

CHAPTER EIGHT

ART AS OPEN SOURCE INTELLIGENCE

RICK KANTOR

Abstract

This chapter proposes that the cultural preeminence of rational, scientific and materialistic thinking today is limiting the field of Creativity and Innovation. Art and the work of today's emerging artists who grapple with deeply understanding the forces shaping our world, as artists have throughout history, offer us the semiotics that may probe our own unconscious to find deeper connections. Beyond the dialectic of art as either rarified and effete or functional lies Banathy's concept of social systems design (Banathy, 1996). How might artists' work and their probing thought processes make connections for us to use in our own domains, to stretch our minds to go beyond the conventional or intentional? Art is more than the bridge between the sciences and the humanities: it is its own technology with the potential to evolve our consciousness. This chapter will briefly present how we progressed to today's contemporary art scene, and then will look at selected artists' work to illustrate the creative inspiration that may be found in simply understanding the artists' creative enterprise. Their synthesis of the disparate cultural influences revealed in these works serves to catalyze our own imagination for our innovation efforts. Using Art as 'code' for programming deeper and more remote thinking is another powerful tool for developing the learned skills for fostering creativity.

Introduction

It is safe to say that at no time in civilization's history has the pace of change been as urgent and incessant as it is in our world today. The combination of digital technology and globalization has unleashed infinite possibility simultaneously with the threat of immediate irrelevance or obsolescence. Looking back, the industrial revolution, of course, brought enormous change to manufacturing, to the rise of urban centers, factories and a host of social ills as a side effect of the escape from agrarian drudgery and its limitations. But our current revolution of digital interconnectivity is shaping every aspect of science, technology, learning, lifestyle and social interaction at a velocity uni-

imaginable even 20 years ago. Major innovations, disruptive products and breakthrough creative ideas are daily occurrences, showcased every morning in Fast Company online.

We know there is no slowing this down. We strive to find ways to accelerate our ability to innovate better and faster, not only to stay at peak performance in our fields but merely to keep up to avoid being insignificant. This is as true for the organization as for the teams it nurtures and the gifted, highly specialized individuals required to continuously generate the creativity that may become tomorrow's coveted innovations.

The landmark 2010 IBM study of 1500 CEO's (IBM.com) revealed that creativity was viewed as the number one requirement for successful organizations to thrive in our increasingly complex world. This confirmed a reality that business people, technologists, professionals, educators, scientists, doctors and artists were already feeling. The pressure of constant change, stress, longer workdays, a work-life imbalance and the anxiety of information overload left us with the sense that we were not keeping up. Bela Banathy in "Designing Social Systems" expressed it perfectly years before:

"There is an increasing realization of the massive societal changes, transformations and new realities of the post-industrial knowledge era. These changes touch the lives of every person, family, community and the society. Still, we enter the twenty-first century with organizations and institutions designed in the nineteenth" (Banathy, 1996).

The burgeoning field of creativity research offers potential solutions to aid us in mastering our current predicament. Launched by Guilford's 1950 speech to the APA only 65 years ago (Guilford, 1950), the field of Creativity offers growing empirical evidence of effective tools to generate more creativity and improved problem solving to help design more effective systems and generate better ideas. We've learned how to create organizational cultures more conducive to free-flowing idea generation, building cultures of innovation. As new products' shelf lives diminish and obsolescence looms closer for every new invention, technology or product, the theories and skills of creative problem solving and idea generation confirmed that enhanced creativity was a learned skill, available to anyone. The imperative to keep the innovative pipeline full has mandated putting these creativity enhancing tools, systems and facilitators to the test...and quickly.

The copious amounts of excellent research continues to investigate many aspects of creativity—personality traits, cognitive style, multiple intelligences, effect of environment to name a few. We endeavor to find every way possible to enhance our creative fluency, to stimulate our teams, to make veritable innovation petri dishes of our organizations where novel and useful ideas can spring to life like new antibiotic discoveries ready to cure our societal ills or lagging product sales.

Discussion

It is my proposition that one of the most powerful catalysts of creative thinking has been largely left out of our creative toolbox: today's contemporary artists. Here is a deep well of inspired, unusual thinking that is a readily available resource that can launch the kind of remote connections that give birth to creative ideas.

"Recent surveys consistently identify imagination, inspiration, inventiveness, improvisational ability, collaborative and inter-cultural skills, spontaneity, adaptability and presentation as among the most sought-after attributes of business leadership. These qualities are frequently summed up in a single word—creativity—and all over the world, corporations are focused on acquiring the skills and tools they need to tap into the creativity of their workers and unleash the creative potential of their organizations" (Seifter, 2004). Today's artists offer us unique perspectives that can provoke a reaction and dialog among company teams, fostering the kind of remote associations that would be impossible to reach on their own.

