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Jonathan Gangi

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# Arts Entrepreneurship: An Essential Sub-System of the Artist's Meta-Praxis

JONATHAN GANGI  
*Pennsylvania State University*



As a conceptual tool, the Artist's Meta-Praxis depicts commonalities and amplifies profound connections between artistic action and the art of entrepreneurial action. The framework is presented as a step towards empowering arts students for the complexities of effective entrepreneurial action by identifying and ordering the scope of knowledge and skills artists need for entrepreneurial success. Further, the model demonstrates how entrepreneurship education and training can be integrated into higher education arts programs.

**B**roadly speaking, Arts Entrepreneurship Education is concerned with helping higher education arts training become more responsive to the professional realities students face after graduation. In part, this is prompted by decision- and policy-makers actively reconsidering the outcomes of arts training.<sup>1</sup> Although this article deals with professional artists and their entrepreneurial work, the focus is on the *process* of artists acting entrepreneurially. Surveys such as SNAAP and other scholarship pertaining to artists and work are concerned with the professional outcomes of arts training or an artist's occupational environment.<sup>2</sup> Despite some similarities, it is crucial to point out that surveys and scholarship

<sup>1</sup> Ann M. Galligan and Neil O. Alper, "The Career Matrix: The Pipeline for Artists in the United States," in *The Public Life of the Arts*, ed. Joni Cherbo and Margaret Wyszomirski (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 173–201; Harry H. Chartrand, "Toward an American Arts Industry," in *The Public Life of the Arts*, ed. Joni Cherbo and Margaret Wyszomirski (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 22–49; Gary D. Beckman, "Career Development for Music Students: Towards a Holistic Approach," *South Central Music Bulletin* 3 (2004): 13–18; Neil O. Alper and Gregory H. Wassall, "Artists' Careers and Their Labor Markets," in *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, ed. Victor A. Ginsburgh and David Throsby (Amsterdam: North Holland, 2006); Joni Cherbo, Ruth Stewart and Margaret Wyszomirski, *Understanding the Arts and the Creative Sector in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Pierre-Michel Menger, "Artistic Labor Markets: Contingent Work, Excess Supply and Occupational Risk," in *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, ed. Victor A. Ginsburgh and David Throsby (Amsterdam: North Holland, 2006); Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, *A Diverse Palette: What Arts Graduates Say About Their Education and Careers—Annual Report 2012*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2012); Kristin Tomson, "Roles, Revenue, and Responsibilities: The Changing Nature of Being a Working Musician," *Work and Occupations* 40, no. 4 (2013): 514–525; Elizabeth L. Lingo and Steven J. Tepper, "Looking Back, Looking Forward: Arts-Based Careers and Creative Work," *Work and Occupations* 40, no. 4 (2013): 337–36.

of this type are only tangentially related to this proposed framework, as this framework deals with *process*, not professional outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

As a framework, the Artist's Meta-Praxis is intended to help introduce and empower arts students to the complexities of effective entrepreneurial action. By identifying and ordering the scope of knowledge and skills artists need for entrepreneurial success, the framework attempts to establish both epistemological and ontological contexts, thus demonstrating how the study of entrepreneurship can integrate into higher education arts training. It is the author's intention that the model help faculty, administrators and students recognize the content, concept, and context relationships expressed by some educational leaders when engaging in artistic and entrepreneurial action.

This article proposes that entrepreneurial action and artistic action are *synergetic* and asks how entrepreneurial action might fit within the broader scope of an artist's career. As a conceptual tool, the Meta-Praxis is also a response to the suggestions of Sam Hope, former executive director of the National Office for Arts Accreditation (NOAA), for maturing the field of Arts Entrepreneurship Education as well as amplifying the profound connections between artistic action and the *art* of entrepreneurial action.<sup>4</sup> Hope identifies important pedagogical needs for arts entrepreneurship educators to address:

“There are many ways to help students make connections between what music [art] is and knows and what business is and knows and what entrepreneurship is and does...These commonalities may provide important connections, for entrepreneurial action is not a science, but rather an art.”<sup>5</sup>

Later, he proposes the following:

“What I am suggesting [for those engaged in entrepreneurship education] is an orientation to big picture facts, issues, and choices in the territory of entrepreneurial action...especially with regard to the relationship among content, concept, and context, between fundamental knowledge and skills...and connection and synthesis...Without this conceptual and contextual knowledge [musicians and artists acting entrepreneurially] are vulnerable...to weakness and constant economic challenges...[There is a] complexity that awaits music [art] and musicians [artists] in the broader world of entrepreneurial action. If we are not realistic about the need for basic understanding of this broader world, we run the risk of giving our folks spears and a few techniques of spear throwing to engage those who have legions of tanks led by four-star generals who were first in their class at armored warfare school. This is a danger we must find ways to avoid.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See below for an explanation of the term *Meta-Praxis* as coined by this author.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Hope, “Entrepreneurial Action, Leadership, and the Futures of Music,” (paper presented at the College Music Society Summit - *Music Entrepreneurship Education*, Nashville, TN, 2010), 6, 15–16. Also, see Steve Blank, “Entrepreneurship is an Art, not a Job,” <http://steveblank.com/2011/03/31/entrepreneurship-is-an-art-not-a-job>, Accessed May 5, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Hope, “Entrepreneurial Action,” 6, 15–16.

<sup>6</sup> Hope, “Entrepreneurial Action,” 7, 15.

Towards this end, the framework serves to specifically illustrate how these actions coalesce in the context of Hope's suggestions.

## WHAT IS THE ARTIST'S META-PRAXIS?

### Defining Terms

In the case of this model, *meta* is derived from the word *metaphysics* and attempts to answer in the broadest possible terms: "What is there?" "What is it like?" and "How do they relate to each other?"<sup>7</sup> The prefix *meta* also denotes a position behind, after, beyond or something of a higher or second-order kind.<sup>8</sup> *Praxis* (traditionally understood as "practice") is the process where a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realized.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, *praxis* is used by educators to describe a recurring passage through a cyclical process of experiential learning.<sup>10</sup>

The term *Meta-Praxis* is employed to describe all the skills—both cognitive and physical—that artists need for self-determined success. Although practice takes place specifically in each component of the model, Meta-Praxis is the practice that encompasses *the entirety* of what is practiced. It is the *ultimate, unified* or *larger practice*—the practice of everything simultaneously. Colloquially, the Meta-Praxis is how the *big picture operates*: the general practicing of all of the smaller, specific practices in the context of the larger practice.

### Divergent Thinking

As knowledge workers (i.e. those who determine tasks autonomously), artists acting entrepreneurially employ divergent thinking within the entire scope of behaviors and skills required to launch and sustain a fiscally solvent arts business. Consequently, divergent thinking is a critical component within the Meta-Praxis. Many perceptions of divergent and convergent thinking exist; however, this framework employs the understanding of divergent thinking outlined below.

Since the 1950s, divergent thinking has been a popular topic of study and considered a primary cognitive component of creativity.<sup>11</sup> Gibson, Folley and Park write:

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<sup>7</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "metaphysics."

<sup>8</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "meta."

<sup>9</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "praxis."

<sup>10</sup> David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> See Joy P. Guilford, "Traits of Creativity," in *Creativity and Its Cultivation: Addresses Presented at the Interdisciplinary Symposia on Creativity, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan*, ed. Harold H. Anderson (New York: Harper, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1959), 142–61; Sarnoff A. Mednick, "The Associative Basis of the Creative Process," *Psychological Review* 69, no. 3 (1962): 220–32.

