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## Viewpoint 2: Arts Reflecting Living Systems

By Nik Dee Dahlstrom



Dear reader, breeder, breathe..... before you do anything..... just take a pause.....  
breathe! Seriously, I mean it! Take a big breath in..... and out.....  
No cheating!! ;-)

Now hold your breath and read the following sentence:

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,  
but by the moments that take our breath away.*

*Quotation attributed to a wide variety of people<sup>1</sup>*

Now please, ;- ) don't forget to start breathing again.

This article is a 'breathing & breeding' exercise. The latter in the context of 'giving birth' to a reflection on a reflecting system. And then to take action; artistic action in the living system of our cultural heritage. Feeling lost? Don't worry! Just take my hand and:  
Take a chance,

                    come and dance,  
                                    in order to enhance  
  your co-creation of the mirroring aspect of this  
point of view – I can't do it without you; dance with the words as leaves in the wind.

*Dancing leaves*  
Your juicy, textured,  
heart of green makes a  
pretty nature scene. Dancing  
all around the trees in  
the soft wind's  
whispering  
breeze

Angela Yardy<sup>2</sup>

You see, this viewpoint is titled  
'Arts reflecting living systems'

but could equally have been called:

'Living systems reflecting Arts'.

It's a playful transdisciplinary attempt to capture but a glimpse as a gentle reminder that the world of creative arts is filled with living systems of all kinds. As an article, it is rather an art-tickle aiming to be 'arterate' as well as literate; a transforming transformer or 'trans-reader' that instead of context has an 'artext' and therefore is coined 'artextual'<sup>TM</sup>. It is a text that is expanding or rather 'artspanding' outside its very own format. You can either read this viewpoint as a pure text in 15 min or follow the many [blue hyperlinks to videos](#), read shape poems etc. and spend 45 min. So please (and I'm addressing your inner child now) come and play with me! Come and dance with your inner child as captured so well by J.T. & Robert and their [mirror dance](#).

And be kind to yourself, remember that 'what goes around – comes around' also works in its positive aspect.

GOES AROUND...  
WHAT COMES  
AROUND BACK

Artist unknown.<sup>3</sup>

In order to make sense I want to take you through some of our senses and try to be both sensitive and, why not – sensational.

Now close your eyes ... and read on – switch on the inner eye; your artistic eye!

What is art? Is it a product, originated in the mind of its creator/s or as received in the eye of the beholder? As often stated: Art is not what you see but what you make others see.

Art  
is not  
what you see but  
what you  
make others  
see.

Art  
is not  
what you see but  
what you  
make others  
see.

Nik DD <sup>4</sup>

Is ART an abbreviation, and if so for what? Artistic Relief Technology, Age Refining Technique, Awareness Responsibility Technique, or when reflecting living systems; Artificial Reproduction Technique? Or is it simply the products of human creativity?

Looking from an individual perspective. Is the artist a special kind of person or rather is each person a special kind of artist? As Picasso once put it: 'Every child is an artist.' and thus art is a core component of the unique potential within each of us.

Looking from a global perspective – would the world at large make any sense without it?  
The 'earth' without 'art' is just 'eh'.

**Impressions of a leaf**  
*By: Tyler Pedersen ©2011*

A  
leaf  
floats  
freely by  
its thin edges  
collide onto cement  
cell walls shaking briefly  
chloroplast pigments recoil  
dendritic veins drained of color  
sickly stomata, gang green stem  
passing pedestrians, footprints  
flatten and crunch cuticles  
musty, earthworm scent  
rises from the dirt  
decay ensues  
adding  
form  
to  
E  
A  
R  
T  
H

Tyler C. Pedersen <sup>5</sup>

## The linked play on interplay

Or in looking in the mirror, as in the chosen viewpoint here, I cannot avoid the fact of my artistic background in *the performing arts – music & drama* and quote one of my late and sad to say, never to have met soul mates, W. Shakespeare. 'The object of art is to give life shape.' and 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women are merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages.' So, I've invited two of my inner characters in a scripted dialogue on how performing arts and film interplay with living systems. The many video links Mr Drama and Ms Music refer to are all little moments that can take your breath away. These links are also listed at the end of this viewpoint.

### (Entrance)

#### Mr Drama:

Each theatre ensemble and crew is like a big family sharing the stories of human interactions.  
Performing arts is a living system reflecting a living system.

#### Ms Music:

Yea, it is a collective process where the separate entities play their parts in order to contribute to the whole.

