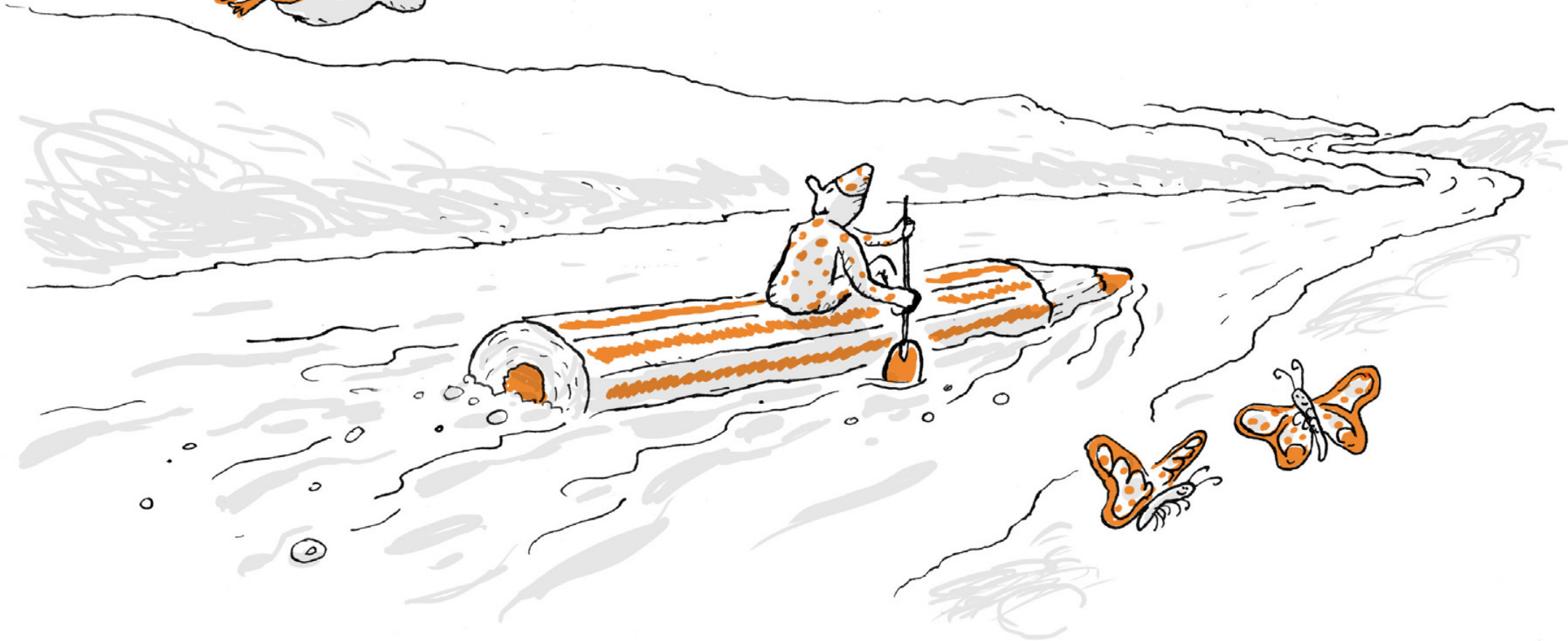


The Performing Artist's Audience Workbook

Part 2: The Workbook

Created by Lisa Baxter
Illustrations by Philippe Brasseur



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Your Workbook

What is it?

This workbook is your personal space.

Created to inform the ‘audience benefit’ element of Creative Scotland’s Touring Fund application, its uses aren’t limited to just that.

- You might want to use it at the point where you have **an idea for a new piece of work.**
- You might want to **reflect on previous work** you have created.
- You might want to use it when you are **creating work** and think about **how the artistic choices you make might shape the audience experience.**
- You might want to use it to **consider who your audiences might be**, what makes them tick, and **how you might communicate your work to them.**

Whatever your intention, I hope you enjoy this ‘me-time’ to think, reflect, write, doodle and draw around the subject of your practice, your purpose and your audiences.



Who is it for?

This workbook is for anyone who makes art.



- It's for artists who want to experiment with or embrace reflective, audience-centric practice.

- It's for artists who care about how their work is experienced by others.



- It's for artists who want to communicate their work authentically and meaningfully to others.



- It's for artists who want to re-engage with their purpose and explore whether it still holds.

- It's also for artists who want to apply to the [Creative Scotland Touring Fund](#).



Why is this important?

Here's what excites me about creating this workbook for you:

You have a direct line to the human condition – that's what makes you an artist.

You intuitively create affective experiences through your imagination, your sensibilities and your artistry.

Your unique expressive talents and the resulting human effect is the stuff of art, its goodness.

And it all happens below the radar, on a frequency hardly anyone within the arts sector feels the need to tune into ... until now.

This could be the beginning of a shift. A re-tuning to a different bandwidth. **Yours.**

I, for one, cannot wait to see what emerges.

How do I use it?

This workbook is for anyone who makes art at any stage in their career.

Make it your own, immerse yourself in each stage and be open to what surfaces. Think of it as a journey where you walk through each page, pencil in hand.

Each chapter has a specific focus and three associated exercises.

Your Artistic Purpose is about you-the-artist and/or company. The other chapters focus your attention on the work in question, whether that's at concept stage, a work-in-progress or a finished piece.

Allocate plenty of time to complete and reflect on these deceptively simple exercises which will hopefully extend the way you already critically engage with your practice. If you are an individual artist, think about buddying up with someone who can help you reflect.

Each exercise runs across two pages, from left to right and has:

- A title
- An introduction
- An explanation about what to do
- Some 'tips' and 'traps' to focus your mind
- And a canvas to frame your thinking and your answers.

Just print out the exercises you want to do (A3 format will give you more space to write, draw, doodle) and off you go.

Feel free to doodle, write or sketch your responses.

Be as messy as you like.



Your Journey

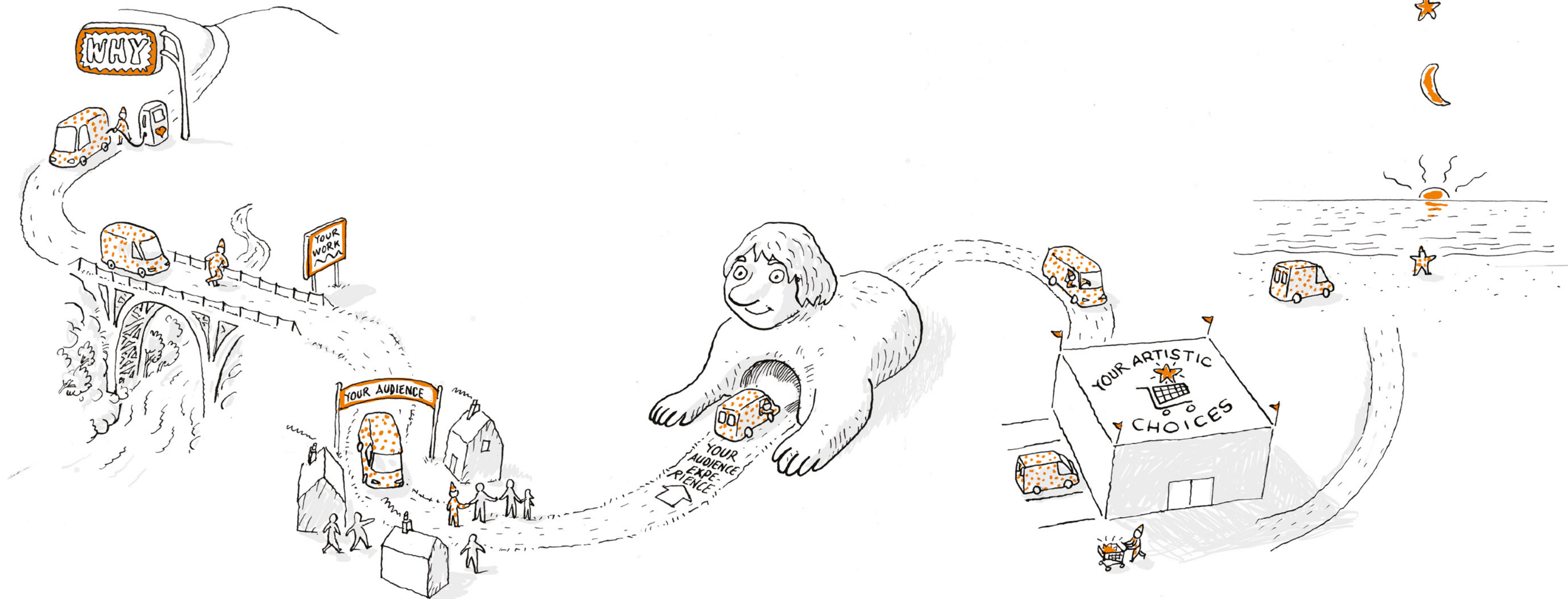
It's important to say here that this workbook is **NOT** an 'essay plan', but a journey.

At each stage in that journey you will find a series of exercises around the following themes:

- Your Artistic Purpose
- Your Work
- Your Audience
- The Audience Experience
- Your Artistic Choices

These exercises are designed to elicit a train of thought that flows from one stop off to the other, each one building on the previous one and setting you up for the next. Whatever emerges is yours to use in any way you feel useful.

Your experience of the process is as important as what emerges in words, so pay attention **to yourself**.



1. Your Artistic Purpose

Because we never stand still, and because the world is constantly changing around us, periodically reflecting on our 'purpose' helps us stay in tune with our evolving self and continue to be relevant in a dynamic and unpredictable landscape.

The questions you will be asking yourself here are:

- What is important to me?
- How does my work reflect this?
- Who is my work for?
- And to what end?

IKIGAI explores the intersection between passion, mission, vocation and profession.

The Golden Circle helps you flip your narrative from what you do to why you do it.

Cause for Action explores the difference you want to make to the world.

You don't have to do all the exercises.

If you do, there will be some overlap but it will be worth the effort.

You might find this short video from [▶ Oprah's Life Class](#) series interesting. It's very short and, I think, very relevant. Hope you think so too.

Tip: Come to the next few pages as if you are thinking about your artistic purpose for the very first time ... and don't write for anyone else but you.

Trap: Deferring to previous things you have written as this might limit your thinking.



WHY

IKIGAI

Ikigai¹ (pronounced ‘eye-ka-guy’) is a Japanese concept around finding your purpose in life, your reason for being.

The Ikigai model below is simple yet profound – a practice field for you to explore how your passion and talents intersect with what the world needs and is willing to pay for.

Exercise

Take a look at the canvas opposite. Consider each question carefully and write your answers in the relevant section.

What do the answers reveal about:

- **Your passion** – where what you love and what you are good at come together.
- **Your mission** – where what you love and what the world needs come together.
- **Your vocation** – where what the world needs and what you can be paid for come together.
- **Your profession** – where what you are good at and what you can be paid for come together.

