
AMERICAN ART AS A FUTURE- DETERMINED PERFORMATIVE CULTURE

On the subject of creativity

by Pierre Beaudry, 12/5/16

“As long as man looks at himself as a creature of the Earth, he will fight his neighbor over a piece of the land. As soon as man looks at himself as a creature of the Universe, he will discover that he needs his neighbor to help him conquer outer space.”

Dehors Debonneheure

INTRODUCTION

It is not difficult to sort out the true nature of American art culture behind Lyn's Manhattan Project from the ruffraff of the bastardized American entertainment culture represented by Wall-Street-run shareholder values. It can be done with one very exciting nineteenth century cultural concept of civilizing both man and nature, which was established by James Fennimore Cooper in *The Last of the Mohicans*, and which had not been applied in any art school since Leonardo da Vinci's renaissance.

That concept can be formally identified as a *performative form of artistic composition* aimed at changing the way human beings think about civilizing man and the universe both; that is, by making you discover a principle of action whose function is *to make visible the invisible creative domain of the human soul*.

This Leonardo da Vinci principle was expressed by Cooper as a thoughtful way of generating ironies, intentionally, into one's own compositions by means of producing an apparently unintended effect of change coming from nature itself. As Cooper put it, the principle acts “... *as if nature had created a specific effect, but with the appearance of having been produced by chance.*” (James Fennimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, The New American Library, Inc., 1980, p.20.)

The same idea can be used for discovering new horizons of untamed nature such as the North Polar Region, or for space travel. The secret is how you increase your mental power in order to better master the laws of the universe. That's the Galactic-Solarian question: how do you change the way you think and become a galactic thinker? What axiomatic change are you willing to make in order to generate the maximum amount of transformation in the universe after you have first made that change in your own mind on Earth?

The point to understand is that all events that take place in the universe follow that intention, whether that intention is conscious or not and whether it is made in the microcosm or in the macrocosm. This Cooper principle is a matter of crucial importance for our time and for the future, because mankind will not survive without it. Therefore, ask yourself: “*How can I manifest an intention in a manner such that it does not appear to be intentional?*”

The questions I will attempt to answer for you in this report are: How did America create a performative culture of change? Why is it necessary to create such a culture and, is there a historical model that one can use in order to validate such a culture? Let's first look at the American artist, Thomas Cole, who founded the National Academy of Design and the Hudson River School, and see how he provided a performative answer to these questions.

1. THOMAS COLE AND 'THE CLOVE, CATSKILLS'

"Art is the imitation of the creative power."
(Thomas Cole, *Letter to Critics*, 1849.)

When the National Academy of Design was created by close collaborators of James Fennimore Cooper, that is, William Dunlap, Samuel F. B. Morse, and Thomas Cole, the idea was to establish a domain of artistic composition committed to creativity as opposed to Wall Street profit-making. The development of one's creative powers was considered the natural state of man's collaboration with nature. As Dunlap put it, the creation of the National Academy of Design was to be totally against the principle underlying the Wall Street controlled Academy of Fine Arts. See my five reports on [The National Academy of Design](#): Dunlap wrote:

"The Academy of fine arts was a 'joint stock company,' composed of persons of every trade and profession, who thought the privilege of visiting the exhibition an equivalent for twenty fine dollars – such persons were the *electors* of the directors, and entitled to be themselves elected directors. Artists could only share those privileges by purchasing stocks, and might be controlled in everything respecting their profession by those who were ignorant of the arts. Artists had sprung up who might challenge competition with any in the world, and maintain the challenge." (William Dunlop, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of design in the United States*, Boston, C. E. Goodspeed & Co., 1918, Vol. III, p. 53.) See my report: [SAMUEL F. B. MORSE, THE LEONARDO OF AMERICA](#)

This cultural fight was the fight that Schiller identified between the "bread-fed scholar" and the truth-seeking "philosophical mind." Unfortunately, the full history of this crucial rise and fall of American art culture was never told, although the details of its main battles have been conserved in the archives of the National Academy of Design for nearly a hundred years. The time has come to let the truth of this matter out of the bag.

