

Handout: I am revising this lecture as a sculpture; it's final shape might tell you how

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Concluding with 3 Tips:

The following are three tips reinforcing what I have learned from creating this lecture, some of which draw from lectures given at past residencies at VCFA, craft books read during this program, my research, and my own experience.

1. **Begin writing by thinking about composing structure:** Begin creating by thinking and revising toward structure. Imagine a potter spends time focused on the eyes of the sparrow until they are beautiful, sharp and hungry, but neglects the body, wings, head and feet outside of the broad-, placeholder-strokes. When the potter goes to reshape the head, the work on the eyes will be damaged, require re-doing, not fit with the rest of the piece, and/or discourage the potter from trying to better the other parts of its body. The potter may be too scared to create a good bird out of fear of losing the eyes that they spent so much time perfecting. When writing, you will be building still at the word, sentence, paragraph and page level, because doing otherwise would eliminate connective tissue in the piece. But try thinking at the level of the entire piece by being intentionally conscious of the way each addition, alteration, deletion or re-ordering affects the whole. This will be slow going at first. The initial draft may not have as much structure as you intend, but as you direct more conscious effort at paying attention to and noticing the piece and your own creative impulses, you will improve and deepen your craft skills.

2. **If it isn't working, counter the tyranny of memory** by taking the daring advice of author Sunil Yapa, who suggests intentionally losing the complete first draft of a piece and rewriting it entirely from scratch. Potters do this all the time: they create the same thing over and over and over again from scratch until the piece reaches a desired state. Yapa suggests that, for writers, this will filter content automatically, and that key, important concepts will be retained in memory while structure will come more naturally and intentionally now that most fundamental ideas are discovered and fleshed out. Alternatively, open an empty word document or flip to a blank page and copy your original first sentence into it (only if the first sentence is suitable). Write from there and add in words, phrases or sentences of the original as they fit, slotting them in when they suit and throwing them out when they are awkward or unneeded. Create something new without throwing out everything from before, and see what details don't matter by changing their context.
3. **Once structure is in place, focus on details:** This is a step where you could create infinite variety. Brainstorming through word webs or lists of possibilities may be handy here. After making lists, you can try plugging in a series of ideas to see what best suits the piece. Or challenge yourself to write two, three or five (depending on the length of the piece being revised and your ambition) versions of the same piece from one draft where structure and concepts have been thought out. From there, examine what works in the different versions and consider whether one is more successful, if there are parts that can be combined, and/or what can be learned or conveyed from the different versions.

The words “creation/revision” have been squished together so many times throughout this essay that they have begun to sound like one word, or perhaps a phrase: creating a vision. I hope that these tips, even if only a little, help you better create your vision.