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# Chapter Seven

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## Lifecycle Phases and Framework

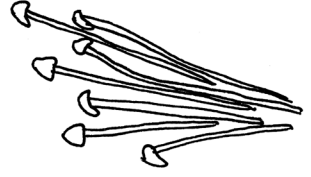
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*In Chapter 7: Lifecycle Phases and Framework, we will introduce you to a framework that will help you explore both who you are becoming as you make projects and also what the project is becoming as it takes shape and circulates in the world.*

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\* We suggest that the following section be shared with the group as best suits your context, either read aloud—in whole or in part—or assigned to be discussed in your space of learning. Before you begin to read, we invite you to ground yourself in the space: notice the air on your skin and your feet on the ground. What are your feelings and sensations at this moment? What are you bringing to this text? Take a moment to become aware of this. We invite you to notice what comes up for you, as you are reading this chapter. We will ask you to reflect upon this at the end of this chapter.



## Process

Take a moment to imagine how you might begin a new project. You might:

1. Start by learning about your tools and materials and seeing what they can do; or
2. Start by learning about a topic you want to explore; or
3. Start by getting to know a neighborhood or a site that you want to work with.

*Which of these feels most familiar to you?*

The options above describe three approaches to creating and interpreting a project, guided by: (1) form, (2) theme, and (3) context, an approach popularized by Dr. Renee Sandell, professor of art education at George Mason University.<sup>1</sup> If you emphasize form, this interpretive framework addresses the visual components of a project, including materials, techniques, color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.<sup>2</sup> If you emphasize theme, this is an interpretive framework that refers to the subject of the project, the research about a topic that you apply to your project. If you emphasize context, this is an interpretive framework that refers to the location, place, people, and histories that your project is placed in relationship to. We would like to suggest another concept, a fourth approach to starting a new project. This fourth interpretive framework takes into consideration the entire life of a project, including where it goes after it leaves the studio or the lab. We call this the *lifecycle* of a project. See Lifecycle Framework Diagram on p. 658.

1. **FORM:** start by learning about your tools and materials and seeing what they can do; or
2. **THEME:** start by learning about a topic you want to explore; or
3. **CONTEXT:** start by getting to know a site that you want to work with; or
4. **LIFECYCLE:** start by learning about the life of art projects.

Our framework relies upon an ecological metaphor to look at the entire “life” of a project, from the moment it is imagined to the moment it is discarded, recycled, or forgotten.

## Phases

We have identified ten components of each project’s lifecycle; we call these phases. A phase is a recognizable stage in the development of a

project's lifecycle. We encourage you to begin by focusing on one phase of the lifecycle of any project to explore a different way of thinking, working, and being.

- *Support*: the ways your needs are met in order to rest, dream, and work on any project.
- *Source*: where you obtain materials for a project.
- *Transfer*: the exchange of resources for goods or labor in your project.
- *Labor*: the roles you and other people take on in order to create a project.
- *Tools*: the devices or implements you use in your project.
- *Copyright*: your exclusive legal rights to your projects.
- *Narrate*: how your project is represented.
- *Encounter*: the context where your finished project is presented.
- *Acquire*: the storage, maintenance, and stewardship of your project.
- *Depart*: where materials from projects go when they are no longer of use, value, or interest.

The lifecycle framework asks you to “zoom out” and consider a holistic approach to your project. And as you think about what your project will become, the lifecycle framework insists that you also think about who you are becoming through the decisions you make in each phase. Begin by thinking about *one* phase as an entry point.

*Here is an example of a lifecycle for a project made in art school today:*

- *Support*: You rely on loans and day jobs, as well as cooking and dancing with friends to have the energy to return to your project each day.
- *Source*: Your materials come from a store.
- *Transfer*: You pay for your materials and tools, no one pays you to work on your project or to narrate it.
- *Labor*: You work alone in your studio.
- *Tools*: You use your school's tools.
- *Copyright*: You assume that you will not share your copyright.
- *Narrate*: You represent your project on social media and in stories you tell friends.
- *Encounter*: You present your work in a gallery space at school.
- *Acquire*: You give it to a friend or family member.
- *Depart*: When the recipient cannot store it anymore, they bring it to a local dumpster.