#### Mr Drama:

You mean also like in a film production!?

#### Ms Music:

I mean, as in the orchestra.  
Have a look at what happens when this little girl gives a coin to a street musician and gets the best surprise in return. It's such an [Ode to Joy](#).

#### Mr Drama:

Ah good teamwork! How then does that compare with living systems as artistic monograms presented by the single artist?  
Like this TALE-O-GRAM Nik made on the meaning of life titled [The Broken Mirror](#).

#### Ms Music:

Well a single performer can make an equally strong statement on our living system, while still being part of it or even performing in it. Watch Ludovico Einaudi adding his voice to those of eight million demanding [protection of the Arctic](#).

**Mr Drama:**

Nice one! Or this classic, following the theme of mirrors, telling a story of [the man in the mirror](#), visualized not by performing but through powerful images of human ills in the world and leaders willing to 'make that change'.

**Ms Music:**

Mmm, and this [emotional piece](#) of music also by Einaudi mainly presenting living systems in nature.

**Mr Drama:**

And here's another staged cross media narrative on the ['Love of Life'](#) by Sand Artist Kseniva Simonova.

**Ms Music:**

Yes, life can be very fragile. Often captured in poetry.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops at all...

*Emily Dickinson*

**Mr Drama:**

Ahh! and mentioning feathers, if the object of art is to give life shape perhaps this [well-balanced performance](#) by Miyoki Shida makes us better understand the fragility of an interconnected living system.

**Ms Music:**

In music terms Bach and his fugues are good examples of interconnectedness. Musical themes that imitate and repeat themselves. Here in ["Little" Fugue in G minor](#) animated in order to visualize how the 4 parts playfully dance together.

**(Exit, and pulling myself together)**

This last digital visualization brings me to the point of new technology. We have seen the digital natives fully enter a new era of interaction with the audience where the borderline between arts and entertainment become hard to separate. Computer games working hard to be accepted within the definition of ARTS. In Virtual Reality 'VR' we become totally immersed and surrounded by the experience – we even create virtual 'art-ificial' living social systems; complete worlds where we can live as avatars and double identity – is that then art or a living system? Computers, as we know them today, are already doomed and very soon to be replaced by VR and AR (Augmented Reality) devices. Here is a film VR version on living system ['Virtual Nature 360'](#). If you follow this link on your phone, ideally using VR-glasses. You can spin around and become part of this living system. In the next clip you can see how two living systems, that would naturally never meet, are artfully enabled to interact with each other by the use of AR. ['BBC Frozen Planet'](#) at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

So, is the meeting of the creator and receiver a passive or active one or even interactive and collaboratory? And in a world of new technology, what is that artistic reflection versus reality, versus virtual reality, versus augmented reality?

These are a few questions that I leave as food for thought. Though still being very aware of my limitations within this 'wordy' format. Art, as here presented in an art-icle, forming nouns which were originally diminutives; a fickle attempt at capturing arts in words knowing that *Arts speak where words are unable to explain*. So how then can words, put in a viewpoint, do justice to its very subject? Well, we will have to live with that challenge and see where this journey or rather mirrored piece of 'art' i.e. 'travel' between life and death will take us.

Still breathing?



Good – then on we go!

## Travelling between Life & Death

Life

TRAVEL

Part of the cool thing in the creative process is that it really is real creation, that is, it has the ability to change and transform, to start up processes with creators as well as those who are the recipients. Not least, the verbal and written language has a strongly transformational power – through words, pronounced as well as put in thought. Hence shaping our own lives and influencing our fellow human beings in one way or another.

All kinds of creativity are powerful languages with which we can express ourselves and communicate who we are as well as meet