It is not surprising that contemporary artists have been largely left out of our organizational search for creative originality. Art today has become separated from the core of our daily lives where it has lived for millennia. Artists throughout history told the tales that carried the culture forward, created the visual representations of our religions and our wars, celebrated our triumphs and defeats and recorded our everyday social events. Artists were the apparatus of semiotic capture (Ebert, 2013) and appropriately central to the culture.

Then the mid-twentieth century world became more complex. Art was no longer just one of two things: either art for arts sake or as the functional conveyor of socio-cultural values. Now Art began to comment on the intersection of industrial change and society. Impressionist landscapes began to reveal smokestacks and trains in the bucolic landscapes of Monet. The factories seen in the distance of Seurat's post-impressionist "Bathers at Aznieres" foreshadowed the vast side effects industrialization would bring to lifestyle and environment. Artists were starting to sound the alarm on the societal cracks they perceived. Through Surrealism they wrestled with our unconscious feelings, our metaphysical, existential angst. Then the Abstract Expressionists in the new art capital of New York after the end of World War Two struggled with what meaning there could possibly be in a nuclear world that had exploded 2 atomic bombs that instantly erased the lives of over a hundred thousand people. It took the painter Mark Rothko to explain what we felt, in his luminous voids that glowed on his evocative canvases, filling even our peripheral vision with his soulful cry.

Society moved on and capitalist consumerism overran the relevance of the abstract expressionists. Pop Art sought to fill the void by making our consumerist world the new religion, where Warhol's silkscreened Coke bottles and

celebrity portraits became the central semiotic of our culture. If this art wasn't confusing enough for the masses, along came Minimalism and Conceptual Art, both rejecting any aesthetic imperative. Artist Joe Kosuth explained: "Conceptual art—simply put—had as its basic tenet an understanding that artists work with meaning, not with shapes, color or materials. When you approach the work you are approaching the idea" (Ebert, p. 219). That 'idea' might be expressed with every type of material available as artists experimented with new forms of expression including technology, light, sound, video, tar, straw, water, any other material they could get their hands on, and live performance.

This new found complexity of artists' intentions confused and alienated the befuddled museumgoer. Unprepared, they struggled to figure out what "it" meant, rather than what they were experiencing. Suddenly the viewer was expected to become an essential part of the artistic equation. The same audience that felt capable of enjoying Van Gogh's sunflowers was left adrift in the changing tides of this new art.

While this was bad news for the artist whose audience had shrunk dramatically, it could not be a more compelling source of new ideas for anyone seeking an inspired jumpstart. Here was fresh dialogue; original thinking that pushed us outside of our proverbial boxes, to hurl us in unexpected directions. If creativity is about finding the novel and useful (Mayer, 1999), then contemporary art has just laid down a powerful springboard if we would only dare to step on it. Listen to the expansive thinking behind the work of bio-artist Eduardo Kac:

Eduardo Kac "utilizes emergence in his transgenic bio art. In "Genesis" (1999) KAC translated a quote from the Bible (Genesis 1:26) into Morse code and then converted it into a DNA sequence—ordered from a genetics lab—and infused it into a Petri dish with fluorescent E. coli bacteria. Finally the bacteria's light source was connected to the Internet such that web users could turn it off and on, influencing the E. coli's unpredictable mutations" (Ilfeld, 2012, p. 62).

This kind of exceptional, unconventional thinking is the work of artists' minds that are not trying to problem solve but simply drilling down ever deeper into the core of an issue. Does this kind of thinking trigger or inspire you? If you're asking what this piece means, or whether you understand the artist's intention, you are likely missing the value that might be there to catalyze your own thinking. As individuals in pursuit of enhanced creative thought, this is what matters. Here is a third function of art where the artist serves as the sentry on guard looking for cracks in our evolutionary plan.

The contemporary artist is no longer necessarily the artisan of the work. Some never even touch the materials. Damien Hirst famously never makes

any of his own works, nor Jeff Koons. Instead, as artist Joe Kosuth states, “artists are authors within a discourse” (Kosuth, 1996). The confusion most people experience, and why artists have been whisked out of the mainstream and locked inside rarefied galleries, is because the very nature of the artist has changed. Their connection and purpose has deepened, resulting in works of art that often have nothing to do with aesthetic appeal.

If you missed that conceptual change, then understanding why Damien Hirst’s shark hung in formaldehyde is, in fact, museum worthy will be incomprehensible. Some people think this artwork is an effete, insider joke, that couldn’t possibly have anything to offer you or your company. It is titled, “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living.”

Then it gets more complex still. The shark had to be replaced when it deteriorated over time, despite the formaldehyde solution. Did the artist know this would happen? Was deterioration part of his intention? How does this extend the dialog into our own products’ dissolution or our own personal disintegration? It may not be pretty, but have you gotten a jolt of creative inspiration to ponder?