In 1821, it was Samuel F. B. Morse who was the primary organizer and recruiter for the new institution. The first membership included, among others, Frederick S. Agate, Thomas Cole, Thomas Cummings, Moseley Danforth, William Dunlop, Asher B. Durand, Charles C. Ingham, Henry Inman, Peter Maverick, John L. Morton, Ithiel Town, and Charles C. Wright. Two of those members, Cole and Durand, were later to become the original founders of the Hudson River School of landscape painting. It was art historian, Louise Minsk, who best identified the higher purpose of that group, when she wrote:

“Prominent American writers of the period, such as Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant, all expounded on the virtues of the natural state as the highest state of being. Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle,” Cooper’s *The last of the Mohicans*, and Bryant’s poems helped in shaping an audience ready to receive the same message on canvas...

“In a nation still yearning for an artistic identity of its own, the years 1825 to 1875, defining the Hudson River School, were a period of powerful nationalism in a young America. The earliest, dramatic and uniquely American landscapes of Thomas Cole prompted immediate response from a people restless to discover and claim its own greatness. These sentiments reached their pinnacle in the monumental and inspirational canvases of Frederic Church’s *Niagara* and Albert Bierstadt’s *Yellowstone Falls*.” (Louise Minsk, *The Hudson River School*, Barnes and Noble, New York, 2006, p. 7.)

What did the principle of design, which Cooper identified above as a *unifying principle of man and nature*, mean to Thomas Cole? For Cole, the idea of creativity applied to both human beings and to nature. There is no opposition between the two. There is only a community of principle which permits both to blend one into the other as destiny blends in natural law. Take the illustrative case of *The Clove, Catskills* (Figure 1) What do you see in that canvas which has “*the appearance of having been produced by chance*”?



Figure 1 Thomas Cole, *The Clove, Catskills*, 1827.

Look for Cole's application of the principle that Cooper applied to Chingachgook. What you are looking for is almost not there. Cole had created an irony by drawing the profile of a disappearing Indian warrior within the natural setting of the Catskills. Try to see if you can find it before turning this page.

For the thoughtful artist of that time, the inclusion of such an anomaly inside of a painting created a completely new revolutionary form of artistic composition, typical of a new American culture. Cole had created a performative form of art which was designed to change how people think; that is, a form of art which *expresses a change by self-reflexively changing itself* at the same time.



With Cole, an American future-determined artistic culture was born that simply stated: “*Art is the imitation of the creative power.*” (Thomas Cole, *Letter to Critics*, 1849.) In other words, and to be perfectly clear on this point of method: for Cole, the purpose of the artist was not to imitate nature. His intention was not to represent things as they are. The intention was to imitate the creative power of the universe in a way that only a human being was capable of doing it, which is, by creating ironies that force the spectator to think and cause him to axiomatically change the way he thinks.

Figure 2 Indian standing on a rock. Detail of Thomas Cole, *The Cove, Catskills*, 1827.

Figure 2 shows the standing profile of an almost invisible Indian warrior holding a stick behind him in his left hand and pointing upward at the dark forest in front of him with his right hand. The pose seems to indicate the very purpose that Cooper was talking about when he described the painted face of Chingachgook: “*The colors of the war paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive than if art had attempted an effect, which had been produced by chance.*” See my report: [THOMAS COLE AND THE BIRTH OF AMERICAN CLASSICAL ARTISTIC COMPOSITION.](#)

However, is it to this new form of art that the Indian warrior is pointing to, or is it to his own disappearance as a product of a dying culture?

2. WORTHINGTON WHITTREDGE AND 'THE OLD HUNTING GROUNDS'

During a period of about fifty years, from 1825 until 1876, it was the moral and patriotic outlook of James Fenimore Cooper which best represented the mission of the National Academy of Design and the Hudson River School. As diversified as these two groups may have been, it was the principle of axiomatic transformation that James Fennimore Cooper brought into the art of design which represented the enduring cement among all of them, that is: *How do you make visible the invisible creative domain of the human soul?*

Worthington Whittredge gave a beautiful example of the Cooper principle in one of his most famous paintings: *The Old Hunting Grounds*. What do you see in that painting? Or, rather, what do you look for in such a work of art which reflects the Cooper principle? See my report: [WHITTREDGE AND LEUTZE: THE ART OF CIVILIZING NATURE](#).