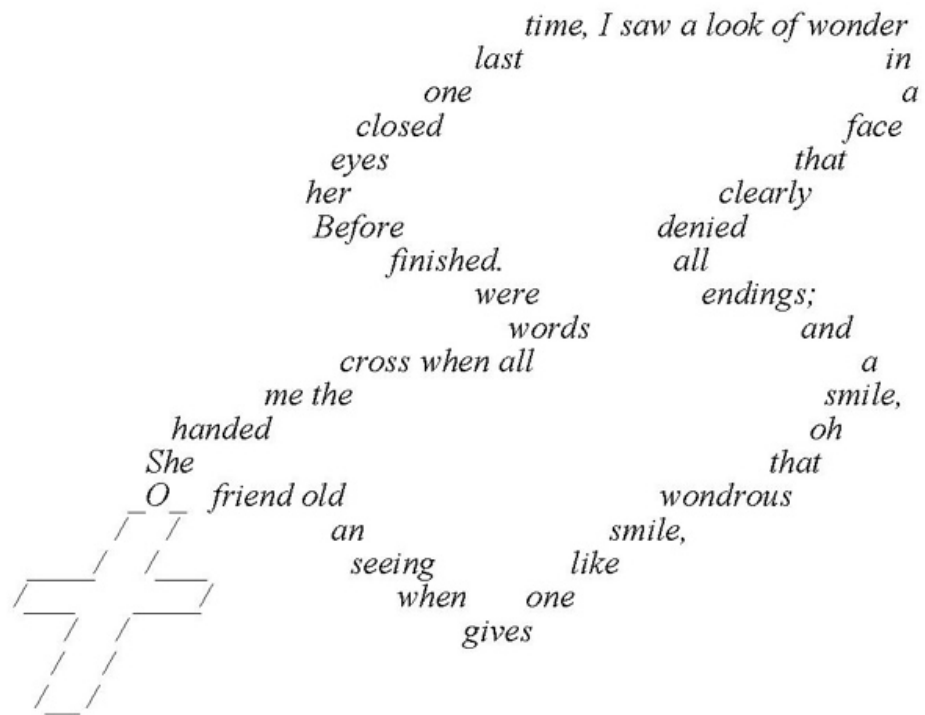
beyond common language boundaries. The art leaves clear impetus in human living systems, both for the individual and for the larger society, and is as crucial for our well-being.

It is therefore not just the art that reflects living systems, but also the opposite. Just as these mirrored word-images are bi-directional, the relationship between art and living systems is two things that belong to some kind of back and forth breathing symbiosis, rather than just a one-sided mirroring from one to the other. This topic named 'mimesis and anti-mimesis' goes, as follows below, way back in time.

Death

*Life/death Ambigram<sup>6</sup>  
Travel Ambigram<sup>7</sup>*

## Cross



John Ecko <sup>8</sup>







system are interconnected as a symbiotic breathing rather than one-way mirroring of the other.

*Seed of life*<sup>11</sup>

## Our cultural heritage: where the past meets the future...

2018 is labelled as the year of European Cultural heritage. Celebrating the past to build the future – discover what is cultural heritage and why it is important.

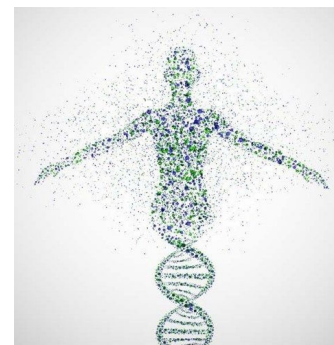
Cultural heritage has a universal value for us as individuals, communities and societies. It is important to preserve it and to pass it on to future generations.

Through cherishing our cultural heritage, we can discover our diversity and start an inter-cultural conversation about what we have in common. So, what better way to enrich our lives than by interacting with something so central to who we are?

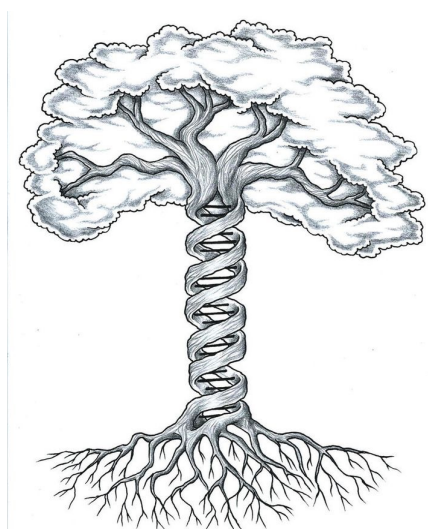
*Unknown artist*<sup>12</sup>

You may think of heritage as being 'from the past' or static, but it actually evolves through our engagement with it. What is more, our heritage has a big role to play in building the future of Europe. That is one reason why the initiative of European Cultural Heritage Year wants to reach out to young people in particular.

Cultural heritage shapes our identities and everyday lives. It surrounds us in Europe's towns and cities, natural landscapes and archaeological sites. It is not only found in literature, art and objects, but also in the crafts we learn from our ancestors, the stories we tell our children, the food we enjoy in company and the films we watch and recognize ourselves in.