Consider instead, Hegel’s point of view, that art is no longer made just for its own sake, for its aesthetic beauty, or as a religious spiritual object (Kosuth, 1996). Art today is philosophy, with our best artists serving as our early warning systems that alert us to that which requires our attention. Today’s artists serve as our investigative reporters about everything from the uses of new tools and technologies to bringing to light societal changes and issues that need to be addressed.

The artist’s job is to dig deeply, not to solve problems but to find problems; to make the connections we missed. Artists can be a resource for our *own* creative thinking. According to Banathy, “The salient intellectual process is synthesis; its guiding orientation is expansionist; and its thrust is seeking, formulating and fulfilling purpose.” (Banathy, 1996, p.106)

Instead of welcoming the prescient work and thinking of these dedicated artists scattered in every town and city across the United States, the gatekeepers of the contemporary art world have anointed the chosen few and largely ignored the rest. In Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s view, creativity is the intersection of the individual, the gatekeepers of the field and the domain (Tanner & Reisman, 2014, p. 13). The art world’s curators and gallery owners, as the gatekeepers, have decreed who will be today’s collectable, celebrity artists. In this commodification of art, these artists’ products have become a luxury asset, an investment, a trophy. Consumerism has usurped the artist’s importance to our society. What has happened to the deeply felt message of the philosopher artist trying to communicate to us all? The intention and clarion call of the artist has been drowned out by the auctioneer’s gavel.

Dr. Don Baciagalupi, former-President of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and now President of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art being built in Chicago, sought to redress this usurping of the artist’s intention for the mere product to be sold for the profit of the few and privileged. He envi-

sioned a show, “State of The Art”, which would dare to risk censure by the leading gatekeepers of the Art world by asking which artists were being left out of the contemporary art dialog.

The journey began with outreach to every colleague in every town across the U.S., to find the most promising, unheard from artists with a deep commitment to their art making. The resulting list of 8,000 names was whittled down by Internet review to 900. Baciagalupi and curator Chad Alligood then spent a year visiting every studio to find what they were looking for: 102 artists speaking to the issues of our time and our communities. Artists who made incisive connections, placing before our eyes things we had never conceived; thought provoking, complex pieces that left us pondering, marveling, confused, nourished, intrigued. They found artists with a fierce commitment to their communities, which they served by embedding their studios in these villages, inner cities and small towns and cities.

Here, at this show at Crystal Bridges in 2014, contemporary artists were put back into our society where they belong: as our visionaries, our provocateurs, and our philosophers. They were returned to their historic role as the canary in the coalmine, pointing out the dangers and wonders of the place we find ourselves as a society and as individuals struggling with our warp speed global world. Dr. Baciagalupi explained:

“Historically, art has had a central role in communicating the beliefs, the mythologies, and the cultural history. It’s a huge loss to our culture that the marketplace of commodification has filtered the contemporary art we view. The voices and intentions of the artist have been lost. The mainstream media won’t discover these artists because it can’t deal with the complexity of this work. Our world now is in binary mode, where you are either for or against something. The complex meaning of today’s artists is too difficult to grasp easily. The work requires the audience to make their own meaning, to engage their minds and emotions to give the work its value. It requires today’s Art gatekeepers to be more complex, not just the suppliers of million dollar art to galleries and collectors.”

Baciagalupi’s audacity, backed by the forward thinking Crystal Bridges Board of Directors, was to posit that a new museum could be a gatekeeper of its own and in the process, reinvigorate the dialog of the public with contemporary artists. The gamble would be whether the public would be willing to grapple with the complex conversations these selected artists were demanding in their work.

“What I saw at the museum”, said Baciagalupi, “was 176,000 people who came, they investigated, they challenged, and they had discussions with complete strangers. This doesn’t happen at a Jeff Koons exhibition where every-

one already knows the brand, so you can no longer see the work. At our show, it's all novel."

Here is a sampling of the kind of thought provoking, creativity inspiring works by selected "State of the Art" artists whose intentions and process might provoke new creative meaning and connection with your own projects and issues. These artists are creative power tools who have a lot to teach us about where innovation comes from:

Nate Larson and Mimi Shindelman:

Their Geo-location series uses GPS information embedded in actual 'tweets' to locate the exact physical location of that particular Twitter update. The artists travelled to the location to photograph the originating site of the 'tweet'. They exhibit the photo image with the 'tweet' captioned below. In one image, a sad dog's face sticks out of a dilapidated porch screen door with the 'tweet' caption below, "Two years ago today I lost my Dad...time sure flies! I miss you Dad. #RIP."

