

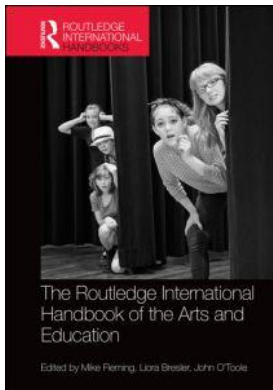
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6

Creativity in the arts and arts education

Intentionally reclaiming our rightful, central place

Eric Booth

In this chapter, I endeavor to clarify some aspects of creativity amid the fog of misunderstanding, to dispel some tenacious illusions, and to suggest some positive future directions. The chapter begins with a historical overview before looking at definitions of creativity and practical approaches.

Historical view

In ancient Greece, excellence meant realizing the established rules for art, which derived from nature. They had no word for creator or creativity – their closest term was *techne* – *the making of things according to rules*. We still revere *techne*, technique, in the arts and arts education, emphasizing it from puberty on. (It is interesting to note that in the USA and elsewhere, many kids drop out of their childhood artistic interests and practices around the age of twelve.)

Where ancient Greeks recognized extraordinary artistic achievement by an individual, it was credited to divine sources, with help from intermediary demi-god Muses or from a daemon (an external nature spirit). (The one exception was poetry, where poets were expected to produce new ideas free from imitation of nature.)

This artistic legacy of adherence to artistic rules sustains; we respect (or intentionally disrespect) the forms and practices of the artistic disciplines. We teach them to all initiates, and we still struggle to discriminate creativity from craft. I work with people who produce masterpieces in blown glass, in quilting, in clay, yet they balk every time I call them artists because their fealty is to the rules and traditions of the craft, even as they produce original, valuable, one-of-a-kind results. We are uncertain about *techne* vs. creativity even in the high arts: to what degree does an excellent performance of a symphony become creative, going beyond, a mere brilliant “technical” realization. The Venezuelan *Símon Bolívar* Symphony Orchestra challenges many “expert” critics who claim their technique is not as refined as other major orchestras, but at the same time, their artistry is profoundly moving to audiences worldwide.

In the Ancient Roman era, imagination and inspiration grew in importance in the arts. Old Latin had a word for the act of creation, *creatio*, and also for the human *creator*. The etymological root of creativity comes from the Latin, *creare*, meaning *to make, to bring forth, to produce*. The word had a wide application, not specially attached to the arts – a legacy we

still carry when we recognize that creativity can appear in any medium. I like to challenge high art rigidity by casually defining art as “making stuff you care about.” I grew up hearing phrases like “the art of bricklaying” and “the medical arts.” The vast majority of people in Western culture believe in creative artistry in every medium and have an experiential sense of its truth.

Latin also had the word *facere* which meant much the same as *creare*, but had a nuance of difference that hints at a split we find in current understandings: *creare* had a connotation of *creating from nothing*, and *facere* carried a sense of *fashioning*, of *classifying*. The importance of the act of invention by an individual was rising in the arts, attached to *creare*, whereas *techne*’s working within rules and traditions was continued within *facere*.

In the Middle Ages, Christianity pulled the sense of the word creativity away from everyday and even artistic expression, reserving it for divine acts alone. Only God created something from nothing, so *creare* was severed from *facere*, and creation became the domain of the Christian God, beyond human capacity. The still-active legacy of this era is the sense of creative inspiration having a divine aspect – a supra-human “muse” or of some special beyond-the-ordinary aspect to acts of creation. It appears in the sense of genius which has its own etymological journey from meaning *to produce* in its earliest pre-Latin root (including all kinds of production), to become *generative power*, to become *a guardian deity or spirit that watches over a person, connected to that person’s spirit, wit, and talent*. The legacy of “genius” in our understanding of creativity appears in the common use of the term for highest creative achievement, deriving from some magical capacity that some people have and others don’t; and those with a lot of the special juice are geniuses. Most people feel there is something mystical, at least larger than normal life, about creative geniuses. With the *facere* aspect of creativity split off in the Middle Ages, that essential component of creating in the arts was sent along the track of craft, valued and important, but not really creative.

