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John F. Kennedy Center

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR ARTISTS: HOW TO HANDLE THE  
RESISTANCE IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS

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>> LISA DAMICO: Hello, everyone, and welcome to "Tools and Techniques for Artists with and without Disabilities: How to Handle the Resistance in the Creative Process" I'm Lisa Damico, your moderator and webinar organizer. Today's webinar is part of the a monthly series that comes out of the office of VSA and accessibility. This series addresses topics related to arts, disability and education.

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Your questions will come directly to me, and then during the designated question and answer time at the end of the presentation, I'll relay them to our presenter.

I want to emphasize that following the presentation, I will send out a follow-up E-mail with a link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint, an excerpt from Shaqe's book "Diagnose your Creative Block", and a copy of the transcript. This means you don't need to worry about frantically taking notes during the presentation. You can just go back and watch the recording and go through the supplemental materials at your convenience.

I'd like to let you know about next month's webinar, "Brave new world, questions and answers for not-just-yet-professional literary, musical/performing, and visual Artists "Scheduled for Tuesday, February 10th with Melissa Haas and Christy Batta.

If you're active on social media, I invite you to connect with us using the hashtag VSA webinar on Facebook, or VSA international, twitter, VSAINTL, or Instagram. And with that, I will turn it over to today's presenter, Shaqe Kalaj. Shaqe?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Yes. I'm here.

>> LISA DAMICO: All right. I'm going to make you the presenter so that we can see your screen.

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Okay.  
>> LISA DAMICO: Perfect.  
>> SHAQE KALAJ: Okay. Great.

Well, welcome. This is an introduction into resistance, and really tools and techniques to utilize. So my name is Shaqe Kalaj, and here we go.

Who is this presentation for? Well, it's for visual artists, writers, musicians, performers and those that support or teach to artists. It's also for anyone else who explores creativity and hits resistance as well.

It's also for artists with and without disabilities.

So I just wanted to give a heads up. In 20 minutes, I will introduce Bev, which is a case study, which will illustrate all the points that I'll be setting in front of us.

So who am I? I'm a certified creativity coach and consultant, certified through the creative coaching association. I'm also an artist. I work in painting, print-making, drawing, installation, and I'm also a conceptual artist as well as an --based artist and a socially engaged artist. So all those play a factor in how I work as a certified creativity coach as well. I'm also an educator. I work with arts integration and inclusion, and a lot of my work has been in Michigan with VSA. So I'm also author of "Diagnose your Creative Block," and author of "Your Creativity Toolbox," which I will be sharing more at the end of this presentation.

So there's three points that I want you to be able to leave with today, within this hour. I want you to know how resistance is a natural part of the creative process. It's inherent, and it's an essential part because it allows you to produce work that you least expect. Also, have a basic understanding of creative blocks. I just want you to understand how resistance contributes to how blocks are formed. So that way you have a basic understanding of that as well.

And finally, I want to how to employ techniques and tools to stay productive. This, to me, seems to be the most -- one of the most essential things when you're dealing with resistance and block.

So in this presentation, I will define creativity. I will define resistance. We'll get a better understanding of creative blocks. And also, I'll present six tools for your creativity tool box. And lastly, the case study of Bev, who is a visual artist and educator.

Creative people all share one common denominator. They're attracted to the creative process. And I'm assuming that you're attracted to it as well. I'm sure that it keeps drawing you back to the -- what the beauty of the -- of the process, and what keeps you interested in it.

So defining creativity. First, creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality.

Also, it is the ability to make connections with traditional ideas, rules and patterns in order to make meaningful new ideas, forms, methods and interpretations. So at the crux of creativity is your ability to make connections to ideas, to materials, and sometimes to things that are outside of what you do, which will bring in new things. And so that ability is probably one of the best things that you'd want to develop in order to really deal with resistance much better.

Finally, much of creativity involves the right conditions for creative breakthroughs to occur. So when I talk about conditions, I'm talking about whether you have good supports that are around you, whether you have a place to work that feels comfortable, whether your life conditions are good as well. So all those steps play a good factor in really allowing creative breakthroughs to come through.