Take the necessary amount of time to examine closely this painting, because it judges your ability to think as much as it measures its own ability to reveal the invisible domain of creativity. It is that proportionality which is important to discover in this crucial experiment.

What you are looking for is not supposed to be visible. You are looking for what is not there or for a trace of what is no longer there. In other words, you are looking for an anomaly coming from a higher dimensionality. So, what do you see that is coming from a higher domain?

At first glance, everything seems to be normal: you see a water hole, an old broken down canoe, birch trees in the sunlight, and, if you look carefully, you might even discover a female deer, or two, eating peacefully. What's wrong with that? That is what you are supposed to see when you go into the woods. However, Whittredge represented much more than what nature was able to show. (**Figure 3**)

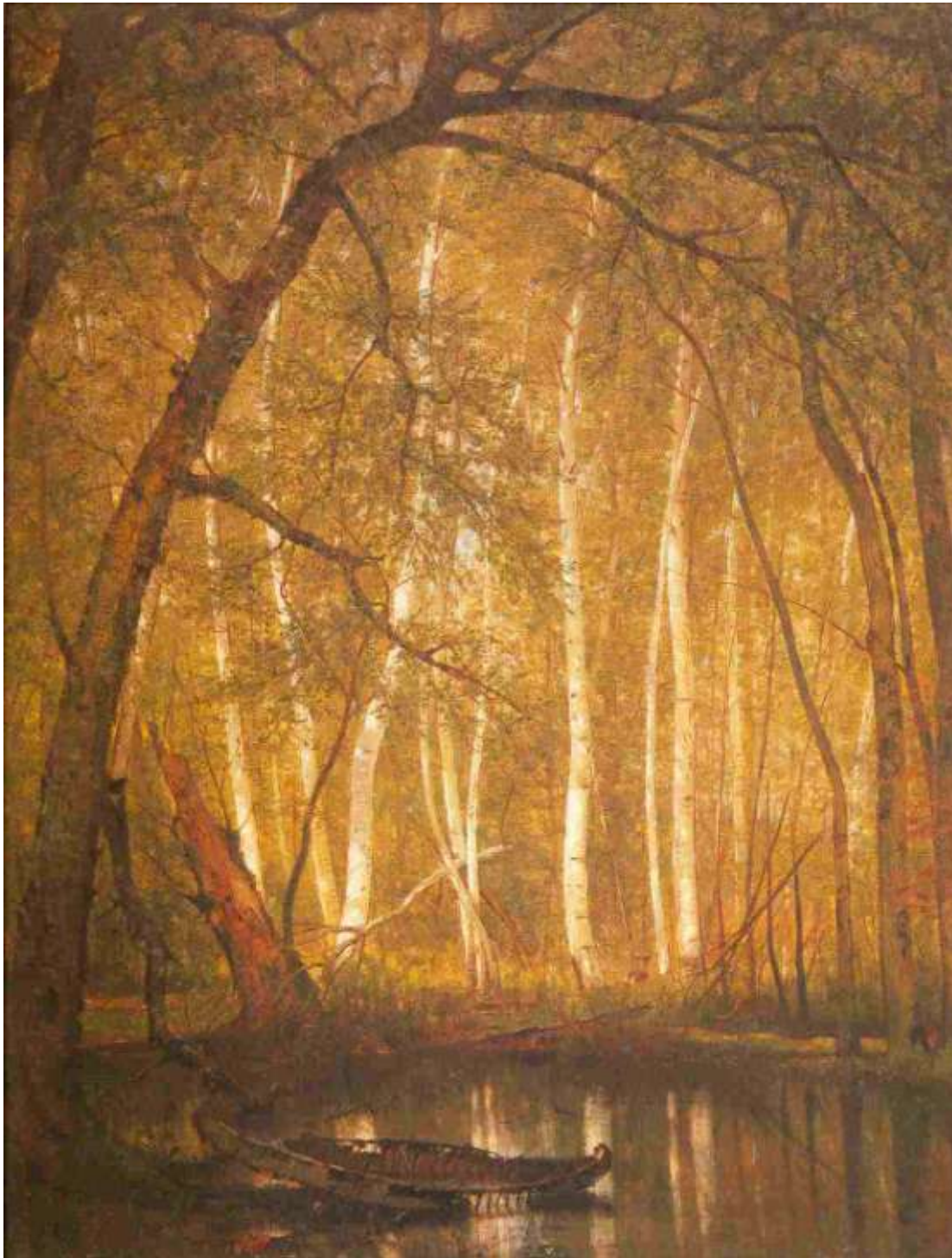


Figure 3 Worthington Whittredge, *The Old Hunting Grounds*, c. 1864.