The show catalog elucidates the artist's work: "Culling the digital material of our everyday lives and anchoring it to the spaces we inhabit, the artists compel you to reconsider the intersections between public and private, virtual and real, spoken and seen." In the artist's words, "We're talking about the loneliness of the Internet." (State of the Art catalog).

Jonathan Shipper:

"To me, art is the process of somebody looking at the world and rethinking what it is." In his work, "Slow Room", the artist has taken a familiar and homey looking living room and attached cables to each and every object: the couch, the lamp, the television, the vase, the chair, the rug. The cables connect through a hole in the back wall to a mechanism that imperceptibly over days and weeks will drag each object to the hole, slowly destroying each in a final heap of waste.

"The work compels you to stop and consider the slow change of your own form and that of the world around you", the catalog explained. Mr. Shipper offered, "These pieces are about destroying the old but they are also about creativity itself, which is in part an act of destruction. To make a chair you have to destroy a tree." (State of the Art catalog).

Hamilton Poe:

In his work "Stack", 6 working household box fans are attached sideways to a wall in a vertical stack from the floor toward the ceiling, with space between for mini-sombreros, anchored by an egg, to spin about in the breeze. It's a humorous installation referencing Donald Judd's sleek and iconic wall mounted sculptures. Describing his creative process, Poe says "Artists come

to art through displacement from the norm. My issue is being bombarded with information. I get overwhelmed and that produced this feeling—right before I reach exhaustion—of giving up and releasing anxiety. Pushing through is very important, and then finding something new” (State of the Art catalog).

Susan Goethel Campbell:

Susan’s work focuses on the intersection and fusion of natural earth elements with those that are manufactured and engineered. In her series “Clods” and “Grounds” she grows root-bound forms that make perfect living casts of manufactured containers, capturing their indented concentric circles and plastic patterns in root formations and grass. The surprising tribal art-like beauty comes from the translation of one material form into another (State of the Art catalog).

Gabriel Dawe:

His mesmerizing construction of miles of colored thread strung between hooks on walls and floor surfaces may appear to be colored beams of light overhead. Growing up in Mexico City, he watched his grandmother teach embroidery to the females in the family. “Dawe sought to explode the gender-bound tradition. He sees the structure of his installation as a metaphor to the social structure—and strictures—that often rule our everyday lives” (State of the Art catalog).

Joel S. Allen:

The loss of his sister to pharmaceutical side effects began for Joel as grieving and transmuted into art making using hundreds of ubiquitous amber pill bottles. Appearing like giant tribal “shaggy beehives suspended in space, Allen wants to remind us that the potential for unearthly beauty lies everywhere around us, waiting only for the touch of human imagination” (State of the Art catalog).

Flora C. Mace:

“I never know what our work’s about until we make it”, Flora says in the catalog. As a glass artist, she has invented new ways to use glass. In “Tazetta Narcissus”, she has invented a way to preserve forever a living, flowering narcissus bulb. By deconstructing each petal and leaf and painstakingly encasing it in glass before reassembly, the flowering form will last forever, something never before accomplished with a carbon-based life form. She says of this remarkable achievement, “I hope that the techniques we have developed...will help other artists realize that there is another way, and just keep

looking” (State of the Art catalog).

These are some of the undiscovered artistic provocateurs in our midst. There are many established, well-known contemporary artists whose extravagant works may spark new avenues of creative thinking. The otherworldly beauty and sheer scale of James Turrell’s sculpting of light into Roden Crater, an extinct volcanic cinder cone in Arizona, is one provocative example of Eminent creativity in our time.

John David Ebert, author of “Art after Metaphysics” writes,

“With contemporary art, there is no single world that is being articulated. Each artist is busy constructing his own plane of signification on the inside of his or her own semiosphere, and the interested individual can either show up to view the experiment or else completely ignore it.

However: we are living in an age when all the previous structuring Forms of civilization...are in complete disintegration and disarray. And in such an age of breakdown, the contemporary artist IS necessary as a sort of fisherman of Forms...he is busy extracting from this middleheap temporary singularities that may serve...to construct a new cosmology for a new epoch”
(Ebert, 2013, p. 219)

In the literature on creative ideation in organizations, one of the catalysts recommended to spur more expansive, less conscious thinking in groups is to bring in a Wild Card, a provocateur, a zero gravity thinker (Rabe, 2006, p. 5). This describes today’s contemporary artists who are connection-making marvels. Free of group thinking or organizational expectations, non-conformist and independent, there are artists whose works align to every business type and domain. Bring these artistic minds to sit at the conference table when brainstorming; ask them to do a presentation discussing the intentions and concerns of their work before a group creativity work session. Hire an art historian to showcase and discuss artists’ work relevant to any given topic—education, healthcare, guns and violence, the environment, family and social structures, water shortages around the world.