In the Renaissance, human agency in creativity was reasserted. Artists often used Christian subject matter to demonstrate their individual creative imagination and power, but their art expressed human vision, freed from imitating nature. Certainly da Vinci embodies the potency of the creative power of humans. The concept of creativity was wrested back to human hands from the prior Christian definition.

The word creativity itself was not applied until the seventeenth century when Polish poet Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski purportedly was the first to use the word, applying it to poetry; but carrying the Middle Ages legacy, he wrote that poets applied creativity “in the manner of God” (Tatarkiewicz 1980: 71). The Age of Enlightenment continued to draw the power of creation down to earth, so much so that in the eighteenth century, for the first time, the term creativity began to be widely applied to humans, particularly artists and their creations. The momentum of this swing from divine to human hands kept moving – all the way to the nineteenth-century understanding that creativity was the *sole* province of the arts. The arts owned creativity. This colonized sense that the arts own creativity still pervades in the arts (but not with those outside the arts). I see its appearance in a hundred small ways, habits of mind, unexamined beliefs – many in “the arts club” believe that creativity in the arts is the only “real” creativity, allowing others to aspire to the creative condition of art. This legacy leaves a lingering sense of entitlement and self-importance in many in the arts sector that is at odds with the mainstream views of Western culture that now value creativity more widely. A belief in the specialness of artistic creativity separates some leaders in the arts from the vast majority of their surrounding citizenry; it frequently excludes them from explorations of how to advance creative capacity in nations, in corporate culture, in politics and communities, and even in education.

Social scientists became interested in researching creativity in the 1950s, and have continually expanded the range and methods, to include theory, practice, education, physiology, and industrial applications. A significant moment in the research progression came in the 1980s when Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi challenged the research community to change the question from “What is creativity?” to “Where is creativity?” (Csikszentmihalyi 1996). This redirected a productive channel of research away from the inconclusive debates about definition toward exploration of the widespread evidences of creativity.

For reasons that are not the subject of this chapter “the arts” and “arts education” find themselves on the periphery of US and other cultures. As creativity has become a buzzword of importance worldwide, the arts haven’t found a strong voice in the creativity conversation.

One illustrative example derives from personal experience. At the beginning of this century in the USA, a group of mostly high-tech industry leaders launched a school reform initiative called the Partnership for 21st Century Skills.¹ Creativity was among its highest priorities. The arts were almost completely absent in its early years, not because the business leaders didn’t think the arts had creative value, but because no one from the arts stepped forward to join their reform initiative in useful ways. I challenged the leaders of the Partnership about the absence of the arts, and that their first books appeared without any examples or input from the arts. They responded positively in email exchanges with me, stating, “We definitely value creativity in the arts; we think it provides a special sauce for learning.” Because the arts and arts education had avoided joining this high-profile initiative to infuse education with creativity (a hesitation largely born, in my view, by a lingering sense of specialness inherited from nineteenth-century identity, and by the disorganization of the fields of the arts and arts education that makes it hard to join such initiatives), the contribution of the arts to creativity was reduced to a condiment that adds flavor to the nutrition that other subjects provide.

Our contemporary understanding of creativity is confused because we carry residual beliefs from each of these epochs. We haven’t shed understandings as we evolved; we kept the old as we added the new. We don’t have one definition or reliable set of core skills because we carry the history of all of them in us. Without agreement or focus, we are weak.

The great twentieth-century physicist David Bohm said that anytime one sees seeming polarities, look for the greater truth that contains them both. That is what we must do in arts education and the arts regarding creativity. To shape our knowledge for greater visibility and impact, to bring our potency with creativity to the education reform and cultural evolution processes, we must look for the greater truths underneath our multiple and seemingly contradictory jumble of understandings of creativity.

