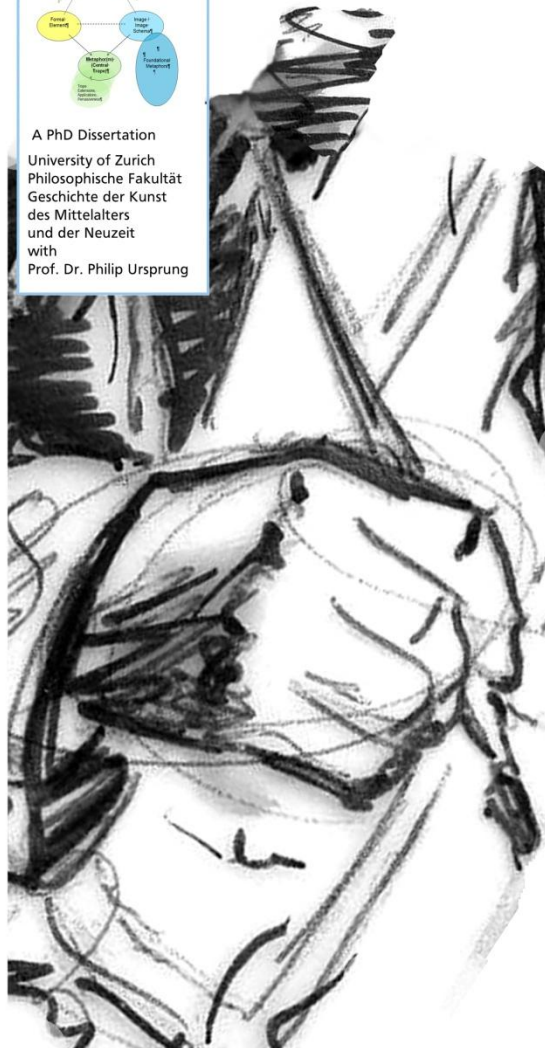


Engaging a Theory of Central Trope in Art
by Mark Staff Brandl



Engaging a Theory of Central Trope in Art

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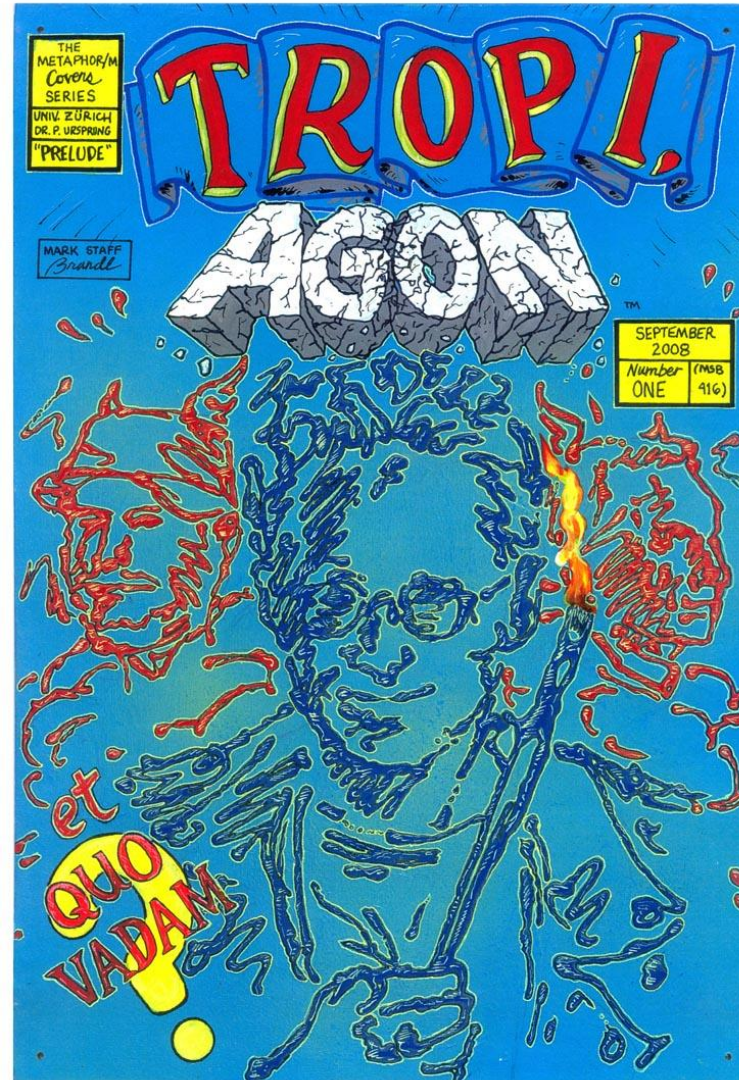
Metaphor(m) = Metaphor + (Meta-) Form

Metaphor(m) = Metapher + (Meta-) Form

- Dr Brandl's book, titled *Metaphor(m): Engaging a Theory of Central Trope in Art*, presents and embodies his thesis that the formal, technical and stylistic aspects of artists' approaches concretely manifest content in culturally and historically antithetical ways through a uniquely discovered trope.
- His philosophy, termed *metaphor(m)* or *the theory of central trope*, is grounded in conceptual metaphor and cognitive science, particularly that of George Lakoff, as well as Harold Bloom's idea of poetic misprision.
- Brandl's concept is applied to painting, installation art, electronic media, the expanded text concept, art history timeline models, comics, and artistic cultural inheritance. This dissertation is in the traditional form of a book, but with the addition of paintings and sections in sequential comic form as well as an actual installation comprised largely of paintings.

- Dr Brandls Buch, mit dem Titel *Metaphor(m): zur Theorie der Kernmetapher in der Kunst*, entwirft und verkörpert seiner These, dass Kunstschaaffende in den formalen, technischen und stilistischen Aspekten ihrer gestalterischen Schaffensprozesse besondere Tropen oder Metaphern entdecken, die antithetisch auf kulturelle und historische Ausdrucksformen reagieren.
- Brandls Theorie stützt sich auf eine lange Reihe wissenschaftlicher Untersuchungen zur konzeptuellen Metaphorik (allen voran die Arbeiten der Kognitionswissenschaftler George Lakoff) sowie auf Harold Blooms Traditionstheorie und dessen Aufsätze zur "kreativen Fehl-Lektüre" (*poetic misprision*).
- Brandls Theorie der Kernmetapher wird auf die Malerei, Installation Kunst, elektronische Medien, das Konzept des erweiterten Textbegriffs, Zeitleisten der Kunstgeschichte, Comics und künstlerisches Kulturerbe angewandt. Die Dissertation erscheint in traditioneller Buchform, enthält aber zahlreiche Bilder und Zeichnungen, Abschnitte in sequenzieller Comicform sowie eine mehrheitlich aus gemalten Bildern bestehende Installation.