“Divergent thinking is distinguished from convergent thinking, which is defined by a narrowing of possible responses to reach the correct solutions. In contrast, divergent thinking involves flexible ideation to generate many responses to open-ended and multifaceted problems. Convergent thinking works best with well-defined problems that have a clearly defined response, while divergent thinking is best suited for poorly defined or unstructured problems... Since Guilford’s seminal contribution to the study of creativity, divergent thinking has remained a conceptually, internally, and externally valid element of the creative process.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Guilford, divergent thinking provides the foundation for creative production, as it requires ideational searching without directional boundaries.<sup>13</sup> He identified four aspects of divergent thinking:

- 1) Fluency (the ability to produce a great number of ideas or problem solutions in a short period of time)
- 2) Flexibility (the ability to simultaneously propose a variety of approaches to a specific problem)
- 3) Originality (the ability to produce new, original ideas)
- 4) Elaboration (the ability to systematize and organize the details of an idea and carry it out)<sup>14</sup>

### General Systems Theory

Borrowing from General Systems Theory (GST) helps to depict and legitimize the Artist’s Meta-Praxis framework. Jeffrey Stamps describes GST as “...an integration of two complementary approaches, rational and intuitive perspectives.”<sup>15</sup> By envisioning the broad scope of actions artists could use when behaving entrepreneurially, the Meta-Praxis framework endeavors to integrate critical aspects of the rational and intuitive approaches needed for a codified systems theory.

In further explaining human systems, Laszlo and Krippner draw certain distinctions:

“[H]uman activity systems (be they composed of individuals in a nuclear family, musicians in an orchestra, or members of a national or international organization) tend to have multiple and overlapping purposes, of which it is possible to distinguish at least three levels: the purpose of the system, the

<sup>12</sup> Crystal Gibson, Bradley S. Folley and Sohee Park, “Enhanced Divergent Thinking and Creativity in Musicians: A Behavioral and Near-Infrared Spectroscopy Study,” *Brain and Cognition* 69 (2009): 162–69.

<sup>13</sup> Guilford, “Traits of Creativity,” 142–61.

<sup>14</sup> Joy P. Guilford, “Creativity,” *American Psychologist* 5, no. 9 (1950): 444–54; Guilford, “Traits of Creativity,” 142–61.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Stamps, *Holonomy: A Human Systems Theory* (Seaside, CA: Intersystems Publications, 1980), 14.

purpose of its parts, and the purpose of the system of which it is a part, the suprasystem.”<sup>16</sup>

The Artist's Meta-Praxis (as a system) falls into the category of a human activity system and therefore, necessarily contains the three levels outlined above. Obviously, the *Meta-Praxis* is also an attempt to define and order a coherent theoretical human activity system for artists. This is necessary, as the aims and purposes of artists as entrepreneurs are often difficult to define, possessing multiple and overlapping purposes.<sup>17</sup>

Note that Laszlo and Krippner suggest that GST is a methodology “to model complex entities created by the multiple interactions of components by abstracting from certain details of structure and component, and concentrating on the dynamics that define the characteristic functions, properties, and relationships that are internal or external to the system.”<sup>18</sup>

This method is the basis for determining inclusion in the Artist's Meta-Praxis conceptual model. It should be noted that the goal is to include all necessary and sufficient elements that an artist (acting entrepreneurially) would require to engage in the complexities of effective entrepreneurial action in an arts context. Additionally, the model is designed to contain explanatory power, both in minute detail and broad categories, to explain the totality of how an arts entrepreneur's “general system” would—or does—function.

## Holons and Holarchies

As a seminal figure in the field of GST, Arthur Koestler's work serves to further validate, contextualize, and legitimize the Artist's Meta-Praxis conceptual framework. His system-theoretical model of *Self-Regulating Open Hierarchic Order* (SOHO), developed in 1967, uses the concept of a ‘holon,’ described as, “a system which is simultaneously a subsystem and a suprasystem.”<sup>19</sup> He defined the term holon as:

“[Referring] to complex entities, particular organisms and people, which are simultaneously: (a) **whole** individuals and (b) participating **parts** of more encompassing wholes. ‘Holon’ was constructed from the Greek word for whole, *holos*, and the suffix ‘on,’ which connotes a part, as in *proton* or *electron*.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Laszlo and Stanley Krippner, “Systems Theories: Their Origins, Foundations, and Development,” in *Systems Theories and A Priori Aspects of Perception*, ed. J. C. Jordan (Amsterdam, North-Holland: Elsevier, 1998), 47–74.

<sup>17</sup> Gary D. Beckman, “‘Adventuring’ Arts Entrepreneurship Curricula in Higher Education: An Examination of Present Efforts, Obstacles and Best Practices,” *Journal of Arts Management, Law & Society* 37, no. 2 (2007): 88–111; Hope, “Entrepreneurial Action”; Gary D. Beckman, “So, What's the Point? An Introductory Discussion on the Desired Outcomes of Arts Entrepreneurship Education,” in *Disciplining the Arts: Teaching Entrepreneurship in Context*, ed. Gary D. Beckman (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 177–84. Ruth Bridgstock, “Not a Dirty Word: Arts Entrepreneurship and Higher Education,” *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 12, no. 2–3 (2013): 122–37.

<sup>18</sup> Laszlo and Krippner, “Systems Theories,” 47–74.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost in the Machine* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); Stamps, *Holonomy*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Stamps, *Holonomy*, 7.

He further explains holons as:

“Intermediary structures on a series of levels in ascending order of complexity, each of which has two faces looking in opposite directions: the face turned towards the lower levels is that of an autonomous whole, the one turned upward that of a dependent part. This dichotomy is present on every level of every type of hierarchic organization, and is referred to as the ‘Janus phenomenon’.”<sup>21</sup>

Hierarchies are often characterized by a chain of command flowing directionally from the top down; thus, entities on lower levels have very little communication or influence on or with higher levels.<sup>22</sup> Contrastingly, holarchies have a bidirectional command chain. Unlike hierarchies, holarchies contain horizontal channels of communication and influence. In a holarchy, an entity from any level can affect and influence other levels, in any direction, both vertically and horizontally. Consequently, there is no superiority of importance within the system; all holons in the holarchy are vital to the *optimal* functioning of the structure.

### Realizing General Systems Theory in the Meta-Praxis

The Artist’s Meta-Praxis can be envisioned as a framework operating similarly to Koestler’s Self-Regulating Open Hierarchic Order. By adapting Koestler’s language used to define his ideas of holarchies and holons, it is possible to describe the application of these concepts in a new academic context while simultaneously arguing for the validity of the Meta-Praxis framework. To be extremely clear, the following ideas and language are original to Koestler; this article merely adapts his language to the framework.<sup>23</sup>

### META-PRAXIS IN GREATER DETAIL

#### Definitions and Structural Design of the Framework

Structurally, the Meta-Praxis consists of multiple holons that can be isolated into individual components. When combined, however, they transform into a multiple-leveled framework, creating a holarchy of parts within parts. Three vertical levels form the depth of the structure, and three horizontal components on any given level comprise its span.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> level holons are:

- Meta-Intellect
- Artistic Action — in any discipline or sub-discipline (i.e. classical guitar)

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Koestler, “Beyond Atomism and Holism: The Concept of the Holon,” in *Beyond Reductionism: New Perspectives in the Life Sciences*, edited by Arthur Koestler and John R. Smythies, (London: Hutchinson, 1972), 197.