A definition

As a first step toward agreement on deeper truths, let me propose a definition of creativity. It is fair to say that there is near-universal agreement around a few core aspects of creativity: it entails both a process and a product, and that its products are both original and useful. Not a complete definition, but those are the most prevalent elements in the sixty-odd different definitions I have read. We know more than that; so I prefer a definition I came across in a 2004 academic paper that holds what I deem the key aspects of the term:

Creativity is the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context.

(Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow 2004: 89)

Notice five key features in the definition:

- An individual's capacities are a part of creativity – but that is not the whole story. There are certain processes and environments that come together with a person's abilities that make creative work possible.
- It is an improvisation – creativity results from the dynamic interaction among (at least) three ever-changing contributors. No wonder it is hard to define and impossible to require.
- There is such a thing as group creativity. We rely on this in our arts and arts education practices, but tend not to include it in our intuitive definitions. Arts in schools tend to emphasize individual technique rather than creativity in group instruction; my students at Juilliard confessed that they did not feel creative when they played in the orchestra. (How much creativity are the marching band and school orchestra players developing? I am not saying it is not valuable or high-impact learning, or that group creativity does not happen – but is it emphasized?)
- There is a perceivable product – not just an idea, but at least some expression of that idea – which demonstrates those two basic attributes of originality and value.
- Social context counts – creative accomplishment in one setting may not be such in another. Marcel Duchamp's placing a urinal entitled "Fountain" at the 1913 Armory Show was a creative statement of such impact that it is still talked about today; placing that urinal at a construction site a hundred years later would not be seen as a creative accomplishment. Unless it were photographed in a way that evoked an ironic reference to Duchamp, at which point it might become a creative accomplishment again.

Using that definition, it is possible to identify common falsehoods or misapprehensions about creativity:

- *Creativity has to do with genius, and you either have it or don't have it.* Actually, it is a set of capacities that all people have and that can be developed. Yes, you can teach creativity, and you can most definitely develop environments that encourage it.
- *Creativity requires inspiration, appearing in dramatic "eureka" moments of insight and breakthrough.* Actually, creative processes have few eureka moments, and are comprised of many kinds of endeavor, much being mundane, practical and analytic.
- *Creative work is unreliable because it is not sequential and requires inspiration.* While creativity cannot simply be summoned on demand or scheduled, we do actually know much about how to encourage it, and we know how to create atmospheres and processes that develop creative skills and unfold in effective (if not entirely sequential or predictable) ways.
- *Creative work produces "soft" solutions, not efficient, effective results.* Ask businesses about this illusion. They count on creativity to solve their most intractable problems, to produce product innovations, to improve the efficiency of their operations; they place it high on their list of leadership capacities. Creative problem-solving can make a difference in almost any setting. Arts organizations, which pride themselves on creativity as their *raison d'être*, frequently live within some of the least creatively conducive organizational environments.
- *Creative work is impossible without adequate resources.* Certainly some creative projects do require costly resources to realize, but the resources required for the core creative work itself are usually modest.
- *Creativity is a particular kind of work people do.* Actually, creativity is more like an attitude, an inclination, or a tropism, than a distinct kind of task. Any endeavor can become a creative exploration if one invests it with the playful impulse to make something new.

Creativity in arts organizations

Having set out the historical view and dispelled some of the illusions around creativity, let's turn our attention to what can be done within arts organizations. This discussion focuses on the US context but has wider implications.

Creative practice in the arts is alive and well, especially if you apply a more inclusive definition of the arts than high arts institutions do. If art is creatively making things you care about, it is thriving widely. What can change, making a powerful difference to the struggling state of many arts organizations, is a creative redefinition of the word "education."

Currently "education" in the large majority of US arts organizations is seen as a discrete set of programs that work with schools and maybe some other institutions. The purpose is mostly to teach children about art, and in deeper partnerships, to help the school achieve what it needs, which is usually higher academic achievement. Arts organizations tap funding for this kind of education; and there has been little change since the early 1980s.