How I came to it!



How I came to it!

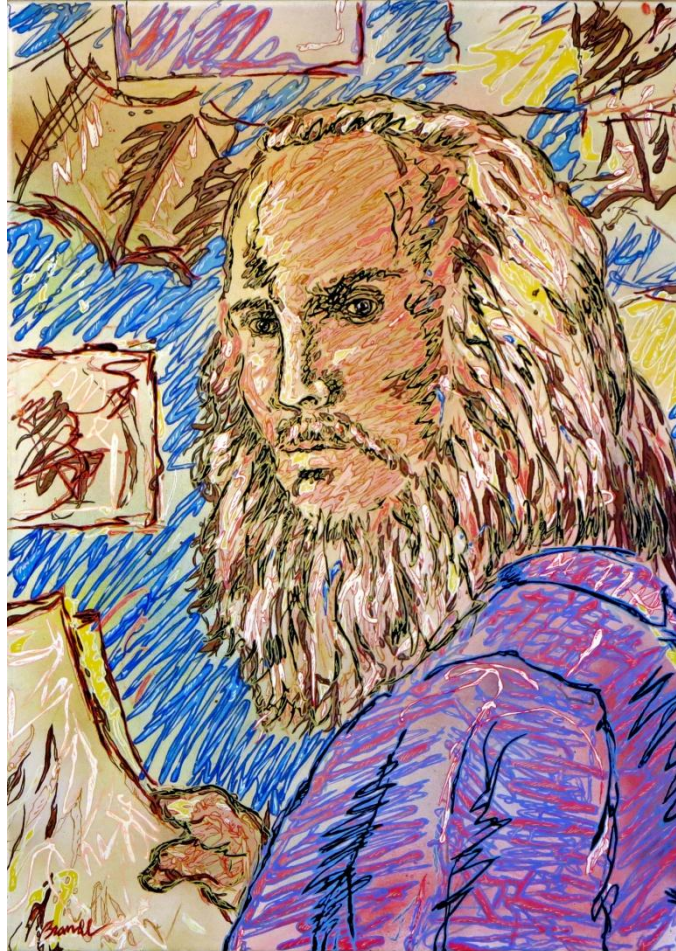
- **A Personal Beginning**
- early 1980s **Modernism** coming to a close.
- *Postmodernism* begins
- Poststructuralism, mostly Deconstructivism slowly **hegemonic**, --- still now
- Opportunity to seek new theoretical inspiration, to free oneself of the previously prevailing **Formalism**
- In heated discussions: art was clearly not all about form, creators had something to say, to discover.
- ALSO, art was not all about the inability to say anything
- Jacques Derrida et al., Deconstruction. Still dominates Neo-Conceptualism.
- Metaphor of "text" for all experience, and suggests that there is no possibility of intentional meaning. Nihilistic, solipsistic, and a-political, but important critique.
- What began as a situation promising a possibility for more free artistic play, has unfortunately now become the dominant master of the academy.

- My study of literary theory —defensively, yet also out of enthusiasm.
- Dr Philip Ursprung, Dr Andreas Langlotz
- Ulterior motive theorize myself out of the constraints of theory, fighting fire with fire
- To discover philosophers acknowledged **agency**, not mere symptoms of societal flaws.
- Greatest revelation in cognitive linguistic approach of George Lakoff and others and in the antithetical revisionist theory of Harold Bloom. Combined: accorded with my experience of art and new possibilities for understanding art, its production and its producers.
- Cognitive linguistic theory was first widely introduced in Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* and Lakoff and Mark Turner's *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Bloom presented his theory initially in a trilogy of books beginning with *The Anxiety of Influence*.



Why?

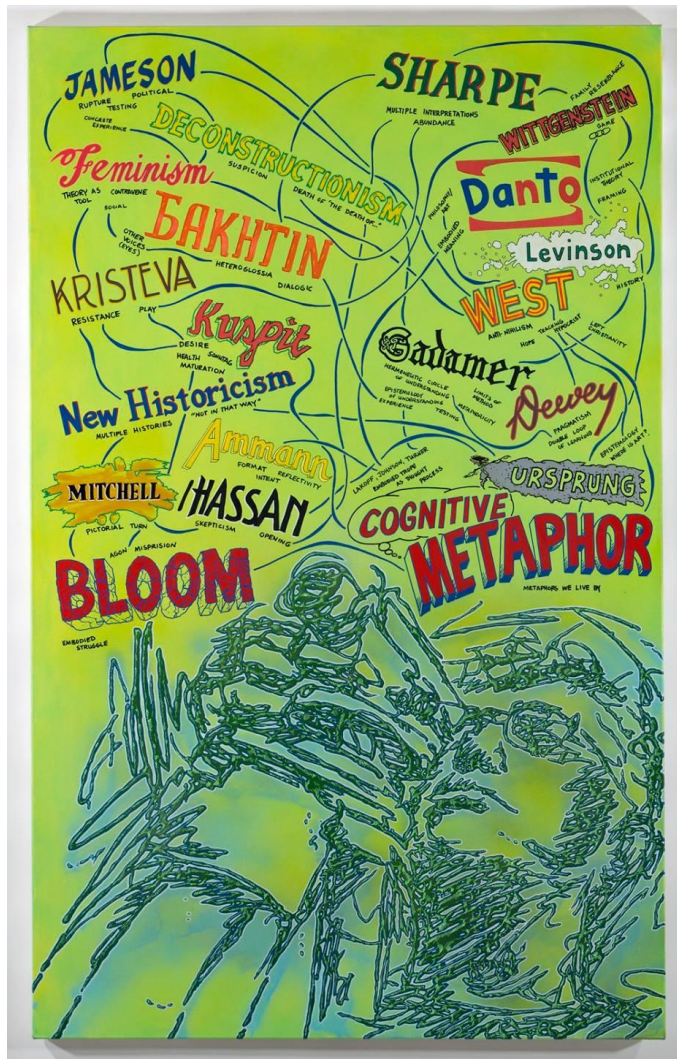
- Own, though radically different, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, Wassily Kandinsky's **personal book of theory**.
- Compared to Kandinsky --- more philosophical and not at all esoteric.
- My mixed and cross-media, personal, equivalent of Tintoretto's *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, "my Sistine Chapel."
- **Pure joy**, difficult reasoning to discover and formulate a serious new perception of art.
- Serve as a **truth and corrective** to current theoretical landscape
- **"Philosophy matters.** It matters more than most people realize, because philosophical ideas that have developed over the centuries enter our culture in the form of a world view and affect us in thousands of ways." --- Lakoff
- **"Philosophie ist von Bedeutung. Mehr als die meisten Leute bewusst ist, weil philosophische Ideen, die über Jahrhunderten entwickelt haben, gehen in unserer Kultur als Weltanschauung ein, und uns in tausend Formen betreffen."** --- Lakoff
- **Understanding** works of art and creative thought processes embodied in them.
- Never forget, **art comes first, theory is secondary.** Yet theorization, close attention, contemplation can help us understand art by ourselves and others, free us from unquestioned notions and inspire us to new works.



