. Although I always enjoyed drawing and music to a certain degree (it helped that my mother was a musical prodigy and a natural at drawing beautiful lines), it wasn't until seventh grade that drawing became a regular pastime, and I also began teaching myself the guitar. Throughout the following six years my grades in foreign languages and algebra declined, while my

abilities in the arts became enhanced. In retrospect, I think that my enjoyment of the arts left little time to explore the many other aspects of my personality. As a result, I read less, and didn't complete the work needed to be proficient in algebra, the foreign languages, or the sciences.

After a while, my self perception changed. Where I had once been outgoing and confident, I began to withdraw. I found myself 'not getting it' when confronted with more 'academic' subjects. I felt that although I was intelligent, I just wasn't 'as smart' as the smart kids. I bought into the idea that intelligence had to do solely with academics.

I became frustrated, and I would continually push myself to prove that I could 'do it'. This resulted in constantly hitting ceilings, as my logical/mathematical abilities could only take me so far. Eventually my musicianship increased to the point that I began playing professionally. I also realized that my Verbal/Linguistic intelligence was strong.

Finally, in my mid-thirties, I realized that I had to be back in the arts, and with my wife comfortably employed, I returned to college to study Art Education, and learned about Thomas Armstrong and Howard Gardner. Thanks to these works, and Bobbi Tilton, Professor of Art Education at The University of Montana, who required her class to read Armstrong's book, my understanding about my intelligence became clearer. I wasn't slow after all. I simply had other intelligences and the schools were not teaching to my intelligences.

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT #1 – SONGWRITING AND PERFORMANCE OF THE SONG ENTITLED, “WANT”

After coming to an agreement on the matter of an appropriate Final Creative Project, the first idea was to write a song (Appendix 1). I have confidence in this area and have received positive feedback about my compositions. I was ready to use art to express my Musical and Linguistic intelligences. It was interesting to observe my inner processes. I am familiar with them as I've written several songs and rewrote WANT twice. The internal questions returned. Following are musings about my process of composing:

I somehow build an internal rhythm, and words begin to form in my head. The mood becomes obvious. Is this a mood that I wish to continue working with? Okay, fine, let's keep going. Lyrics begin to come forth...no, not that word, it's a bit sophomoric...what else can I put here...keep the flow going. Is this song a love song? Does it deal with Debbie? Is it generic? Does it mean anything? How's it working with the rhythm? Where do I want it to rhyme? Do I want A B, A B? Maybe A B C, A B C? Is this song about attachment or magnetism? Is it pushing and shoving? Where is this going? Oh, hey, where'd that line come from? I like that. Now I see it. It's become a song about desire...about wants. Hmm...wants and needs. There is a difference. Am I too direct? Am I opening myself up to ridicule? What will people think? I don't care about what people think. Yes I do. My daughter might hear this song. Of course she will. These are natural human desires. How can I couch them? That's it! I'll build each line as simply desires...wants. Jeez there's a lot of wants, what will people think? That's the point, there ARE a lot of wants...I want things all the time...spouses always want something from the other. It's okay. But are there too many in the song? Let me think about that, but keep going. Each line will have a distinct meaning...intrinsic unto itself. Should I have it lead to the next line as well? Maybe, we'll see. But ultimately, it'll be a double entendre, it'll be both about loving someone completely and about making love...the give and take, the 'dance' so to speak. That's it. Now I have a song. How's it feeling...the rhythm? Oh, hey, a melody line is there. I can hear it. What chord is that? A 'C'. Okay I can hear it now...I can hear it. How do I resolve the verse? Got it. But that's trite...keep looking, think...what words rhyme here? Does it have to rhyme? Can't I ever break away from always having to rhyme everything? Someday I'll do that...but not this song, this song needs to rhyme. This song is poetry...maybe bad poetry, but the melody line and mood will push it. The 'feeling' of the music moves the lyrics. It'll work. It'll work.

Putting my experience into words is difficult, because although I am absolutely honest to the ‘sense’ of the words, I may experience an inner ‘sensing’ that is symbolic for the words, “I like that!”, or “Hmmm, I need a different word here.” At other times, I can hear the words in my head.

After the lyrics are finished, and the song has been floating in my head and body as a kind of rhythmic pulse, I pick up the guitar and play. The song takes wind. The motion of the playing takes the internal ideas and manifests them kinesthetically. The body moves: the forearm moves, the fingers pick, the vocal chords vibrate, the jaw opens, the tongue and lips form sounds. As all of these elements come together they create something new: a song.