Again, we would like to suggest that any phase of the lifecycle can become an entry point into the next project that you make. For example, you might want to investigate the source of your materials in relationship to the content of your project. Depending on your interests, you might want to experiment with ways of producing your project, new contexts in which to present your project, or new ways of copyrighting your project. By looking at the whole lifecycle, you can begin to imagine that any phase in your production process can be a site of research. You can consider the life, death, and circulation of your project in advance, as a fourth way to begin a project, in addition to what you consider with form, theme, and context.

We hope that the framework above allows you to incorporate ideas about the circulation of your projects into the research and creation of the project itself, from the start. For example, the lifecycle approach might be located in the philosopher and conceptual artist Adrian Piper's "meta-art" statement from 1973:

By "meta-art" I mean the activity of making explicit the thought processes, procedures, and presuppositions of making whatever kind of art we make.... Procedures might include how we come by the materials we use; what we do in order to get them; whom we must deal with, and in what capacity; what kinds of decisions we make concerning them (aesthetic, pecuniary, environmental, etc.); to what extent the work demands interactions (social, political, collaborative) with other people, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Two years later, Piper wrote "Seven Conditions on Art Production," in which she states that she will voluntarily prescribe the following conditions concerning her work: it will (1) be materially inexpensive, (2) be context-independent, (3) have duplicability, (4) have simple and inexpensive reproduction, (5) have accessibility of distribution, (6) have an exchange value that equals the production value, and (7) have a stable market value.<sup>4</sup> Piper's writing resonates with us fifty years after it was written.

By creating conditions—a "meta-art"—for the production of projects that are aligned with her goals for art and are within her conscious control, Piper provides one possible response to the lifecycle framework that we have outlined. In Piper's "meta-art" statement, she anticipates what we are calling lifecycle phases:

- *Source*: "The works do not depend for their realization on scarce, inexpensive, or relatively inaccessible natural or human resources."

- *Labor/Tools*: “The reproduction of the works does not require highly complex or expensive labor and technology.”
- *Transfer*: “The price of the works is computed in such a way as to compensate me for labor (at the average blue-collar wage rate of \$7.50 per hour).”<sup>5</sup>

Adrian Piper’s conception of “meta-art”<sup>6</sup> from 1973 emerged at the same time as institutional theories of art which state that an artwork cannot be understood as “Art” without existing alongside organizations and people who share established, pre-existing knowledges, customs, and norms about what “Art” might be.

As curator Christophe Lemaitre writes in the foreword to *The Life and Death of Works of Art*, philosopher George Dickie’s institutional theory of art began to consider the work of art as a system of relationships that would always include:

- An artist (a person understanding and taking part in the development of the artwork),
- An artifact (to be presented to an artworld public),
- A public (namely a group of people ready to understand what is presented to them),
- A system in the artwork (a structure allowing for the work to be presented),
- And the world of art (all of the artworld systems).<sup>7</sup>

## Negation

*“I can’t work with so many constraints!” / “My process is more fluid than this.”*

*You might experience our emphasis on conceptual frameworks and structured activities as constraints. Every artist has a set of constraints that are self-imposed, whether they are explicit or implicit. From Sol Lewitt’s grid instructions to Yoko Ono’s scores, from August Sander’s taxonomies<sup>8</sup> to Bill T. Jones’s performance modalities,<sup>9</sup> artists often give themselves instructions in order to navigate the unknown. Artists who are not explicit about their own “rules” often make implicit rules in order to guide their decision-making in projects. For example, artists might only work late at night, or only after lots of coffee, or only pursue ideas that their peers encourage. These are implicit rules. Please accept our frameworks as offerings for guidance in your process. At the very least, you might see this book as a helpful tool when and if you teach younger artists how to begin*

to make art. Teaching can be described as a method which at least in part involves providing instructions that lay the groundwork for open experimentation. We offer instructions for experimentation that you can adapt to suit your own context.

