

art based empowerment

What is the artist's role in preventive youth work?

"art based"

The artistic process is a process of creating and shaping. "art based empowerment" wants to open up various aspects of the creative process used by artists to young people. Providing this, does not mean to make every young person want to be an artist in its narrow traditional meaning (e.g. become a painter or a sculptor). Art based empowerment wants be understood in an art context the way for example Joseph Beys defined it when he said, "Everybody is an artist." Meaning that everyone has got his or her own creative potential to use and shape their own lives.

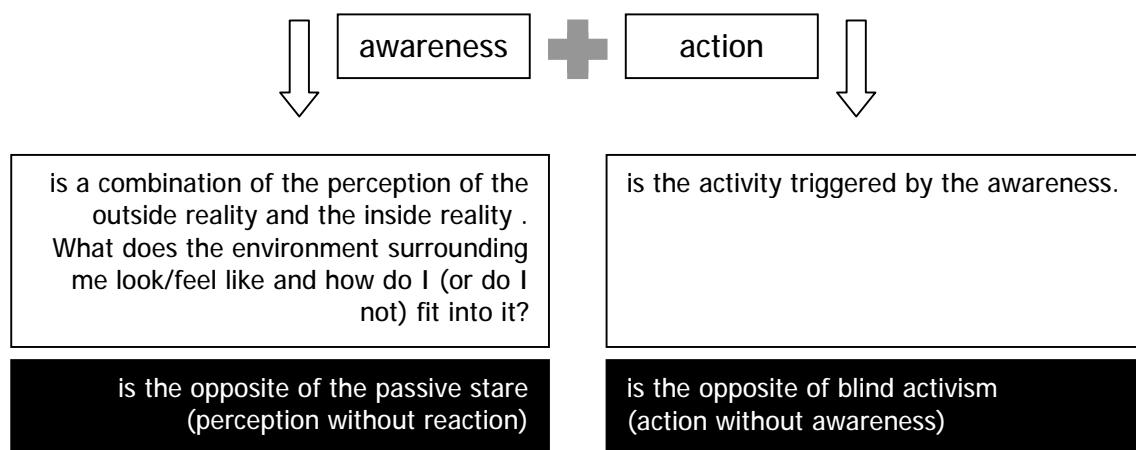
In many cases big parts of this creative potential stop being used along the way between the age of 6 and 15. Skills that are not used become stunted and at some point don't seem available any more.

It has occurred to me that "art" might have become something intimidating since often times people (especially adults) who were confronted with art reacted very insecure and apologetic. "I don't know anything about art. I can not say anything about it. I don't even know how to draw."

Art is an ancient instrument of human kind to explore the world and look at it through new perspectives. For many people in our world "art" has been lost as a key element to express themselves and to shape their individual lives. It has been replaced by "art" as a product that can be bought and used to decorate ones life.

"art and creativity"