So resistance is inherent to creativity. It is a natural part of the creative process, and the more that we can begin to utilize it, the easier it becomes in a lot of ways. And as you can see, these two zebras are butting heads, and that's exactly sort of what it feels like what you're right in the midst of resistance.

So resistance can be an uncomfortable experience. It's uncomfortable because of that tension that you're butting heads with an idea, or something new that you're trying to bring about. So it doesn't always feel that great, let me just put it that way.

And some of the things that is experienced is the tension that makes it difficult. So a lot of people experience it in various ways. Some people will go out and do a household chore that will relax them or get them out of that tension. Some people experience some sadness or depression, or some people just find an escape where they don't have to experience it at all. But a lot of times, that resistance is an important part to actually -- that you want to go through.

But, besides it being the tension, it's also the juice that allows you to work in extraordinary ways, and I can't emphasize the value of resistance in that it allows you to come up with something unique, something that surprises you.

So resistance occurs before every great innovation and new idea. So that tension is necessary. Now, it can last for, you know, a couple minutes. It can last for days. You know, it all depends sometimes on you, the artist itself, and the kind of work you do. If you do more difficult work with concepts, sometimes that's even difficult, or if you're doing something that's out of your box, you'll find resistance there. But it

really is the lead way into that aha moment, that wonderful idea that you've been waiting for.

And I suspect, because you are here, you have a great desire to dip into the creative process, and because of this, you experience resistance.

So again, it's normal to experience resistance. In fact, I suggest that you welcome it. What it allows you to do is you get a new viewpoint. You're able to see from a different vantage point. You're able to get another perspective. It allows you to create new work. So resistance is something that is a really a wonderful thing, once the -- you go through it.

Resistance is the springboard that allows you to pull out of you work that surprises you. So it's sort of like a teeter totter in the sense that you're going back and forth between the resistance and the breakthrough. So sometimes somebody can experience resistance, and then the next morning, they get that aha moment, that idea that they've been waiting for, and the resistance actually sometimes going through doing things on a daily basis, sometimes the idea comes through in that way. So it's almost like going back and forth in a lot of ways.

So one of the things that happens when resistance gets stuck is it forms into a block. Resistance forms into a block if you failed to make the right connections followed by the right actions. So what I mean by right connections is that depending on your work and some of the situations there, you want to be able to make the right connections. Otherwise, what happens is the work stops -- the resistance stops, and nothing comes forth. So that's why the resistance is important.

And the blocks can feel a lot like the -- this image here, whether they've got a strong form, they're immovable. This is sort of what it feels like in some way to look at a block, but a lot of what you experience when you're experiencing resistance is that it's a feeling a lot of times.

Creative blocks occur when resistance is not pushed through.

Common symptoms, when experiencing a creative block. You feel prevented from moving forward. You are producing, but you know it's not your best work. Now, at first, this may not appear as a block, but if you're not producing your best work, you're not pushing the resistance through.

You're doing anything and everything except your work.

Something just isn't working but you can't put a name to it. So I've had people come to me who said they wanted to work with me because they don't have the words why they're not -- what's wrong, but they just need some assistance, and that usually is a good indicator when you're blocked.

You're not satisfied with your work. So all these, and there's other feelings that people experience, but these are some of the common experiences.

Now, the greatest loss with creative blocks is lost time. I consider this, you know, you might think that somebody might say that it's money, it's a loss of money, but it really isn't. It's the lost time of not accessing maybe your potential, or things that you would really like to do. And so it can actually -- blocks can cause years to -- weeks to years with a block, so you can lose a lot of time with a stagnant block that you're not creating, or creating the work that you would like to create. So to me, this seems to be difficult. Now, I've had clients that I've worked with who are -- that don't have disabilities, who have been blocked for 20 years, and they -- so they can -- you can have a five, ten years. I've seen people that I've worked with who have been blocked for five years, and after a month of working with them, they were able to pass through the block. So sometimes assistance can be really great at those moments.

The problem is, when you're experiencing a block, it's easy to just accept that you can't start or finish your work. So I want you to consider just these two elements of starting and finishing work. Do you have work that you have started that you haven't -- that you haven't started because of some kind of block? Or is there a work that you have a lot of that's unfinished that is just sitting around your work room or studio, or your house? So this is all an indicator. I can tell from myself, I've had many unfinished works in the past, and I've had to apply some tools and techniques that I'll present later. But that really is an indicator that there's something stalling.