<sup>22</sup> Stamps, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Paraphrased version adapted from Koestler, “Beyond Atomism and Holism.”

- Entrepreneurial Action

Level 1 holons, in combination, serve to reconcile the atomistic and holistic activities of artists.

**2<sup>nd</sup> level holons are:**

- Technique
- Practice
- Divergent Thinking

Level 2 holons are inherently behavioral in nature, incorporating routines of acquired skills and displaying rule-governed behaviors.

**3<sup>rd</sup> level holons are:**

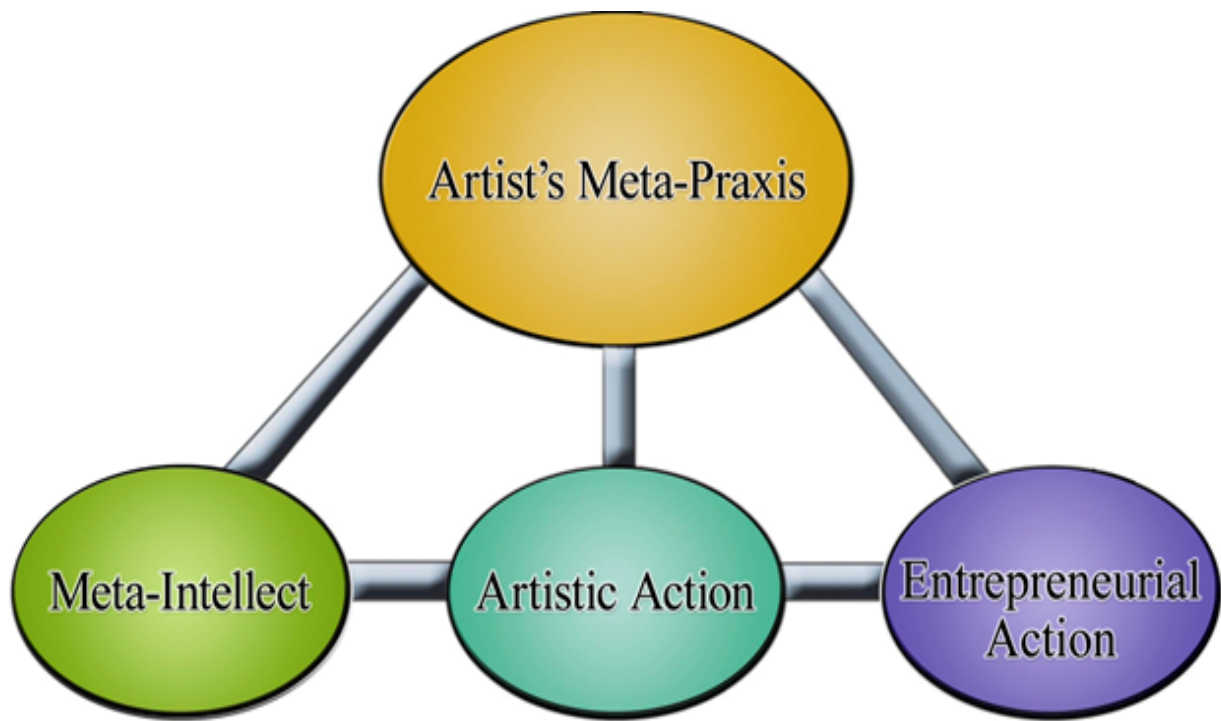
- Theoretical Knowledge
- Applied Knowledge
- Domain Knowledge

Level 3 holons are acquired and incorporated by those of Level 2.

The Meta-Praxis framework is a way of thinking, perceiving and acting, involving both the cognitive and the physical. Figure 1 illustrates the paradigm's structure; figures 2, 3, and 4 show each component's subsystem. Additionally, Figures 2, 3, and 4 display each subsystem's sub-layer. Figure 5 illustrates both the paradigm's structure and subsystems.

To interpret this framework, one must 1) consider this model in three dimensions, 2) envision a constant bidirectional flow of information and skill application between the components, and 3) take into account a guiding force that will govern the system. The reader is cautioned not to consider this a "grand model of artist cognition" but rather a way to visualize (rightly or wrongly) what appears to be important to an artist and where art and entrepreneurship might occur in this system. To reiterate, this model is presented only as one possible way to understand how an artist *might* think and where entrepreneurship education would fit into this model.