The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding. — Leonardo da Vinci

„Das edelste Vergnügen ist die Freude am Verstehen.“ --- Leonardo

Theorists



Embodied Cognition / verkörperte Kognition

Eine These aus der neueren Kognitionswissenschaft, nach der Bewusstsein einen Körper benötigt, also eine physikalische Interaktion voraussetzt. Diese Auffassung ist der klassischen Interpretation des Bewusstseins diametral entgegengesetzt und wird als grundlegende Wende in der Kognitionswissenschaft angesehen.

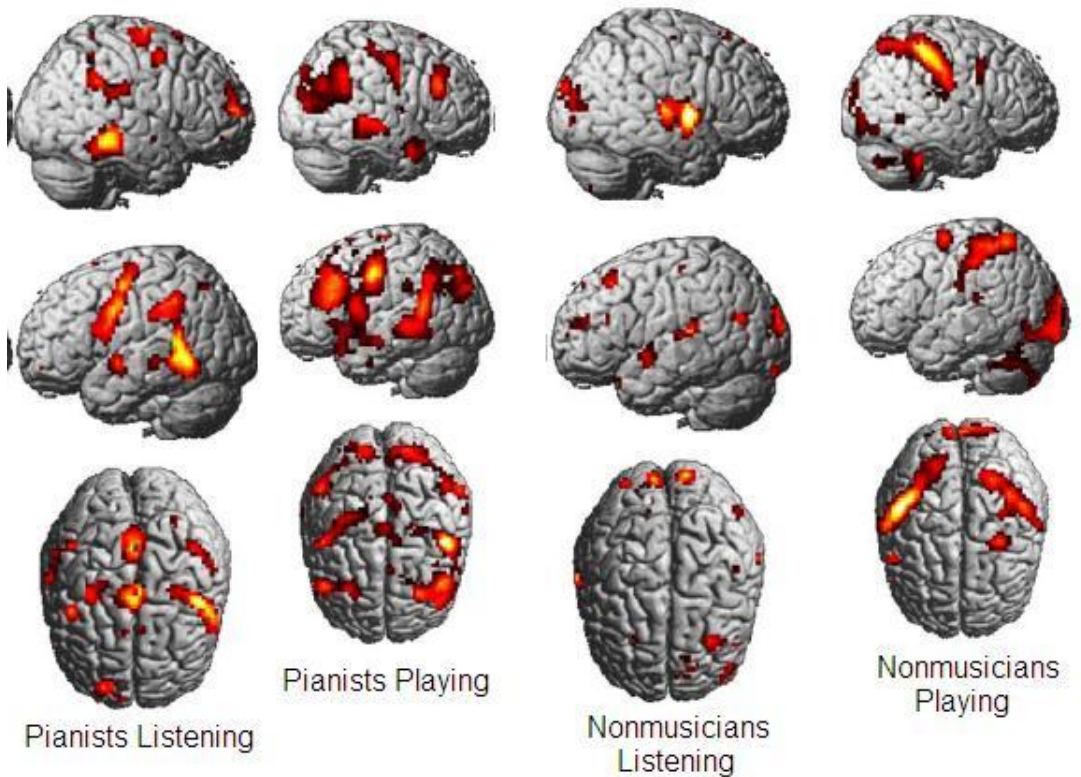
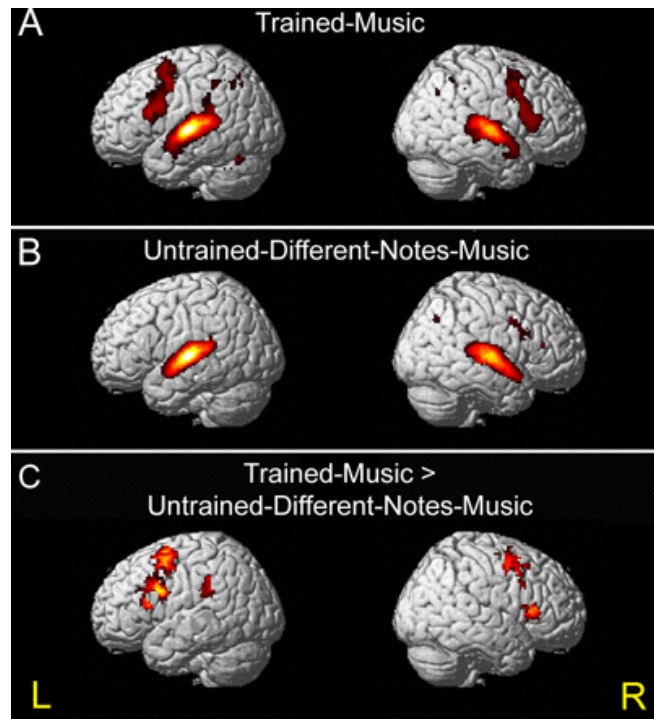
Embodied cognition holds that an agent's cognition is strongly influenced by aspects of an agent's body beyond the brain itself:

MIND = Brain IN Body IN Environment

GEIST = Gehirn IN Körper IN Umwelt

Embodied Cognition / verkörperte Kognition

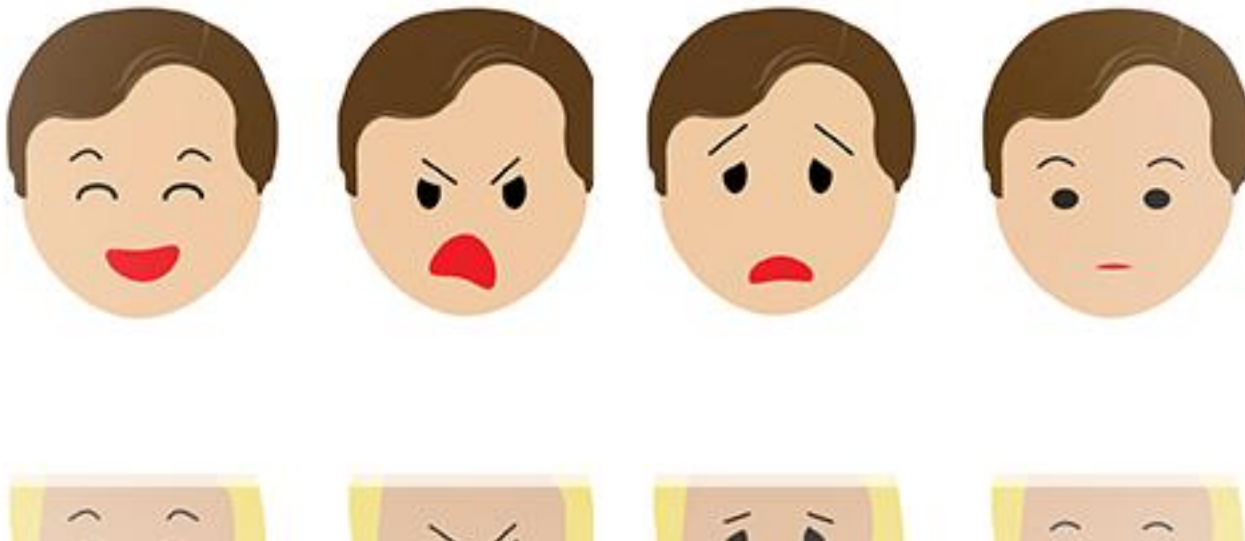
(MRI, etc.)