So with over 25 years in the trenches working with resistance, I figured out a critical element. So this is my 25 years as an artist and my years as a creativity coach, but I still see some things that were common that I wasn't experiencing by myself. I could see some trends and blocks that were occurring.

So one of the things that I found out was all blocks are not the same. Now, if you have a -- if you tell someone, another artist, that you're blocked, sometimes they'll give you, well, I started working on my journal and started writing notes, and that -- that's what got me pulled through. But it may not be effective for you, and the kind of blocks that you're dealing with. So what I figured out is there are over 80 different kinds of creative blocks. It's not that one that is represented to -- in books, and in a lot of the way that we hear about creative blocks. So there are different kinds, and they look

different, and they look different, depending on the person and the years of experience that they've been doing their art form.

The main problem is that creative people think all blocks are the same, so what -- let me just show a difference. Someone who's been working for three years and isn't working, has a radically different kind of block than someone who had experience with 25 years of being blocked. And although they're both not working, their blocks are different, and they would be handled differently. So that's just something that I wanted you to show you is that they're not the same in that way.

Behind every block is this potent potential that can be awakened at any time. So here I want you to know that although a block might feel solid, it still holds that same potential that was in the resistance that was first there. It's almost like unraveling it, and getting to that core.

So this is a good time to ask this question. Do people with disabilities experience more resistance than people without a disability? Well, my answer is sometimes.

A lot of it depends on the kind of work that the artist is doing, the person -- their personality qualities. Also, the kind of disability that they have. Is it physical, emotional, cognitive? And what I have found that a lot of times with the cognitive disabilities, that sometimes there's a little bit more tension that the artist is experiencing versus someone without a disability. So it doesn't -- but I've also seen that many people who have disabilities have more access to their creativity in different ways. So let's just say that it sometimes happens.

So thinking differently about disability, okay, so there was an article in scientific American mind in January 2015, and the article is called the advantage of dyslexia by Mathew H. Schneps. And in the article, he says scientists have long suspected dyslexia might be linked to creativity, but laboratory evidence for this was rare. Impairments in one area can lead to advantages in others, and it is these differences that drive progress.

One of the things that I think is really important to pick out here is that there's a link to creativity in disability, and I think in various disabilities, there's probably some potential that lies there. The only problem is when you're given a disability and a label, you're told what the problems are and not so much what the potential is behind the disability itself, like this example here.

So I've really wanted to show this information to you so that you could think about it a little differently, especially in our conversation about resistance.

So what you need is a good set of tools for your creativity. So you see here a hammer, a flashlight, an axe, a glove. So there's a variety of tools that you just see that we would normally use for a tool box. But in your creativity tool box, you actually need a variety of tools as well to handle the many kinds of resistance and blocks that are up here on your -- up here before you. So I'll be presenting six tools. And with these tools, you'll be able to -- I'll make them as concrete as possible. They are a little bit on the abstract side.

Small steps is the first tool. This is your bread and butter tool, as I would call it, because this is something that whether you're a new artist or an experienced artist, this is a great tool to implement. And as you see here, there are a lot of steps that lead to an entrance, and they're small. And that's the way that you really want to think about your work, is the idea of breaking things down into small, incremental steps. So whether you're working on a project, you can break that down into parts that feel like you can accomplish them. And so that's why this tool is probably your most useful tool.

Now, scheduling may sound sort of counter intuitive to creativity, but it is probably one of your significant tools to probably developing discipline and developing a lifestyle as well. So one of the things that I like to look at when I'm working with someone is just see if they work better in the mornings, afternoons, early evenings and evenings, and see which part of the day that is more ideal. And I'd also look at, you know, how long the person can work for. This becomes valuable in that you start to see your own rhythms that start to work for you.

Now, what I'm presenting to you is really about perspective. The macro and micro perspective. That's the big-picture view and then the small detail. This will actually help when you're in the resistance. A lot of what happens is when you're working and you're focusing on the small detail, you're losing the broad picture of where you're going. And a lot of times, I see that the macro view is missed as far as directing the artist in a particular direction for them. So this becomes valuable in that sense.