*Figure 1*

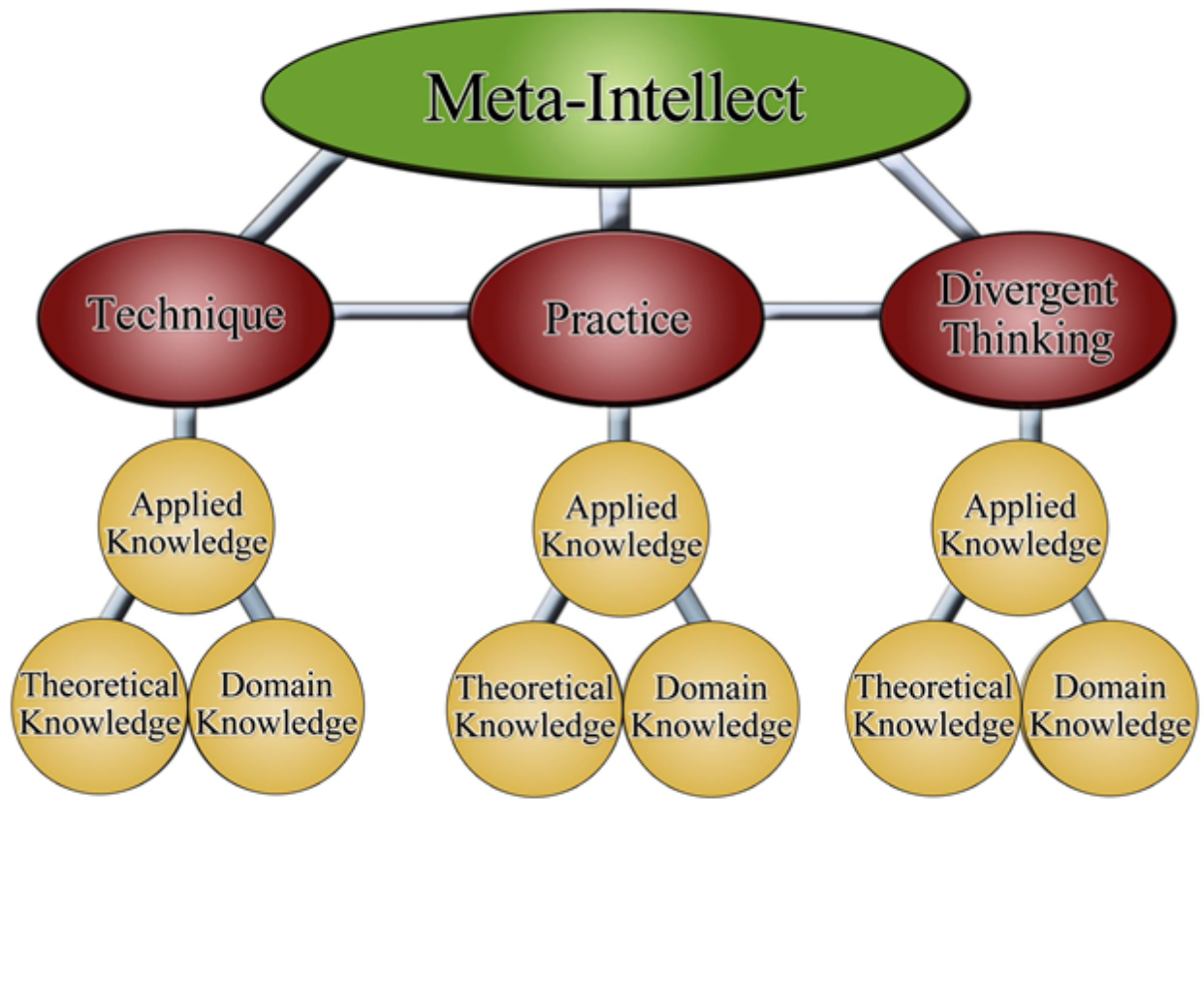


Figure 2

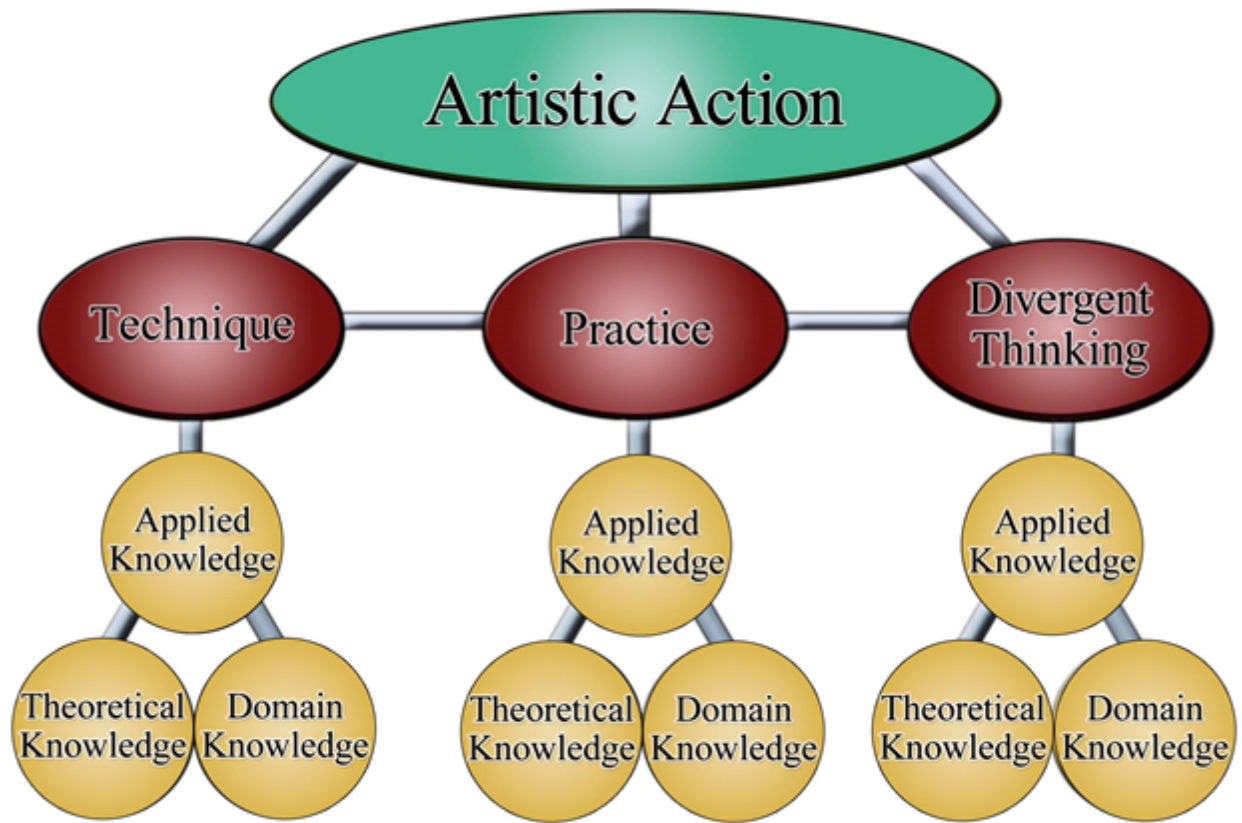


Figure 3

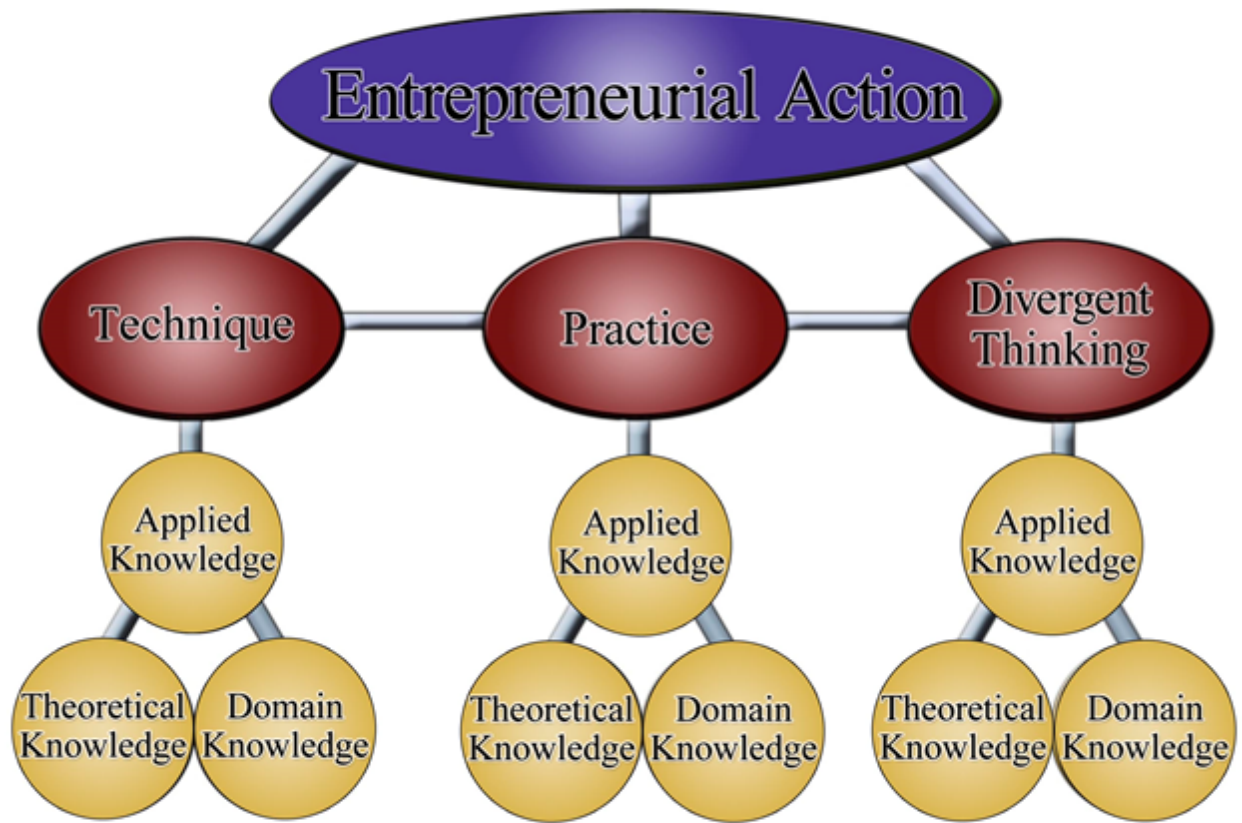


Figure 4

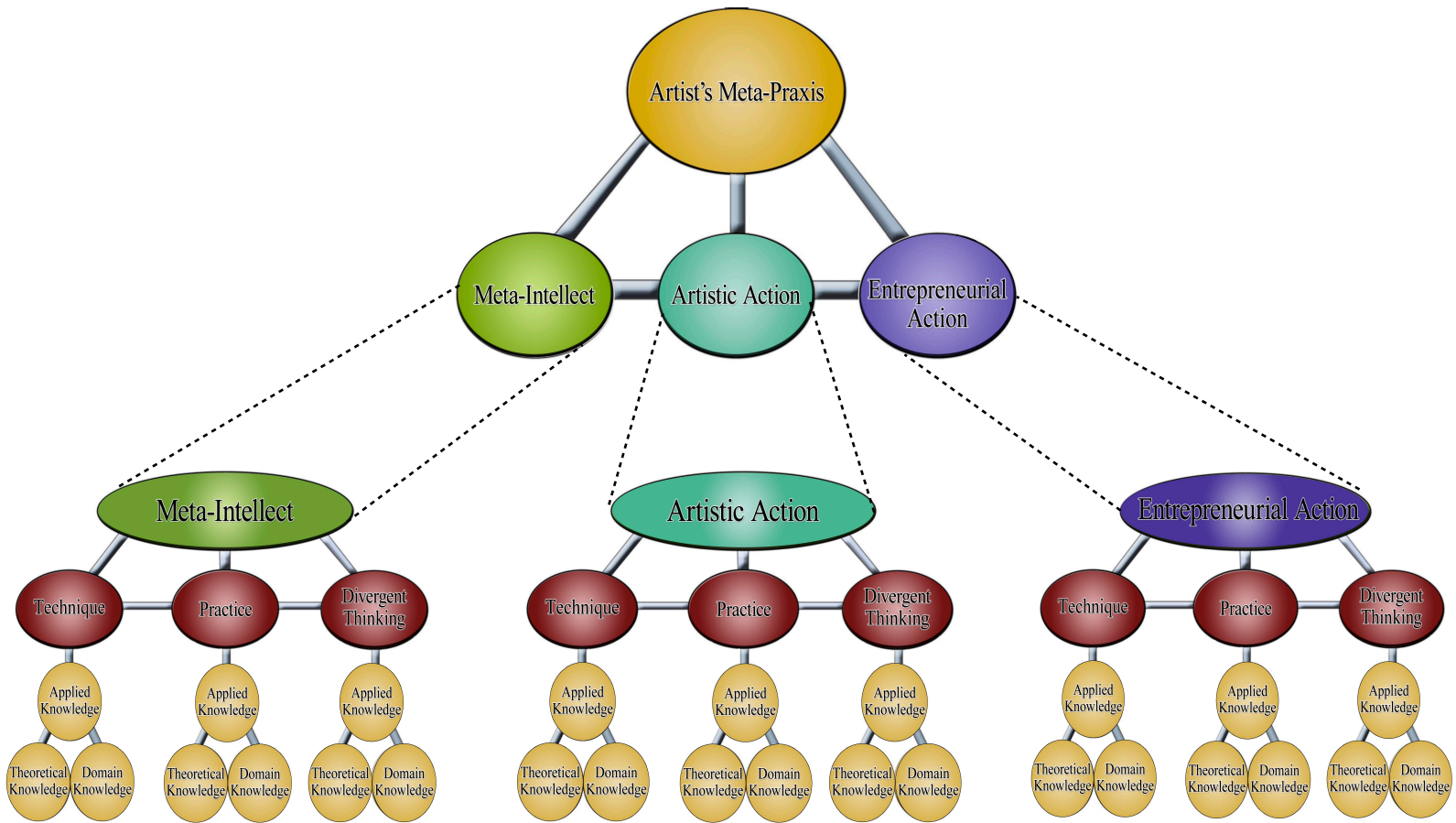


Figure 5

## The Governing System: Meta-Intellect & Creativity

The Meta-Intellect (or “big picture intellect”) is an all-encompassing, fluidly governing intellect; as such, it is the command center for the management of knowledge and action. It perceives, analyzes, discerns, anticipates, critiques, interprets, judges, and guides. Enabling efficiency, the Meta-Intellect illuminates and prioritizes tasks or skills, differentiating activities that are a means to an end and those that are ultimate ends. Additionally, it organizes a staggering amount of information, knowledge and skill needed for one to be—in this case—a successful artist and entrepreneur. The Meta-Intellect, as the command center of knowledge and action, fosters high levels of *expertise* critical to the successful functioning within the multiple domains of the Meta-Praxis.

Cognitive psychology can help explain and validate the suggested Meta-Intellect concept. Fayena-Tawil, Kozbelt, and Sitaras abstract metacognition thusly:

“Expertise is the perceptual and behavioral ability to work with ‘the big picture’ in solving a problem. Having a sense of ‘the big picture’ is also relevant to understanding how individuals monitor progress and engage in metacognition, that is, reflection about one’s own thinking. Metacognition involves actively monitoring and regulating one’s own cognition and behavior to achieve a goal. Metacognition plays very important roles in creativity. For example, eminent creators appear to deliberately engage in metacognitive processes like consideration of task strategies, self-instruction, time management, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Better problem solvers are also more adept at metacognitively monitoring their progress.”<sup>24</sup>