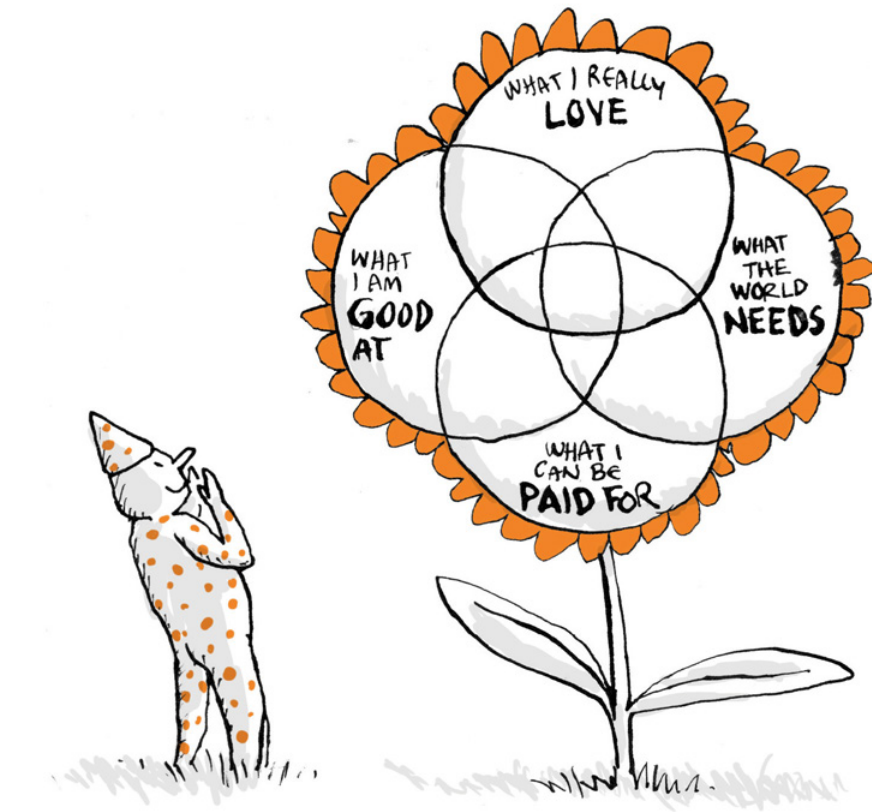
Then, reflect on the ways your responses support, stretch or enhance your understanding of your artistic purpose and write its essence in the centre of the canvas.

Tip: Be true to yourself.

Trap: The temptation to tilt your answers to meet external priorities or funding criteria.

“Those who give up the things they love doing and do well lose their purpose in life. That’s why it’s so important to keep doing things of value, making progress, bringing beauty or utility to others, helping out, and shaping the world around you.”

Hector Garcia, author of *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*



WHAT AM I
GOOD AT?

WHAT DO I LOVE?

WHAT DOES
THE WORLD
NEED?

WHAT CAN I BE PAID FOR?

¹ If you’d like to find out more about Ikigai, the Hector Garcia [book quoted above](#) is a perfect introduction.

The Golden Circle

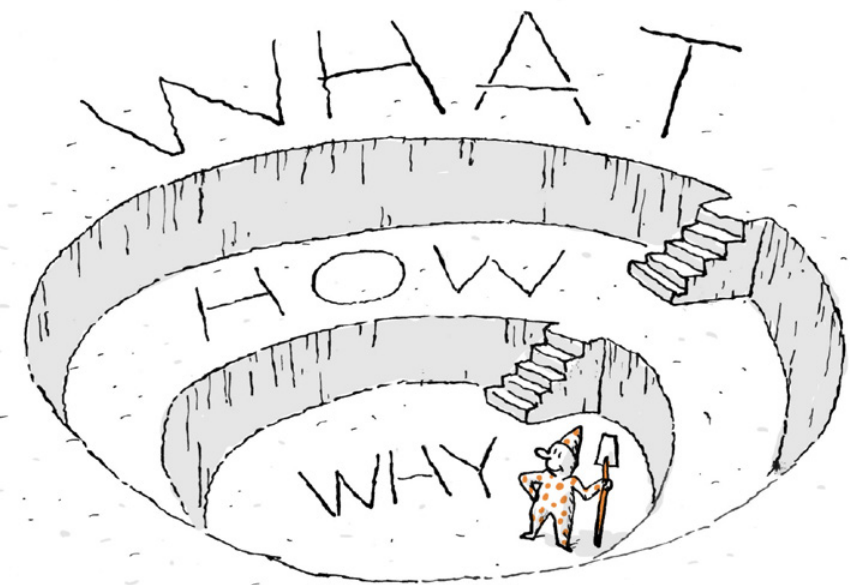
Devised by author and motivational speaker, Simon Sinek, The Golden Circle is a brilliant concept I use a lot when working on organisational purpose and my gut feeling is that it would work very well for artists too.

Its simple genius lies in the way it flips the way people talk about their work, starting with the ‘why’ rather than the ‘what’, to create a compelling story with the power to inspire others.

The best way to begin is to watch Sinek’s [TED Talk](#).

It’s 17 minutes long and illustrated with real world stories from Apple, the Wright Brothers and Dr. Martin Luther King.

As you watch it, make notes of anything you identify with, then turn your attention to the questions in the exercise and write the answers on the canvas opposite.



Exercise

Why?

- Why do you do what you do?
- What was the spark that created this ‘you’?

How?

- How does the above shape your artistic choices and practice?
- What is ‘you’ about all this?

What?

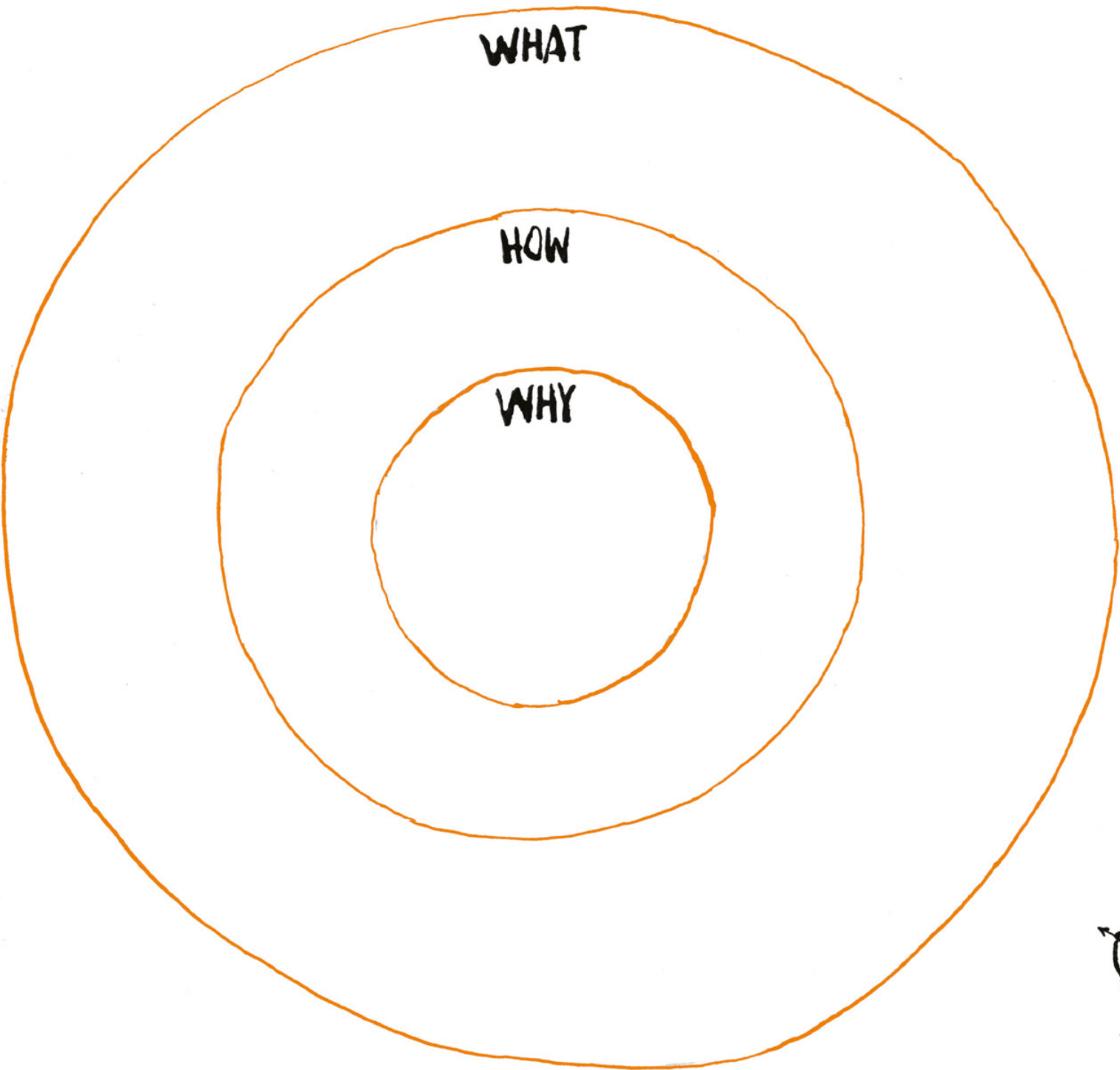
- What kind of work flows from the above?
- In what ways does it support your essential ‘why’?

Tip: There are no wrong answers if you speak your truth.

Trap: Idealising your answers for some other imagined reader.

“ Dr. King gave the ‘I have a dream’ speech, not the ‘I have a plan’ speech.”

Simon Sinek



Cause For Action

If your purpose is caused-based and touches on civic engagement, social justice or activism in any way, this exercise will help you re-connect with the world view that informs the politics of your practice.

It's a re-working of something I created to inform the development of civic engagement initiatives².

Originally entitled *Designing Public Value with Purpose*³, I've changed the emphasis here to create a process to help you craft a powerful impact statement that:

- surfaces the personal and/or human stories that underpin your politics, belief system and values,
- clarifies your artistic intent in relation to this,
- and articulates the difference your work will make.

This will shift the narrative from the usual *course of action* to the much more compelling *cause for action*.

Exercise

Look at the following questions and record your answers on the canvas.

The Big Picture

- What do you see, notice, observe in the world you inhabit⁴?
- What social, cultural, economic, political or other forces are at play?
- What is the evidence that backs this up?

The Human Impact

- How is the picture you paint impacting on the people and communities in that world?
- What is their lived reality?
- Why is this significant?

What This Means

- How has this informed your own world view?
- What are your corresponding values and personal belief system?
- What do you care about?

What You Are Doing About It

- How does it influence your direction, your creative choices, and why you make work?

The Difference You Want to Make

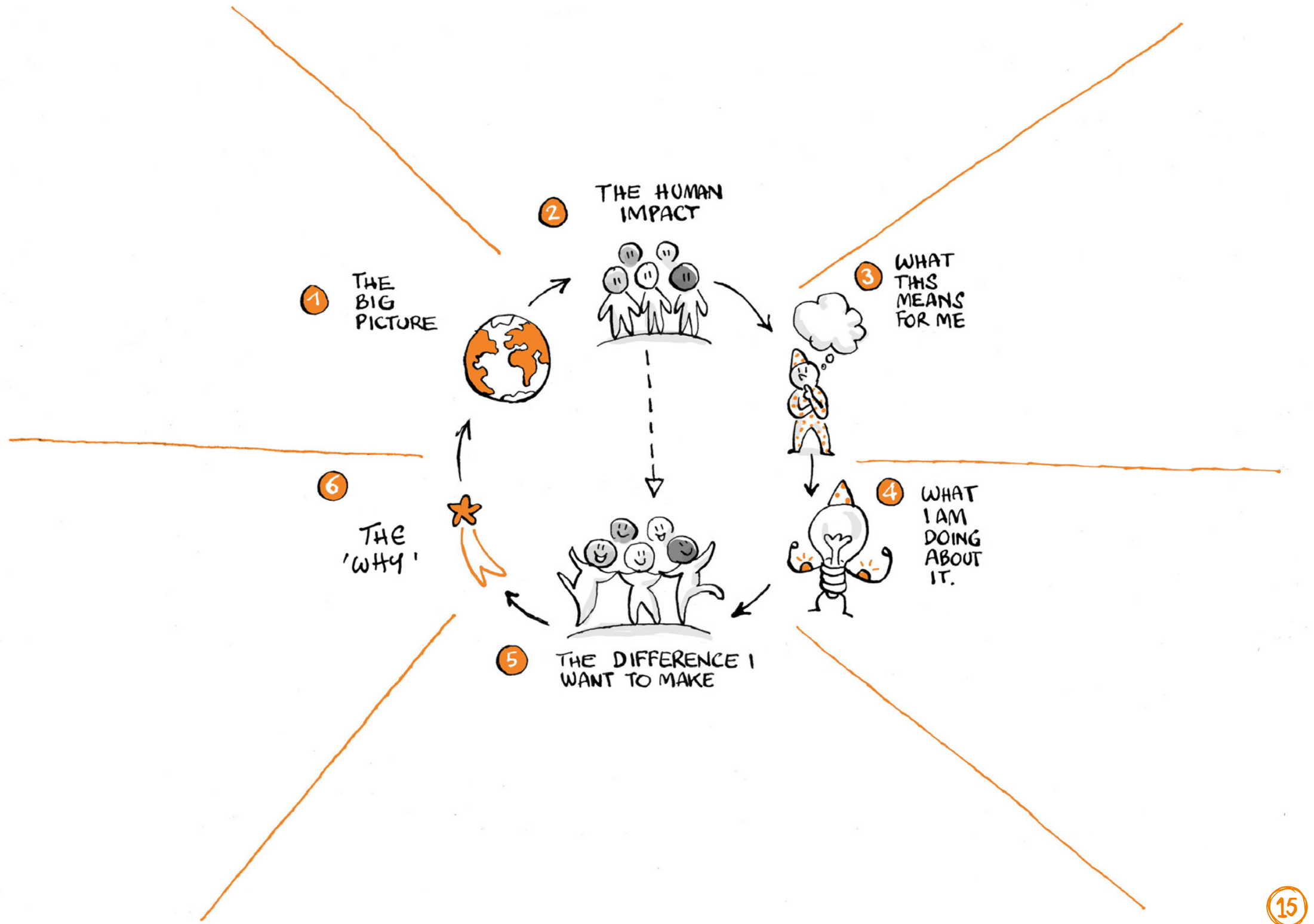
- What impact/s do you want your work to have?
- What do you want to shift, change, challenge?