Now, this is where we want to get to. We want to get into the zone. This is the sweet spot of creativity. This is where -- this is the magnet, let's just say. So this is where you get all excited. Your ideas are coming. You're working with materials in a great way. You know, you're getting involved. You're sort of lost in what you're doing. So this is really the ideal.

And as a coach, I really am looking for this, and I'm working with people, is to help figure this out even more.

Now, humor is probably one of the things that needs to be added to -- when you're dealing with resistance, and it's quite serious, it's pretty important to have humor there, as to whether it's in the work or the way that you talk about the work. Or the way that you dialogue internally about the work. So I know for myself I have a couple projects that I'm working on, and one of them is about the food industry, and especially with issue-based art, you can get quite serious. So in it, I used a lot of irony in the work to bring out some humor, not only for my viewer, but for myself.

So visualization is the sixth tool that I want to present to you. It is a picture in your mind's eye. It is the ability to see something without it being in front of you. We can remember maybe something that we ate last night, or a person that we saw the other day, and a better view of them in our head. But this becomes valuable in that you can use this for your creativity as well, and blocks. And right now, I want to take you through a stage of visualization, particularly of a creative block. I want to sort of get us to look at it.

So we're going to visualize a creative block with, you know, an image like this, and there's no windows, so it sort of feels a little claustrophobic, and there's tiles on the sides, and so it doesn't always feel that inviting to be in this. So what we want to move to is move from here to here in a gradual step. Here, though, the wall is no longer a solid wall, but a fence that we can see through. We're outdoors. We're still on a path, but it feels a little bit more comfortable, if you'd agree with me.

And then we move in to the next image. Then imagine yourself on a bridge. To me, this feels a lot more relaxed in some way. It's almost as if I'm going -- I'm still on a path, but I'm moving toward nature, and the bridge is over water, and so it feels very different than that first image, or even the second image. And then also, even better, a view of the creative block as an open road.

So we're still on a path, but what's nice about this is we can go off the path. We can go to the left or we can climb the mountain, develop our own path. And that's what essentially what creativity is. There's many paths and many directions that you can take. There's not one way to solve a problem. So this is why this image is really ideal, because it allows us to come make our own path if we choose to.

So I'm going to be presenting to you one case study that will show resistance, blocks, and the unblocking process. And this is Bev, the art teacher and painter. However, she's really not Bev and she's not really a client of mine. I really keep that

confidential but we wanted to have an example and this is sort of somebody that I would work with.

So I've -- I want to show you some of the things that she experiences is that she feels her life is unfulfilled and feels like she has not tapped into a potential.

Although she loves teaching, she is not happy with just being an art teacher. In fact, she spends a lot of time helping her students develop. She spends a lot of extra time working on lesson plans and experimenting for new class ideas. But one of the things she does find is that she often finds that time is passing by for her own potential and her abilities as an artist, so she does feel somewhat of a loss with this.

Now, however, she does not feel her artwork is good enough. This is probably one of the things that maybe holds her back a little bit. And if she doesn't have some of the confidence when she goes to her painting, to really apply all of her abilities. So there is a lack of confidence that she has. But her problems are mainly these. She has random work patterns. Her skills are rusty. And she goes months without working. And she forgets she's an artist. So when her random work patterns, that means that she'll work for a half hour, and then, you know, three months later, she'll come back to it again. And essentially, her skills are rusty because she doesn't spend enough time with it. So every time she goes into it, she only stays a little while because there's a painting technique, and she hasn't found the right support with that as well.

Now, when she confronts resistance, she seeks an escape. And when she experiences this and she's by herself and she's trying to do this by herself, and so she'd rather do something that gets her mind off what she's doing, so she'll go to junk food, chocolate is one of her drugs. Social media, that gets her more extroverted and outside of her introverted stage, and she talks to people on the phone. So those are -- so her resistance is particular on how she handles it. But these escapes provide relief but also prevents her from making any traction in her art. This is a great loss because her escapes just move her away from it rather than maybe even pushing through it a little bit, which would be really helpful.

So if that was a client of mine, I would give her a personalized protocol. Everybody's different, and I implore a lot of different techniques to better have her have breakthroughs. So I have tools that I would present right away with her.