Within the domains of artistic and entrepreneurial action, the necessity of expertise, problem solving, and a sense of the “big picture” seem obvious. Additionally, processes like consideration of task strategies, self-instruction, time management, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation are essential. Thus, the role of the Meta-Intellect is to direct these metacognitive processes throughout the entire system of the Meta-Praxis.<sup>25</sup>

Meta-Intellect controls the rules, strategies, integrative and self-assertive tendencies, triggers, scanners, regulation channels, shifts from mechanical rigidity to freedom of mind, and the regenerative processes within the Meta-Praxis holarchy. Likewise, the Meta-Intellect affects horizontally the holons of any specific arts discipline and Arts Entrepreneurship, as well as vertically the holons of Divergent Thinking, Technique, Practice, Theoretical Knowledge, Domain Knowledge, and Applied Knowledge. Theories of the system determine the rules of the game and strategy determines the course of the game. Meta-Intellect selects strategic maneuvers within the Meta-Praxis by activating Divergent Thinking, which requires the involvement of Domain Knowledge and Applied Knowledge. Contrastingly, the rules of

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<sup>24</sup> Frieda Fayena-Tawil, Aaron Kozbelt and LEMONIA Sitaras, “Think Global, Act Local: A Protocol Analysis Comparison of Artists’ and Nonartists’ Cognitions, Metacognitions, and Evaluations While Drawing,” *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts* 5, no. 2 (2011): 135–45.

<sup>25</sup> Kelly G. Shaver and Linda R. Scott, “Person, Process, Choice: The Psychology of New Venture Creation,” *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice* 16, no.2 (1991): 23–45.

the game are determined by Theoretical Knowledge and Domain Knowledge. These rules affect and influence the strategic decisions of the Meta-Intellect. Functionally, the interplay of behavior between holons of each level account for the coherence, stability, and specificity of the entire Meta-Praxis.

