

# The Artist's Manifesto





# THE ARTIST'S MANIFESTO



A creative philosophy for life & work

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# Dedication

*To my children; Ruairí, Cian & Cara – this book is for you.*

*Follow your heart, let it draw you to the thing you love to do most, then dedicate your life to that. Get paid to play. Let your inside world be your driver, let the outside world be your inspiration. Look not to others, family or friends for guidance, acceptance or applause for no matter how well intended they can never show you the way. Be here now. Seek out and embrace the solitude of your own company. Listen to the small voice that speaks when you are quiet, and you will always find the answers to your life's most significant challenges.*

*Love, always, Dad.*





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# Foreword

BOBBY KOUNTZ

About once every decade or so, an Artist will tap into what I refer to as the Infinite Source of all things creative... When this happens, there is an actual, palpable shift or shudder, if you will, in the space-time continuum. Behind the curtain, or veil, or cloak, or whatever you care to label it, lies the truth. When an Artist accesses the truth, magic happens, literally.

The book you are about to read isn't a book at all. It is a collection of ideas and inspiration structured in a format that will hopefully have you asking questions and seeking answers, believing where you previously doubted and doing things which up until now, you only ever dreamed. If it does that for you, then you will be experiencing a similar awakening as happened to me.

The Artist's Manifesto may not grab you as it did me, it may not shake you violently as it did me, but it will wake you up to yourself if you let it – I promise. At some point, while reading the book, you will become suddenly aware that something is different and yet you won't know what it is. But you will KNOW!

The Artist's Manifesto permitted me to become

the writer I always knew I was capable of becoming. The reason you are reading these words now is a result of the profound experience I had from reading one of the first early versions of the book.

You can imagine how incredibly proud and honoured I was when Larry asked me to contribute the Foreword. I told him he would have it by the end of the week. He said I should take my time. But I felt like there was no time like the present, so I got to work. It felt to me that the Foreword would write itself and I merely needed to do my best to capture the essence of it. It was only hours after that initial conversation that the foreword was complete. This is the essence and principle message of *The Artist's Manifesto* in effect.

When an Artist connects with the truth of her inspiration, time stands still. What she once knew, or thought she knew, becomes suspect because of the depth and breadth of the new information she has witnessed. Because the Artist, sharing her work, has broken through something and suddenly dared to share. The new information she is exposed to is so profound, so moving, and so undeniable, she is forced to at least look into the mirror and give ourselves permission to seriously consider what we are reading and learning to be true.

You see, as Winston Churchill said: "The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance

may deride it, but in the end, there it is.” Truth is like gravity or the wind. It can’t necessarily be seen or felt, but we know it exists, period.

The Artist’s Manifesto is a document of truth. It documents the truth about anyone who has ever considered sharing something unique with the world. The Artist’s Manifesto is a permission slip, a license if you will, giving you the reader, or anyone who ever thought they needed permission to be creative, the authority to create.

This document, this manifesto is all you will ever need to access the depths of yourself. It will awaken you if you let it. If you surrender to the underlying message, to the space between the spaces, to the words between the words, to the time between the time, you will find yourself in absolute awe of all that is not only possible but more importantly, possible for YOU!

A universe of possibilities awaits... Woven into the words, the sentences, the paragraphs and the chapters, are the ideas that will set you free from the false boundaries you have allowed society to place upon you.

What is “Creative Genius” and where does it come from anyway? What it is might be easier to explain rather than from where it originates. Let’s start with what it isn’t. It’s not YOU, at least not the you your friends and family know as you. It is the you that only you know. It is the you that emerges when you or I consciously pause

long enough to put our ego in the back seat and let something else drive. It's that something else that's like the wind I described earlier... It's the same something else that's providing these words for my mind to filter into the tips of my fingers now.

It's the thing that's known and yet not understood. It is sensed, ever felt, but it cannot be seen, at least not by the outer eye. Simply put, it is what I refer to as our inner wisdom. Some have referred to it as our essence, and others call it our "inner coach." One well-known writer often refers to this source as our intelligence.