The first step would be small step. This would be brilliant for her. This would be just perfect. The reason is she just works ten minutes a day, five times a week. That's all that she'd have to work. And that would actually build the

incremental step. And that would get her out of, you know, these two to three-month stents. And then it also wouldn't be a time issue, because normally what would happen is that she wouldn't want to devote all that time, because she's busy with teaching. So this allows her to go in and just dedicate that ten minutes. And the thing is, she can continue beyond the ten minutes if it's going well. And I'm going to tell you right now that she will. And this is -- it's almost like a trick, in a way, because it's -- having the limits allows her to tap in, and then also, if she feels like she doesn't want to go beyond the ten minutes, that's fine as well. And that's -- and she should be happy to even doing the ten minutes. So we're building sort of a confidence here in timing things.

So getting to the zone. Now, with her doing the ten minutes a day, and when she dead indicates that ten minutes a day and when she goes past the ten minutes, this is an indicator that she got to the zone. I'm always looking for this, and I'm really going to be paying attention to the conditions that occurred during that. Did she get a good idea? Is that what propelled her?

Or, was she involved in the media? Was there a technique that she just got really heavily involved in?

Or, was she involved in a particular color that she got excited about?

So this is what I'm going to -- as a creative strategist, I'm going to be really looking for this. I'm also going to look if she was listening to any kind of music and what music that was. Or did she do physical exercise beforehand? Or, possibly did she talk on the phone beforehand?

So these are all going to be telling me something about how to help her to get to the zone. So like I said, I'm real critical of trying to figure out this part of this.

Now, one of the things that will actually help her a lot is the macro perspective. When she worked, she works on individual pieces, and she's not getting a broad view of her direction. So this will become really important as far as guiding her. It really is a guide in a sense, the macro view, the big picture. This will help her have better choices in what she decides to choose to make and spend her time. So as you can see, this can be very helpful as far as these tools in particular. Let's get into visualization. Visualization becomes a tool to help her with that broad view, that macro view. And these, I would take visualization as when I took you through the block, but this could also include me talking through it, a conversation between her and I, and some of this would be subject matter. I would want to know what subject matter she was interested in. And if

there's any particular themes that seem to tie her more -- the work more closely together.

Also, colors. If there's a particular color that she's more leaning toward. What I do when I first work with people, I have them take personality questionnaires, and one of them is a color questionnaire, and it tells me what kind of colors a person might be more linked to. And that also, I can't go into great detail, but it says something about the personality as well.

Also, I would look at her finished artwork. Artwork that she's finished and trying to see some trends there or subject matters or things that would help her get a bigger view of where she could go.

Now, scheduling would be a really good tool for Bev as well. I would like to try the ten minutes in the morning and see how that goes. On another day I'd like to try it in the afternoon during her lunch break, and see if it would affect her day, if that would get her to be more productive. Or would it be in the afternoon, around -- after teaching? Is she able to transition easily from that? If her work is too focused in a way, and she can't transition out of it, then that would be indicator, too. Sometimes we have to find something that will be a little easier to go into. So we might define the ten minutes as just mixing colors. So you can get really -- I would get really focused on seeing what would work for her.

Humor. Something to lighten it up. I think as a coach for Bev, I would definitely have more dialogue that was a little bit lighter about the focus, and to really get her to see what she's doing in a lighter way. Or even choose subject matter that has a humorous tone.

So concluding Bev's protocol, Bev, the small steps, the scheduling, the visualization, that would all help Bev with some of the issues that she had with her skill sets, her sporadic art time, so the small steps become very valuable in that way.

So today, I'm going to conclude with the three points that I presented with, and that today you will leave with that resistance is a natural part of the creative process, that it's inherent. It's part of it. And it's a great part of it.

And I also wanted you to have a basic understanding of creative blocks. So that way you understand how they get formed, a little how it feels so you can identify them a little bit easier. And lastly, how to employ techniques and tools to stay productive. This seems to be a really important part of this because there's so many different kinds of blocks there, you really do need a lot of tools and techniques to really stay productive.