The Why?

- What does all this reveal about your artistic purpose?

Tip: Try where possible to gather the evidence that supports your world view to imbue it with real authority. How do you know what you know? Can you evidence what you believe to be true?

Trap: Avoid latching onto the 'in' issue with funders and policy makers.



² By this, I mean helping arts organisations develop programmes of work designed to create public value beyond the work on their stages.
³ Inspired by the work of Jerry Nagel and Kathy Jourdain, Worldview Intelligence
⁴ You are invited to define your world here. This could be your community, town, region, country or world you find yourself in. It's entirely up to you.

2. Your Work



It's time to move on from re-connecting with your artistic mission to describing your work. This is probably the element you feel most confident with.

However – sometimes the way artists describe their work, whilst it makes complete sense to them, may sound like gobbledygook⁵ to the untrained ear.

The exercises in this section will slow you down and create a space for you to inhabit the subject, content and form of your work differently, hopefully in a way that stimulates a fresh new language with which to describe it, a language that **anyone** can understand.

Scratch Pad uses mind mapping to help you structure your thinking, combine your ideas, and maybe even generate some new ones.

Slow Writing creates a space for you to then describe your work ... *s l o w l y*.

Polishing The Window helps you rub away those 'smeary words' to make your description as transparent as possible.

Tip: Re-read the *On Babel fish* chapter in **The Prelude**.

Trap: Falling in love with your own voice.

“Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.”

Berthold Brecht

Scratch Pad

A scratch pad is a space for quick jottings you can refine later. Think of it as a ‘thought dump’ where you get it all out.

Here, it takes the form of a mindmap – a visual way of organising information around a central theme.

It's ‘super-power’ resides in how the branches that radiate out from that central theme represent related clusters of ideas.

This structure precludes linear thinking and encourages you to see relationships between the clusters which might otherwise remain hidden.

Here's a [short video](#) about how to mindmap you might find useful.

You can use the canvas on the opposite page or, like with the video above, simply start with a blank page.

To help focus your thinking, I've created a series of questions around the following themes:

- Inspiration
- Concept
- Themes
- Story
- Meaning
- Form

Choose any themes which are relevant, and feel free to create themes of your own.



⁵ A language that is meaningless due to excessive use of specialist language.

Exercise

Bring your work or idea into focus.

Read the following questions, and quickly jot down your answers on the scratch pad opposite.

Write the first things that come to mind.

Keep building on what you've written as you move through the questions.

Don't 'sweat it' – this is your 'working out' page.

Inspiration

- Where did the inspiration for the work come from?
- What was the spark?

Concept

- What are the fundamental ideas behind the work?
- What is it that you want to convey or express?

Themes

- What recurring themes or motifs are there?
- What forms do they take?
- Are they, for example, conceptual, visual, musical, physical?

Story

- Is there an overarching narrative?
- What is it?
- What is the emotional arc?

Meaning

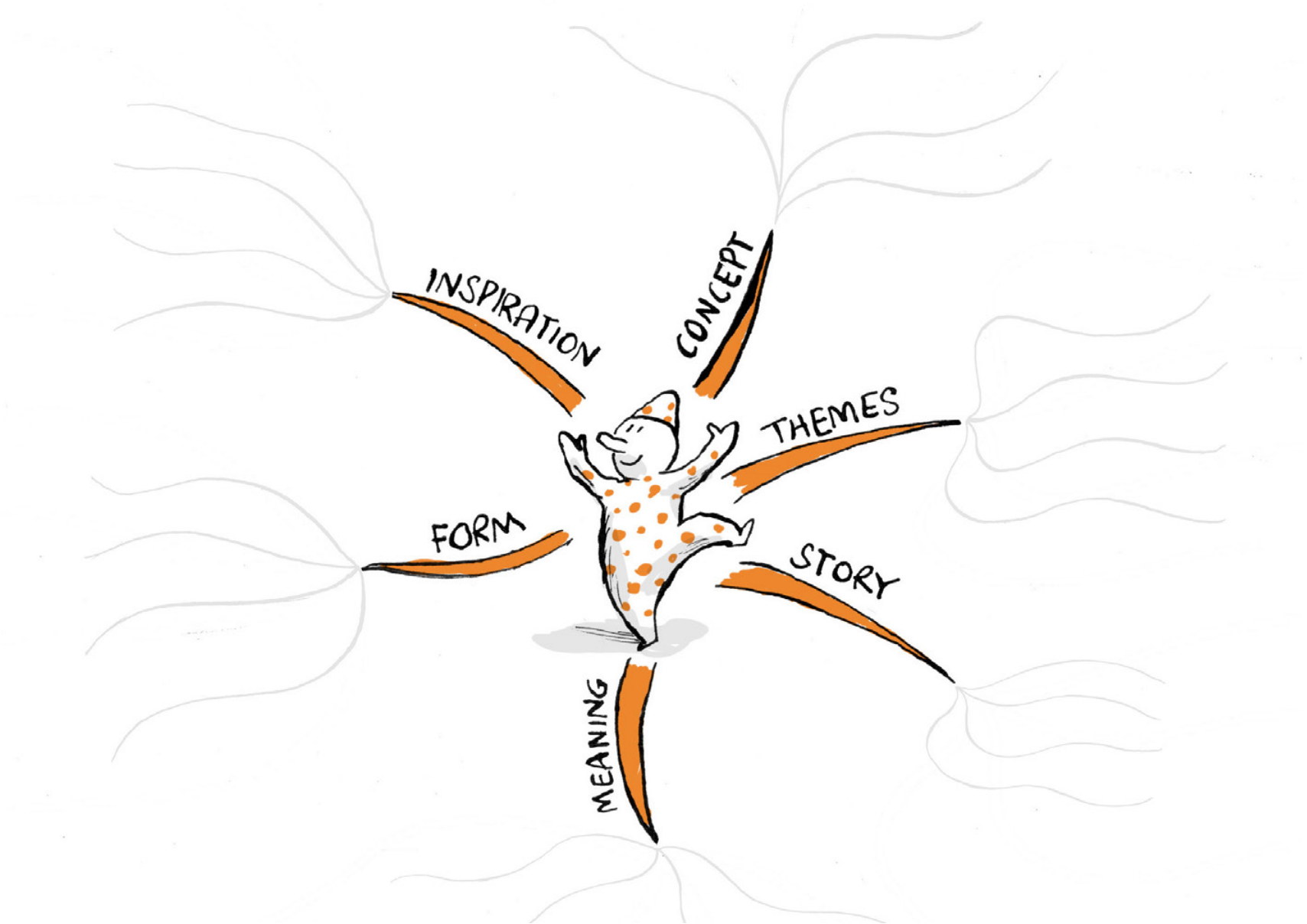
- What are you trying to convey?
- How might it resonate, strike a chord or matter to the audience?
- What makes it relevant?

Form

- What is the genre?
- What is the intended performance context?
- What is the performance style?
- How do the different elements work together?

Tip: Allow new thoughts and connections to emerge as your write.

Trap: Jargon will kill your thinking.



Slow Writing

You now have everything you need to describe the work in question and a full page to do it in.

You might be tempted to go straight to your laptop and type it all out.

Think again.

For exercises such as this, the pen is mightier than the keypad. Why?

Because writing by hand slows ... you ... down ...

... and changes where ... you think ...

... from the quick and reactive amygdala⁶ ...

... to the slow ...

more reflective ... frontal ... lobe ...

... allowing the synapses in your brain fire differently ...

... creating the optimal conditions for the unexpected thoughts to emerge.

“Once you change where you think, you change how you think, which in turn changes what you think.”

Kerry Patterson, Author,
Crucial Conversations

Exercise

Get a pen or pencil.

Bring your work to mind ... and begin to write.

Describe it as expressively as you can.

Use your mindmap from the previous exercise to inform your writing.

Don't rush it.

Take your time.

Tip: Take delight in finding the right vocabulary with which to describe what you really mean.

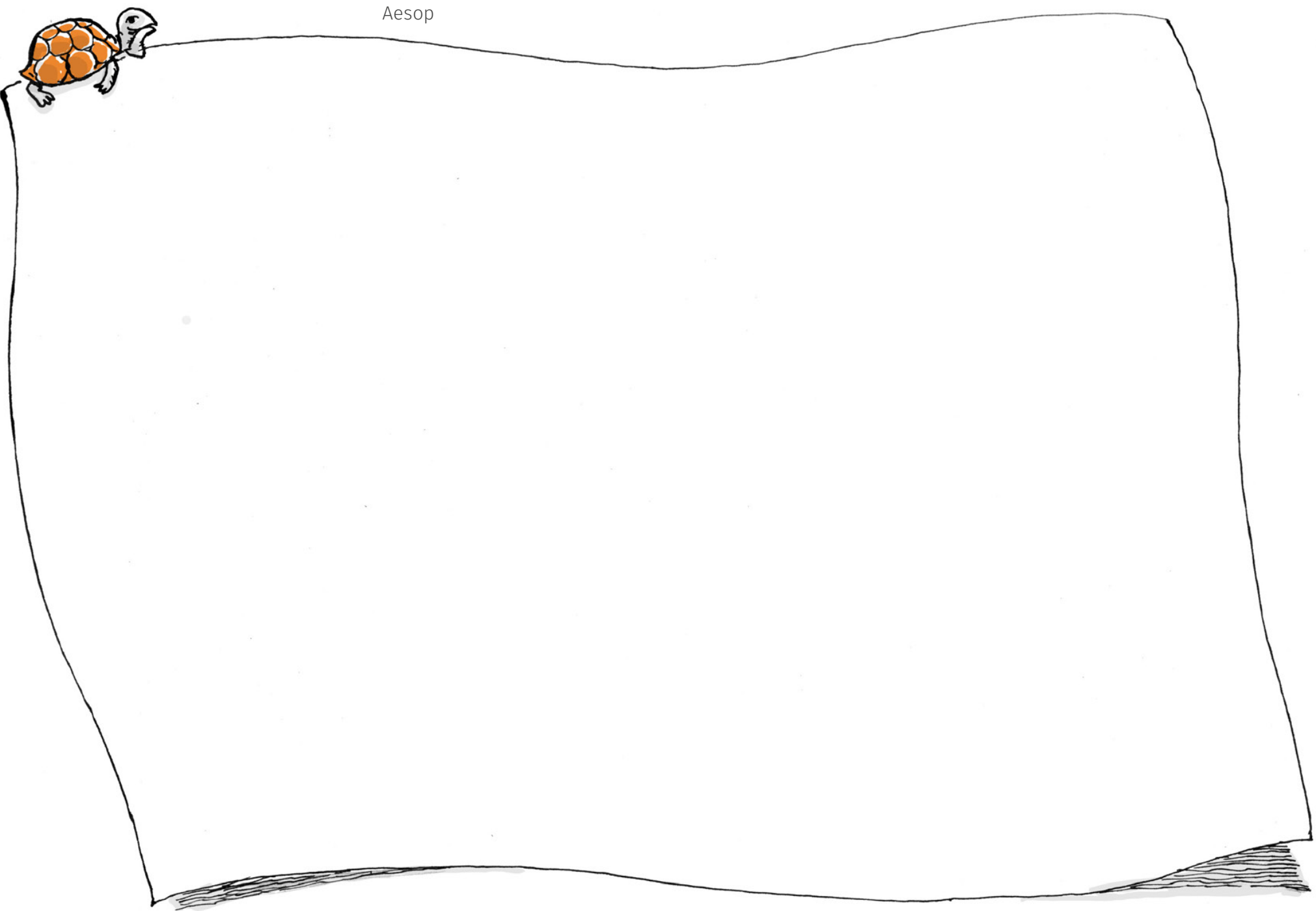
Trap: The temptation to go straight to keyboard first.