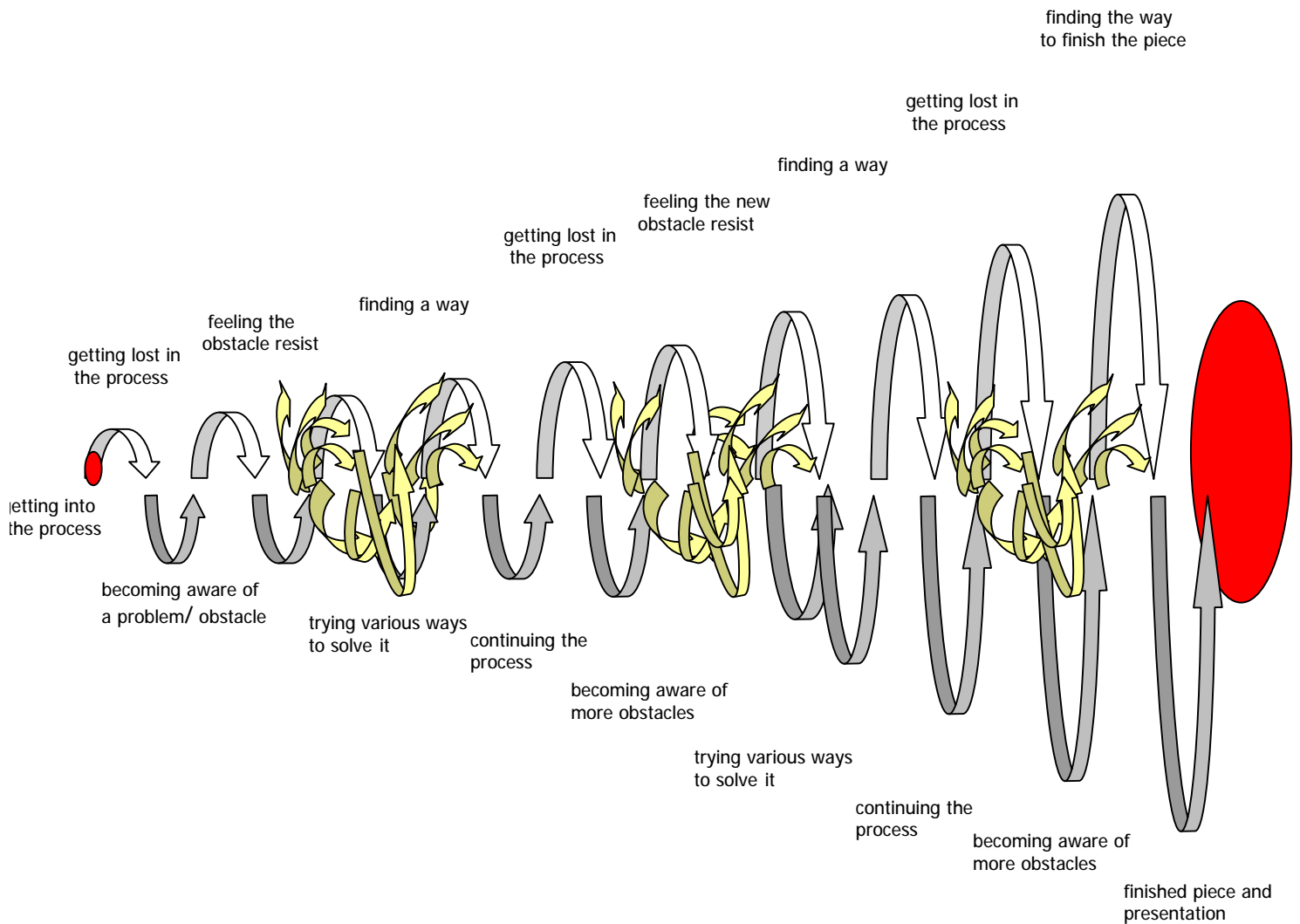
Two major elements of the creative process:



The key is the reference to real life.

Art –a process of awareness and action- can be the tool for young people to find different ways and experiment with various strategies to deal with their own self within the environment that surrounds them. Therefor the artistic process can be seen as a sheltered environment within real life.

"the artistic/creative process"