### Artistic Action

Although an artist operating within any arts discipline could be inserted into the Meta-Praxis, this article will employ a classical guitarist as a specific arts discipline in the model (See Figure 3). Classical guitarists utilize a variety of skills to master their instrument: facile technique and a compelling sense of musical interpretation are certainly critical, but cognitive power, enhanced through divergent thinking, is also necessary. A classical guitarist relies heavily upon Divergent Thinking during the process of determining fingerings for complex musical passages as the aesthetic quality of the music—whether superior or inferior—is greatly affected by the fingerings chosen. Therefore, the incorporation of Meta-Intellect guiding Divergent Thinking during this process is vital to determining the degree of technical ease or difficulty within a work and, ultimately, the musical result.

However, in order to achieve *expertise* in fingering choices and musical control, the guitarist must develop a thorough knowledge of music, the instrument and efficient practice regimens. An example of Domain Knowledge is a guitarist possessing an understanding of each of these categories: 1) the instrument's design and operation, 2) music and how it is generated on the guitar, and 3) practicing—both how it works broadly and how it is efficiently executed on the instrument. Knowing the necessary technique, music, practicing, and thinking theories are examples of Theoretical Knowledge. It is at this point that the Meta-Intellect governs the process by guiding the strategic choices through Divergent Thinking.<sup>26</sup> Theoretical Knowledge determines the rules of the game, and the Meta-Intellect determines the optimal choice using both Domain Knowledge and Divergent Thinking. The decision is then put into action through Applied Knowledge to bring about the desired effect.

The field of cognitive science can help to validate these suggested processes within the Meta-Praxis. Francis Heylighen and Clément Vidal suggest the following:

“One of the key insights of the new cognitive science is that cognition is necessarily situated and embodied. This means that a cognitive system, such as the human mind, is always interacting with its environmental situation via its bodily sensors (eyes, ears, touch...) that perceive, and effectors (hands, vocal chords...) that produce actions. The complexity of the real world is dealt with not by manipulating an abstract internal representation, but by manipulating

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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 4 of the author's dissertation for a detailed analysis and explanation of how learning the classical guitar fosters divergent thinking ability. Gangi, Jonathan J., “Arts Entrepreneurship: An Essential Sub-System of the Artist's Meta-Praxis” (DMA diss., University of South Carolina, 2014).

the world itself, i.e. by performing actions and monitoring their results via perceptions.”<sup>27</sup>

This type of cognition articulates the required actions of the Meta-Praxis, and as such, the model can move from pure assertion closer to a grounding in cognitive science. Classical guitarists manipulate their world (or domain) by interacting with their environment via bodily sensors (eyes, ears, touch), effectors that produce actions (hands), and a monitoring of the musical results. For example, after choosing fingerings for a musical passage, guitarists test the choices by performing the music, listening to the results and making necessary adjustments to achieve the desired results. Similarly in performance, guitarists must monitor their playing and respond accordingly in order to realize their musical interpretation according to their musical or artistic intentions.

### Entrepreneurial Action

The same elements utilized within Artistic Action by a virtuoso classical guitarist are required in Entrepreneurial Action. An effective entrepreneur will likely benefit from Domain Knowledge, whether the domain is Theoretical Knowledge about entrepreneurial Technique, Applied Knowledge towards Technique, or how to think creatively in order to simply recognize a “better way.” These areas of knowledge influence entrepreneurial Technique and Practice, which advance through Divergent Thinking.

Behaving as an entrepreneur requires expertise, problem-solving skills and the incorporation of Divergent Thinking, all of which can be done in an artfully creative manner. Like artists (as mentioned previously), entrepreneurs are able to manipulate their domain by interacting with their environments via bodily sensors that perceive and effectors that produce actions and monitor results. For example, entrepreneurs may use Domain Knowledge to achieve a better understanding of a market or industry they wish to utilize. Once established, the Meta-Intellect guides Divergent Thinking to determine, using Theoretical Knowledge, an optimal strategy for creating a new product/service or innovating an existing product or service to increase the value to the market. After the new product/service is introduced, entrepreneurs monitor the results of their efforts.

Entrepreneurs engage in metacognitive activity to evaluate all aspects of the venture, including Theoretical Knowledge and Domain Knowledge, the way in which these become Applied Knowledge, as well as Technique, Practice, and Divergent Thinking. When modifications are made based on preliminary results, entrepreneurs often employ perceptual triggers, scanners, and feedback loops to evaluate the effectiveness of their entrepreneurial technique, problem solving skills, creativity and innovation to achieve the desired results of their practice. These actions can be viewed as identical to those of artists, as the only significant difference between an artist and an entrepreneur in this context is the creation and development of different “products” in different domains. It appears then that many of the

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<sup>27</sup> Francis Heylighen and Clement Vidal, “Getting Things Done: The Science behind Stress-Free Productivity,” *Long Range Planning* 41, no. 6. (2008): 585–605.



elements involved in the intellectual and creative processes of artists and entrepreneurs can be described as similar, if not identical.

Throughout the entire Meta-Praxis, these cognitive and physical activities cannot be separated. Channels of communication and synthesis flow constantly and multi-directionally between each level of process within any and all of the components. Technique influences Practice, which is influenced by Divergent Thinking. Divergent Thinking is influenced by practicing techniques of thinking and by learning about theories of thinking. Further, Technique is influenced by thinking about theories of technique, and Practicing is influenced by thinking about theories of practicing. Applied Knowledge of one area to another is the glue that binds all of these processes together and provides cohesion.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, entrepreneurial action and artistic action, directed by intellectual action, form a synergetic relationship.

## PROFESSIONAL ARTIST SURVEY

### Purpose

Although the Meta-Praxis as a theoretical model is grounded in cognitive and systems science, querying professional artists can initially test the framework. The author conducted an informal survey to investigate the processes and skill sets used in the larger context of the participants' careers as an initial attempt to demonstrate the hypothesized Meta-Praxis theory. Results of the survey demonstrate a linking of the theory with practice, thus providing a basis to illustrate that fiscally solvent arts entrepreneurs use many—if not all—of the elements contained within the Meta-Praxis framework.

### Method

Participants chosen to complete the questionnaire are working artists. Requiring participants to be self-employed allowed for authenticity and credibility in the sample. Further, all survey questions were developed using the theoretical foundations of cognitive and systems science. Purposefully, each artist was unaware of the Meta-Praxis framework to avoid any bias.<sup>29</sup>

### Participants

*Participant 1 - Painter:* Primarily self-taught, with some university training in art and art history; exhibits original works at prestigious juried arts fairs and shows nationwide.

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<sup>28</sup> Envision the process described while referencing Figures 1-5.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix A for the questionnaire. Participant 1 provided written survey answers, while Participants 2 and 3 answered via phone interview, therefore most of the quotes for Participant 1 are verbatim, with only a few paraphrased sentences for continuity's sake. All quotes by Participants 2 and 3 are paraphrased, not direct quotes. Note: Participant 2 is not the author.

*Participant 2 - Guitarist:* Classically trained founder/artistic director of an international guitar festival and director of a guitar school; performs nationally and internationally in addition to composing for movies, theater, radio, television, and documentaries.

*Participant 3 - Dancer:* Classically trained founder/artistic director of a dance theatre touring company; choreographed works for Momix, Ballet Arizona, Verb Ballets, Ballet Theatre of Ohio, Dancing Wheels, numerous universities, and pre-professional programs.

## Responses Pertaining to Intellectual Action

### *Determining What to Work On, When*

All three participants clearly focused on long term planning. This includes how they determine when and what to work on and a concern for the ‘big picture’ of their business and career. Participant 1 indicates that new paintings are created to replace pieces sold:

“I work on paintings to replace the same thematic pieces that I have recently sold. My paintings are prioritized in order to replace inventory, whatever streamlines that is the priority.”