In one creative ideation technique called Brutethink (Tanner & Reisman, 2014, p. 29), a group is shown a random item and asked to force meaning of this item onto their problem. For example, “How is a Frisbee like my problem?” “It flies far away but then sometimes boomerangs back”. “It’s enjoyed by people and dogs” “It’s best played in a group and outdoors”. Instead of a Frisbee, let an artist’s work inform these same questions, starting off the session with a much deeper well of thought from which to draw connections. Pandy and Mitroff’s Law of Limited Variety describes the possible advantage:

a system will exhibit no more variety than the variety to which it has been exposed in its environment. (Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 97). Seeking complexity, as artists do, may increase your creative output.

We need artists to assist us creatively because not all connections are made cognitively through the left hemisphere of the brain. Music and visual arts are processed in the right hemisphere, making connection through the corpus callosum with the brain's left hemisphere. The visual work of artists, the auditory compositions of musicians, the kinesthetic works of dancers stimulate the non-verbal parts of our brain. This forces us to stretch for the remote kind of connection making and creative thinking that innovation requires. Bringing an artist to the conference table may increase the fluency and flexibility of your creative ideations.

In the field of Creativity, we speak of the importance of a deliberate creative practice. When you regularly include the artist and their works in your culture, you are building a "learning organization", defined by Human Performance Technology as "organizations that encourage, support and celebrate personal mastery of knowledge" (Van Tiem et al., 2012, p. 496). Invite artistic complexity to start to filter into the conversations of your teams. It's infusion builds more open, expansive cultures, where richer dialog and broader perspectives take root in an environment committed to creativity and learning.

One of the ways organizations are increasingly incorporating art is through artist residencies. From Amtrak, to Hallmark to the UCSF Memory and Aging Center, organizations are bringing artists into the dialog, to shed a new light where there was darkness. Dr. Bruce Miller is the esteemed behavioral neurologist and founder of the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) Memory and Aging Center, whose mission is to provide the highest quality of care for individuals with cognitive problems while also conducting research on the causes and cures for degenerative brain diseases. This may seem an unlikely home for artists.

As one of the world's leading authorities on fronto-temporal dementia, Dr. Miller's understanding of how the Arts can effect brain function and inform their work was the impetus behind creating the Hellman Visiting Artist Program, a 3-month residency where artists immerse themselves with patients experiencing cognitive loss. Asked why he wanted to build this residency program he replied, "People listen to artists. They translate our message to society. We need to rely on artists because we are interested in speaking to a broader San Francisco community. Second, as we age we each have a need to preserve our own systems through visual arts, dance, music and writing. Our involvement with the Arts preserves and even enhances our abilities. When the left side of the brain degenerates, the right side remodels itself and responds. People never interested in art suddenly become interested with left hemisphere loss."

Asked about the benefit of the art residency program for his staff, other doctors and patients, he admits it's difficult to measure the ROI. "I think so. It

humanizes the patients for the doctors. They listen to the way great artists think about the brain. It encourages creative exchange between artist and researcher.” He recalled the deep understanding of their work on Aging and Memory expressed through poet Jane Hirshfield’s work, who spent 3 months deeply engaged with UCSF’s daily work with patients and neuro-scientific research.

Amtrak got into the artist residency business by public demand. Writer Alexander Chee, author of “Edinburgh” and “The Queen of the Night”, in an interview with PEN America mentioned that his favorite place to write is a train. “I wish Amtrak had residencies for writers” (pen.org). The twitter sphere got hold of this, # Amtrak residency, and pressed Amtrak which wisely saw the benefits to their brand and their customers. The first recipient of the residency was New York based writer Jessica Gross, who wrote, “Writing the Lakeshore Limited”, published in February 2014 by The Paris Review. This artist program has been featured on “The Wire”, in the New Yorker and the Huffington Post.

Fashion house Hermes also recognizes the value of bringing independent artists into their workplace. “The Foundation d’ enterprise Hermes pursues a commitment to the creative men and women whose work helps us to see our world in a new light, challenging and consolidating the foundation of our shared culture” (Fondation Enterprise Hermes.org).

At Hallmark, where workers are encouraged to revive their creativity with a wide variety of offerings, an engraver spent 3 weeks in a ceramic studio making pots. Robert Hurlburt’s excited response to the value that this immersion into an artist’s experience has given him succinctly sums up the impact of art: “It’s given me an opportunity to get back to thinking wild and crazy things” (Hallmark, www.fastcompany.com). One of the first principles of creative thinking skills is to go for remote associations and not to censor our thinking: those “wild and crazy” thoughts are the golden threads we seek to capture to weave into creative tapestries.

