

Fiasco Martial Arts

“Fiasco Martial Arts” is my nickname for the type of wild flailing that an untrained, undisciplined person might do in response to being physically attacked, but done by a trained, supposedly disciplined martial artist. In other words, when the martial artist sees that what he learned doesn’t work, he goes hog-wild.

A fiasco is an endeavor that failed miserably. And if a martial artist finds him/herself becoming slaphappy against an assailant, there is a good chance that the martial artist’s training has been a fiasco.

It is possible that the accosted martial artist was caught in an awkward position, was injured, or somehow could not release his deadly Dual Dragons Trade Peach Pits technique. It is just as likely that the Dual Dragons didn’t duel as well as he thought they might.

But there is a difference between Fiasco Martial Arts and [Educated Garbage](#). Decades ago I purchase a book on Ving-tsun/Wing-chun that illustrated several *chi-sao* (sticky hands) sequences, included counters and counter-counters. It was great to see the movements broken down. I then saw a video of a similar thing, but without the advantage of individual pictures or slow motion: for anyone except advanced Wing-chun stylists, it looked like two guys slapping at each other. “All the intricate training,” I thought, “and they just end up just going hog-wild!”

Many years later, I was teaching a seminar in which a student complained that the technique being taught was unrealistic because of its complex nature. “True,” I responded, “the more complex a response, the more likely it is to be unrealistic. But, with practice, some apparently complicated sequences can be done rather quickly and thus become much more realistic. They may not come out exactly as practiced, of course, but practicing them in their entirety allows them to be rendered in an effective way.” I invited him to come up and attack in the manner we had been practicing. To be sure, I had the advantage of knowing what the attack would be and when it would arrive, but I also suspected that the questioner might throw me a curve during my response.

He attacked, I responded, he tried to counter and continue his attack, so I responded to his response. He found himself with several fists in his face until he moved away and nodded submission. “I know, I know,” I said to the class, “it looks like garbage. But it is *educated* garbage. It is a freestyle response based on the structured technique we just learned.”

Having saved myself (and the reputation of the martial method I was teaching) from a fiasco, I realized that there is very little *apparent* difference between Fiasco Martial Arts and Educated Garbage, but there is a huge *actual* difference. In the first, panic ensues and one reverts to fight-or-flight instincts. In the second, confidence reigns and a martial artist lets his trained

reactions take over. Each appears to be an undisciplined response, but the hidden (and important) discipline of the Educated Garbage response is a creative recreation of learned technique such that it does not allow panic to lead to a fiasco.