Organized by theme, new work is prioritized according to thematic areas needing replenishment.

Participant 2 constantly focuses on long-term student retention and new student acquisition as the highest priority:

“Maintaining high enrollment for capital flow is crucial for my business, and staying ahead of the game regarding enrollment requires ongoing, ahead of time planning.”

For this participant, new student recruitment targets elementary, middle, and high schools, although priority is placed on elementary and middle schools, because younger students are better retention candidates.

Participant 3 prioritizes work based on achieving the long-term goal of increased visibility and impact within various communities, in addition to engaging audiences throughout multiple geographic regions:

“I determine when and what to work on based on grant deadlines and other funding concerns. Additionally, I create work to push artists to get better at their artistic skills, as well as communicating through their art to have a high impact on our audiences/communities.”

*Monitoring Progress*

Participant 1 keeps a daily log of each painting sold, how many paintings of each theme are sold and the markets yielding the highest volume of sales:

“I daily monitor my progress in my business’ keeping a log of each painting I sell, how many paintings of each theme were sold, and which markets have been best to sell in.”

Additionally, daily goals are set for which new paintings to create. Likewise, Participant 2 states:

“I always consider what pedagogical materials and repertoire students like and try to keep their interest by giving them a variety of musical styles to practice and perform. By doing so, not only are the students happy, but, more importantly, the parents are happy, resulting in long-term student retention.”

Participant 3 monitors the complete scope of the dance company, including artists, board members, budget concerns, grant applications, tickets sales, community impact, and competition analysis:

“At least once a week I try to meet with everyone involved in the dance company to monitor the progress of each aspect of the organization.”

*Divergent Thinking*

Participant 1 views divergent thinking as especially critical to realizing the aesthetic goal / vision of each painting. It is also used when interacting with customers to determine what will connect with the target audience and correctly assess their feedback:

“Creative thinking is the soul of my business. There are many times where I will talk with other artists, especially my wife and children, about paintings. My son, who is also a painter, many times will engage me, and we will discuss our vision and goals for different paintings we hope to accomplish.”

For Participant 2, divergent thinking is the starting point of practice, performance, and teaching:

“For me, everything I do is always going to begin with creativity; the more I use it, the better I get at thinking creatively in all aspects of my art and business.”

Whether the task is composing music or developing new business strategies (such as incentivizing current students to recruit new students) divergent thinking is essential and must be carefully cultivated through constant use and application. Similarly, Participant 3 uses divergent thinking in all career aspects, including the creation and presentation of new works, assessing and surpassing other competing organizations, and the management of assets and resources:

“Creative thinking is vital to everything I do, both on the artistic side and the business operations side. I try to create new work and present it in new spaces, using new ways to market and develop audiences. Creativity is critical for me to place art in a new context.”

## Answers Pertaining to Artistic Action

### *Role of Technique and Practice*

Participant 1 delineates that technique and practice are what define skill level, which in turn allows the artist to achieve the aesthetic goal/vision of a painting:

“In my artistry, technique and practice are what define my skill level, and ultimately help me to satisfy my aesthetic vision.”

When practicing for performances, Participants 2 and 3 always have goals and prioritize practice session content according to the requirements of upcoming performances. For Participant 2, possessing a strong technique is critical as each performance is selling a product. Technique directly affects the product's quality:

“When I perform on stage, I am selling a product, so technique is very important. I need to know what I am good at and how I will present to an audience. So, I evaluate my technique to be sure I can present my product well.”

Participant 2 also indicated that technique is tremendously important when working through injuries such as focal dystonia.

Participant 3 notes that technique and artistry are vital to a quality product and performance and are directly linked to the ultimate success of the arts business:

“Technique is vital to artistry, and there is a strong link from technique and artistry to the success of the dance company, but technique is not the only thing — depending on context—sometimes connecting with and engaging the audience is more important.”

### *Importance of Environmental Situations*

Participant 1 draws upon rural landscapes for inspiration, reflecting the artist's work environment. An art show environment is crucial for Participant 1 because:

“My actions are based on my audience's response to my work. I monitor closely whether I have succeeded in communicating based on their feedback.”

Participant 2 says that knowing the environment of specific performances is vital:

“I always pick repertoire for the audience I am playing for and try to be smart in the way I program concerts; using innovative repertoire sometimes requires that I create new arrangements.”

This is the same for Participant 3, who also uses innovative repertoire targeted to the preferences of specific audiences. Never would a program be performed without taking into account the target audience:

“I must be aware of my environment artistically, by having an awareness of trends in choreography, gauging what works and what doesn’t compositionally, and keeping up with trends to stay in tune with other choreographers’ work. I also have environmental considerations pertaining to performances, and it is crucial for me to find innovative venue locations.”

Seeking out and utilizing new performance venues serves to provide new ways of communicating, engaging and connecting with audiences.

## Answers Pertaining to Entrepreneurial Action

### *Role of Technique and Practice*

A foundational entrepreneurial technique for Participant 1 is the ability to comfortably talk with clientele at arts venues. For this participant, talking is the primary impetus for sharpening business acumen, perspicacity, and skill:

“To build my art business I needed to first be able to comfortably talk with my clientele, have the drive to constantly improve the product, and to be realistic about my goals.”

Participant 2 states:

“I don’t see a difference between my art and my business, it all melds together. So it is important for me to have the full scope of skill sets needed in all facets of my business.”

Some of these skill sets include the ability to communicate and articulate the value of their artistic products to their markets. Human interaction (i.e. asking questions and seeking out advice from mentors and experts) is another important technique for all participants.

Participant 3 acknowledges:

“I must be real and honest with people when talking about my business and why it matters, should be funded and why performances should be attended. I found that talking to someone like you are [simply] just two people sharing what is very important and effective as a technique when talking to artists, board members, and audiences/communities.”

*Importance of Environmental Situations*

Of critical import for success, Participant 1 must be positioned in the environment of small arts venues/events. This domain provides opportunities to personally meet clientele, which serves as a precise measurement of successful communication through the artwork to the target customer:

“My communication with my clientele at various small art venues where I sell my work is what sharpens my skills. In this environment I can personally meet with clientele, and this serves as a perfect measurement of my success with my audience.”

Maintaining an awareness of one's environment is essential for Participant 2, who is always looking for opportunities within a domain:

“I am very willing to do other things besides my art, and this has been very beneficial for me.”

For example, Participant 2's guitar school is housed on the second floor of a tennis club. Within that environment, an opportunity was recognized for both the tennis club and the guitar school. A mutually beneficial agreement was reached involving an exchange of labor on Participant 2's part (creating advertisements for the tennis club) while the tennis club owner financed the purchase of the advertising mechanism and allowed Participant 2 to include marketing materials for the guitar school. The TV screen was displayed in a prime location, near the first floor entrance, serving to inform clientele of tennis club events and guitar school events on the second floor, resulting in increased business for both the guitar school and the tennis club.

The non-profit arts sector environment is crucial to consider for Participant 3, especially the actions of similar dance companies:

“I must be aware of the artistic climate that I am a part of, including knowing what other arts organizations are doing that are similar to mine. The more aware of my environment I am, the better I can know what has worked or not worked for another company and this helps me to get and keep a competitive advantage.”