Arts organizations need to redefine their "education" role to place their *raison d'être*, creativity, at the center of the organization, not just in cash-positive discrete programs. The institutions themselves need to become learning institutions that use their creativity not just to present artworks and market their offerings creatively, but to become centers of creativity in every way. Arts organizations need to *be* creativity, radiate it in everything they do, so that arts learning becomes who they are. The definition of creativity emphasizes the importance of environment; arts organizations must embody the mindsets and skills of creativity, offer everyone the satisfaction of experiencing creative processes, and be environments that draw people to discover and create novel and useful new things through the arts organization.

A relevant example is Woolly Mammoth Theatre in Washington DC (<http://www.woollymammoth.net>). They had perfectly good education programs that they stopped because they admitted they were not accomplishing the bold mission of the organization. They reconceived "education" as "connectivity," which is a wholehearted creative connection to the vital streams of life in DC that *live* a passionate stake in each play's key issue. Woolly does this not to increase attendance, but to activate everyone, in the theatre and the community, about the relevance and value of the play's concerns. The concept of "connectivity" makes the theatre an embodiment of creativity, each production an improvisation using their creative theatre knowledge and experience, which they invest in the community and into the production, and into environments they create wherever they go. They use their theater art to draw everyone into making things of value.

In the Community Engagement Lab (celvt.org), a recent project of mine, we explore ways in which orchestras can creatively engage, boldly, with communities; and we experiment with projects that connect them with people who do not attend concerts. The goal is for the orchestras to educate themselves about ways to activate the relevance and value of symphonic music within those who don't already have an interest. What are the factors that inhibit creativity within arts organizations? These include: fear of failure, time pressure introduced too early in a process, surveillance, working predominantly for extrinsic rewards, demand for immediate results, "single right answer" thinking, a working environment that is not experienced as "safe enough," and "satisficing" – the habit of grabbing the first workable solution that appears. Creativity is in the DNA of arts organizations – it needs to be tapped and prioritized.

Arts organizations can help themselves in this process by hiring the experts of this work, the superheroes of this particular DNA – teaching artists. These are artists who both know the arts from their ongoing practice, and, importantly, who know how to creatively engage others, both those with arts backgrounds and those without. Arts organizations ought to have teaching

artists do more than deliver their school programs; they should be on every planning team. In Europe they have developed a position called an “animateur” who is basically a teaching artist on staff, who opens up the engagement possibilities throughout the organization.

Arts educators

In arts education, we tend to take creativity for granted. We don’t speak about it well; we don’t present about it well (to ourselves or to others); and we do not develop it adequately, even when we are given enough time with learners. We could be far more intentional and focused on developing basic creative skills (Booth 2013).

We could provide time and appealing invitations for students to focus on creative processes, thus developing the reflective practice that encourages interest in how learners succeed creatively. This gives learners more articulate ownership of their own creative capacities, reducing the mystery and empowering the sense of ability and potency. Students could be invited to share their processes along with sharing every product – I know a teacher who places students in the lobby of the choral concert, showing clips on video monitors to the incoming audience of the highlights they selected from their rehearsal period which they felt illuminated their creative advances leading up to the stage of development the audience will witness that night.

Teachers could prioritize the focus on certain creative skills they value. For example if they feel brainstorming is important for their learners (perhaps because the teacher notices students usually grab the first idea that crops up), they can build in short, fun brainstorming exercises at the beginning of projects. Or if teachers value divergent thinking (coming up with not just many ideas, but highly original ideas), the teacher could regularly offer playful imagination exercises, or even class-crowd source wild possibilities. The skill development is not a one-shot miracle – it never is in arts education – but requires repeated, consistent, and pleasurable exploration.