In addition to constraints that artists impose on themselves, many constraints are imposed socially, politically, historically, and economically, whether the artist recognizes them or not. See Chapter 6: *How Are You in the World and How Is the World in You?* for more.<sup>7</sup>

## Negation

*“Why would anyone care about how this project was made?”*

*As we go through the lifecycle framework, we will continually ask you to consider the ways in which you will represent your project. See Chapter 14: *Narrate* ≡ for more.<sup>8</sup> Even if very few people want to know how your project was made, we think that you care. You spend many long hours thinking about how to make each project, and then making it. Why not attend to the ways projects get made—not only materially, but interpersonally—in classrooms and in self-organized learning spaces? We are offering ways that you might develop capacities of embodiment and collaboration while making projects. Even if the final audience that encounters the project will never know about the process, you will refine your ability to be present in the process of making itself, in relationship to others. Just as Marshall McLuhan said, “the Medium is the Message,”<sup>10</sup> we believe that “the Process is the Message.” As poet, essayist, and playwright Claudia Rankine said at the Whitney Museum, artists must ask, “How am I responsible to human beings in the making of anything that I make?”<sup>11</sup> Our work leads us to wonder, how might process itself impact the meaning of any given project? What would it mean to include the whole life of the project in our understanding and reviews of projects? Can we focus on ways of being and ways of making when we are reviewing projects?*

## Reflection

1. Thinking about all of the phases in the lifecycle of your project can be overwhelming. We suggest that you start with one phase. Which phase of the lifecycle do you imagine might be an entry point into your next project, and why? Which phase connects to what feels urgent to you, and why?
2. \* What feelings and sensations came up for you while you were reading this chapter? For example, did you feel surprise, frustration, or excitement? How did you hold these in your body? For

example, did you sense these emotions in your shoulders, neck, and back while reading this chapter? *See the Social-Emotional Intelligence Project Reflection activity in Chapter 4: Teacher/Facilitator Guides.*<sup>7</sup>

3. In the following chapter, we will explore the ways in which the lifecycle framework draws upon the work of contemporary cultural theorists, feminist economists, philosophers, and engineers and designers. We do this to create a shared understanding from which dialogue about production and circulation in the arts can begin.



1. See Renee Sandell, "Form + Theme + Context: Balancing Considerations for Meaningful Art Learning," *Art Education* 59, no. 1 (January 2006): 33–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043125.2006.11651576>.
2. Adapted from Allen Memorial Art Museum, "Elements of Art," Oberlin College & Conservatory, <http://www2.oberlin.edu/amam/asia/sculpture/documents/vocabulary.pdf>.
3. Adrian Piper, "In Support of Meta-Art," *Artforum* XII, 2 (October 1973): 79–81, in Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight, Vol. 2: Selected Writings in Art Criticism, 1967–1992* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 17.
4. Adrian Piper, "Seven Conditions on Art Production," 1975, in Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight, Vol. 1: Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 159.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Piper, "In Support of Meta-Art."
7. Christophe Lemaitre, ed., "Foreword," in *Life and Death of Works of Art*, 3–33 (Dijon, France: Tomolo Presses, 2016), 4; Lemaitre adapts Dickie's description of art as a system from George Dickie, *The Art Circle* (New York, NY: Haven, 1984), 80–82.
8. See Katherine Tubb, "Face to Face? An Ethical Encounter with Germany's Dark Strangers in August Sander's *People of the Twentieth Century*," *Tate Papers*, no.19 (2013), available, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/face-to-face-an-ethical-encounter-with-germany-dark-strangers-in-august-sanders-people-of-the-twentieth-century>.
9. See Bill T. Jones, *The Breathing Show*, dance, 1999, video, 8:08, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOSsDHLooi0>.
10. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, NY: Mentor, 1964).
11. Claudia Rankine, "Perspectives on Race and Representation: An Evening with the Racial Imaginary Institute" (The Racial Imaginary Institute Panel during the Whitney Biennial, the Whitney Museum, New York, NY, April 9, 2017), video, 2:13:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLGMkf77HL8>.