When I recorded WANT, I recognized the Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Musical, Logical/Mathematical and Bodily/Kinesthetic intelligences at work. Learning from the recording engineer, who also played keyboards and bass, was a treat. Notable was the aspect of trust I needed of him. Working Interpersonally, I build trust in the other persons’ ability to do their job. It released me, and actually opened up new avenues of learning. When asked by the recording engineer how I wanted the song to be played, and what mood I was after, my defenses dropped and I opened myself to internal questions. I wanted input from outside myself, to relieve me from my fears and judgments. I weighed information I received from the various sounds of the keyboard and the producers’ suggestions, and came to a new understanding about it. My energy was heightened and new impressions were coming in as my responses were going out. The recording performance was successful to in that it actualized that which existed only in the head and on paper. When I listen to it now I hear that my voice was not in good form, having

been damaged due to an illness this past winter, and my rhythm guitar was off beat on a couple of occasions. But the song now exists as a work of art that others can experience.

CHAPTER 3: THE MURAL OF MISSOULA VALLEY

I knew the mural was going to be both difficult, and rewarding. What I didn't know was how frustrating and time consuming it would become.

I received a phone call from the owner of a restaurant called 'Friends', located on North Reserve in Missoula. The owner asked me if the Art Club at Sentinel High School might want a community project. He was opening a second location on North Orange and asked that I visit him at his current store to see the existing mural. I found it cute, and a little bit too 'cartoony', but he and his wife really enjoyed it.

I approached the Art Club, and they were interested in the project. The owner and I talked about the possibilities, the size, the costs, etc., and we agreed. The donation to the Art Club would be in the \$500 range, but I decided to cover the costs of the paint, as I was using the project as my Interpersonal work for my Masters Degree. The owner and I spoke about content and style (not realistic, a bit fun), and I produced a pencil sketch to which he agreed. After rendering a colored version we were ready to work.

Once the walls were prepped, I took responsibility for the initial wall sketch. I justified my extensive work in the project to the fact that there was no clear work space for the first half of the mural. There were building materials to work around, or move. I was balancing on ladders, working late at night because of my own job of teaching.

Eventually, several of the students came to contribute, painting their own versions of the sketch. The result was actually quite nice, especially considering the working conditions: a literal balancing act to pull it off (Appendix 2). The owner was extremely happy with the result. He placed our names on the plaque for the customers to see. He was happy but my students were tired, and I was exhausted and unsatisfied. I tried to

please the customer, and the result was not as 'professional' looking as I had envisioned. I was frustrated by the conditions in which we worked. The job, which had become rushed, focused my attention on the time constraints. I had wanted more value, that is, the range of dark to light tonalities, in the people on the 'M' trail. I felt forced to accept the work in relation to the situation, and my best work didn't have a chance to flourish.

We produced a 7' x 30' full-color mural of the Missoula Valley depicted in the four seasons. Big Flat and the Clark Fork River was shown in Spring, Snow Bowl in Winter, Downtown and Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Fall, and the trail on Mt. Sentinel and the 'M' in Summer. Changes were made to the concept for the purpose of including various ethnic groups who reside in Missoula hiking the 'M' trail. After all, the restaurant was called 'Friends'.

Although I was not personally satisfied with the final result, the students who assisted seemed genuinely excited. They jumped in when needed. The young lady who painted the undertones in the Clark Fork River came on several occasions and did a fine job. Another girl climbed the ladder and painted the trees and much of the snow in the Winter scene. A young man looked at the photograph of Washington/Grizzly stadium and painted a beautiful rendition, complete with a football game in progress. Those who lacked confidence in their artistic abilities mixed paint and enjoyed being part of the process. It truly was a worthwhile project in that the students accepted a commission, worked hard on it and finished it.

I was eventually transferred to another school, and 'Friends' restaurant closed not long after. The property has been up for sale, and the mural was painted over. There may be a photograph of the finished product in existence somewhere, but I have not been

able to locate it. I have only two sketches, and my memories.

I set out to produce an Interpersonal work. As described, there were numerous people to work with, and to please. The mural used my Spatial intelligence as well. While painting the mural, the Kinesthetic intelligence was active. Besides the movement of the body in the actual production of the work, there was quite a balancing act going on up on the fourth or fifth rung of the ladder, picking up machinery and moving it, and climbing on booths to finish the job. Rendering a 30 ft. wide mural down to a workable sized sketch was fun, and took a certain skill in simple mathematics. After measuring the 'L' shaped restaurant wall, the sketch was drawn to $\frac{1}{2}'' = 1'$ scale, allowing the sketch to fit onto an 18" piece of paper.

