

The Emergence of Meaning
from Observations
of Studio Mass Accumulation

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Abstract

The work of every artist is to rearrange the materials available in his or her environment in some significant and meaningful way. But if the artist's work boils down to the selective rearrangement of familiar and pedestrian materials, what is it that distinguishes the artist from the non-artist? Are there observable and measurable differences between the ways the artist and the non-artist work? Is it possible to identify objective predictors of artistic creativity through observations of the artist's process?

During a five-month period the artist recorded the weight of everything that entered or exited his studio: art supplies, full soda cans, empty stomachs—in; trash, full bladders, curbside recycling—out. About a dozen mass, time, and lexicographic parameters were defined and calculated from the observed quantities. When presented in a multivariate color foldout chart, these parameters hint at an underlying structure and meaning not immediately apparent from the raw source data.

To maximize the scientific authority of this study, metric units, the passive voice, and specious equations were liberally used.