First of all, everything is presented under stage-light. The whole setting is theatrical. Nature does not behave like that at all. *The Old Hunting Grounds* is obviously painted for the purpose of having a spectator stand in front of that scene, investigate it, and attempts to make a discovery of some hidden secret. What does Whittredge want you to discover in that staging area? Look at this painting as a spectator's trap as opposed to entertainment. You have no choice. You are caught in the performative web of the creative process.

Whittredge is forcing you to stand in front of a theatrical stage where a drama has already taken place, and where he is attempting to make you think about the significance of what he had in mind. Think of what is going on in Whittredge's mind and of what I am attempting to make you discover at the same time. This is a three-mind problem. What do you see in Whittredge's mind?

All you see is a dark foreground, where you are located, and a stage-lit background which projects reflections into the water where something is sitting, there, waiting for you to see something that is no longer there. What you are looking at is the staging of something which you must remember, something that you will never forget. Look. What is it that is not there? Can you see it? Can you see what is missing? Have a closer look at the canoe. **(Figure 4)**



Figure 4 Detail, *The Old Hunting Grounds*.

Yes! What are missing are the patches of birch on both sides of the canoe. But wait: are they really missing? What about the reflection from the birch trees in the background? Aha! There is the anomaly. What does such a reflection tell you? That the canoe has simply been abandoned there to rot away? No. The birch tree reflections in the water are a painful performative remembrance of days past when Chingachgook used to hunt in this wilderness. This canoe is like the old soldier who lost a leg in the war and sometimes feels it is still there. That's what's not there.

The point, here, is that nature is incapable of producing such a so-called "natural effect" without the presence of a human being at that precise spot at that precise time, because only a creative human being is capable of making you discover what nature seems to have caused to take place only "*by chance*."

3. SOGA SHÔHAKU AND 'THE THREE LAUGHERS AT TIGER RAVINE'

When looking for the intention behind something, the tendency is to look for it in the past. But, looking into the past is the wrong place to look for the design of creation. What you have to look for is in the future because the intention of a creative design is always located in the future, never in the past. If you want to look for the cause of anything, never look into a time when that thing has already existed. Look for it in a time when it never existed before, but when it should have existed.

This doesn't mean that the past is not useful to look into in order to understand problems of axiomatic importance. It simply means that causality cannot be found in the past. This means that you have to look at the past as something that is meant to be used from the future. For example, look at the Peace of Westphalia as something that came about from the future. Cardinal Jules Mazarin necessarily had to look at it that way, when he started to negotiate an end to the Thirty Years War, in 1642.

Let me show you how this works: *Take three discontented individuals A, B, and C, who are in disagreement with each other, and put them in a social situation where A will have to come to agree with B and C only after he is able to eliminate the difference between them.*

That's the process of the Peace of Westphalia. It is not a process in which A has a choice; it is a process caused by necessity, and necessity comes from the future. That's how a social process of axiomatic change takes place in the minds of three different individual persons, or three different voices in a musical composition. That's how the process of change works in artistic composition as well as in the galactic domain of the curvature of physical space-time.

Don't try to deduce the end result of such a process from something that took place beforehand. It won't work. Logical deduction is incapable of representing such a process of transformation because the only way to represent it is by generating a *performative form of constructive geometry*, which is a function of change from the future.

It is the interconnected congruence between the minds of the three discontented participants *A, B, and C*, including their simultaneous self-reflexive actions, which becomes the proof of validity of the transformation. The best artistic composition I could find to illustrate how this Peace of Westphalia principle works is the following Japanese painting of *The Three Laughters at Tiger Ravine*.

As the story goes, three sages representing the three main religions of China, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, met at the monastery where the Buddhist sage had made the vow not to cross over the bridge to the outside world. When the three inadvertently crossed the bridge together, they simultaneously broke out in thunderous laughter. What was the discovery that made them laugh as one man?