The result was indeed an achievement to produce, and I learned that I don't like confrontation with those I consider my boss. Due to my inexperience with large scale productions, I didn't ask for what I needed. I accepted the inconveniences without argumentation, but grumbled about them internally. I also found that when I asked for assistance from the students, they didn't initially jump to the task. There were different methods of speaking with them to get them excited to start.

Drawing was different when working in a large format. I saw the image on the wall, but using the large muscles to render the image was unusual. I have been accustomed to using my fine motor skills to produce drawings. Using the movement of my entire body was energizing, and revealed a slightly different style of line.

CHAPTER 4: THE BIG PICTURE – MATHEMATICAL, MUSICAL AND MORE

After the giant mural, I thought I'd better go smaller. So after the initial sketch, a notation in my sketchbook no larger than two inches, I had my next project. It would be 48" x 120", and built in eight sections. Here's how the piece came to be.

When I heard that Ellis Marsalis was presenting at the Creative Pulse, I knew I had to go. A musician of his stature, in conjunction with a possible MI project, was too good to pass up. So with permission from Randy Bolton, I spent an afternoon at his presentation, hearing his musical mastery, both technically and compositionally.

Ellis Marsalis is the piano playing patriarch of an amazingly talented musical family. His chosen style of music is jazz. Mr. Marsalis, joined by current and former Creative Pulse students, on bass guitar and percussion respectively, spent the afternoon giving lectures and demonstrations on how jazz is formed and played. He started playing a composition written for piano. The musicians stayed with the integrity of the work as written, working to produce what the composer envisioned. As they repeated the song, Ellis began improvising, adding changes to the melody or the chording structure. The accompanying musicians stayed within the written form, so as to keep the content of the piece from becoming another song. When Ellis stopped improvising, another instrument took a break from the established form and added his own version of what the composer had written. Ultimately, when the time felt right, all of the musicians returned to the work as written, and ended the piece.

It was a joy to watch and listen to them in their element; this trio of piano, bass and drums, investigating changes in melody, chording, rhythms, and moods. As I

listened, a small sketch appeared in my notebook: eight sections, representing the musical octave (ABCDEFGA), seven notes resolving back to the root note (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Si, Do) or (Do, Si, La, Sol, Fa, Mi, Re, Do), depending on if the octave is ascending or descending in nature. In addition, a series of simple lines, abstract representations of the melody; arching, circulating, connected, disconnected, appeared in my sketch. This, to me, was mathematics as I understand it. Music, with its counts, rhythms, vibration quality (pitch), harmonies (3rds, 4ths, 5ths), notation (whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes) is mathematical in structure and sound.

Planning an artwork of 48" x 120" and divided into eight equal sections would take some planning and room. Diagrams were produced, measurement made, and materials purchased. Masonite board was cut to size, gesso was applied, and I was ready to paint. Space was a consideration, so I rented a studio to produce the work. I decided to work in oil, an artistic medium in which I had never worked. I engaged in discussions with artists who knew the material better than I. From them I learned that walnut oil, which I had purchased to increase the flow of the paint as it leaves the brush, would add additional drying time for the work. It was also suggested that I do not use turpentine as a thinner, as it is extremely toxic and flammable. Instead, I should consider using a non-flammable and non-toxic substance called Turpenoid Natural to clean my brushes and thin paints when necessary.

After moving into my rented space, it was necessary to build a ledge large enough to hold the work. Finally, after spreading on an underlayer of modeling paste to add depth to the work, I started copying the little 2" sketch onto my ten foot piece. I remember coming to the realization that I had to let go of my inhibitions and

trust my ability to produce large flowing lines. I created a counterpoint between long, curving black lines and small, white notational shapes. I wished to let the juxtaposition work. For the predominant background color I chose a blending of oranges and bluish greens, as orange is a dominant color and the subtle blues, being the compliment of orange on the color wheel, will stand out and help the piece to ‘move’.

I’m satisfied with the piece, which I call Pulsation Jam in 8 Parts (Appendix 3). Finished works seldom meet my internal visualizations, but this one works. I set out to reproduce the exhilaration I felt while experiencing the trio of jazz musicians. Music moves through the air, and I needed this painting to move across the wall. I wished to create a challenge for both myself and the viewer. I believe the painting has a certain charisma, and asks the viewer to spend a moment with it. I succeeded in this, and have a renewed confidence in myself as a painter.