No matter what we label it, understand that "it" has infinite capacity and "it" is what The Artist's Manifesto is all about. That which can be named is not what we call it. We use words because they are the only method we have to try and describe the indescribable.

Tesla, Michelangelo, Edison, da Vinci, Einstein, Curie, Angelou and so many others, they all knew creativity and imagination were key. The Artist's Manifesto is like a sacred set of scrolls or a treasure map. The answer in the scrolls, the direction to the treasure, they are in you, they are in me, they are in us... We merely need to acknowledge our infinite capacity, afford ourselves permission and we will be free to access that which is within us, that which always has been.

**Believe Completely, Dare Greatly,  
Achieve Accordingly!**

Bobby Kountz, 7:51 PM August 20th, 2018

Author of the forthcoming book:

Commit, Then Figure It Out; How to Accomplish  
Almost Anything...



# Preface

## *Background to The Artist's Manifesto*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

*It was late. Joanne and the kids were asleep. As I sat at the kitchen table, at odds with myself and the work I was in, I began to write the first words of what I would later call The Artist's Manifesto. I had recently taken a project management role with an engineering firm as a short-term solution to a difficult financial situation. Previous to that, a business I had spent 15 years building had failed. I needed to find my place again. The content I was writing had occupied my mind in fragmented chunks for a long time, and late in the silence, as the clock clunked on the wall, it began to come together. What the words became is an expression of what I stand for, my relationship with the world and the overall meaning and purpose of life and work as I have come to understand it. The contents of this book outline what I believe it means to not only create something meaningful to oneself and others but also how every one of us might live a happy and fulfilling life through our work no matter what our chosen career path. To preface this book, and at the risk of appearing somewhat self-indulgent, I feel it's appropriate to let you know my work*

*background and how I came to write The Artist's Manifesto. If you should currently find yourself in a challenging situation, take solace in the fact that change is inevitable. You will find your way.*

I am an artist, and because you're reading this, I guess you are too, even if you are not currently calling yourself one. I've always been an artist, although for a very long time I avoided admitting that to myself. Since I was a child, I had that feeling of something bigger and broader waiting to come through, waiting for me. It was something inside me, a part of me that I couldn't explain. It drew me to weird people, to freaks, people with tattoos and crazy hair and crazy clothes. It brought me to underground music shops, to bars with alternative music, lyrics of songs, arty non-conformist things and dissenting opinions of the world. It brought me to the hidden meaning in things, to that deeper, more profound reality that escapes most of us. It all just felt like it was my place.

I would take great pleasure in doing nothing. Thinking, smoking out my bedroom window, dreaming of the girl down the street, and wondering what that bright halo was around the street lights at night that nobody I knew could explain. I was a dreamer, and it didn't go down well with some people. Once at a PT meeting, my form teacher told my parents I needed to concentrate more on mathematics instead of staring out the window. You see my compliance, and that of my

peers was more important to him than anything we could dream for ourselves. Like most kids, my natural creative instinct was discouraged in favour of a one-size-fits-all model for life. This model was the one I would end up following.

Nothing unique in this. Since the early 1800's when compulsory education first became broadly established in society, systems of education have imposed on us a universal template for successful life and work. Knowledge is vital for healthy development and growth, of course, it is. However, the old assembly line model for education is no longer workable in this contemporary society. Nowhere in the natural world will we find any two things identical, and although we are very similar, every human being is unique. Despite our uniqueness, we are lined up, made to wear the same clothes, when to use the toilet and when to eat, and to remember and repeat the same stuff. It's like we are pawns for the machine.

I'm an adult now, and I can now reflect soberly on all of this. However, like every other kid, I had to follow the well-beaten track. Instead of following what felt natural to me, I chose to fit in. I decided it was best to be normal, to get a job, to stick to the pre-written rules for life, work and success. But it didn't last.