An approach I use with arts educators (with all educators, actually) to increase the development of creative skills in students, without requiring an additional minute of school time, is called “isotonic instruction” (Booth 2013b). As in isotonic exercise, this pedagogy focuses on the development of a specific muscle (a specific creative skill), and works it in isolation, repeatedly, as part of a larger set of fitness activities (kitbag of creative skills). In practice this means one- to two-minute activities, once or twice a day, every day of the school year – before class, at the beginning or end of class, during homeroom, etc. These playful, game-like challenges focus on, say, brainstorming for a two-week period. An example might be one morning to have students list, for sixty seconds, all the ways in which a mouse and a refrigerator are the same, and then share some of the different answers they came up with. And then present a different challenge for a minute in the afternoon. After two weeks of this kind of play, the teacher might focus on metaphor-making capacity. Teachers who do this tell me that after about a week of isotonic instruction, metaphors begin to appear on the playground, and after about two weeks, they begin to appear in written essays.

Arts educators do not have a handy set of agreed-upon basic skills of creativity. It would help if we did. I led a conference of business and political leaders who *don’t* value the arts as more than classy entertainment – it was bracing and illuminating to work with those who don’t believe the arts have anything useful to offer them. They found the word “creativity” to be another “fluffy” word they don’t take seriously. At the end of three days, one particular skeptic said, “If you could specifically tell me what the key skills of creativity are, and show me reliable evidence that the arts develop those skills, I would become an enthusiastic supporter.” With

the help of James Catterall and the Centers for Research on Creativity (<http://www.croc-lab.org>) and other researchers around the USA and Europe, we are making progress toward answering that challenge. ArtsEdSearch is a valuable resource to find the available research (www.artsedsearch.org) from the Arts Education Partnership.

Let me offer a set of creative skills I use. I discuss them fully elsewhere.² The key processes, actions and attitudes activated when we invest ourselves in the flow of creating are:

- 1 **Generating multiple ideas and solutions.** Often called brainstorming or “ideational fluency,” this is the capacity to create many possible ideas or solutions, and the instinct to go beyond single adequate answers, or pretty good ideas, to produce more and better from which to choose the best. Associated with this is divergent thinking, which comes up with highly original solutions. Divergent thinking may not generate such a bounty of ideas, but provides those surprisingly original, unexpected few.
- 2 **Thinking analogically.** As opposed to logical thinking, this equally important cognitive capacity lifts us out of literalism, enabling us to form symbols and metaphors. Analogical thinking creates original ideas by connecting usually disconnected categories of things, to create new conceptual frameworks, new potentials, new understandings.
- 3 **Sustaining inner atmosphere of exploration.** This inner alignment finds delight in problems with multiple solutions and enjoys the process of figuring things out, making them better, and not just in the completed product with anticipated reward. It requires a tolerance of the anxiety around ambivalence and uncertainty, a willingness to keep going and not find quick (or not so quick) closure. It brings with it a positive feel about mistakes, seeing them as opportunities, and an eager willingness to try new things when one experiment doesn’t pan out. This habit holds curiosity in the highest regard.
- 4 **Using one’s own voice.** This capacity is not as simple as it sounds. It distinguishes one’s own understanding of things, apart from the many other influences, and responds in one’s own individual way. It includes many capacities, such as a constant checking in with oneself to discover experiences and responses anew, following impulses about one’s own understanding until they come clearer, making choices based on that personal sense, through to completing one’s expressions to their fullest possible realization.
- 5 **Trusting one’s own judgments.** Perhaps underlying the habit of finding one’s voice, this develops a personal inner compass for validity. It involves use of all the senses to gather data, and a confidence to rely on holistic wisdom, derived from body knowledge, intuition and impulse as well as data and logic. Making a judgment is an act of consequence in the individual, a decisive moment, more than having an opinion, a set of ideas, or an impulse to try out. Creative engagement requires temporary suspension of both self-judgment and fear of the judgment of others, and a trust that one’s own impulses are worth following.
- 6 **Formulating good questions and problems.** The better question leads to more engaged answering and more creative answers. This habit develops not only the good questions we pose aloud, but more importantly, the taste for and the quality of the thousands of unstated internal questions we pose to guide our solving processes, large and small.
- 7 **Improvising.** This instinct to make-it-up-as-you-go generates new material through play and exploration. Its suspension of normative rules and expectations celebrates risk-taking, experimentation, innovation, discovery, and imagination. Skilled improvisers guide themselves into and out of such play, finding appropriate times and methods; they are drawn to improvisation, function happily within it, and distill the material of value that arises.
- 8 **Finding humor.** Required for good collaboration and for a healthily sustainable inner working atmosphere, this fun habit of mind enables us to play with the reality we perceive.