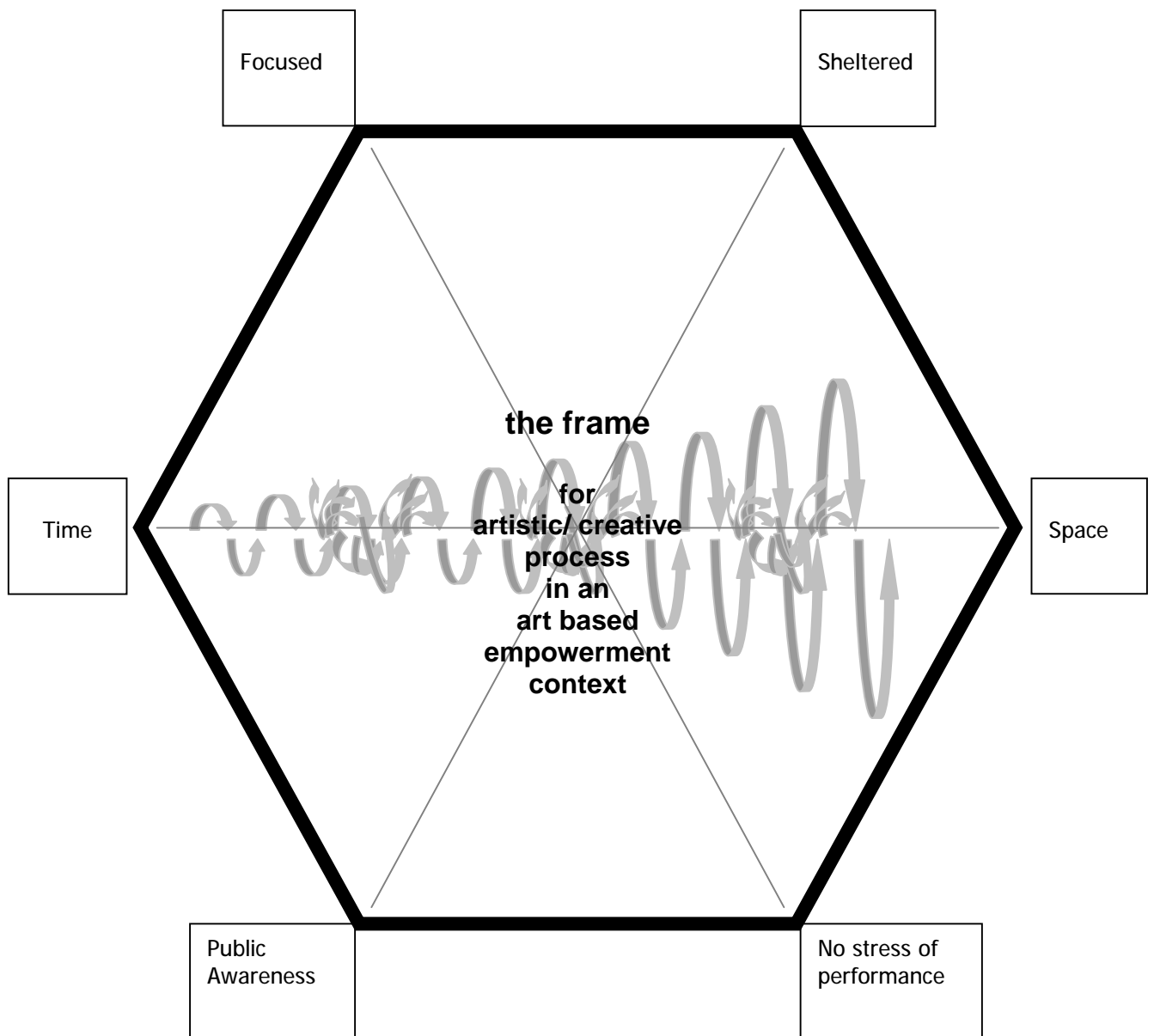


This process happens on both an emotional and an intellectual level. In order to get ahead in the process it is important to switch back and forth between the two. (spiral)

“empowerment”

Preventive work - as we all know - can not only be information about unhealthy elements and influences in our lives. It is about finding out which aspects of our world make us not healthy. These aspects have to be confronted with ideas and offers to lead diversified and colorful lives. The world we have to open up to young people and therefore to ourselves consist of many unique moments and a wide spectrum of choices and options to shape and create this life to become our very own. In order for this to happen the right frameworks needs to be constructed. Art based empowerment can be one of these frameworks:

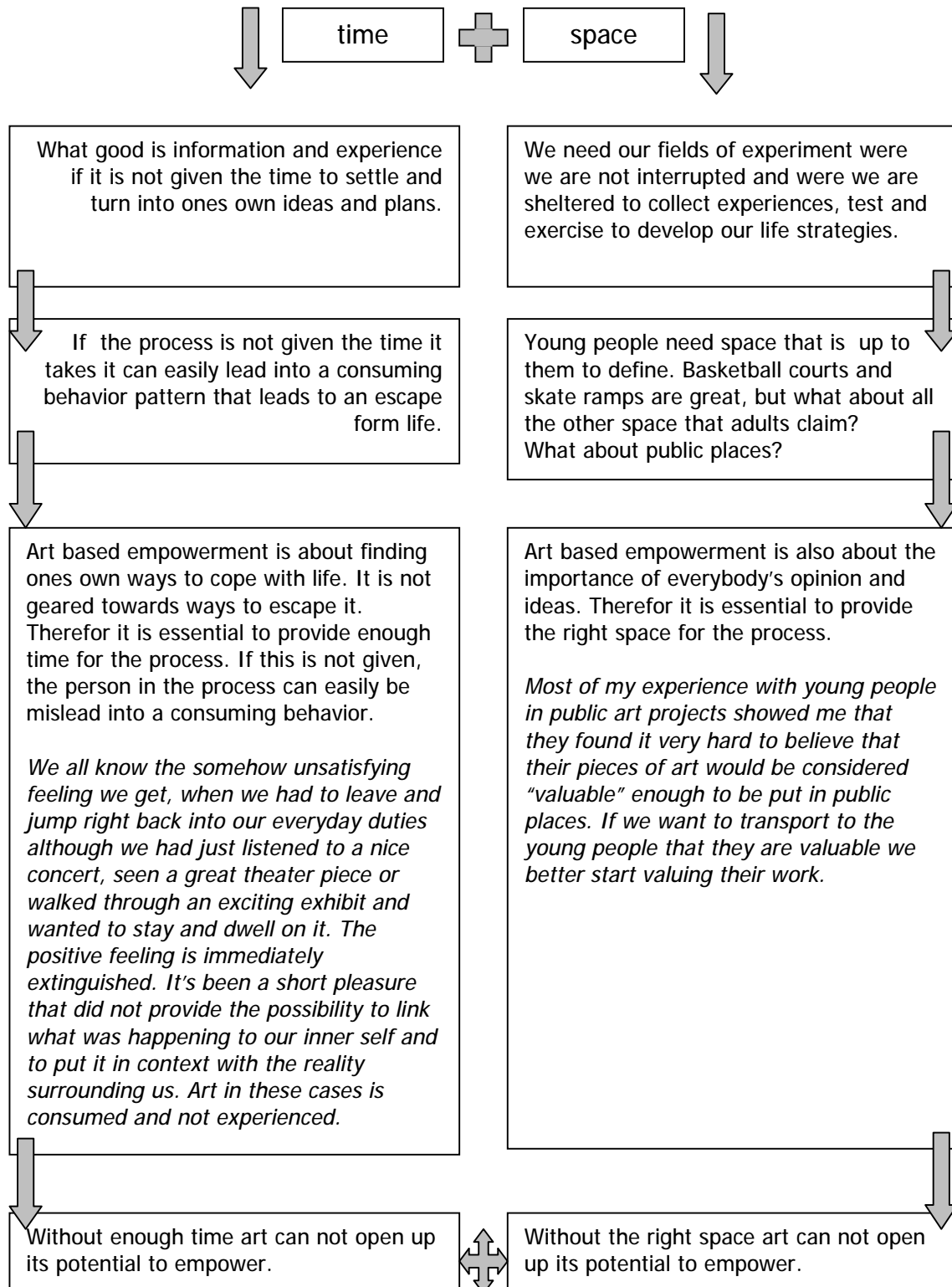
The art based empowerment framework:



The 6 corner stones of the framework

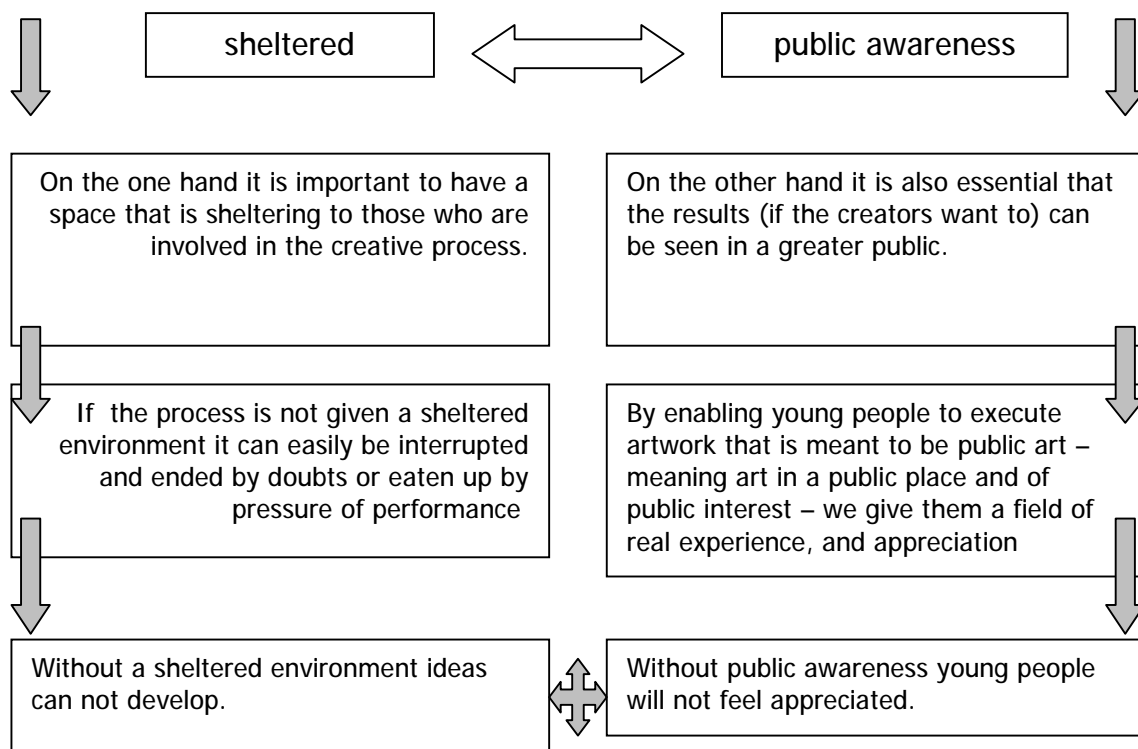
"time" and "space"