Embodied Cognition / verkörperte Kognition

All conceptual reasoning comes from abstracting earlier bodily EXPERIENCED action and perception.

Alles konzeptionelle Denkvermögen entsteht aus dem "Abstrahierung" aus früheren körperlich erfahrenen Handlungen und Wahrnehmungen.



Cognitive Metaphor Theory, Lakoff

In cognitive linguistics, **conceptual metaphor**, or **cognitive metaphor**, ---understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another.

Conceptual metaphors in language in our everyday lives, but also shape the way we think and act. Everyday language is filled with metaphors we may not always notice.

Metaphors are matter of **thought** and not merely of language, but of experience: hence CONCEPTUAL and EMBODIED tropes.

LAKOFF (Professor Linguistik an der University of California) und JOHNSON (Professor für Philosophie an der Southern Illinois University) verstehen Metaphern nicht als rhetorisch auffällige Figuren, sondern als alltägliche Sprachbilder, deren metaphorischer Gehalt in der Regel nicht unmittelbar wahrgenommen wird.

Sie vertreten die Auffassung, dass Metaphern nicht nur blosses Beiwerk unserer Alltagssprache sind, sondern dass vielmehr unser gesamtes Denken, Handeln und Sprechen im Alltag wie in der Wissenschaft nach metaphorischen Mustern funktioniert.

In der kognitiven Linguistik werden Metaphern also als eine der wesentlichen Strukturierungen des Denkens angenommen.

Metaphern sind KONZEPTUELL und VERKÖRPERT.

Cognitive Metaphor Theory, Lakoff



Example

See Mark G. Taber's animations at
<http://www.metaphorandart.com/>



AGON, Bloom

Misprision:

Revisionism is central to artistic creativity.

Agon the conflict arising from the anxiety of influence.

Each creator must wrestle with his or her precursors, the ones who inspired them to be artists in the first place.

Creators fence with comparable expressions of similar experiences by their predecessors, therefore primarily with their predecessors' tropes, while also struggling against themselves and previous versions of themselves.

"Strong" creators, as Bloom calls them, form new and independent spots for their creativity in a continuous conflict, which he terms *agon*.

Overly simplistically described, Bloom's theory contends that artists have a central rivalry with the past, with those artists who came before them.

AGON, Bloom

Harold Blooms Traditionstheorie und dessen Aufsätze zur "kreativen Fehl-Lektüre" (*poetic misprision*).

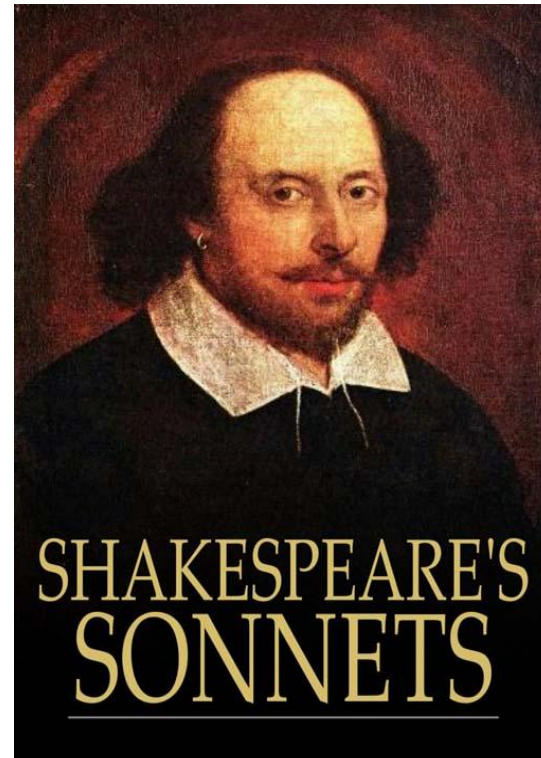
- Die These, dass ein Schriftsteller in seinem Streben nach Originalität stetig versucht, sich von seinen Vorbildern und Einflüssen zu lösen (dieses „Ringens“ heisst *Agon*.)
- Der Künstler (-in) versucht, seinen „geistigen Vorreiter“ zu ersetzen.
- Künstlerinnen und Künstler ringen auch mit sich selbst, und bisheriger „Versionen“ von sich selbst.



struggle /
Ringen



Misprision
/kreative
Fehl-
Verstehen



Agon

Oedipus

tradition and
anti-tradition /



My AGON alteration

Blooms Metapher ist klar Freuds Ödipus-Komplex (1910 CE),
aus Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* (429 BCE).

Aus den Einflüssen von Jazz, Blues, Gospel --- African American
arts --- ändere ich den Figur zu Eshu.

Eshu ist in der Religion der Yoruba und den davon abgeleiteten
afroamerikanischen Religionen der Herr der Straßen, Straßenkreuzungen
und Inspiration.

Seine Hauptfunktionen sind die Vermittlung von Botschaften der
Menschen an die spirituelle Welt. Er gilt als Trickster.