So I have two products. These two products is a basis for this presentation. In April, I will be releasing this video set

and this book through my Web site. "Blocked, Diagnose Your Creative Block." This is where I actually get into the 80 different kinds of blocks and how you can actually figure them out yourself. I have questions that will help with that. And it really gets you to start to see that resistance is there, and blocks aren't bad as well, as long as you learn how to move them around a little bit.

And this is where your creativity tool box becomes valuable as well. I have 52 tools that when you sign up on my Web site you get a tool each week with a -- a tool each week for your creativity. So I'm really pleased about these two products because I feel like this would help a lot of people with resistance and blocks.

So I want to thank you for listening to this presentation, and if you have any questions beyond the time that we have here, you can always reach me at this E-mail address. And this Web site. Thank you.

>> LISA DAMICO: So with that, we are going to open it up to questions from the audience. We have some that came in through the registration process, but feel free to type any questions you might want to ask Shaqe into the question pane, and I will share those with her.

So our first question comes from Robin. If you're teaching a group of seniors, none of whom feels confident or has art training, is it helpful to tell a story of overcoming one's own resistance?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: I think so. I think being honest about your own resistance becomes really helpful. I think that's part of the problem with this is when you're going to a classroom, none of this is talked about, resistance, and how do you work with a blank page. So addressing that seems to me like a better direction. So I think -- I think there's ways to go about it, but I think that would be a really valuable thing.

>> LISA DAMICO: I'm trying to go full screen and it blocked me out.

What are some ways to find an artist mentor?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Well, first of all, I would suggest that you look for somebody that fits well for you. Do they have the things that you're looking for? Do you respect their work? Are they open about their own resistance? One of the places that you can go to is the creative Coaching Association, that has lists of different type of creative coaches and mentors, and I'm listed on there as well. But you really do want to -- what you can even do is try out some different coaches or mentors and just see -- ask some questions to see if you're a good fit.

>> LISA DAMICO: Great. What are your recommendations for those who are stuck creating art with the same subject matter? How can they move forward?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Well, the first thing that I would say is research. You need to see -- being stuck, imagine you're in a box in a way because you're doing the same thing, so you need to do research of maybe interests that you have. I do a lot of reading. I pick -- I just have a lot of -- I just open up a lot of different openings so that it affects my creativity. So in a lot of ways, if you can experiment. So, like, even choosing a different subject matter that you would normally not pick, and just see what that does. And then continue to do research. I just can't emphasize how research really helps. And that can be through the drawing experience, or through reading, talking to other artists as well.

>> LISA DAMICO: Our next question comes from Jocelyn. What suggestions do you have for reluctant students who are new to the creative artistic process?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Well, I would say that scaffolding would be important. So this is where you have an idea of where you want to take somebody, but you find the steps that are really small at first. So the idea is if you can start with something that is real accessible, and then you build from there, but you do it in incremental steps, and that will actually build confidence. I've done that with a client of mine who had no art background before, and I would just have her mess with color at first. And then I would slowly teach her different things. So you really want to do the incremental part so that people build confidence.

>> LISA DAMICO: And this is something that I always get asked. Will there be access to both the PowerPoint, as well as the ability to listen to the webinar once again? And yes, everyone who's registered for the webinar will get an automatically generated E-mail with a link to the recording. That will go out about an hour after this webinar finishes airing, and then within a week, I will send out an E-mail with a packet that has the transcript, a copy of the PowerPoint, and that excerpt from Shaqe's book.

All right. Our next question. Can you talk a little bit about work rhythms and professional demands?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Okay. You know, a lot of this, my coaching work, is asking a lot of questions back to the question that someone asked, and, you know, for me, I'd want to know more about a person's profession and how it's interfering with someone's rhythms, or is -- creative rhythms. And so those are some of the things that I'd like to know, but I'll tell you just a general thing, is that there needs to be more boundaries between some professional work versus maybe creative work that

is separate. And so sort of, sometimes, like even for myself, if I'm working on a project, I will close it out -- I'll put it away when I'm working on something else. So that's what is important is the idea of creating boundaries.