## Bright Shiny Things

I started working when I was 15. Every day as a

young apprentice I was committed to doing the best work I possibly could. It was automatic. I have no idea why, but attention to detail was paramount for me. There were those who recognised it, and they soon afforded me higher responsibility. But many others around me didn't value the effort I put into my work. I realised that most adults worked a job as a means to an end. It was transactional. The underlying rule was; *do as little as possible – give them hours, and they'll give you money*. As long as I was an employee, I had little control over how the system worked. I had to follow the rules and avoid setting too high a standard because the rules said; just about acceptable was good enough.

I felt uncomfortable working to a sub-par standard, and as I got older and braver, I developed an urge to do my own thing. I was tired of living up to shitty work standards and lackadaisical attitudes of my fellow workers. So I used the skills I had acquired, and the fear of little, to build something of which I could be proud. With the technical skills I had gained and the focus on quality, the business grew fast and soon provided me with good clients and a good income. I insisted on the best from myself and the people working for me. But despite this, it wasn't long before I found the same problems as I had as an employee. People just didn't want to play to the level I did

The boom years of the early 2000s were well set, and as new business flooded in the door, the

pressure to deliver was high. In my now relentless pursuit of status and success, it wasn't long before I was making poor decisions. I began to hire people on a whim and ignore the standards I had set for myself for the sake of just getting things done. I started to disregard the principles I had held so important for so long in pursuit of the next job, the next big thing. Leading up to the bust in 2008/9, the entire country including me, couldn't see further than its nose. I was the microcosm of the macrocosm, and just like everyone else, I fell for the lure of bright shiny things.

It's true that we can only ignore the truth for so long before it jumps up and bites us, and after several years in ignorance, I was finally forced to face the senselessness of it all. The economic slowdown arrived, and by 2010 there were far fewer opportunities in my line of business. I held on for as long as possible, but with customers in short supply, pending legal actions, and debt burden at an unsustainable level I had no option but to accept my mentor's advice and close the company.

## Giving Up

With the closure of the business, I had completely lost my sense of self. Everything I had built over the previous 15 years and the apparent status that came with it was gone. I tried to get things started again, but I had lost the drive and the will that had given me the initial energy to start my own thing.

A second business soon followed the first down the tubes, and although there was less collateral damage this time around, I decided I had enough. It was time to give up the fight, to retreat and take stock of what I was doing and where I was going.

I had some savings and a couple of investments that I cashed in, but for the most part, I was broke as a pie crust. I began to sell things just to pay the bills. Bikes, tools, electronics, anything that I thought would command a price, I sold it. I began doing some freelance marketing and web work for a couple of business people which brought in a few quid, but given the predominantly negative state of mind I was in, most of that turned sour. I couldn't find a good client if one fell out of the sky on top of me. Banks were sending demand letters, debt collectors were phoning and calling to my door, and I could barely bring myself to spare the price of a cup of coffee. I remember one Saturday morning my kids asked me to bring them for breakfast. I didn't have the heart to say no, but my bank account was in the toilet. I think I was down to my last €20. As I approached the till I was dreading the response; sorry sir, your card has been declined. Man, it was shit. Luckily, on this occasion, I had just about enough to pay the total.

For three years I did little of any significance work-wise. Although I did carry out some charity work that had a significant positive effect on the lives of several sick children and their families. It

also provided me with some sense of purpose. I should recognise too, that I was running marathons and training hard at the same time, and I had become fitter physically than I had ever been before. So while my professional career, personal and the family financial situation was in the manure, my health and fitness were better than ever. But that aside, I mostly just sat in my kitchen and stared out the window, just like I did when I was a kid. I was back where I started.

During that difficult period, I listened to, and read over and over again material from people like Alan Watts and James Allen. They and others helped me figure a lot of things out about myself and my place in the world. Eventually, I began to understand, and most importantly, remember who and what I was. On the inside, I was witnessing significant positive personal change, self-realisation and awareness I hadn't felt before. In stark contrast, the outside was a bit of a mess. My wife shouldered the majority of the financial responsibilities during this time, for which I am very grateful. However, with debt collectors never far away, the tension between us was high.