⁶ The part of your brain that is responsible for, amongst other things, your fight-or-flight survival instinct.

“Slow and steady wins the race.”

Aesop



Polishing The Window

Sometimes, the things we write may seem crystal clear to us, like a freshly polished window, but come across as opaque or ‘smeary’ to others.

This exercise will help you polish up your description, rubbing away those spots and smears that prevent people from understanding what you mean.



Exercise

Read your description through the eyes of someone who has nothing to do with the arts.

Even better, read it out to a trusted non-arts friend.

How does it come across?

Be honest.

If you (or your friend) spot any words or phrases that come across as a bit artsy, jargon-y, or even a tad pretentious, write them in the left-hand area of the canvas.

Use the area on the right to try out alternative ways of expressing what you mean.

Once you’ve finished, create the next version of your description.

You might want to share the subsequent iterations with a broader group of family and friends for feedback and keep refining until you feel you are ‘there’.

Tip: Use a thesaurus.

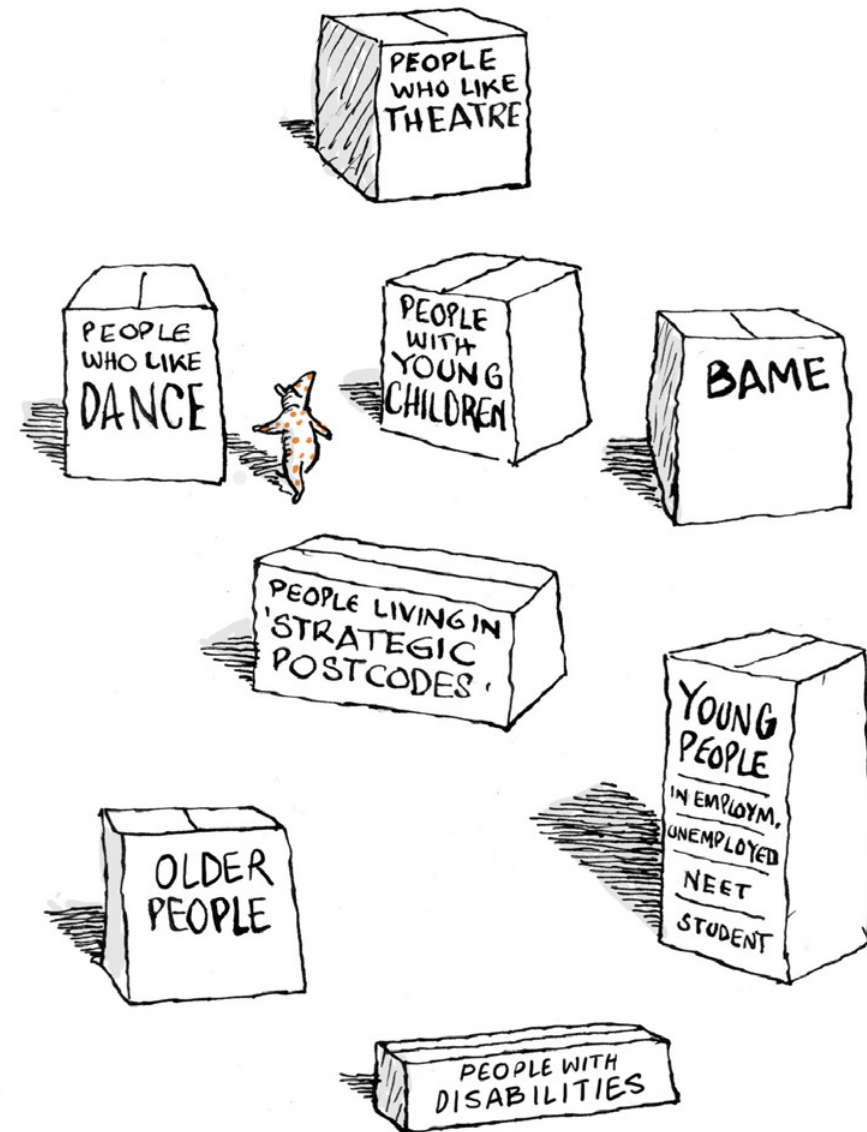
Trap: It’s easy to fall in love with well-worn phrases or eloquent flourishes of artsy descriptions ... but this is the place and time to ‘kill your darlings’.

“Without focussing and getting clarity you cannot lead. You cannot motivate. You cannot plan. You cannot communicate.”

Bobb Biehl



3. The Audience



Think about the word ‘audience’. Your audience.

Who do you see in your mind’s eye?

How would you describe them?

In the arts sector, there is a tendency to classify the audience and put them into little boxes.

The problem is **it doesn’t tell you anything meaningful about those audience members**. They’re just labels on boxes.


Yet THIS is how the audience exists within the consciousness of many people who work in the arts.

You know better.

It’s time now to look much more closely, and searchingly, at those people who might be interested in spending their precious time, attention and money on the work you create. The question you need to ask yourself here is:

“Why on earth might a person want to experience my work, and what might they hope to get out of it?”

In order to answer it we need to take their pulse and engage a little empathy. Figure out what makes them tick, what motivates them, and what they value.

This [short video](#)  by Nick Bowmast⁷ is a great starting point.

Did you watch it?

How did it make you think?

A bit like this?

“How can I possibly know who the audience is?”

“My work is suitable for ‘anyone and everyone’ so why do I need to be so specific?”

“Every audience member is a unique individual so how realistic is it to even try to pin them down?”

“Even if I could guess who they were, what about those audiences that I haven’t even thought of?”

I know this might seem daunting, but all this notwithstanding, give it a go.

If you have access to audience research, use it. If not, make your best guess.



Not the audience is a simple exercise in reverse thinking.

Beyond the tip of the iceberg encourages you to think about audiences differently.

Snap encourages you to match what you believe the audience wants with what you have to offer.

Tip: Take a look at [Culture Segments](#), a segmentation system⁸ developed by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre. It offers audience descriptions that feel more like x-ray vision than a label because they’re ‘based on people’s deep-seated values and beliefs [and] gets to the heart of what motivates them’. I find them extremely helpful in clarifying and stretching my thinking around audiences because they resonate with me on a deeply human level. You might find them useful too. Feel free to pinch any concepts, words and phrases that you find helpful.

Trap: Looking in the mirror and using yourself as an audience of one.

⁷ ‘Nick Bowmast is an independent design researcher based in Aotearoa New Zealand and the author of [USERPALOOZA, A Field Researcher’s Guide](#).

⁸ Segmentation is form of audience categorisation that helps people in the arts make informed choices about marketing, fundraising, programming etc. As someone who has been talking with audiences for many years, I find Culture Segments is the best at astutely capturing the ineffable human ‘essences’ that can help us get under the skin of the audience.

Not the Audience

It's easy to become stuck in a rut.

You know, thinking in the same way day after day.

Or not thinking about things you ought to be thinking about.

This can happen with how you think about audiences.

Deferring to the same mental picture ... perhaps because it's easier than **really** thinking about them.

Not the audience is a warm-up exercise to get you thinking differently, by thinking **in reverse**.

Instead of following your usual train of thought, reverse your assumptions and think the opposite.

This is a really good way of unsticking your assumptions and patterns of thought.

Exercise

Ask yourself this, 'what kind of people are definitely **NOT** my audience?'.
Bring them to mind and think about the following:

- What do **they** want to get out of a theatre visit?
- What kind of performances do they enjoy?
- What do they want to experience?
- What does 'risk-taking' mean for them?
- What would really get them excited?

Write your answers to each question around one of the figures opposite.

Circle the words and phrases that makes this audience totally inappropriate for your work.

Now, **think about the opposite of those words**.

You could write these down in a different colours so they stand out.

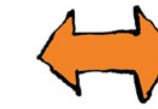
What does this tell you about the who **right** kind of audience for your work might be?

Has anything new emerged for you?

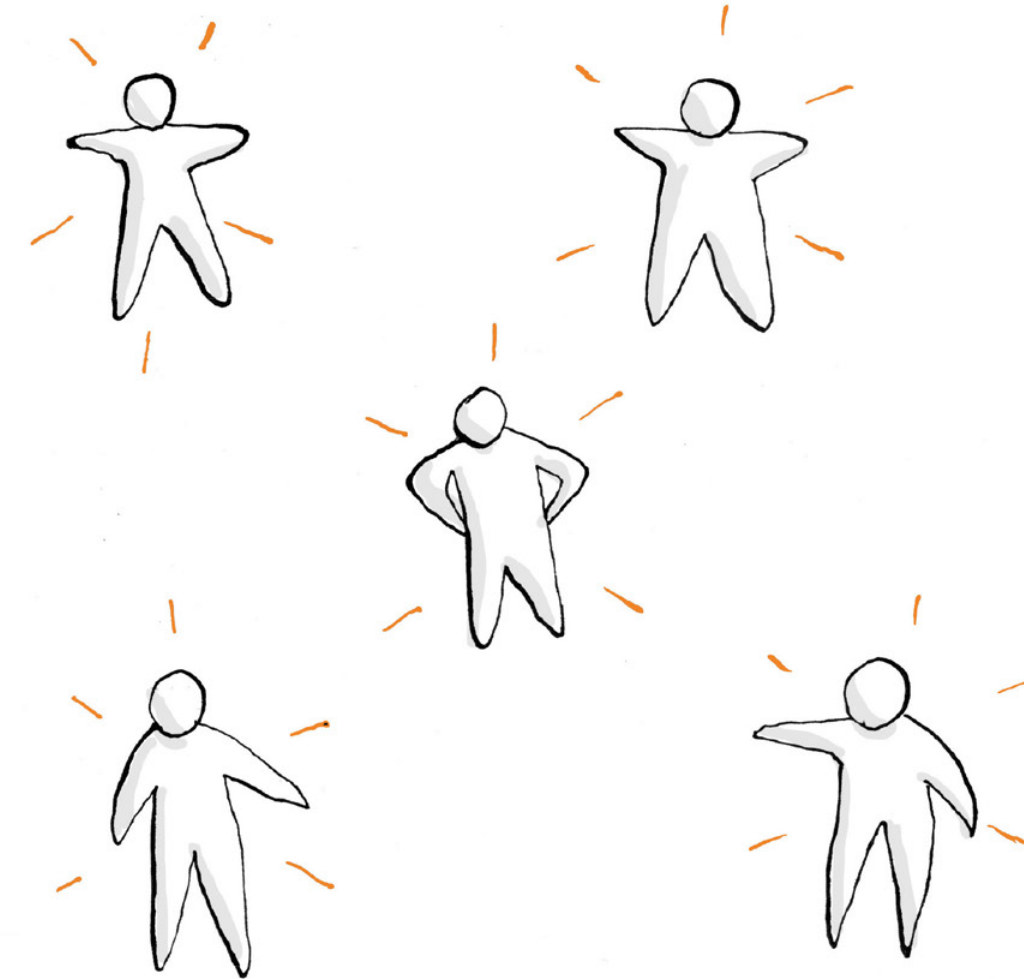
Tip: Choose your words carefully and use a thesaurus to help you find the right words, and the right opposites.