>> LISA DAMICO: Great. Our next question is -- I just saw one that I liked. How does an art teacher overcome fears of people who are too afraid of failure to even join a simple beginner's art class?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: I think it goes back to getting people acquainted with art. If they are just beginners, that just means that they really need to just dabble with it a little bit rather than getting in to specific techniques. So this is some of the problem that I see is somebody goes to a drawing class, and they're asked to draw a still life. And that's just -- that's not a starter method, so more of a starter method would be working with lines and shapes going -- to making something much easier and much more palatable for a beginner.

>> LISA DAMICO: Our next question comes from Anita. What advice would you give for career burnout after 30 years as a visual artist?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: That's a good question. I work with a lot of people that sort of -- you know, the thing is, a lot of times you can develop patterns of the way that you work, and it can get sort of narrow after a while. It might be effective for a long period of time, but you have to always reinvent yourself. So I would suggest that you need to reinvent yourself in some way. Whether you explore another art domain or something else. See, this is where I think research again becomes really important, or having -- even having hobbies, because then you have a couple different interests that really will infuse your creativity in a lot of ways. But that's a good one.

>> LISA DAMICO: Definitely good tips. Our next question is from Martha. I think the common definition of creative block is an internal block that sort of freezes your process. You point out that blocks are resistance are probably more often external. This is a valuable point. For performing artists, often money to create the work is the most difficult one. Can you talk about this?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Well, with the money end of it, I think I don't have a good answer for that, because I think there's many ways to go about the money, and I really don't want to get into that topic right now, because it's -- again, I would suggest the person doing some research on different approaches to make money for your artistic work. For myself, I'm really using the internet, and I have a mentor as far as with the internet as well. So marketing using that approach. But it's too broad right now for me to talk about.

>> LISA DAMICO: Thank you. This next one I feel like I personally struggle with. I think it's a common one. Sometimes having too many creative options or choices can be distracting and are overwhelming. What would you recommend?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Can you repeat that question again?

>> LISA DAMICO: Sure. Sometimes having too many creative options or choices can be distracting or overwhelming. What would you recommend?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Well, I would say that part of the problem is your macro view isn't developed enough. By having too many choices, you're going in a lot of different directions, and it's not a bad thing. But at some point, you're going to have to really fine tune your direction because you can't do everything. And so really, getting a big picture of a direction of where you're going, then you're going to be making better choices that fit that direction.

>> LISA DAMICO: I think especially in this day and age of the internet and constantly being connected, we see all of those options.

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Yes. Exactly. True. Very true.

>> LISA DAMICO: So I think this will be our last question. I am a visual artist, and finding with many challenges as I have recently turned 65, am semi-retired, and have always looked forward to this time of life to spend more time in the studio. Now that this time has come, I feel my creative process is stuck. Do you have any tips for getting started or moving beyond that?

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Yeah. And I see this happen a lot, is that when people retire, they have all this open time, and they're thinking, oh, I'm just going to work in the studio, and it's great. I have all the time that I need. And the problem is that it's too much open time and there wasn't enough prep beforehand. So I just wanted to say that I work with clients now who I worked with before they retire to ease them off. But I would suggest the same thing for you, is that you work in incremental steps. So what I'm talking about is figuring out how much time you can spend on something. So if you can, like, taking 20 minutes in the morning five days a week, and just defining what you're doing. See, a lot of this creativity, there's so many choices that you can go, and it's all open-ended, and then you're stuck with the introverted space that you might be in. So I would suggest is to break down that tool, small steps to really break down what you want to do and to find some time.

>> LISA DAMICO: Wonderful. Well, with that, I want to thank you, Shaqe. You've given so many great tips and stories. I

think everyone who's been on the webinar today will definitely take something valuable away from this.

>> SHAQE KALAJ: Well, thank you. I was very pleased to share this topic. It's definitely a lot of research that I've put into it.

>> LISA DAMICO: Thank you. And with that, I would like to ask you, our webinar participants, to remain on the webinar a few moments longer and complete a short evaluation survey that will open when you close the window. I definitely read through all of your responses, share them with our presenters so that we can ensure that we have the best webinar series possible for you all.

So thank you for joining us today. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to reach out to me, Lisa Damico, at [lvdamicoatkennedy-center.org](mailto:lvdamicoatkennedy-center.org). And I hope to see you all next month. Thank you. Good-bye.