### A Turning Point

I used to hold fast to the idea that we should never give up – no matter what, stick to the task until you get what you want. Now, there is some merit to that statement in some respects. However, I feel

there is a fair dose of clarity required around what it actually means. If you believe, as I did, that “never giving up” entails keeping the blinkers on, your head down, pushing forward with whatever is not working until something changes, then what we tend to label as a failure, will be perpetual. Momentum will dictate results.

Successfully applying the concept of “never giving up” requires an understanding that we never can, and never do, no matter what outside circumstances look like or how we react. So in that, there is an irony; perhaps we need to fail before we succeed. Maybe we need to know both sides of the thing to truly understand. It is true that to realise the success we want, we are required to give up, temporarily speaking. In giving up, we must relinquish our need to have it a certain way. The Artist’s Manifesto, and in particular, the principle of *Purposeful Accident*, which we will cover in a later chapter, explores this idea.

In all challenges of life and work, there are ups and downs, an ebb and flow, and if we are too rigid to the outcome, to what lies at the peak or the trough of experience, then we lose the benefit – we fail to learn anything. Experience teaches words don’t teach. Never giving up to most people means gritting your teeth, tensing your muscles and fighting it out, but this is exhausting, and eventually, our resolve suffers. In reality, the only way to win is to relax, to accept the current



conditions and realise they are temporary. Take your foot off the gas, slow down, diffuse the difficulty and focus instead on something small and unrelated. I realised this as I sat in that kitchen chair with my back to the wall, listening to the clock tick while staring out the window at my friend the birch tree. I learned that only when we slow down can we allow ourselves to reach a turning point, and gently take it. Consider this book as an arrow pointing the way towards that turning point.

### Why Write This Book

Lot's of what I write I'm sure some would consider rubbish, and that's fine. Maybe this book is rubbish. All I know is that I am somehow compelled to write it and share ideas within it. I like writing; it allows me to express something ultimately inexpressible. Such is the nature of the self and its will to know itself. To express it through our art and work enables it to be, for a short while, until it needs to be something else. To deny its expression or conceal it with ulterior motivations starves us of happiness and fulfilment.

However, many of us operate in this way. We do work we'd prefer not to do and then justify it by referring to the thickness of our wallets, and the many responsibilities we have. Or we convince ourselves that we are too old, that it's too late to change. Little do we know that it is this reluctance

to accept change, the only true reality there is, which is at the heart of our unhappiness and discontent. Like our insensitivity to the low-level hum of a fridge in the background, we have become accepting and comfortable in our discomfort. This book offers an alternative to this standard thought model of how life should be.

The Artist's Manifesto is a creative philosophy for life and work. It is a philosophy to which I can align. I wrote The Artist's Manifesto to remind me of what's important. It is also a means by which to encourage you to create things for the sake of it without the need for applause. It is a call for you to follow your heart and create with passion, integrity and commitment. It is a message from your self to you to stay connected to your creative spirit and to be utterly selfish concerning your work.

Because the doing of something for its own sake is reason enough to do it. That is what The Artist's Manifesto is about – taking hold of an idea and regardless of how it is received, pursuing it to its ends for the personal gratification and enjoyment that it brings. Consider The Artist's Manifesto a message from you to yourself. Consider it your call to arms, to fight the good fight, to ignore the imposed opinions of others, of the fickle crowd. Consider it an invitation to return to you. I hope you take it.

Oh, and I should say, the girl down the street of

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whom I used to dream as I stared out my bedroom window... I married her.



# The Artist's Manifesto

## Short Form

The Artist's Manifesto is the creative's call to arms. It is a call to you to ignore the opinions of others, to leave behind the need to be accepted, and finally create the beautiful things you were meant to create. It is a request for you to find the silence, to finally listen to the small voice that's been calling you all your life. It's call for you to bring an accurate representation of yourself into the world without fear of rejection.

We are the Storymakers, and we tell our stories through our art. That can never be compromised for the sake of applause, for when we do, we lose the truth and honour in our work. Praise can come, but only as a consequence of making things from a pure and unspoiled place.