Humor is one of the most common creative acts, both in the perspective that identifies aspects of the world to make fun of, and in the original and iconoclastic expressions that challenge expectations, poke fun at our established points of view, opinions, and ways of doing things, and remind us to lighten up. A creative classroom always includes laughter in its organic soundtrack.

- 9 **Crafting.** This delight in completing things as well as they can be done seeks excellence, honors the wisdom within each discipline and genre, and wishes to learn from others to make things continually better. This kind of creativity seeks to refine, gain mastery of processes, honor tradition, and apply precision with ever-increasing quality. It applies consistent criteria of excellence, and holds high standards to aspire to. Until craft feels creative, making music or sketching is more *techne* than *creare*, more technical work than creative art.
- 10 **Making choices based on a variety of criteria.** In addition to finding one's own voice and making choices based on it, this capacity enables us to make effective, personally true choices based on a wider palette of perspectives. For example, being able to write in a particular style for a particular audience or to paint the landscape that will work in the corporation's atrium. This habit of mind opens up a vast middle ground of possibility for creativity between the usual two options of investing oneself according to one's own inquiry, or giving over to some other person's or institution's preferences and purposes.
- 11 **Inquiring skillfully.** This habit of mind is enormous, a basket of skills of creating and guiding a learning process. It includes: experimenting, analyzing, reflecting, evaluating, flexible purposing, using serendipity, applying trial-and-error, risk-taking (appropriate risks), taking advantage of mistakes, among others. This habit, marinated in curiosity, includes the skill of not knowing and the feel for staying with an ephemeral thread of interest.
- 12 **Persisting.** Creative engagement may start with a burst of energy, may have energizing "aha" experiences along the way, but it requires persistence to achieve valuable results. As a child develops healthily, her attention span grows; similarly, a learner's capacity to persist grows as she learns how to stay with processes without the quick gratification of completion, finding other kinds of satisfaction and interest along the way. Creative persistence holds to a goal even as we adjust strategies, make mistakes, encounter dead-ends, take side-trips, and encounter failures.
- 13 **Self-assessing.** This capacity to accurately, consistently, interestedly look at the quality of one's work guides the ongoing involvement in a creative project; it grounds the work during the process and after. It non-judgmentally applies high personal standards, and informs choices throughout every process – from sensing when one part is "good enough," to the need for more revision in another, from ongoing reflective awareness of the quality of the process and result, to knowing of one's strengths and weaknesses.
- 14 **Reflecting metacognitively.** This awareness and interest in our internal processes enables us to develop more effective internal guidance, to identify our own style (creative, learning, artistic styles), our patterns, strengths, preconceptions, prejudices and preferences, in order to apply them well or experiment with others. As opposed to self-absorption and narcissism, this holds distance between the observer and the data within oneself being observed. In a healthy individual, this creative habit feeds a kind and supportive inner creative home base, within which sparks of interest get noted and valued.
- 15 **Willingly suspending disbelief.** Often cited as a crucial "audience" skill, this capacity sets aside preconceptions, critical judgment, and experiential caution, enabling us to enter and explore an invented world as if it were in some ways real to find its personal connections, value and relevance. This is an essential capacity of imagination, and is an act of courage and

