

MEDIATION AND CULTURE

By Deborah Hope Wayne, Esq.

Artistic Inspiration

After a very challenging week, I gave myself an afternoon off to attend a gallery talk on Marc Chagall. The art historian conducted an interesting discussion about the Cubist art of creating and what is reflected in the shattered pieces on the canvas. Trying to find meaning in the work, we look at this art and ask about the intention of the artist. On my only afternoon off in a long time, I found myself thinking about how this particular form of art relates to our work as mediators. As I understand it, the Cubists' perspective of the world is not bound to form. Shattered forms are put together to create a new reality. This discussion about non-objective art intrigued me because I have thought of my own work on each case as a puzzle. The challenge becomes how to help put it together and how to continuously challenge myself to try different approaches in seeking to resolve conflict.

As mediators, we can ask the same questions about our cases that we ask about these paintings. That is, what is the reality and what is the illusion? How do we interpret what we see? Do we take it at face value – or, do we insert our own interpretation into the mix. In other words, are we able to see the case from various



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angles? Analogizing the Cubist abstract concepts to our own work, we might ask how we play a role in what the shattered pieces become.

The Cubist inquiry into form is an interesting one. As I understand it, a Cubist painter looks at every possible angle of a subject and then pieces together fragments from these different vantage points to create a painting. Cubism seeks to depict the world as it is, not how it seems. The process involved in cubism and the impact the process has on the result is striking because it involves opening up the mind to see things in a new way. Cubists make room for space to flow through the forms. The artists abandon perspective and explore new forms and ways to create movement on the canvas. Like our own

work, if we seek to determine intention there can be multiple views.

After the gallery talk, I wandered down Fifth Avenue to a café and took time to reflect on how to step back, look at the shattered pieces and put them together in a way that makes sense. That, my friend, is a work in progress!

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