I knew I was going to have a Logical/Mathematical work, and I cannot deny the existence of the Musical intelligence. The painting may not produce sound, but the essence of the energy and spirit of music is inherent. As in my experience with the Missoula Valley Mural, I had to allow my Bodily/Kinesthetic ability to do the necessary work that my mind wanted accomplished. With a work of this size, my large muscle groups became involved. The result is that a kind of ‘dance’ can be seen in the interplay of the symbols. It wasn’t accidental, and I had to move to achieve it.

CHAPTER 5: MY RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

I remember having a conversation with my friend June about this project. What is 'the natural world'? Man has left his imprint in so many ways, on so many levels, that it is difficult to be 'in nature'. We have altered the landscape to such a degree that the question may arise; am I in nature? Has it been altered it to the point that it is now slightly 'unnatural'? Is a farm natural? I can argue that it is not, as the farm has been altered by man, for mans use.

This is relevant because the point of this next work of art is to find a way to explore my relationship to the Naturalist intelligence. This has been the most difficult MI for me to understand. However, I trust that there are those whose being is enlivened through the act of distancing themselves from the world which man has created, to the world where nature exists without our help.

My relationship with nature is tenuous at best. Therefore, my work consists of a nude self-portrait surrounded by natural elements which cause fear in my being when I am among them in their environment. These objects are placed upon a clay platter (altered nature) which has been placed upon natural materials (Appendix 4).

When I go for a walk, I am fearful of what lies around the corner, or of stepping on a poison plant. I fear being caught in a rockslide, or slipping and falling into a river. I am very uncomfortable and very alert when out of my element. That's not to say that I don't enjoy nature. I want more wild lands as I believe in nature's intrinsic value.

Searching inwardly for an artistic concept was interesting to witness. I conceived of four different lidded pots, each with an object inside. A bear claw, a live snake perhaps, maybe some poison ivy (where would I find that...I don't know what it looks

like), and water. All beautifully contained, people would have to open the lids to discover what is inside. I realized I'd have problems with the snake.

Then, after making the first pot, a picture developed in my mind: a simple platter with me in the middle of objects; symbols of my inner fears, beautifully presented. Just before the firing process, I carved into the clay symbols for fire, water, air and earth.

What is interesting is the feeling of calm I receive inside when viewing the piece. I feel a connection to the profound beauty of nature. The visual aspect of viewing a skull connects me to an inner awe that 'I' exist. I am reminded of Georgia O'Keeffe when asked if her bones represented death. She responded, "They don't represent death, they're very lively." Although I don't see them as "lively", I sense a connection to what was and what will be.

I titled the piece, Surrounded. I am surrounded by objects representing the natural world. Ironically, the natural elements in the piece have been dominated by man. I am using controlled nature to represent its control over me.

CHAPTER 6: SELF-PORTRAIT: CAN YOU SEE THE SURREAL ME

The essence of this project was to let the Intrapersonal and Spatial intelligences flourish, and what better method of exploring my Intrapersonal intelligence than to create a self-portrait. My experience was something like this:

An image began forming in my head. I would create a bust – a clay likeness. I would include the upper chest and the slope of the shoulder muscles. Should I be wearing a collared shirt? It may make it more interesting. I need to be looking slightly to the left. My glasses, where should I put my glasses? Down farther on my nose or across the bridge where they are usually located? I'll use wire, and place another type of clay around the wire so that I don't have to fire them. And the back of the head should be open, so that viewers can see inside...I can paint words on the inside, so everyone can read my thoughts.

I was walking down the hall near my classroom when an image appeared in my mind: an image of my guitar, some fruit, and elements of my face. I did two quick sketches and realized that a painting of my inner interests and my inner attitude, with strong contrasts of black and white, would be visually striking. Changing direction, I painted Self- Portrait with Guitar and Fruit (Appendix 5).

This painting was exciting to work on. It also created a challenge for me, as the shapes I envisioned needed mathematical abilities. The arcs of the guitar were created by tracing the outlines of various size bowls, a role of masking tape, and a role of paper towels. The use of perspective was employed in the checkered tablecloth.