Trap: Thinking about people who DON'T go to the theatre. You need to focus on different kinds of theatre audiences.

NOT THE AUDIENCE



OPPOSITE WORDS / TRAITS...



Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg

What does the phrase ‘beyond the tip of the iceberg’ mean for you?

For me, it’s about going beneath that which is immediately visible or tangible. **The ‘superficials’.**

When it comes to our understanding of audiences, and how we talk about them, the superficials are our standard currency.

But they don’t tell us anything that really matters.

It’s all tip and no iceberg.

So, let’s try and delve a bit deeper and explore what lies beneath, in the depths.



Exercise

Below are a series of questions to help you build a picture of who your audience might be.⁹

Some may be more relevant to your work than others.

Answer the ones that work best for you on the canvas.

What key defining traits might your audience have?

e.g. Conservative in taste

What might they think and care about?

e.g. Issues

Identities

Politics

What might they be looking for from a theatre visit in general?

e.g. Stimulation

Entertainment

Escapism

What is it about your work that might motivate them to attend?

e.g. Subject matter

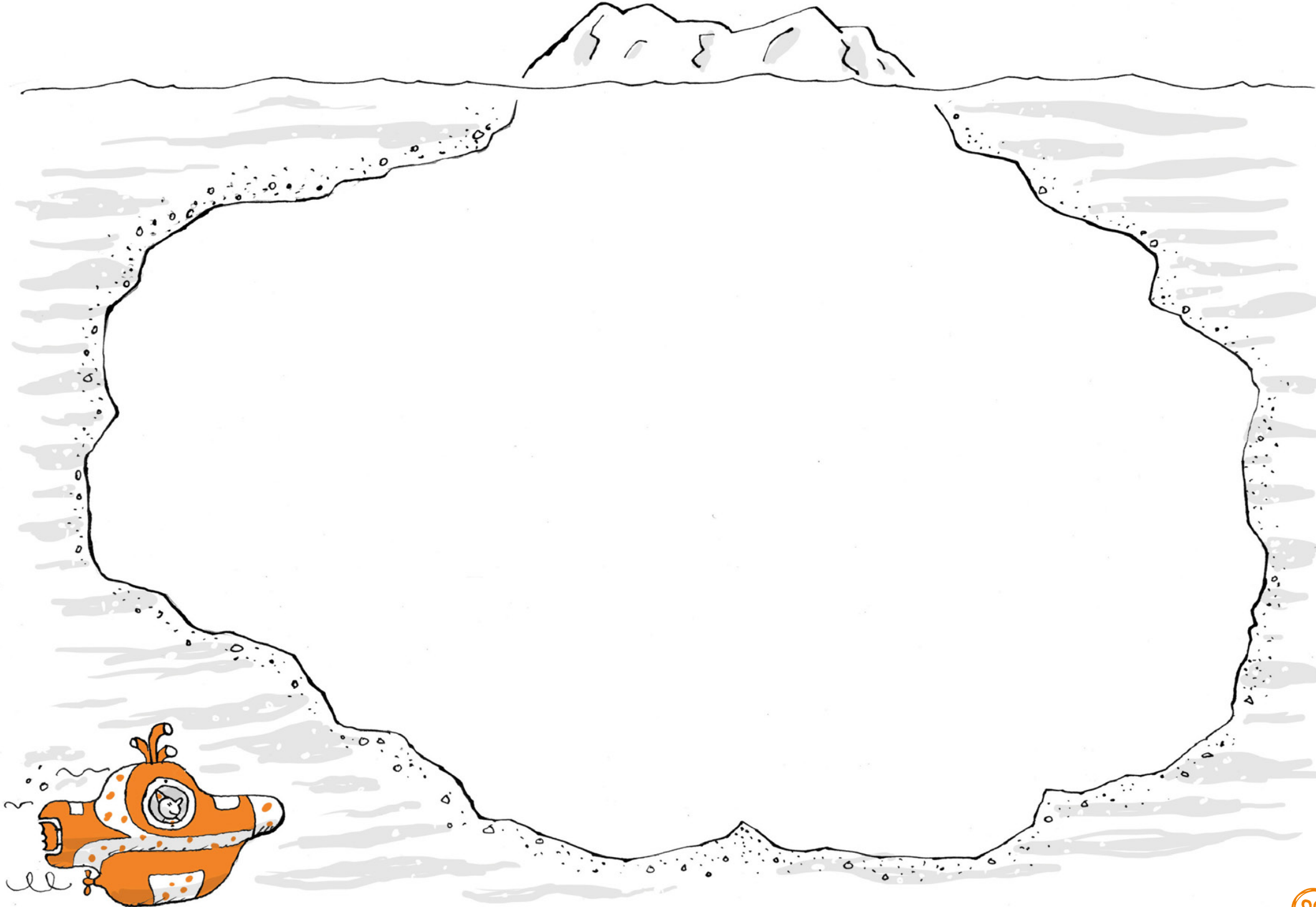
Form

Relevance

Tip: Remember to incorporate some of your insights from the previous exercise.

Trap: Paddling in the shallows because that’s easier and quicker.

⁹ If you have any audience research to inform your answers here, use it. My experience is that very few artists (or venues for that matter) conduct the research necessary to answer these questions fully. **You might, in doing this exercise, realise what you don’t know.** You might feel uncomfortable about making assumptions, yet people in the arts do this all the time. At least here, you’re trying to get a little closer to what make your audiences tick, which can’t be a bad thing.



Snap!

In a game of Snap, you seek out matching pairs of cards.

In the same way, this exercise is about matching elements of your work to what the audience might want or be interested in.

If there is no match there is no ‘snap’.

If there is no ‘snap’ there is no audience.

Exercise

This exercise begins with a series of sentence stems designed to flip your perspective onto what might motivate someone to see your work. Each stem deals with a different kind of trigger:

- If you’re the kind of person who **enjoys** ... have I got a show for you!
- If you’re the kind of person who **thinks and cares about** ... have I got a show for you!
- If you’re the kind of person who is **interested in or curious about** ... have I got a show for you!
- If you like **performances that** ... have I got a show for you!
- If you like to **feel** ... when you go to the theatre, have I got a show for you!

All you have to do is fill in the blanks in the top row of cards opposite **from the audience perspective** (Refer back to how you described your audience in *Beneath the Tip of the Iceberg* to help you out).

In the cards beneath, write down those elements of your work that correspond with what your audience wants or is interested in¹⁰ (Refer back to how you described your work in *Polishing the Window* to help you out).

SNAP!

Tip: You can’t be all things to all people so only complete the cards that are relevant to your work.

Trap: The temptation to complete the top row of cards from your own perspective rather than that of the audience.

If you’re the kind of person who...

enjoys ...

thinks and cares about ...

is interested in or curious about ...

likes performances that ...

likes to feel ...

THEN I HAVE THE SHOW JUST FOR YOU

THEN I HAVE THE SHOW JUST FOR YOU

THEN I HAVE THE SHOW JUST FOR YOU

THEN I HAVE THE SHOW JUST FOR YOU

THEN I HAVE THE SHOW JUST FOR YOU

¹⁰ When I tried this out in the pilot workshops, artists found it useful to ‘talk it out’ with another person.

4. The Audience Experience

Hopefully you've now reached a point where you are clear about your artistic purpose, have fully explored the dimensions of your work, and developed an understanding of who your audience might be and what might draw them to your work.

This section is about exploring the potential effect your work might have on those audiences.

You see, as the artist, you may want to take audiences to places of feelings, thoughts, sensations and understandings that they couldn't have imagined.

This is totally in your gift.

Obviously, you cannot prescribe an audience experience, and audiences will undoubtedly bring their 'selves' to the performance, resulting in a multitude of unique, individual, personal experiences you could never imagine.

However, I have found that encouraging artists to consider the audience experience of their work can open up fresh and useful perspectives.

It's important to say here that this isn't about giving audiences what they want, but about what might be in it for them.

I, The Audience is a powerful exercise that reconnects you with your own experience as an audience member.

Making Wishes is a light touch approach to considering audience affect.

Head, Heart, Body and Soul are for those of you who want to go a bit deeper.

Tip: Refer to the **A Brief Foray into Audience Experience** chapter in **The Prelude**.

Trap: Scepticism. This will limit your thinking.

“Any work of art is only completed through engagement and within the experience of the audience.”

Matthew Reason¹¹

“When the audience comes in, it changes the temperature of what you've written.”

Stephen Sondheim



¹¹ *Asking the Audience: Audience Research and the Experience of Theatre* by Matthew Reason. About Performance No.10 2010

I, The Audience

So, how do you talk about audience experience?

The best place to start is with your own personal experience as an audience member.

It's time to reflect, reconnect and visualise.

On the next page you will see a series of detailed questions under five different headings.

Each question set explores a different dimension of your experience in a way that will hopefully re-surface your memory as clearly, sensorially and viscerally as possible.¹²

My hope is that this exercise will transport you to a personal audience experience in the fullest way possible ... so here goes.

The exercise can work in three different ways:

- As a guided visualisation where you simply bring the experience to mind (you might want someone to read out the questions to you).
- As a Q&A with a friend.
- As a free-writing exercise.



Exercise

Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed and make yourself comfortable.

Take a few deep breaths to relax.

Bring to mind the most memorable, emotionally engaging performance experience you have ever had as an audience member.

Where are you sitting in the auditorium?

What can you see and hear?

What's the atmosphere in the room?

Now, begin to immerse yourself in the memory of the performance using the questions on the next page as your guide.

Tip: Try and find someone to ask you the questions so that you are free to close your eyes and imagine the experience.

Trap: Choosing a personal theatre experience that is very similar to your own work. That's cheating.

“We do not know the true value of our moments until they have undergone the test of memory.”

Georges Duhamel

¹² Whenever I do this exercise with people, they almost always thank me for re-immersing them in a special moment in their lives.

1. Motivations and expectations

- Why did you choose to attend this performance?
- What expectations did you have?

2. Performance description

- How would you describe the performance?
- What adjectives perfectly capture it?
- What stands out in your mind?

3. Intrinsic experience

- How did you react during the performance?
- What did you do as an audience member?
- How did the performance make you think?
- How did it make you feel?
- Can you name any specific emotions?
- Did you feel anything in your body?
- How would you describe the intensity of those experiences?

4. Personally meaningful experiences

- In what ways did the performance connect, resonate or mean something to you?
- What remained with you as you walked away from the performance?
- What remains with you now?

5. Impacts

- Has anything shifted, deepened or revealed itself to you as a result?
- What do you value, in retrospect, about that experience?
- What does this say about you?

6. Shifting perspective

- Now imagine how your audience might answer these questions in relation to your work.



Making Wishes

Now that you have tuned into your own experience as an audience member, it's time to shift your attention outwards.