cultural inheritance /

interculturalism



respect



Jacob

Jabbok River



Eshu

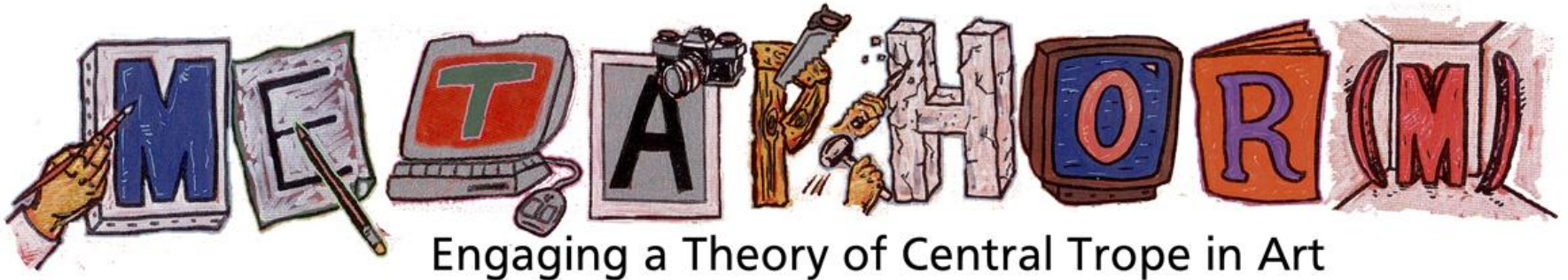
Jabbok-Eshuian agon

call-and-response /



Chronicle / Lacy Atkins





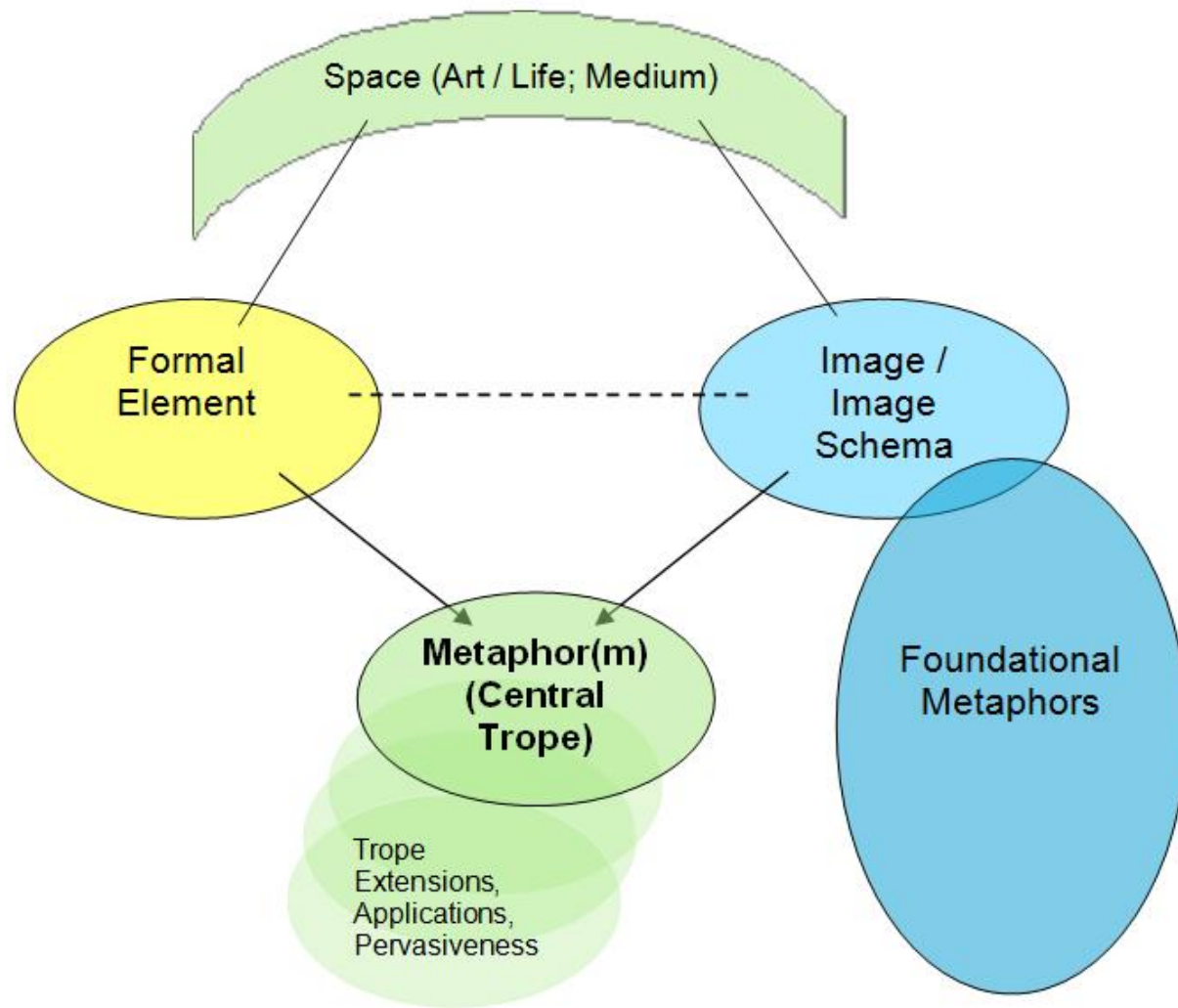
Engaging a Theory of Central Trope in Art

METAPHOR(M)

Metaphor(m): zur Theorie der Kernmetapher in der Kunst, entwirft und verkörpert meiner These, dass Kunstschaffende in den formalen, technischen und stilistischen Aspekten ihrer gestalterischen Schaffensprozesse besondere Tropen oder Metaphern entdecken, die antithetisch auf kulturelle und historische Ausdrucksformen reagieren.

Metaphor(m): Engaging a Theory of Central Trope in Art, presents and embodies my thesis that the formal, technical and stylistic aspects of artists' approaches concretely manifest content in culturally and historically antithetical ways through a uniquely discovered trope.