The end product represents deep-rooted aspects of my inner world. I am musical and play guitar, I love certain foods, and I am somewhat cynical in personality. As a result, the guitar possesses a broken string (actually, the 'B' string does usually break on me more than the others) showing the inner doubt of my ability to play well, as do the notes falling flat. The fruit represents my love of sweet food and is typical of many

still-life paintings. The white sphere is left unfinished as a recognizable object.

Everything is in flux, blending together, moving in and out of each others space. The fruit, shown floating above the tablecloth, gives the impression of movement. The eyes are cartoon-like in technique, exist in blackness, and are looking off toward the guitar, in a cynical manner. The swoops of color, rendered in the primaries of red, yellow and blue, represent the two-dimensional reality of the work, moving across the picture plane.

The various styles included in the work represent my difficulty settling into my *self*. I believe that it is for this reason that I have not yet to begun trying to sell my work. I'm continually experimenting with styles, mediums and subject matter.

This is a highly symbolic, personal work. It is also a surreal painting, indicating multiple realities occupying the same space at the same time.

CHAPTER 7: THE PRESENTATION

Sometime in 2006 I had the idea to present my Final Creative Project as a lecture. I thought it might be important for others to hear about my discoveries of the Multiple Intelligences through my art. By explaining it to those who came, perhaps they might be able to take something with them of the influence the Intelligences have had on me. With the lecture set for June 30, 2007, I began making preparations.

I pondered each piece and made notes of how I thought each of the Intelligences played a role in their making. Advertising was produced and delivered to the newspapers and the PBS radio station. Postcards and posters were printed, delivered and strategically placed. Friends and colleagues were invited. I made lists of everything I would need so as not to make any mistakes during the lecture.

On the day of the lecture, my family became involved in helping to display the work and provide the refreshments. So much work and alas, very few people arrived. It was probably because the lecture was scheduled on the Saturday before the Fourth of July week, but I was hopeful that a good number of the current Creative Pulse students would arrive. Ultimately, I don't think any came to listen. So, fighting embarrassment, I went forward with my lecture, entitled, Essential Understandings (Appendix 6).

I had planned to explore not only the artwork and TMI behind each piece, but I was hopeful that I would be aware of each of the Intelligences in action during the lecture. The spatial arrangement of the room, my relationship to the audience, how and where I walked across the room, my body posture, the words I chose to speak, the playing of the recorded song and more were attempts to act upon the environment through my Intelligences.

As is sometimes the case, the serious effort to finish an action with intent is more important than whether the action was as successful as imagined. I think that I represented myself well with regards to my artwork, and was told that I was clear and that the lecture was interesting, but it is possible that my misunderstanding of the concept of TMI may have resulted in misinformation. I had been thinking for several years that The Multiple Intelligences was synonymous with learning. As I recently discovered, it is not. TMI refers to different ways that we process information using different symbol systems. I knew this, but in my mind I took it further to include different ways of learning. Although I now see that processing and learning are two different things, it may be that I misspoke during the lecture and verbally delivered erroneous information. Although I am saddened by this possibility, the shock of this knowledge has strengthened the realization of the need to ‘get it right’.

In other ways the presentation was successful for me. It met the criteria I had set for myself: that I would plan, write, and present a lecture covering not only how TMI is manifested through my art, but how I will take my findings into the future to better understand the nature of my students. The work was unique to me and my reasons for exploring each medium. I learned more about myself as I wrote about the work and verbalized my findings to an audience. I helped other people experience something I thought of as important in my life, and possibly theirs. Finally, I finished the fieldwork for my Final Creative Project.

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APPENDIX #1: Chapter 2, Want, pg. 8**WANT**

Words and Music by Jeffrey W. Brown, 2007

I want you to want me
I want you to sing my song
I want you to know me
I want us to get along
I want you to see me – turn on your light
I want you to find me
I want you to join me tonight

I want you to hear me
I want you to open your mind
I want you near me
I want our lives entwined
I want you to steal me – keep me inside
I want you to deal me
I want you to play me tonight

(Bridge)

Maybe it'll happen
We both know time will tell
The present feels like heaven
Let's hope it won't go to hell

You want me to touch you
You want my senses enhanced
You want me to trust you
You want me in the dance
You want me in rhythm – a tango just right
A singular motion
You want to complete me tonight

You want me to say it
You want me to pray it

You need me to love you tonight

APPENDIX #2: Chapter 3, Missoula Valley Mural, pg. 11









APPENDIX # 6: Chapter 7, The Presentation, pg. 21