This is about what you want **FOR** your audience.

It's not intended to be prescriptive.

It's an invitation to make wishes.

Why a 'wish'?

Because a wish is not a fact, or a command, or a certainty.

Rather, it is a hope, a desire.

It is your artistic intention.

“Great results don't just happen. You have to be intentional.”

Michael Hyatt

“The most fantastic magical things can happen, and it all starts with a wish.”

Pinocchio



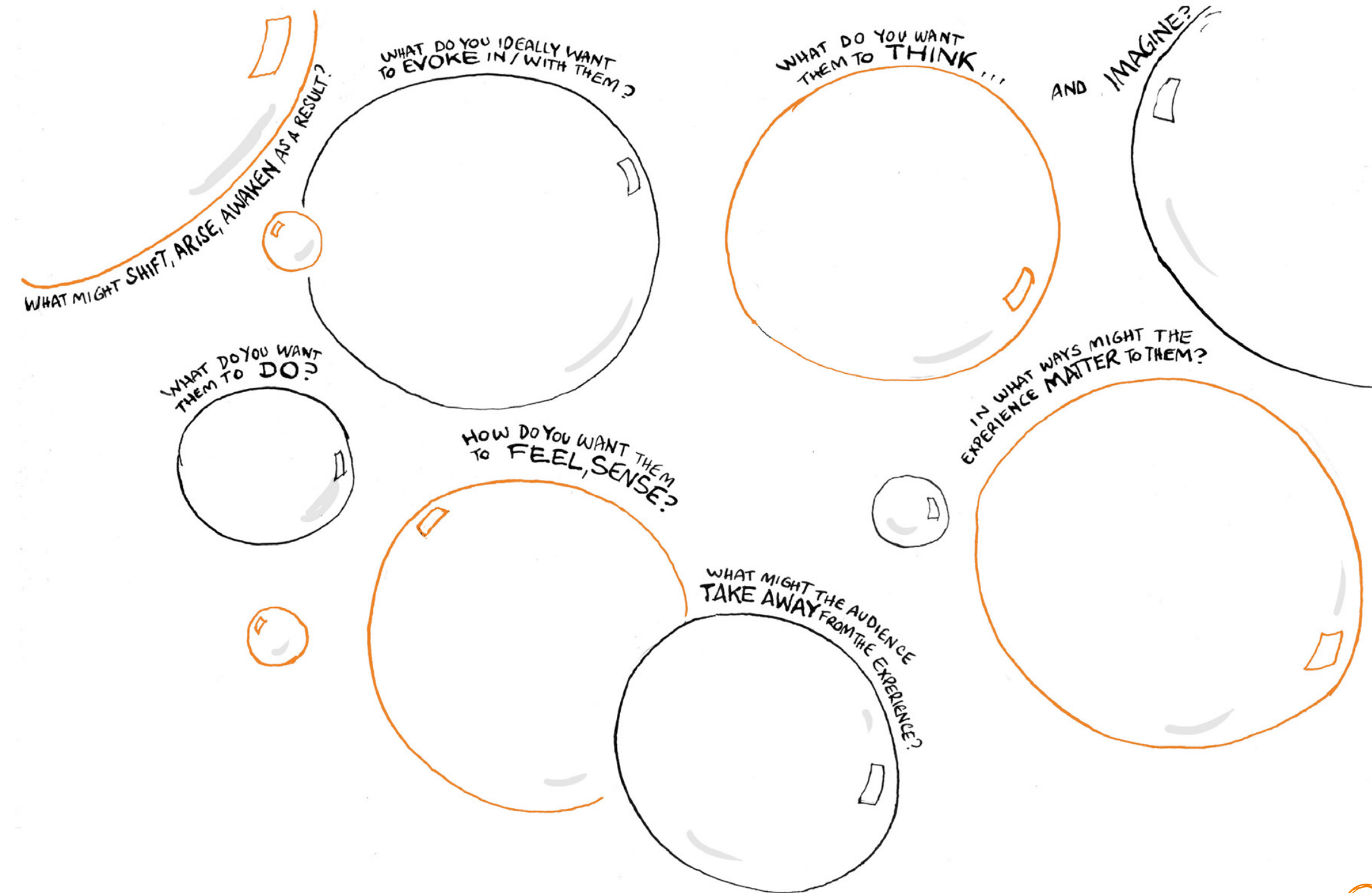
Exercise

Bring your work and your audience to mind and consider the following questions.

- What do you ideally want to evoke in/with them?
- How do you want them to feel, sense, think, imagine, do?
- To what intensity?
- In what ways might this experience matter to them?
- What might the audience take away from their experience of your work beyond the life of the performance?
- What might shift, arise, awaken, change as a result?
- Write your answers on the next page – as many or as few as you like.

Tip: Treat this as a free writing exercise and 'wish big'. You can always pull it back later.

Trap: Deferring to yourself as the audience member.



Head, Heart, Body, Soul

Locating an arts experience in the human body is a useful way of exploring the different types of intrinsic experiences audiences might have.

I once conducted research with contemporary music audiences. What I learnt was that those who came from a classical music background listened with their *heads*, following the form and structure of the music and relating it to what they knew and appreciated. Others listened with their *heart and body*, emotionally and viscerally. They *felt* the music. Then there were a few who listened with their *souls*, choosing to experience music that connected with an element of their identity. They experienced this as a kind of *glow*.

Exercise

Imagine an audience member experiencing your work.

From the categories and questions below, answer the ones that feel most relevant in the corresponding areas of the canvas.

If you have more than one kind of audience in mind, repeat the exercise for each.

Head

- What might they be thinking about?
- What fresh perspectives might they gain?
- What might they learn?

Heart

- What kind of feelings and emotions might the audience experience?
- To what intensity?

Body

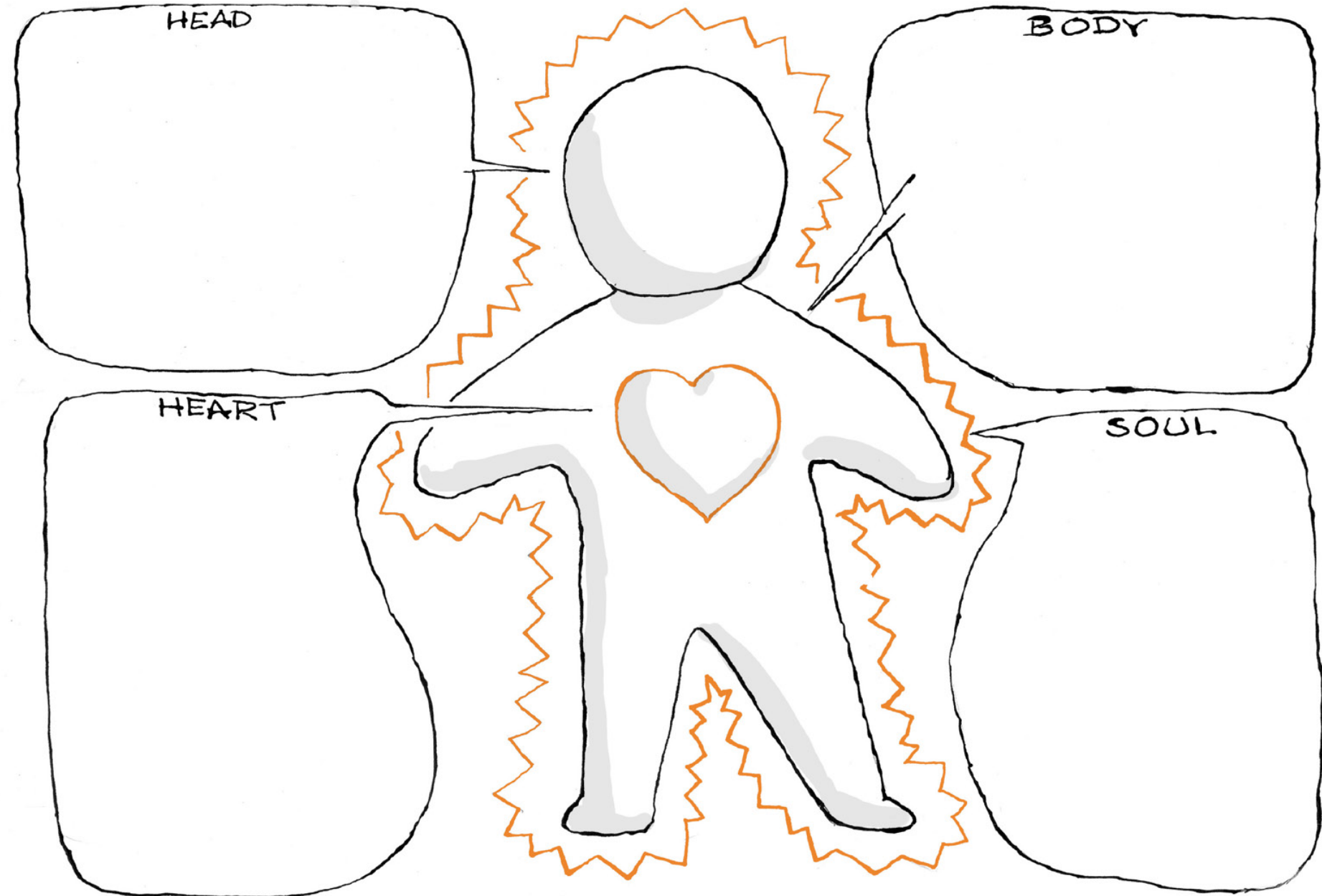
- Which senses will be activated and how will that feel?
- What might they be feeling in their bodies?
- Are you hoping for any involuntary physical responses?
- Are you expecting them to 'do' something other than sit in their seats and watch?
- Will they be physically interacting with the performance or other audience members in some way?
- What might that bring?

Soul

- In what ways are you hoping to strike a chord with your audience?
- To create meaning?
- To feel relevant?
- To touch them deeply?

Tip: Try doing this exercise standing up, walking around, and, as you do, connect mentally with those areas of the body you are thinking about.

Trap: Simplistic, reductive language. Really try and express the audience experience as descriptively as you can.



Is anything becoming apparent that you weren't previously aware of?

Are there any inter-relationships emerging between the different answers that feel new to you?

5. Your Artistic Choices

Here you will explore how your intention for the audience informs your artistic choices, or vice versa.

This is about the expressive qualities of your work.

The qualities that make it art,

And the craft that underpins it.

The metaphor that comes to mind is that of the artist and her palette, and how the way she mixes and applies paint are uniquely informed by her artistic eye and the physical act of painting, culminating in differently affective experiences for the viewer.

I've suggested different elements for the palette to inform your thinking. Feel free to add your own.

- **Context:** performance context, environment, spatial relationships, the ambiance and intrinsic properties of the space
- **Architecture:** structure, form
- **Elements:** lighting, sound, setting, costume, music, story, film, digital
- **Delivery:** movement, language, performance style, gesture
- **Interaction:** direct address, 4th wall, movement of attention
- **Essence:** pace, tone, rhythm, intensity, musicality, energy, atmosphere

Of all the sections in *The Workbook*, this is the one I have found the hardest to develop because I don't want to reduce that craft to mere cause and effect.

It doesn't work like that ... in a linear way.

So, I've come up with something different.

Finger tracing.

You might be wondering what this is.

Finger-tracing is common in mindfulness practice.

Moving your finger along a path or tracing an outline whilst focusing on the physical sense of touch allows your mind to clear from extraneous thought. The instructions I've provided for each exercise will guide your attention around a specific topic. What emerges will be more associative than linear, and more intuitive than straight reasoning permits.

I've created three finger traces for you, each one designed to elicit a different response.

The Artistic Loop explores the inter-relationship between your artistic choices and the audience affect.

The Unfolding explores the cumulative experience of your work and how it affectively builds.