Chart / Tabelle



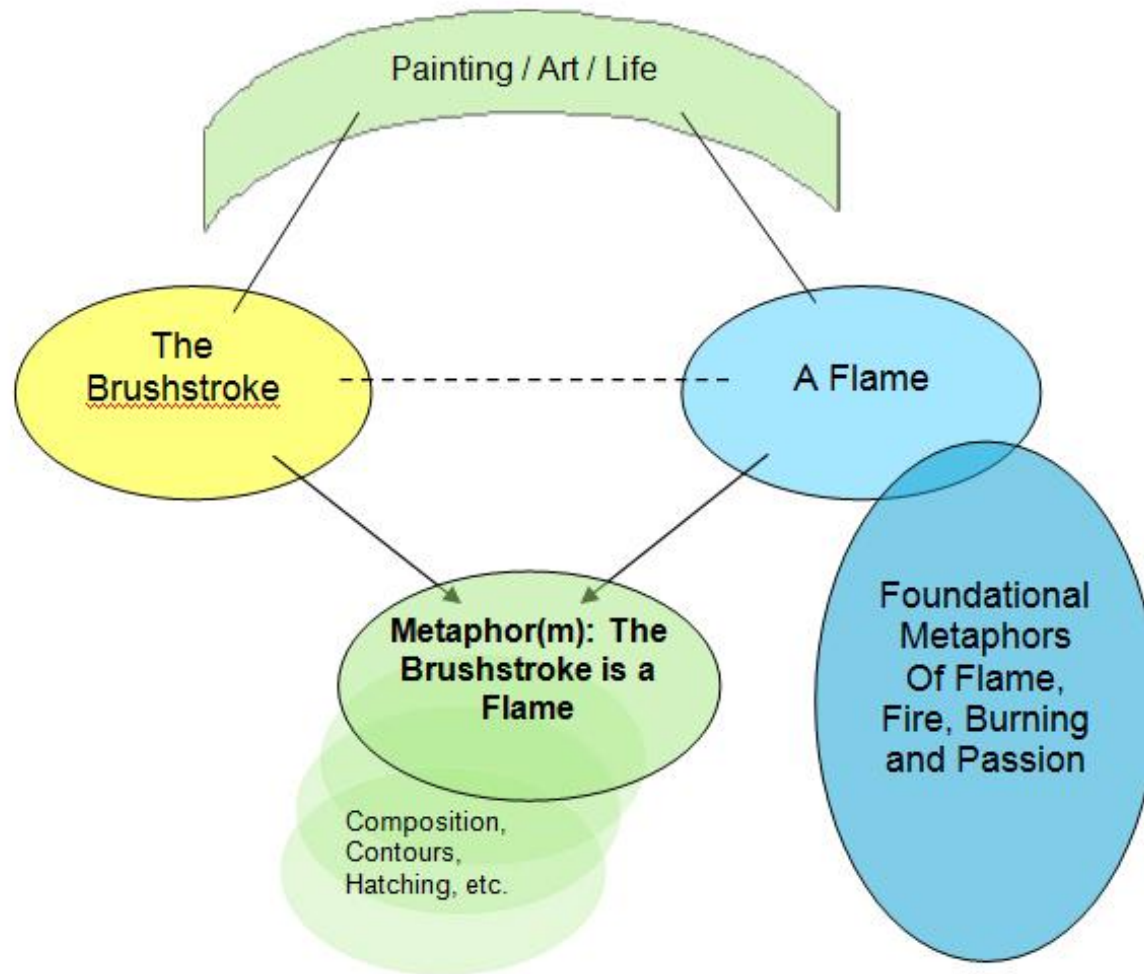
The Chart of Metaphor(m)

Example Vincent van Gogh



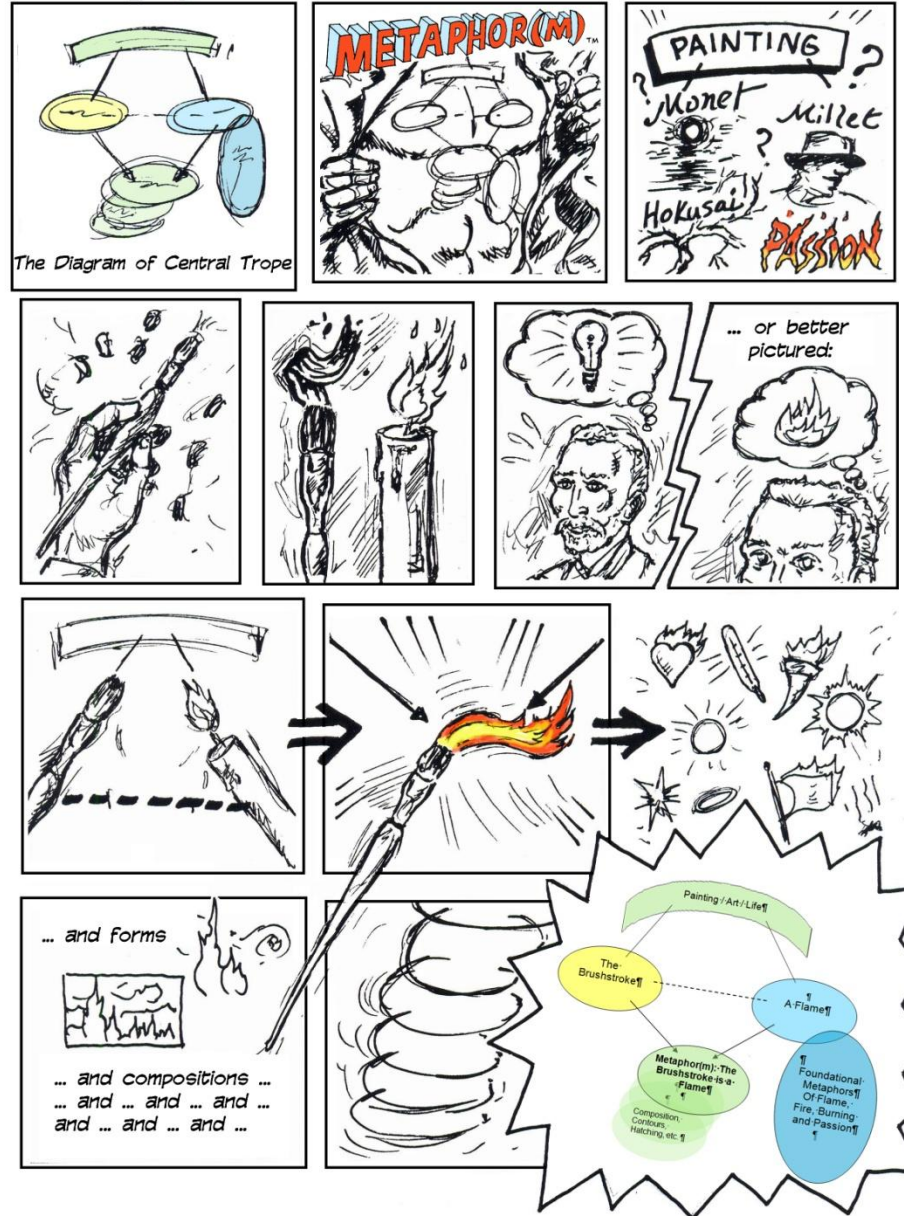
Sternennacht, 1889, Öl auf Leinwand, 73,7 × 92,1 cm, Museum of Modern Art

Example: Vincent van Gogh



The Chart of Vincent van Gogh's Metaphor(m)

Example:
Vincent van Gogh



Van Gogh

Jean-François Millet AND Claude Monet

Japanese prints

Fusing Millet, Monet and Hokusai into one composite predecessor figure

Personal obsession with emotion. The desire to express passion was the focus of van Gogh's vision.

Van Gogh's misprision succeeded when he mapped the image of a **flame** onto the **dot/comma** of Impressionist brushwork.

Justified use of sharp, glowing color frenzied draftsmanship.

Van Gogh antithetically become more "primitive" than Millet, painted more directly, less studiously than the Impressionists.

mark-making which could assume the contours of flames.

A complex of many tropes. The metonymies "*a flame is fire*" and "*fire is hot*" lead directly to the foundational metaphor "*PASSION IS HOT.*"

This merges easily with "*LIFE IS FIRE*" and "*LIFE IS HEAT.*"

A key synecdoche plays a major role, "*the brushstroke is painting.*"

The artist expanded this chain of reasoning to all elements of his works, even composition, in analogous ways.