The Artist's Manifesto is a declaration of who we are and of that for which we stand. It is a gracious presentation of the middle finger to the world that says we should row in, join the machine, be the same as everyone else. It is a message to my fellow creatives that there are more like you, you are not alone, your tribe is waiting. The Artist's Manifesto is about us, our art, and that which calls us to make it.

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### Who Is An Artist?

Everyone is an artist, and everyone can create art. We were born with the ability to create beautiful things. It is inherent in our being. It wills to be expressed and will express if left to do so unhindered. Everyone feels the need to create in their way, and no one has the right to encroach on the creative integrity, method or means of creation of another. Art is unique. It is never the same despite the insistence of the world to place art in boxes with labels.

The street sweeper can be an artist. The barista can be an artist. The plumber, the architect, the florist, the mechanic and the accountant, they all can be artists. Everyone has the opportunity to create art in their chosen profession, but many do not make it. For us who can see art in all things and people, their artistic ability is evident, even if they can't see it themselves.

It is there, waiting to be allowed expression. Allowing that energy expression is a challenge because the world tells us we need to be productive and efficient, to contribute and to earn. Our task, therefore, is to follow the sound of the small voice and allow it to lead us in the direction of what we inherently know is right. Some of us know it and express it, some of us know it and don't show it, many others don't yet know it.

Maybe this life is not for them to know it, but

eventually, everyone will know it and express it freely. That is the ultimate will of the soul.

## The Artist's Challenge

The momentum of the world is our most significant challenge. It has been building for a very long time, and if we unwittingly become a part of it and try to create from there, we spoil our art. Our society is consistently in the making, becoming better than it was before. However, we creatives must step outside of that to create. We must enter our world and make things from there.

For us, there is the natural draw towards making things, and in tandem, there is the draw towards being a part of the world around us. We strive to stay true to the artistic calling, to make beautiful things while the world pulls us like a magnet toward normality. It says that we must follow the rules, fall in line, not drift outside the protective circle of society.

Go to school it says, study hard, get a job, be like everyone else, be safe. Following your heart is dangerous. You'll be left alone out in the wilderness to die. But something inside us knows that this idea is flawed. Sameness, normality, and mediocrity are celebrated and encouraged by the masses. These ideas are the arch enemy of the artist, and they are a restriction to all creative minds in the world.

Sameness is like a whirlpool, a powerful vortex

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with increasing momentum and it is easy to fall into this if we are not aware. Part of the problem for creative people is allowing this sameness to be without needing it to change. In our opposition to it, we become a part of it. It drags us in.

In this world of ours, we are not alone. We join other creative people there. Everyone who has ever made great things and changed the world is there. The energy that wills us to make things is there. Creative people like you and me must go there every day to receive the inspiration and direction we need to make beautiful things. Without taking the time to go to the well, we fall into the momentum of the world.

We become drawn to the predominant thought patterns of people and become disconnected. Our challenge, therefore, to remain in that place, our world. Break the rules! Fuck the begrudgers! Graciously present the middle finger and say thanks but no thanks.

### Creative Integrity

We must be selfish and uncompromising in our art. We must maintain artistic integrity no matter what. We find it when we listen to the small voice. The small voice directs us. It sounds like a whisper and stays with us always. It's loud when we are quiet, and quiet when the world is loud, but it never leaves us. It calls us to keep our creative work



intact and real, to never compromise despite the temptation from the world to do so.

I am not religious in the typical sense of the word. However, I can see the truth hidden in the stories from the bible. The serpent in the garden, for example, represents the world of polluted ideas, of greedy men, of commerce, of a disconnected society infatuated with symbols.

You are an artist. You see these things plainly. You know this has momentum, and you can see there is a draw towards it. Many of us are tempted to go. We think we must compromise our work to find success. Compromising our work is the way to fail so we've got to be careful here not to avoid these false ideas. To create meaningful art, we must hold our creative integrity as the highest value above all other things.

Success will come as a result of making from the quiet place, but if we forget, we become lost.