One of the oldest artist residency programs was begun in 1974 at Kohler Company, a leader in the plumbing fixture industry in Sheboygan, Wisconsin (Laabs, 1994) There, 14-20 artists from around the world are selected to work in their pottery, iron foundry, enamel shop and brass machine shop. By exploring the uses of industrial technology for art making, these artists are expanding the creative vision of a company in an industry not otherwise known for pushing the boundaries of artistic creation. Inviting artists to see with fresh eyes how to work Kohler’s materials invites synergy and connection that would not be possible otherwise.

Beyond this, the benefits to the culture of Kohler are notably positive. Having these rotating artists around all the time uplifts factory worker morale, creating an exchange of ideas about methods and approach to materials. “Tapping into creativity, experimentation and awareness of abstract concepts helped combat fatigue on the factory floor. I saw a marked increase in self-confidence and willingness to put ideas forward” (Laabs, 1994). Since it is

widely understood in organizational creativity that the next great idea can as likely come from the line worker as the Research and Development department, this stimulating effect of having ‘artists in their midst’ has huge bottom line potential.

Dr. Baciagalupi recalled that when he was Director of The Toledo Museum of Art, industry (including General Motors) would approach the Museum to build creative arts programs for them to “get them out of their ruts”. His education staff built hands-on workshops to shake up these industrial giants’ thinking; to teach them about the artist’s way of thinking. Not seeking to solve specific problems, these companies were looking for metaphors and processes that might be appropriate to their own work and applicable to their industry.

Facebook is in its second year of supporting artists’ residencies campus-wide that has made art an omni-present feature in every building. The program founder and curator, Drew Bennett, not only commissions the art for exhibition and installation on every corner of the complex, but encourages the artists to co-mingle and interface with Facebook employees, spreading the seeds of artistic vision everywhere. (Facebook at www.artbusiness.com). His belief is that workplaces filled with art generate employee work satisfaction and increased productivity. By having constant exposure to art, workers are constantly fed a stream of unconventional thinking and new ways of seeing the world.

Whether the ideas making connection and innovations conceived will tangibly affect the company’s success is still a matter of conjecture, but all indications are that the Artist in Resident program at Facebook is an overwhelming success. Bennett believes that the lessons learned about how to successfully create an artist residency program within corporate environments can be rolled out into any organizational settings to promote more expansive thinking, communication and improved workplace satisfaction (Facebook at www.artbusiness.com).

Artist residency programs can now be found at Autodesk, where artists spend 3-6 months working at the digital fabrication facility at Pier 9 in San Francisco. This developed in response to their acquisition of Instructables, a company with Do-It-Yourself projects aligned to the Maker Movement, the thriving subculture of technology enthusiasts who repurpose computer related parts to invent original products for personal satisfaction. The senior creative programs manager at Autodesk, Noah Weinstein, says “Artists are great explorers and discoverers when it comes to using technology. They are asking the software to do things that it does not usually do...they shed light on new functionalities at the cutting edge” (Hallmark, www.fastcompany.com).

Siemens residencies sponsor musicians through its hearing aid division. Honeywell is implementing its own artist residency program, and writer’s residencies continue at the Standard East Village Hotel and the Ace Hotel in New York. Threadless, a T-shirt company sponsors a resident graffiti artist to keep creativity and youthful energy thriving¹.

1. (Hallmark, www.fastcompany.com).

Research on the origins of creative thought and how to stimulate its genesis makes it clear why exposure to the non-traditional, uncensored thinking of artists is so beneficial. It has been argued that there is no such thing as an original thought, only a new synthesis of ideas. A cardinal rule of brainstorming is to build on other people's ideas, to make new connections, to find more remote associations to take us farther afield of traditional thought. Anything that takes us out of the confines of our logical mathematical left-brains and opens access to our imagination-rich, unconscious emotions of the right hemisphere offers the tremendous promise of new synthesis in unexplored territory. This is where those "wild and crazy thoughts" of the Hallmark employee live, but are often suffocated or suppressed by our hectic lives. How do we get beyond these limitations to the fertile lands in our minds where creativity lives?

A number of character strengths for unleashing creativity, can be assessed on the Reisman Diagnostic Creativity Assessment (RDCA). These include openness to new ideas, suspension of judgment in the ideation phase, fluency which is going for as many ideas as possible, flexibility in looking at as many realms and fields of inquiry as possible, elaboration, resistance to premature closure which is incubating on ideas before rushing to implementation, enthusiasm for complexity and its cousin, a tolerance of ambiguity, separating divergent thinking from convergent thinking, risk-taking, high intrinsic motivation, having a positive affect, persistence, and originality (Tanner & Reisman, 2014, p. 25). An open, supportive environment that encourages personal expression and freedom, non-conformity, and gives permission to fail allows these qualities to flourish in the workplace.