"*Passion is life*" is his self-acknowledged central belief. "*Brushstroke is flame is painting is passion is life*" is his metaphor(m), his true central trope.

Example Vincent van Gogh



Sternennacht, 1889, Öl auf Leinwand, 73,7 × 92,1 cm, Museum of Modern Art

My Metaphor(m)



CHAPTER FIVE: THE SEQUENCE

As presented in Chapter 3, I had contemplated and analyzed my own art under the lens of the theory of metaphor(m) while hiking with my wife Cornelia and our dog River on the Via Francigena in France and western Switzerland.



I then used these thoughts as the motivating source for a large Panels painting-installation in a Kunsthalle-like venue called "Und" in the village of Oberuzwil, Switzerland.



Then I wrote about the installation in this chapter in an improvisatory series of vignettes, deliberating on the work in an allusivial manner.

Before writing this chapter, though, I was first in Istanbul...



I was able to complete most of the chapter in the retreat in the Casa Zia Lina.

The final form of the text in this chapter owes inspiration to my four fellow "working guests" there. In particular, Martina suggested the form of a book she had discovered in the library of the villa titled *Es war Einmal* by a deceased caricaturist, Olaf Gulbransson.

Gulbransson is difficult, as a person. The Norwegian artist lived in and was published in Germany. He was condemned by the Nazis, but then later opportunistically cooperated with them, it seems. The work itself, though, was stimulating with its visual and verbal sketches combining observation and reflection.

Sonya's idea to allow a Virginia Woolf-like flow of thoughts and images.



Martin's thought of a improvisatory jazz-like sequential collage. (Such as Braxton's work in this album.)

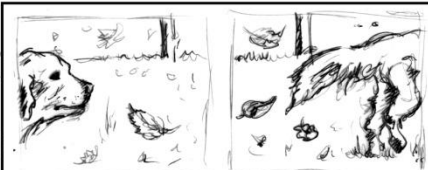


... then on the island of Elba, Italy, as described in the text.

Here are all five of us from the retreat, looking touristic, on Elba in one of two outings to the nearby village of Capoliveri.



During the writing, the suggestions from the others became integrated in the constitution of this chapter as well. Alex's reminder to have a direct connection between images and comments.



Thus this chapter. The installation itself is the primary part of the chapter, the text is a deliberation on it: its components, the thoughts I had while painting and connotations it calls up after completion.

CONCLUSION

Our backyard in Trogen Switzerland was being dramatically rebuilt while I wrote this, including constructing two Bollesseimure, quarry boulder stone support walls.



It was also the fall vacation, *Herbstferien*, so it was a good time to go hiking again. And I could work on the end of my dissertation during and afterwards.

In my mind and in my sketchbook.

First we traveled by car and train to a hotel in Oberharmersbach.



The next day we began our route. First goal, Hausach.



At the outset we saw a large rolled-up hedgehog, Igeli in Swissgerman.

There were interesting old crossroads monuments. Stone, often with several dates each, from the 1500s to today. The oldest inscriptions were incorrectly spelled and with letters reversed. Probably amateur stonecarvers.

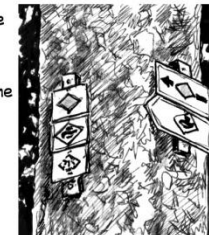


We also saw an unintentional monument, a combination of two assisted found objects.



The path was a bit difficult for the first day.

Especially at the end where it rapidly descended into the valley on a crumbling trail. Our Westweg, marked with red diamonds, crossed the *Hansjakobweg* (a hat) and the famous Way of St. James, (*El Camino de Santiago*, or *Jakobsweg*), marked by the legendary shell.