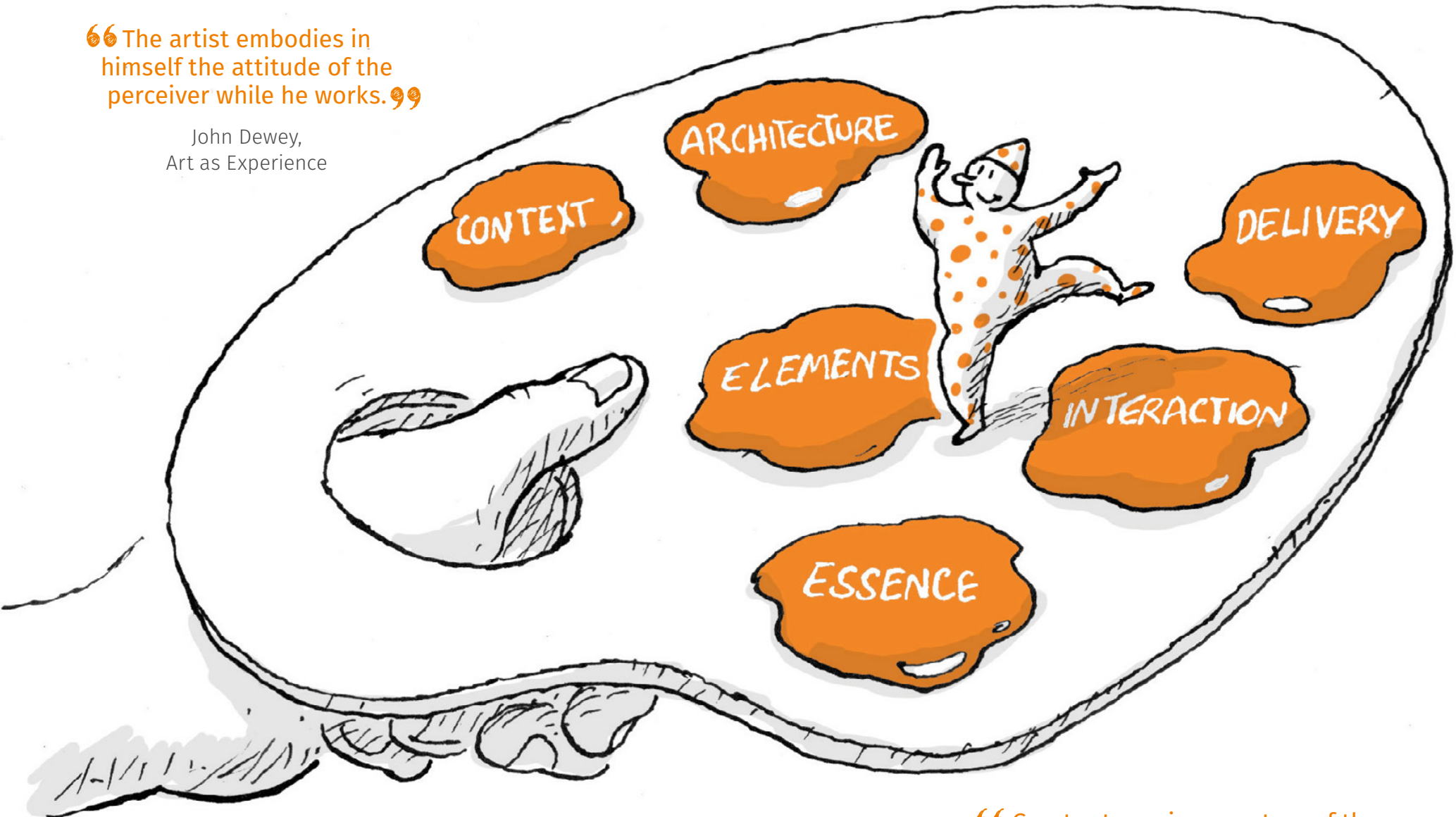
The Emotional Seismograph explores the emotional music of your work.

Tip: Fully commit to the instructions on the next few pages.

Trap: Dismissing these exercises as unconventional, quirky or eccentric, just going through the motions, or not trying them at all.

“The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works.”

John Dewey,
Art as Experience



“Great art requires mastery of the formal and comprehension of the inner experience, and the form the work takes must connect the two.”

Abraham Burickson,
Odyssey Works

The Artistic Loop

This figure  represents the *ebb & flow* between the work and your audience.

The left is the world of the work.

The right is the world of the audience.

They are not separate but intrinsically connected.

Following the loop between the two will bring to awareness how the two interact.

The ebb and flow.

The back and forth.

From left, to right, to left, to right, and back again as many times as you wish.

Exercise

Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed and make yourself comfortable.

Take a few deep breaths to relax.

Begin to slowly trace your finger along the loop.

As you do so, allow your mind to clear ... and focus on the sensation of your finger on the page.

When you feel ready, move your attention between the expressive elements of your work and the audience.

How does one flow into the other, from left to right and right to left.

You might want to focus on one element of the work, and trace a few 'loops' to really immerse yourself in that moment.

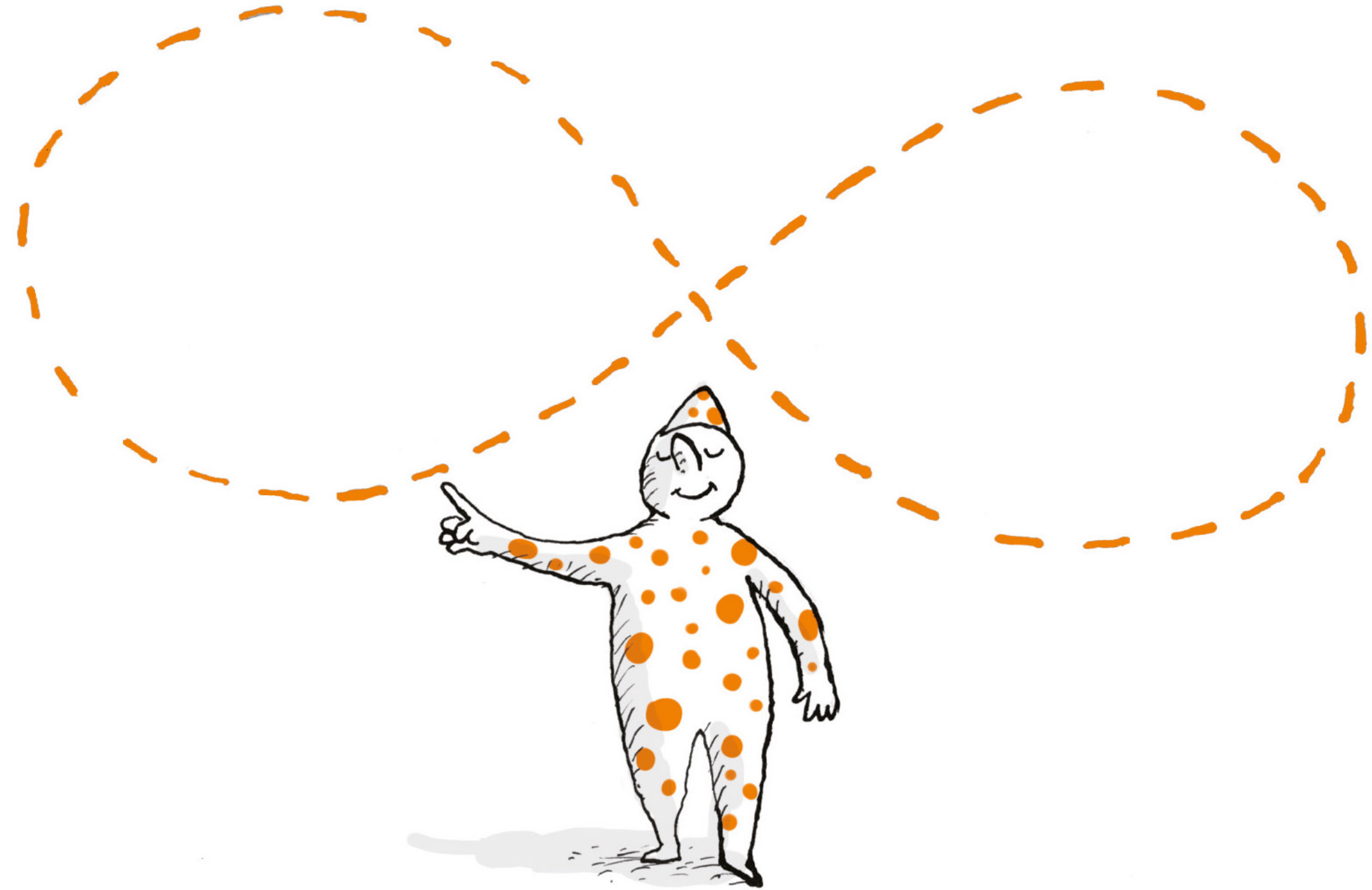
Then ... pause and reflect.

What does this bring to awareness?

You might want to record your thoughts somewhere, in words, symbols or pictures.

As you do, consider these elements:

- Your artistic choices
- The expressive elements of your work
- The intended affect



The Unfolding

The spiral opposite represents your work unfolding before the audience.

Unlike a straight line that gets you from A —————> B, the spiral builds and grows.

In doing so, it accrues meaning in a way that a straight line cannot.

Why?

Because there might be elements in your work that loop back, jump forward, or repeat and build to create a pattern, motif or layers of meaning.

How all this unfolds is, for the audience, key to their experience of it.

Exercise

Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed and make yourself comfortable.

Take a few deep breaths to relax.

Begin to slowly trace your finger from the centre of the spiral outwards.

As you do so, allow your mind to clear ... and focus on the sensation of your finger on the page.

Once you have completed this once, start again and turn your attention to any elements of the work you have consciously 'structured in'.

How do they build, accumulate, inter-relate, intersect, culminate? Where are the intentional or unintentional contradictions, the arcs, the tensions and releases?

What emerges, for the audience?

Keep repeating the tracing until you feel you are done.