As the dance company's director, competitive advantage can only be maintained by possessing an awareness of the environment and what has failed or been successful for competing arts organizations regarding grant funding, choreographic trends, and repertoire/programmatic choices. Equally important within this climate, Participant 3 must have an understanding of key business/marketing trends relating to community visibility, engagement, and audience loyalty, because these are critical to maintaining a competitive advantage within a target market.

## Analysis

Sub-discipline specificity seems irrelevant concerning the ‘big picture’ of each artist’s business and career, as each participant indicated a significant focus on long-term planning concerning their arts “products” and how they determine what to work on when. Clearly, Divergent Thinking is incorporated in all aspects of the participants’ arts businesses, along with the use of Theoretical Knowledge, Domain Knowledge and Applied Knowledge. Divergent Thinking, then, may be viewed as a primary element of an arts entrepreneur’s business venture. There is a knowledge transfer occurring as Divergent Thinking is consistently used in the artistic domain, resulting in creative ideas overflowing into other aspects of the business. Further, with sustained Divergent Thinking practice, high skill levels of creative thinking emerge in all facets of artistic and business experience.

As indicated previously, the Meta-Intellect is an all-encompassing, fluidly governing intellect. As such, it is the command center for the management of knowledge and action. Exemplified by the self-described actions of real-world professional artists, the Meta-Intellect organizes a staggering amount of information, knowledge, and skill needed for one to be a successful artist and entrepreneur. Professional practice reported by these artists demonstrates the use of metacognition to determine the following: what to work on and when, priority of activities, differentiation between actions that are means to an end vs. the ultimate end, the use of task strategy, self-instruction, time management, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and the organization of knowledge, information, and skill needed to be a professional artist. All of these elements listed are descriptors of how the Meta-Intellect functions and are clearly incorporated by professional artists.

Additionally, interaction with customers (i.e. the environment) and monitoring actions via perceptions is crucial in these endeavors. Once again, this highlights the importance of interacting with environmental situations, performing actions, and monitoring results via perceptions. This exemplifies the processes and skill sets outlined by the Meta-Praxis framework, which are perhaps vital to the success of an arts entrepreneur as demonstrated by the three survey participants. Each indicated the importance of human interaction and emphasized that asking those successful in other domains for advice/help is essential for success. Perhaps most importantly, these successful arts entrepreneurs view “non-arts” specific skill sets (i.e. business skills) as complimentary to and synergetic with the artistic process, *not* detrimental or antithetical.

For the participants, there is no distinction between Entrepreneurial Action, Intellectual Action, and Artistic Action, as all three domains of action are melded together into one experience. Cultivating skills in other facets besides their specific art seems critical to sustaining their arts businesses, as evidenced by their responses. These examples clearly articulate the benefits of these meta-cognitions and behaviors, thus serving to empirically support the theoretical notions of the Meta-Praxis framework. Further, this informal survey shows that the components of each holon in the Meta-Praxis holarchy are not solely theoretical, but inherently emerge within the broad scope of a professional artists’ career. Note that the goal of the model is to codify and systematize these processes in a formal manner, suggesting that the framework could serve to help artists become aware of how both Entrepreneurial Action and Intellectual Action are vital to their task. For the emerging arts

entrepreneur, understanding the Meta-Praxis could facilitate the goal of being a successful professional artist.

## CONCLUSION

As a conceptual tool, an application of the Artist's Meta-Praxis may be of benefit to students, faculty, curriculum designers, and administrators by helping them, as Hope suggested, "... make connections between what [art] is and knows and what business is and knows and what entrepreneurship is and does."<sup>30</sup> For artists serious about making their art their career, the Artist's Meta-Praxis framework may be indispensable. Each survey participant — all successful professional artists — validate this claim by intimating the absolute necessity of Entrepreneurial Action and Intellectual Action to their careers.

The Meta-Praxis identifies the skill sets necessary for Entrepreneurial Action, showing that artists are *already* using them in their areas of expertise. Again, each survey participant demonstrated synergies between Artistic Action and Entrepreneurial Action and further indicated that no distinctions exist. Therefore, the model is valuable for artists, as it articulates how non-arts knowledge can strengthen artistic endeavors. By expressing the required multidimensionality needed to create a viable career through their art, the Meta-Praxis liberates artists to view "non-arts" (i.e. business) tasks and skills as beneficial and essential to their artistry. This enables them to know that when not in studio, rehearsal, or practice room, they are still operating as professional artists.

For arts entrepreneurship curriculum designers, the Meta-Praxis framework could be invaluable to their task, as it outlines a viewpoint contextualizing behavioral patterns of Entrepreneurial Action within the broad scope of a professional artist's career.<sup>31</sup> The Meta-Praxis identifies the skill sets necessary for entrepreneurial action, demonstrating that some artists are *already* leveraging these skills in their areas of expertise. Curriculum designers can build upon this framework by drawing additional parallels between artistic and entrepreneurial processes, behaviors, and actions. Doing so will further enable artists to recognize the artistry within the entrepreneurial approach, empowering them to think not only artistically and divergently, but also in how they entrepreneurially recognize and exploit opportunities.

Lastly, the Artist's Meta-Praxis is an answer to Sam Hope's call for:

"An orientation to big picture facts, issues, and choices...especially with regard to the relationship among content, concept, and context, between fundamental knowledge and skills...and connection and synthesis."

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<sup>30</sup> Hope, "Entrepreneurial Action."

<sup>31</sup> Shaver, and Scott, "Person, Process, Choice," 23–45.



Having demonstrated the relationships between content, concept, and context when engaging in Artistic Action, Intellectual Action, and Entrepreneurial Action, the framework provides explanatory power, both in minute detail and broad categories, regarding the totality of how an arts entrepreneur's system could function. Perhaps most importantly, this model demonstrates how artists could channel creativity, imagination, and Divergent Thinking into Entrepreneurial Action to generate and communicate artistic value. Thus, the Artist's Meta-Praxis is a step towards framing entrepreneurship as critical to the artist, arts training, and even art itself. Consequently, Entrepreneurial Action can serve as a key catalyst in fulfilling artists' professional goals.

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## APPENDIX A

### PROFESSIONAL ARTIST QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Intellectual Action Questions

Regarding the “big picture” of your arts business and career, please describe:

- How you determine what to work on and when
- How you prioritize activities
- How you differentiate between actions that are means to an end, vs. your ultimate end/goal
- How you organize the knowledge, information, and skill needed to be a professional artist
- How often you monitor your progress in all facets of your business, artistic skill, thinking, and behavior relating to launching/achieving and sustaining your arts business
- How you use task strategy, self-instruction, time management, self-monitoring and self-evaluation
- How important creative/divergent thinking is to your goal of sustaining a successful arts business, and in what specific areas/ways do you use this type of thinking

#### Artistic Action Question

Regarding the skills needed as an artist, please describe:

- The complete scope of skills needed to create/produce your art
- The role of theoretical, domain, and applied knowledge
- What is needed for expertise, and how do you determine if you are an expert
- The role of technique, practice, and creative/divergent thinking
- How you interact with environmental situations of any kind
- The importance of performing actions and monitoring the results via perceptions

### Entrepreneurial Action Questions

Regarding the skills needed as an entrepreneur, please describe:

- The complete scope of skills needed to build/sustain your business
- The role of theoretical, domain, and applied knowledge
- What is needed for expertise, and how do you determine if you are an expert
- The role of technique, practice, and creative/divergent thinking
- How you interact with environmental situations of any kind
- The importance of performing actions and monitoring the results via perceptions