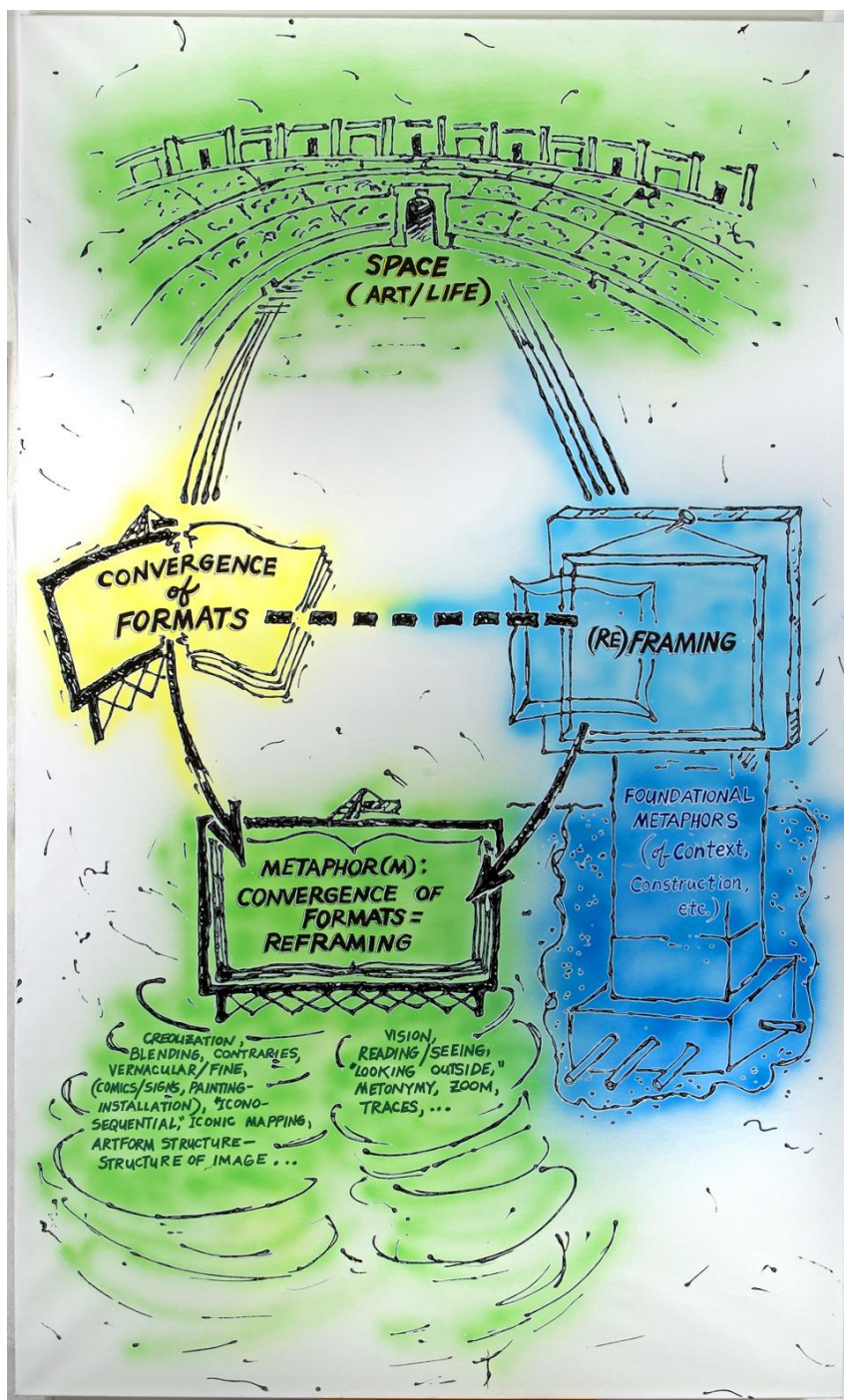


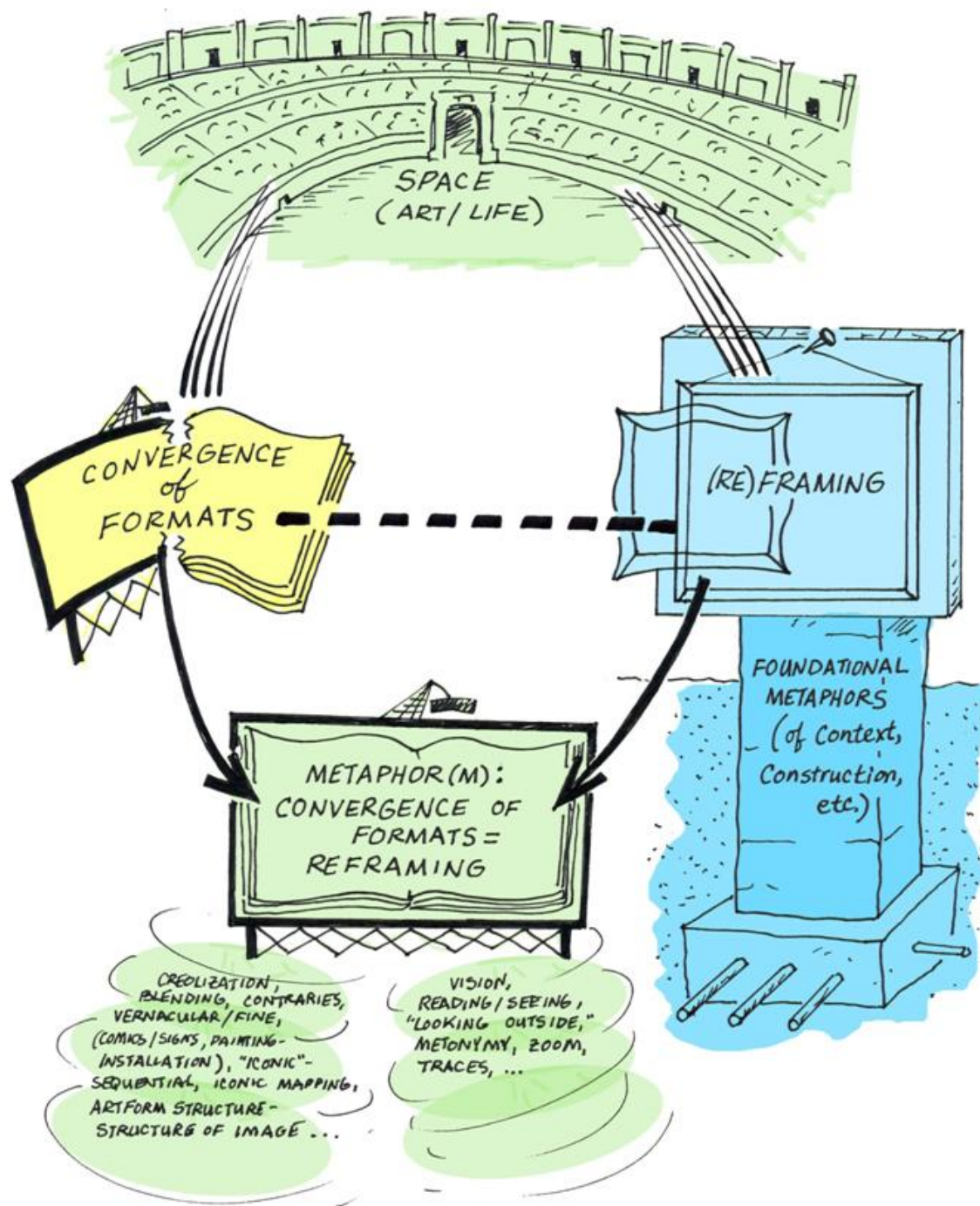
At the end of each day, I was also reading Robert Harris's *Imperium*, an historical fiction novel of Cicero's early career as told by Marcus Tullius Tiro, his secretary, slave, and later freedman.

Cornelia double-checked our path for the following day, while I sketched and wrote this.

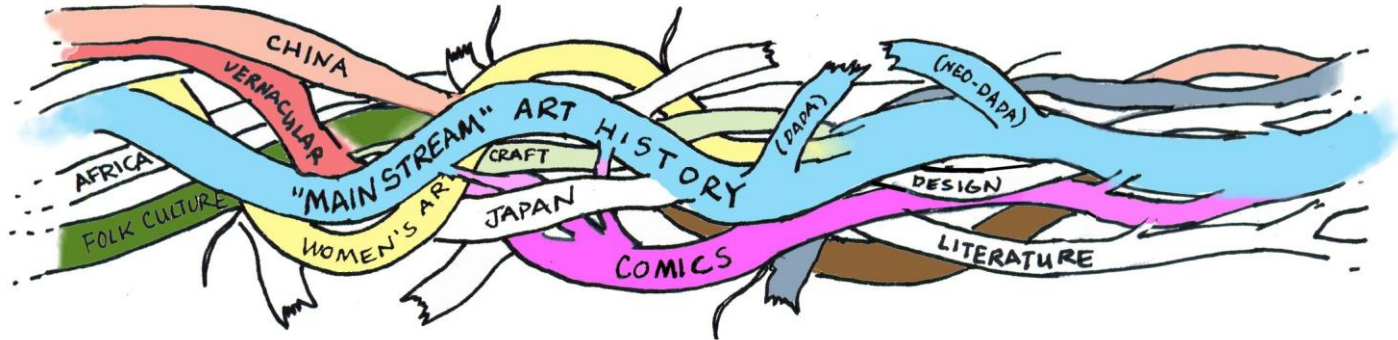


In the book, Cicero had just made an important speech in court before Gabrio against the tyrannical ex-governor of Sicily, Gaius Verres. This reminds me to come back to my own textual "case."





My Art History



Braided Rope
Brandl / Perreault