There are many methods and exercises to help us expand our creative reach. The book "Thinkertoys" by Michalko (Michalko, 2006) is chock full of exercises like Forced Connection, SCAMPER and the Idea Box to spur creative thinking. Creative consultants can facilitate sessions to effectively use Creative Problem Solving methodologies to systematically unlock new approaches and find best solutions. Synectics effectively uses metaphor and analogy to press beyond our conscious minds into our outer creative edges where original ideas lie.

Each of these are valid and powerful tools; each improves our problem solving ability. But consider that all the participants in this kind of organizational training belong to the same culture, bound by similar suppositions and unseen constraints. In the creativity literature we debate whether creativity is domain specific or domain general. Does one need to be an expert in technology to create the next breakthrough technological idea? Can you push the innovative edge of a domain if you are not well immersed in its current capabilities? Yet if you are within that specialized arena, how feasible is it to suspend what you know to be true to approach the domain from a totally new vantage point?

This is where inviting the artist into the dialog can work magic. Dudek wrote in the Creative Research Journal "artists have the greatest degree of

freedom in effecting change by virtue of their temperaments, their inescapable alienation, and until recently, their relative independence of university education. Their greatest freedom comes from a lack of integration into society, their alienation from societal bonds and their needs to question the established pattern of thinking and behaving” (Dudek, 1993, p. 145).

It is our job to embrace the work of the artist. We should strive to comprehend what it is these trained art professionals are concerned about; to see what connections their brains are making that we haven’t considered; to see what their intensive search for meaning and expression can tell us about our world. These are other-socialized brains that are not focused on solution finding or problem solving or product making. These are our finest creative resources who offer their genius and their failures, their wisdom and excursions of fantasy to us.

Our job is to accept their offerings with child-like wonder, to process it through our own systems and the needs of our workplace or our lives and take from it what is meaningful for us. Artists don’t make meaning: we, the audience are the other half of the equation that does that, as Roy Ascot wrote:

“As feedback between persons increases and communications become more rapid and precise, so the creative process no longer culminates in the *art work*, but extends beyond it deep into the life of each individual. Art is then determined not by the creativity of the artist alone, but by the creative behavior that his work induces in the spectator, and in society at large...The art of our time tends towards the development of a *cybernetic vision*, in which feedback, dialogue and involvement in some creative interplay at deep levels of experience are paramount...the cybernetic spirit, more than the method or the applied science, creates a continuum of experience and knowledge which radically reshapes our philosophy, influences our behavior and extends our thought” (Ascott, 1968).

It ultimately may not matter to us what the artist intended, though it’s informative to know. So much of what scares us away from contemporary art is a fear that we don’t understand it, that it’s meaning is unknowable to us, and either we, or it, are inadequate. Adopt the first rule of creativity: suspend judgment. Interact with the art and let it expand your creative vision.

If all that the inclusion of artists into our workplaces accomplishes is openness to new experiences and greater acceptance of possibility, then their canvases, their constructions, their songs, their dances, their performance art, their conceptual works and their poems have done us an enormous service. Our organizations will be freer and more conducive environments for creative ideas. We might learn to adopt the first rule of improvisational theatre, which is to agree with whatever suggestion has gone before by saying, “Yes, and...”. It should be the same with our artists’ offerings. Accept what is pre-

sented so that we may make our own meaning from it.

If we think about what the history of the world might look like if we didn't have art to explain it to us, we might have some idea of how much more limited our organizations are when Art's language is not singing all around us. By including the artist's voice, by welcoming and honoring it in our workplace, we signal to everyone in the culture that diversity of thought is welcome, that originality and non-conformity are expressions to be encouraged. We signal that we are truly dedicated to being creative, innovative powerhouses that consistently produce the highest quality original products, services and thinking.

Conclusion

Apple's famously brilliant "Think Different" ad campaign revealed the magic formula for innovative ideas. The more we are exposed to and surround ourselves with different ways of thinking, the more we raise our own capacity for discovery. We are able to risk sailing into uncharted waters instead of holding back for fear the world may be flat.

My proposal simply urges the inclusion of the artist back into our midst, whether in our schools, our corporations, our politics or our social and leisure activities. We have marginalized the artist, made her "the other". As a society we have either ignored them or cloistered them away in galleries and museums, making them into commodities to be traded for profit or status. In the process we have stripped them of the meaning they bring to our world.

Artists can be the spark of illumination, the catalyst of innovation. But you have to be open to discovering the fuse it lights inside your own brain. Today's artists that can offer us the most creative value may not be the ones who demonstrate an artisan's master craftsmanship. They may not be the artists whose work we can readily comprehend or enjoy. Find the artists who reach beyond pure aesthetics who provoke within you a kind of participatory grappling for meaning.

Contemporary artists have been our most underutilized resource in our quest to stay creatively vibrant and innovatively prolific. Let's put their creative vision and inspiration to work.