*Artist unknown*<sup>13</sup>



Throughout 2018, we will celebrate our diverse cultural heritage across Europe – at EU, national, regional and local level. The aim of the European Year of Cultural Heritage is to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage, and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. The slogan for the year is: *Our heritage: where the past meets the future.*

*LaTay D. Harris*<sup>14</sup>

## To conclude

Dear reader, dear creature, creative, co-creator being part of this specific living system and network; the learning towards well-being.

Still breathing?



I jolly well hope so because now it's over to you!

I am about to end but the end is, as always, the beginning of something else and that else is you. I hand over the relay stick and challenge you. My reflection is reflecting in you – in the eye of the beholder. My food for thought is digesting in you. Thank you for breathing with me, for holding my hand and dancing with me.

My humble aim with this viewpoint, as part of your learning for well-being, is to awaken and art-tickle your creativity as a co-creator of our living present cultural heritage and hence invite you to join the year of European Cultural heritage. The year of European Cultural heritage is not time limited to 2018 but rather the kick-off for further development and knowledge sharing on how we can all be part of building cultural bridges and trust across the world's divides. Let's merge with the symbiotic breathing of the arts and our living systems in order to deal with our current challenges making our place on earth a better place for all. Once again remembering that the 'earth' without 'art' is just 'eh'.

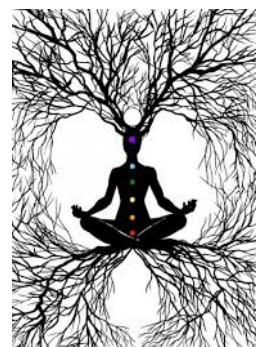


My current work is an officially labelled project as part of the Year of European Cultural Heritage called ['A Viking Princess at the Kings Table'](#)

Please have a look at this video introduction.

It is a cross-border and cross-cultural stage craft/film collaboration in Northern Europe where our aim is to become inspired by historical living systems and find solutions for challenges in our life today. Main target group: youth.

Vincent Ramirez<sup>15</sup>



Dear reader, breeder, breather – just take a final pause – breathe!  
Take another big breath in..... and out.....

Now hold your breath and read the following sentence once again:

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,  
but by the moments that take our breath away.*

Let's create those magic moments – together!

Nik Dee Dahlstrom



Tattoo template <sup>16</sup>

 Initiatives of Change – Sweden

PS – as part of our co-creation – any reflection of the above would be most appreciated –  
please forward to [nikdeedahlstrom@gmail.com](mailto:nikdeedahlstrom@gmail.com)

## Author

Nik Dee Dahlstrom is a Youth & Child Specialist, Culture & Health Manager and Head of Communication at Initiatives of Change – Sweden, with a background as Transmedia Producer, Performing Arts Director, Pedagog, Actor and Writer.

Nik has a special interest in transmedia and the art of storytelling as means of well-being and finding one's unique potential. This includes a special focus on Healing Stories for the little child that resides in us all, regardless of age. His main work is in Swedish and English. Nik is also *Chief in Editor* and member of the European Cultural Parliament (ECP).

Lin Hai Wen <sup>17</sup>

To  
think  
in only  
two colors:  
Black and  
White. To be oblivious  
others. only black. or  
shallow or deep, high  
or fight I only think in  
Have you finished your  
Then you must not have  
at all. How was your  
No? Then it must  
much have been quite  
ball. I ask what color  
grass If not green, then it  
be red. I ask how your mother  
not well, she must be dead. What is  
2 equivalent to? If not 4 then  
be minus 4. Is it  
love and adore? If not, then I  
one you abhor. I think in two  
both length and width. Depth  
myth. Like a paper I have  
see just one face Its blank stare is one you  
if I had finished the job halfway and my day  
grass looks like a dead yellow and I hear  
mellow. What if one had changed divid-  
lover, we were just friends. These are  
life. This is where identity and variety  
cerulean, and deep pink. Ecru, flam ingo, indigo and pitch  
like ink. Do not think there is just wr ong and right For we  
cannot think in only black and white. Do not fall  
for any extremist propaganda. For we are not as

to all  
white. Or  
or low, agree  
black or white.  
job? No?  
even tried  
day? Terrible?  
very  
the  
is the  
must  
is? If  
8 over  
it must  
me that you  
must be the  
dimensions I see  
is a mystery To me, a  
but two sides. Each time you  
cannot erase. BUT! what  
had just been okay. The  
your mother feels quite  
ends And rather than  
the truly unique colors of  
are rife. With amethyst, bronze,  
Ecru, flam ingo, indigo and pitch  
is just wr ong and right For we  
and white. Do not fall  
For we are not as

monochrome as an innocent small panda.