- trust. This is almost a spiritual capacity, to trust, to say “yes” to the unfamiliar. It can help sustain an active participation in the experience of wonder, which is one of the most overlooked essentials for creating, learning, and living a rich quality of life.
- 16 **Observing intentionally.** We take in information from our world actively, through all the senses, which provides an overload of data. The massive input is usually processed by intuitive selection, most commonly by the unseen dictates of our animal nature, upbringing, enculturation and personal preferences. We can also apply intentional observational strategies to produce relevant, valuable, and rewarding information amid the chaotic overload. Some specific practices include separating observation from interpretation, recognizing patterns, attending to novelty, and setting specific lenses that relate to creative work underway.
 - 17 **Going back and forth between parts and wholes.** We naturally switch perspective in creative processes, from micro to macro, from detail to big picture, back and forth between the forest and the trees. Practice develops a sensitive ability to hold both at the same time, and eventually into the capacity to hold seeming contradictions without the need to choose one or the other.
 - 18 **Trying on multiple points of view.** This is the basis of empathy, the capacity to be able to enter into a world and see – to not only “recognize and appreciate” different ways of seeing things, but actually experience and explore from that perspective. The habit applies in connecting to ideas as well as to other people – Einstein credited his theory of relativity to his thought experiments that took him inside the perspectives of phenomena in physics to learn from their point of view.
 - 19 **Working with others.** Our definition of creativity recognizes group creativity, since most creative projects are not done solo. Given a capacity for empathy, this commitment to creative collaboration requires a subtle permeability of the ego that allows a delicate balance of ideation and choice, by the group and the individuals at the same time. In managing such processes, teamwork skills include clear communication, awareness of expectations and their ongoing realization, the capacity for interdependence, basic trust of others, and careful listening.
 - 20 **Tapping and following intrinsic motivation.** Amid the many, and very real, extrinsic motivators that work on us, the capacity to find and follow one’s own personal yearnings is essential to creative work. It includes the heart-intelligent capacity for joy and wonder. It is guided by feel for the pleasures in creating, inquiring, and reflecting. This yearning takes us beyond what we know, striving to capture and communicate that which we want to know, and almost know, that which lies beyond what currently exists. When well developed, this habit enables us to take extrinsically motivated situations, the many things we have to do in life, and find an aspect of them that taps our intrinsic motivations, so we can creatively transform extrinsically driven tasks into intrinsically driven opportunities.

Conclusion

I have suggested some ways that we in the arts and arts education can increase the clarity, visibility, and impact of the creativity in our hands. Here are a few closing ideas of ways to further empower what we know in a time when creativity is rising in our culture.

Use the words of creativity intentionally, with greater clarity – even the word “creativity” is so subjectively and variously defined, you are unlikely to advance anyone’s understanding or investment by using the term. Instead, identify the specific skills or aspects you mean, and avoid jargon – it entrenches others’ assumptions.

I believe that creativity, when it is serving us well, is an attitude, an aesthetic we bring to the experiences of living, not just to time spent on a particular project. It is a tropism toward beauty, an irrepressible impulse to play with what is in front of you to make it better, or more interesting, or more fun, or unforgettable – to make it more beautiful in some way that is guided by your personal aesthetic. As such, it is almost a spiritual aspect of human life, a birthright, an essential to a high quality of life whatever one's material surroundings.

Let me close by returning to the importance of teaching artists. This underutilized resource stands proudly, if institutionally inconveniently, on the Venn diagram overlap between arts education and the arts industries, just as they stand on the overlap of art and education. A teaching artist is an active artist with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator, who engages people in creative learning experiences in, through, and about the arts. Good teaching artists radiate creative capacity and also have the skills to draw it forth and guide it well, in others. Wherever good teaching artists are given a challenge to engage people creatively, good things happen. From kindergarten classrooms to corporate boardrooms, teaching artists stand ready to advance the creative agenda. Use them.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.p21.org/>.
- 2 available at: <http://ericbooth.net/the-habits-of-mind-of-creative-engagement>.

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