The 2 major corner stones of the art based empowerment framework are time and space:

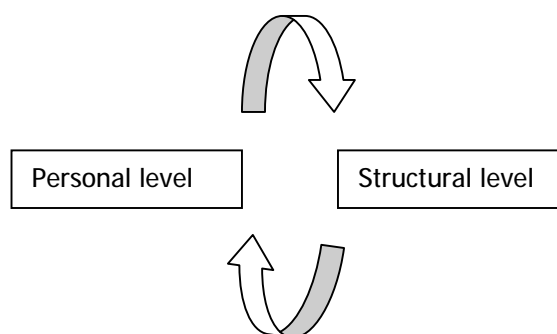


“sheltered” and “public awareness”

Two other corner stones of the art based empowerment framework are “shelteredness” and “the public awareness”.

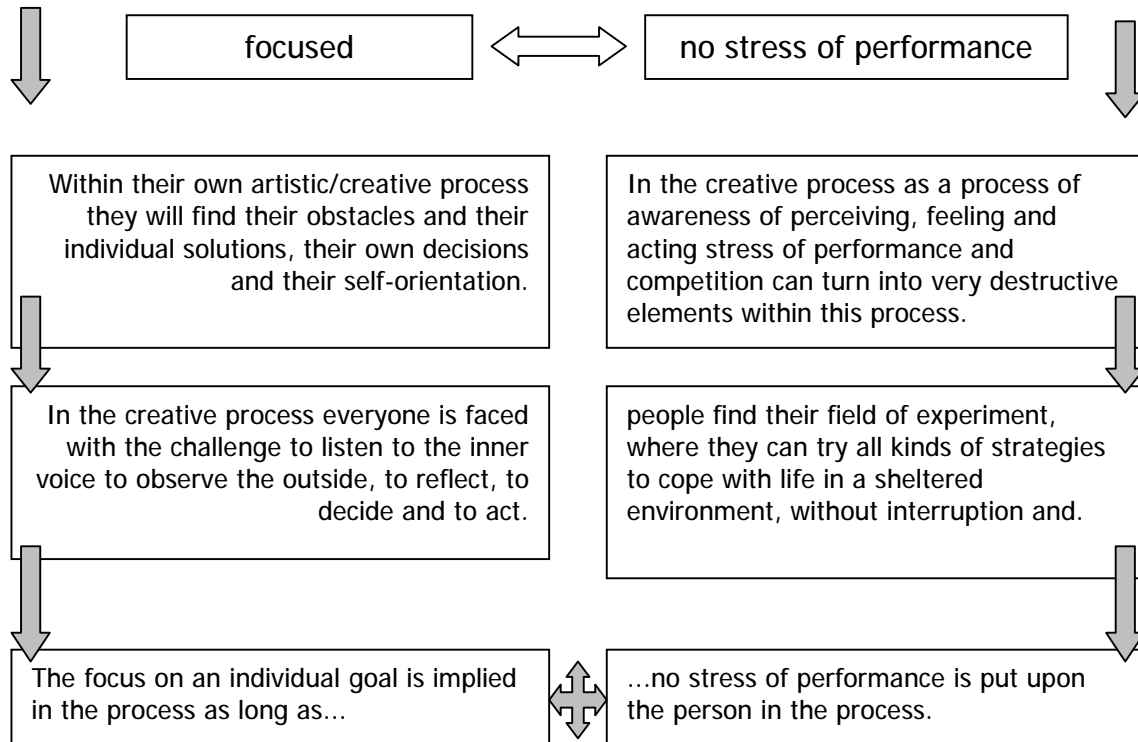


Art based empowerment also works on a non verbal peer education level. Young people’s public art projects are seen by other young people just as well as by adults. They transport information on a non verbal level that often causes irritation for the observers, viewers or passers by. This is a wonderful bases for questions and discussions that might have never started if the information had been verbal. Here it is up to every individual art project group to build different more or less interactive approaches to the viewer.



“focused” and “no stress of performance”

Two other corner stones of the art based empowerment framework are the focus of the process and the rule of “no stress of performance”.



Art based empowerment is making (young) people aware of their individual creative tools and possibilities within their own lives and give them the framework to test them and experiment with them until they feel comfortable to make use of them by themselves.

Every art based empowerment project is a challenge and causes many surprises for everybody involved. It is about taking risks and having fun – it is about life.