## Video links

- 1) Bach, "Little" Fugue in G minor, Organ  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddbxFi3-UO4>
- 2) Ludovico Einaudi performs an original piece "Elegy for the Arctic",  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DLnhdnSUVs&t=41s>
- 3) Ludovico Einaudi – Nuvole Bianche [HD]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcihcYEOeic>
- 4) Man in the mirror  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PivWY9wn5ps>
- 5) So you think you can dance – original version  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT2U-QKgZXk>
- 6) Love of life  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9Yq9T9oH10>
- 7) Feather balance act  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6rX1AEi57c>
- 8) A Little Girl Gives Coins to a Street Musician  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj6r3-sQr58>
- 9) DEE TALES no. 3 The Broken Mirror TALE-O-GRAM  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2NgU22vuG4>
- 10) Virtual Nature 360° - 5K Nature Meditation for Gear VR  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AkbUfZjS5k>
- 11) BBC Frozen Planet Augmented Reality - created by INDE  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fv71Pe9kTU0>
- 12) 'A Viking Princess at the Kings Table'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMCY-PVC0T0&feature=youtu.be>

## References

\*<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia on mimesis and anti-mimesis.

### Quotes & images

<sup>1</sup> Life is not measured...

Quotation attributed to a wide variety of people see: <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/12/17/breaths/>

<sup>2</sup> OK [Dancing Leaves – shape poem] [image] ©2012 Angela Yardy, at Angelas Poems. Retrieved from: <http://angelaspoesms.com/uncategorized/dancing-leaves/>

<sup>3</sup> [What goes around-shape poem] [image] Artist unknown – common use.

<sup>4</sup> [Eyes shape poem] [image] Nik Dee.

<sup>5</sup> [Impressions of a leaf – shape poem] [image] ©2013 Tyler C. Pedersen, The Ancient Eavesdropper. Retrieved from: <https://tylerpedersen02.wordpress.com/2013/03/28/impressions-of-a-leaf-2/>

<sup>6</sup> [Life/death Ambigram] [image] CC. Retrieved from: [https://www.ebay.com/itm/Life-Death-Very-Cool-memorial-Decal-JDM-Race-window-Car-laptop-/301507225261?\\_ul=CO](https://www.ebay.com/itm/Life-Death-Very-Cool-memorial-Decal-JDM-Race-window-Car-laptop-/301507225261?_ul=CO)

<sup>7</sup> [Foot-shape poem] [image] (artist unknown). Retrieved from: <https://fv4th.weebly.com/poetry.html>

<sup>8</sup> OK [Cross-shape poem] [image] Copyright © 2008 By kind permission John Ecko. All rights reserved. Retrieved from: <https://highway316.wordpress.com/category/concrete-poetry/>

<sup>9</sup> [True/False Ambigram] [image] John Langdon. Retrieved from: <http://www.anopticalillusion.com/2012/12/truefalse-ambigram-by-john-langdon/>

<sup>10</sup> [Ying/Yang concrete poem] [image] Julian Sterling. Retrieved from: <https://benesteiman.wordpress.com/concrete-poem/>

<sup>11</sup> [Seed of life] [image] CC. Retrieved from: <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/65443000813074739/>



<sup>12</sup> [Foot - shape poem] [image] (artist unknown). Retrieved from: <https://fv4th.weebly.com/poetry.html>

<sup>13</sup> [Human DNA] [digital art] Artist unknown – closest found ref is the human genome project. Retrieved from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_Genome\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Genome_Project)

<sup>14</sup> [Tree of Life] [digital art] ©2012-2018 BlvqWulph By kind permission of LaTay D. Harris. Retrieved from: <https://toecutter2428.deviantart.com/art/Tree-Of-Life-286981784>

<sup>15</sup> [Tree of life] [image] Vincent Ramirez. Retrieved from: <http://mysticalwillows.com/tree-meditation/>

<sup>16</sup> [Heart initials tattoo design] [image] CC. Retrieved from: <https://TattooTribes.com>

<sup>17</sup> [Black and White Panda-shape poem] [image] Lin Hai Wen. Retrieved from: <http://artmotionstudio84.com/kaligrami-kogato-dumite-riisuvat/>