Correspondence

Rick Kantor

6975 Eagle Ridge Road, Penngrove, CA 94951 USA

Drexel University Graduate Studies in Creativity and Innovation

Email: rick@rickkantor.com

Author's Brief Bio

Art and entrepreneurship are the twin life-long passions that drive Rick's current academic study in the field of Creativity. His 2015 Masters Degree in Creativity and Innovation from Drexel University, under the guidance of Fredricka Reisman, compliments an Oberlin College BA in Psychology and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Sonoma State University. His successful business ventures have included designing novelty products and stationery for the gift market, a New York City decorative painting and faux finishing company, lifestyle furniture stores in Manhattan, an international Halloween and novelty hat corporation, and a natural materials design showroom and distributorship in Northern California. He has worked as a consultant to the David Allen Company and David Allen, best-selling author of "Getting Things Done." Rick is an avid art collector, art maker, yoga practitioner, public speaker, and inspirational volunteer to young schoolchildren. His diverse and eclectic background uniquely informs his current creative consulting work, executive coaching and public speaking engagements. Rick thrives on being the creative catalyst of great flights of productive inspiration for individuals and companies alike. He currently serves as the Secretary for the American Creativity Association.

References

#Amtrak Residencies. <http://blog.amtrak.com/general-faqs/>

Ascott, R. (1968). The Cybernetic stance: my process and purpose. *Leonardo* 1, p 106.

Banathy, B. (1996). Designing social systems. *Systems Science and Cybernetics*, vol. 2, pp. 105-121.

Chee, A. Interview retrieved April 4, 2015 from <http://www.pen.org/interview/pen-ten-alexander-chee>

Deresiewicz, W. (2015). The death of the artist and the birth of the creative entrepreneur. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 315, 92-97. Retrieved May 5, 2015 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1645952594?accountid=10559>.

Dudek, S. (1993). The morality of 20th century transgressive art. *Creative Research Journal*; Vol. 6, Issue 1-2, pp. 145-152.

Ebert, J.D. (2013). *Art after Metaphysics*. CreateSpace (Amazon Subsidiary), ISBN 1492765481.

Facebook, Retrieved May 6, 2015 from <http://www.artbusiness.com/facebook-artist-in-residence-program.html>.

Fast Company, www.fastcompany.com.

Fondation Enterprise Hermes, Retrieved April 10, 2015 from <http://en.fondationentreprisehermes.org/Know-how-and-creativity>.

Guilford, J.P. Creativity. *American Psychologist*, (1950), 5, pp. 444-454.

Hallmark, Retrieved March 27, 2015 from <http://www.fastcompany.com/3043276/my-creative-life/welcome-to-the-brave-new-world-of-the-corporate-sponsored-artist>.

IBM 2010 Global CEO Study: Creativity selected as most crucial factor for future success. Retrieved May 10, 2015 from: <https://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/31670.wss>.

Ifeld, E.J. (2012). Contemporary art and cybernetics: waves of cybernetic discourse within conceptual, video and new media art. *Leonardo*, vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 57-63.

Kosuth, J. (1996). Intention(s). *The Art Bulletin*, 78(3), 407. Retrieved April 20, 2015 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/222969901?accountid=10559>.

Laabs, J.J. (1994). Visiting artists influence work at Kohler Co. *Personnel Journal*; Nov. 1994, vol. 73 Issue 11, p. 28.

Laszlo, K.C. The Evolutionary Role of Art. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved February 12, 2015 from http://archive.syntonyquest.org/elcTree/resourcesPDFs/Evolutionary_role_of_art.pdf.

Mayer, R.E. (1999). Fifty years of creativity research. In R.J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 449-460). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Michalko, M. (2006). *Thinkertoys*. New York, Ten Speed Press.

Pondy, L. & Mitroff, I. (1979). Beyond open system models of organizations. In B. M. Staw and L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research In Organizational Behavior* (pp. 3-39). Connecticut: JAI Press.

Rabe, C.B. (2006). *The Innovation Killer, how what we know limits what we can imagine—and what smart companies are doing about it*. New York, Amacom Books.

Scott, W.R. & Davis, G.F. (2007). *Organizations and Organizing: rational, natural and open system perspectives*. Pearson Prentice Hall.

Seifter, Harvey (2004). Artists help empower corporate America. *Arts & Business Quarterly online*. Retrieved April 22, 2015 from <http://www.artofsciencelearning.org/arts-based-learning>.

State of the Art Catalog (2014). Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. ISBN: 978-0-9834665-0-5.

Tanner, D. and Reisman, F. (2014). *Creativity as a Bridge Between Education and Industry, fostering new innovations*. Self published, ISBN: 1497482992.

Van Tiem, D., Moseley, J., Dessinger, J. (2012). *Fundamentals of Performance Improvement*. San Francisco, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.