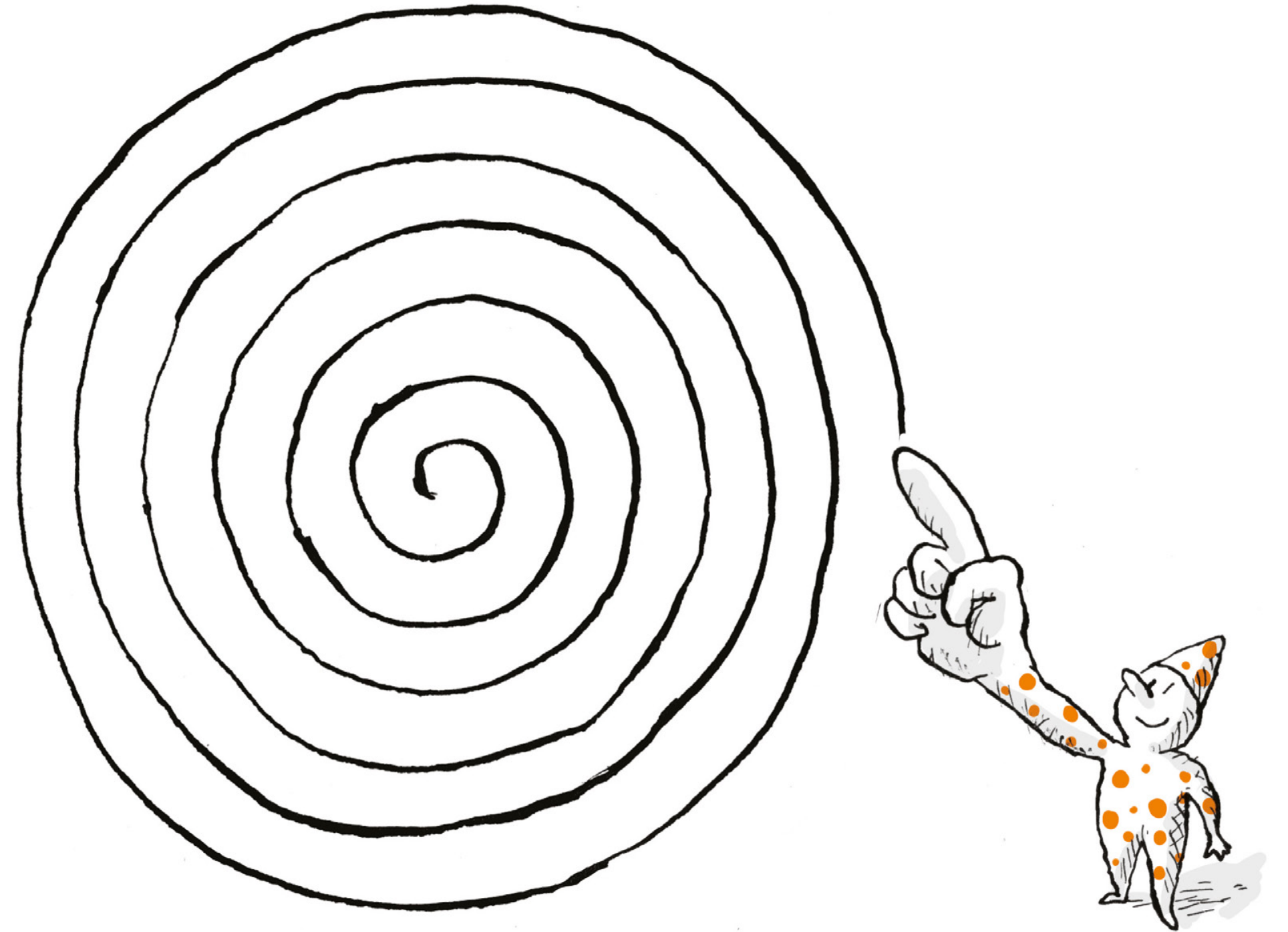
Then ... pause and reflect.

What does this bring to awareness?

You might want to make a record of your thoughts somewhere, in words, symbols or pictures.

As you do, consider these elements:

- Your artistic choices
- The expressive and thematic elements of your work
- The intended effect



The Emotional Seismograph

Just as earthquakes are an undeniable force that shape and shake and shock our world into a continually shifting existence, theatre also exerts its force in the shaping of who we are. Emotion is at the epicentre of this force.

In this exercise, your finger will trace a ‘seismographic reading’ of the audience’s emotional experience as your performance unfolds.

The soft tremors and sharp jolts of emotions keenly felt.

The shifts in intensity, the ‘viscerality’, the frequencies.

The soaring top notes and swirling undercurrents.

Anything, in fact, that constitutes the **emotional score of your work**.¹³

“The only certainty is that we are here, in this moment, in this *now*. It’s up to us: to live fully, experiencing each moment, aware, alert, attentive.”

Madeleine L’Engle

Exercise

Find a quiet space where you won’t be disturbed and make yourself comfortable.

Take a few deep breaths to relax.

Now, imagine yourself in the auditorium, not as you, but as a member of the audience.

The lights dim ... and the performance begins.

Now, as you imagine the performance unfolding, slowly move your finger along the horizontal line and trace the audience’s emotional register.

Think about the type and strength of these emotions.

How high and low will your finger go and at what points?

You might want to draw on the line with a pencil and annotate what emerges.

As you do, reflect on what this bring to awareness.

- Where might the audience register a strong emotional experience?
- What kind?
- What artistic choices do you have in mind to elicit these?



¹³ I found this terrific picture of [Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows](#) story arc which you might find useful.

Coherence

This is where you come full circle and check in to explore the degree to which your workbook jottings align with your overarching purpose as an artist.

Why?

Because each piece of work you make has the potential to reinforce, challenge, detract from or further evolve your artistic purpose and practice.

Sometimes, you might find yourself veering away from it without realising.

This 'veering' might indicate growth, or compromise.

It's important to recognise this and respond accordingly.

So, here's a drawing of the journey you have taken, represented as a circle.

It's time to see if everything coheres.

If your work flows from, and back into your artistic purpose.

Exercise

Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed and make yourself comfortable.

Take a few deep breaths to relax.

Now, look at the canvas and the different stages *The Workbook* has taken you through.

Begin to trace your finger very slowly around the circle, clockwise, away from and back towards Artistic Purpose.

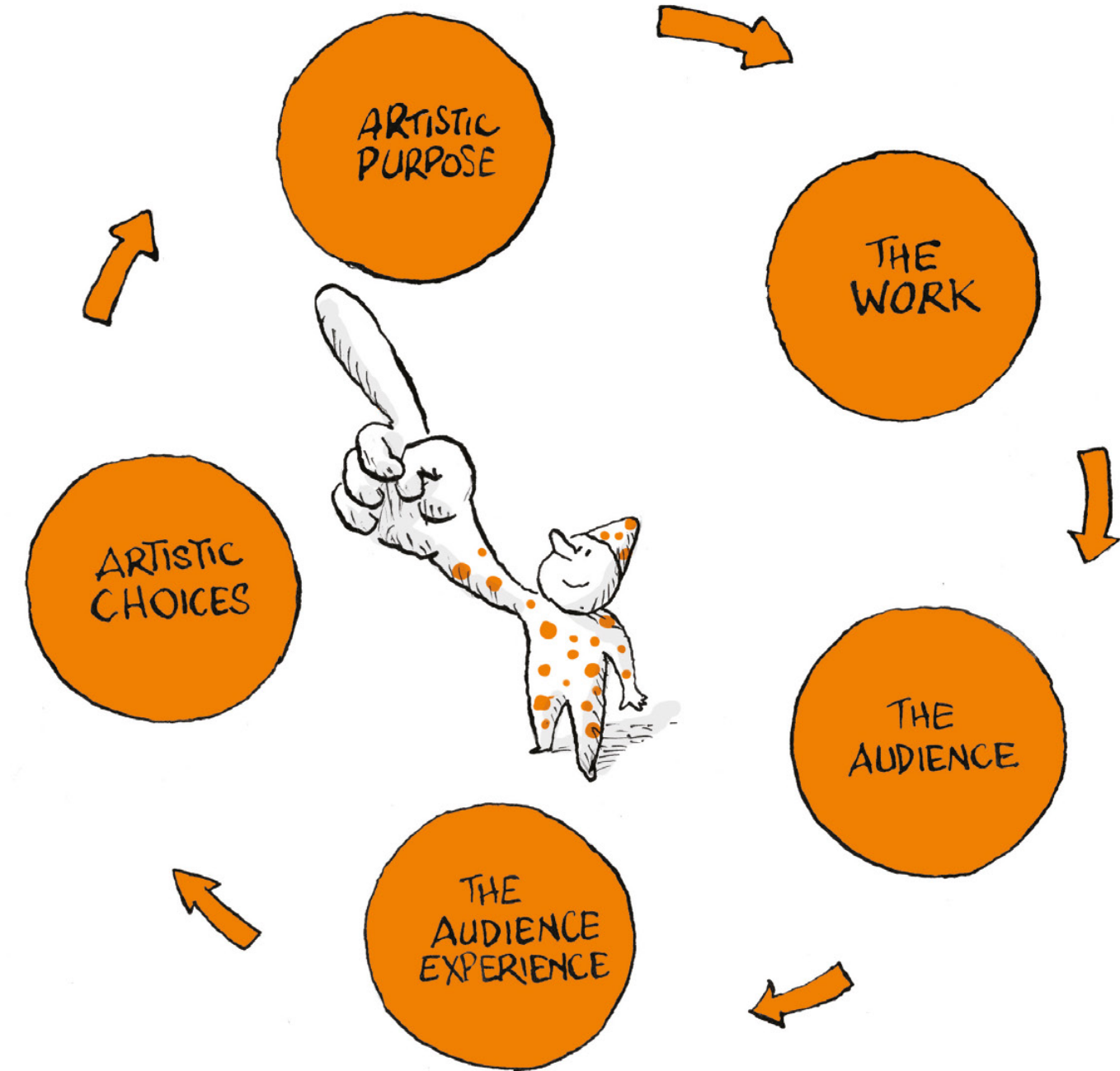
Bring to mind what emerged for you at each stage.

Then ... pause and reflect.

Ask yourself:

- How well does my response to each stage flow into the next?
- Together, do they cohere?
- Is there integrity?
- Where are the synergies with my artistic purpose?
- Are there any disconnects?
- Which elements feel most authentic?
- Does anything jar?
- What does all this mean?
- Do I need to revisit anything?

Keep circling back if needs be, or move between the different stages in a non-circular way to see how everything fits together. If your finger were a pencil, what you produce might look like a great big squiggle.



Pulling it all together

So, now you've completed *The Workbook*.

What has it surfaced?

And what do you intend to do with it?

As I said at the very beginning, *The Workbook* can be used in many different ways:

- You might want to use it at the point where you have an idea for a piece of work or to reflect on work you have done in the past.
- You might want to use it when creating work and think about how the artistic choices you make might shape the audience experience.
- You might want to use it to think about your audiences, what makes them tick, and how you could communicate your work to them.

If you have come to *The Workbook* to help you with the **Creative Scotland Touring Fund** application process remember what Creative Scotland is looking for:

- an inspirational and authentic expression of the potential audience benefit,
- written with a clarity and immediacy that enables Creative Scotland and the panel to make more informed decisions,
- in order to support a balanced programme of diverse work for diverse audiences.

And remember also that what you produce will also be incredibly useful for programmers, producers, promoters, marketers and audiences.

So, have a go at pulling it all together.

Write fluidly, spontaneously.

Make your voice sing out.

Be yourself.

Thank you.



Thank You

It's true to say that without the generous advice and input of the following people, *The Performing Artist's Audience Workbook* would be much diminished, so my heartfelt thanks go to:

Lorna Duguid, for entrusting this project to me / **Tamara Christensen**, for making me feel un-imposter-ish / **Matt Lenton**, for the great Nick Cave quote / **James-Mackenzie Blackman** for making me think about context / **Philippe Brasseur**, for your incredible creative energy and amazing drawings / **Mel Larsen**, for your astute eye and wisdom / **Dr. Kirsty Sedgman**, for all the exclamation marks by the stuff you liked / **Dr. Ben Walmsley**, for your excellent point of disagreement that got me thinking / **Liam Sinclair**, for not changing very much / **Jo McClean** for your unique perspective / **Joe Hancock** for your super sharp comments / **Suzi Willson** and **Roxanne Peak Payne** for your thoughtful responses to the exercises / **Nicky Burgess** for your enthusiasm and pride in me / **Anne-Laurie Mathieu** for gleefully offering to translate it into French.

Biographies

Philippe on Lisa

Lisa is truly passionate about the value of audience experience and shares her convictions and know-how with arts and cultural organisations around the world. We met at Mindcamp Canada where she gave a beautiful workshop called *The Museum of Me*: this is so Lisa, a lovely mix of intelligence and humanity. With my drawings and layouts for this publication, she was both very enthusiastic and very demanding. We had long discussions about how to produce something that is immediate, simple, creative and human – a great co-creation experience we are both proud of.

theexperiencebusiness.co.uk
lisa@theexperiencebusiness.co.uk



Lisa on Philippe

Philippe is creativity personified, warm of heart and touchingly emotional. A talented facilitator, author and illustrator, he has produced a smorgasbord of books around art and creativity which are a delight (e.g. *How to think like an absolute genius*). He also works with schools on creative education, as well as running workshops for CEOs on creativity management. Together and apart, we have developed workshops and games that bring people closer to the ‘goodness of art’, its emotional dimensions, and its potential to awaken creativity in us all.

philippebrasseur.be
phil.brasseur@skynet.be



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

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