That work of art reflects the Confucian doctrine of [Great Learning](#), by Zhu Xi, and its application to the three Chinese religions. In that painting, Soga Shôhaku showed how, in spite of their differences, the three religious leaders were able to laugh at themselves at the same time, because they discovered, in the simultaneity of eternity, that a higher principle than the rules of their respective

faiths had united them in a common humanity. See my report: [THE CHINESE UNITY OF QI, LI, AND TAIJI IN THE SIMULTANEITY OF ETERNITY.](#)



Figure 5 *The Three Laughers at Tiger Ravine*, Soga Shôhaku (Japanese, 1730–1781) Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

It is the sudden *discovery of principle* of their common mission which makes them laugh at the same time and for the same reason. And the reason this painting is so effective is because it is *performative* in both its intention and in its action; that is to say, it generates precisely what it proposes to accomplish. The

purpose of that intention is aimed at changing the way you think by lifting your mind to a higher dimensionality. Clearly, Shôhaku succeeded in accomplishing that purpose.

It is the same purpose that was recently brought to Washington DC by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on November 30, 2016, and sponsored by the China Energy Fund Committee and the Asian Society under the subject of [The Right to Development: China's Philosophy, Practice and Contribution The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China December 2016.](#)

In order to understand what is taking place in that painting, as well as in the previous two canvases, you have to think from the top down, as opposed to from the bottom up. And, you have to realize that laughing at yourself is the best way not to become upset with your own shortcomings, because laughter is the only means you have of preventing yourself from making tragic mistakes. Leibniz best understood this aspect of the principle of the Peace of Westphalia and showed how this was the way to bring a new universe into existence for mankind. The way that he solved the dynamic of the three-mind problem was by discovering how to resolve the musical dissonance among **A**, **B**, and **C**.

Think of such a dynamic as a performative function of axiomatic change. The idea consists in discovering how to apply a principle of proportionality between what you think and what you do, that is, between reason (理 *li*), and power (氣 *qi*); and then, use that proportion as the measuring-rod for increasing the energy-flux-density of your own mind by increasing the power of others; that is, the ultimate end (太極 *Taiji*). Leibniz wrote:

“Thus, hope and faith are founded on love, and all three on knowledge. Love is a joy of the mind arising out of contemplation of the beauty or excellence of another. All beauty consists in a harmony and proportion; the beauty of minds, or of creatures who possess reason, is a proportion between reason and power, which in this life is also the foundation of the justice, the order, and the merits and even the form of the Republic, that each may understand of what he is capable, and be capable of

as much as he understands. If power is greater than reason, then the one who has that is either a simple sheep (in the case where he does not know how to use his power), or a wolf and a tyrant (in the case where he does not know how to use it well). If reason is greater than power, then he who has that is to be regarded as oppressed. Both are useless, indeed even harmful. If, then, the beauty of the mind lies in the proportionality between reason and power, then the beauty of the complete and infinite mind consists in an infinity of power as well as wisdom, and, consequently, the love of God, the highest good, consists in the incredible joy which one (even now present, without the beatific vision) draws out of the contemplation of that beauty or proportion which is the infinity of omnipotence and omniscience.” (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, [On the Establishment of a Society in Germany For the Promotion of the Arts and Sciences.](#))

The Leibniz Christian application of proportionality is entirely coherent with the Zhu XI Neo-Confucian triply-connected principle of reason (理 *li*), power (氣 *qi*), and beyond the limit ultimate end (太極 *Taiji*). The reason for this congruence is because the Confucian human development principle is a reflection of the Christian relationship of the Holy Trinity; that is, where God the Father is the ultimate end (太極 *Taiji*), the Son is reason (理 *li*), and the Spirit is power (氣 *qi*). When the dissonances of all three principles are resolved into unity, they are working as the principle of creativity causing change similar to those demonstrated by the Peace of Westphalia.

Leibniz's intention was to awaken this truth in the so-called “intellectuals” who believe that their academic knowledge is useful for the world. What a tragic illusion. The simple truth of the matter is that those who know and don't do anything to change the world situation are simply cowards. Leibniz may not have been so direct, but that is what he meant. The point that Leibniz made is the same as the one made by Zhu XI: “*knowledge without action is evil because it presupposes that one can truly know and still not act.*” Now you understand why mankind requires a future-determined performative culture.

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