## The Creative Process (Purposeful Accident)

The universe is a fractal in its fundamental nature, ever self-creating better versions of itself. It never ceases, it is always moving, changing flowing. Nothing ever stays the same. It is our job, the job of the storyteller to follow this flow, to harness and ride it like a surfer rides a wave. In that, we become increasingly refined, higher versions of ourselves from it.

The process is self-creating, we do not create it,

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we ride it. In Zen it is known as Ziran; That which comes of itself. Just like life, the artistic process is spontaneous, free of conditions and requires no force or effort. There is no force, no laws, no boss, nobody to push it around and make it happen. It simply does it.

In describing the artistic process, it is more accurate to say there is no process, it merely is. It comes about by our will and intent to create something for no other reason than the joy of creating. Then something special happens. To seek a method or process first suggests that there are rules, and the truth is there are no rules. When we look back with linear analysis, attempting to understand how a thing was made we miss the very essence of it.

The process always looks after itself if we are brave enough to stand aside. It requires no input from you or I. We are merely tools in the hands of our art. To And this and remove ourselves from it allows that which comes of itself to be whatever it wills.

### Embracing Solitude

The most beautiful place you and I can be is here and now. Now is where it all began, and it is where it will eventually end. Life is solitude in an expression of itself and to be consciously in that place is the most exceptional experience any artist can have. God lives in the quiet away from the

noise of the world, so to allow our art expression we must embrace the solitude.

Many of the world's greatest artists already know this. The rest of the world does not. They label the artist a recluse and an introvert. They say you are hiding from the world. They just don't understand what we understand. To be an artist, to be a Storymaker is to embrace the quiet of our minds.

In the solitude of our own company is where that which inspires us waits for us to come home. Never impatient, always loving, it offers us everything we need at every moment to create a masterpiece. It embraces the artist and gives expression to its ideas through our hands. It speaks the truth and wants the world to hear it.

All we need to do is to accept it and allow it expression.

## The Artist's Duty

Every creative person has a duty and responsibility to share the truth of things with the world. This truth lies in the beauty of our art. In the poems, in the prose, in the music, in the dress you made or in the meal you cooked. It's in the book you haven't written yet, and in the drawing, you haven't yet sketched.

There is much darkness in the lives of people, and when we come back to the noisy world from our private creative space, we bring a piece of that light with us. People are attracted to the beauty

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of our work. They recognise it as a part of them and want to be close to it. It is why people desire unique things. It is why people buy art.

Without you and I visiting the silent world where we create we have little to offer anyone. "Be a light unto the world!" it says. So the artist must go to that creative place, set to work and bring it back to here. To show this world a little piece of that thing they have forgotten they are. To let people see that there is a better way, and it waits for them, for that time when they are ready.

The artist must be non-conformist, to highlight the wrongs and present a new idea for the world. Our work must be non-partisan, there is no right or wrong just creativity for the sake of creativity. There is no nationalism, no patriotism, no capitalism, just art. We are Storymakers, and it is our job to deliver the truth of the story.

We must never censor the truth regardless of how it might be received. Outside opinion must never influence our message, and we must never dilute it for fear of controversy or reprisal. We must be prepared to go to war for the truth, for our art.

### The Work

Mathematics is art. Driving a bus is art. Gardening and sweeping the street is art. Creating or doing anything that helps brighten the lives of other people is art. Anything you love doing is art. Your

work is your art, therefore love your work. If you don't love your work, then learn to. If you can't do that, bless it for what it gave you and start something you can love.

Wherever there are human beings in love with their work you will find art. Where we bring commitment, dedication and passion to the things we make, they grow and have influence. People love these things, they see your expertise, and they say "wow, she is brilliant at what she does". This praise and acknowledgement from others comes to us a result of doing the work and can not be a precondition. If we create for the applause of others, then our work will be spoiled. Therefore, do it for the sake of it and no other reason.

Our work is in showing up, making time every day to practice and develop the necessary skills to become a master. To dedicate ourselves to the technical capabilities of our work is to serve the higher calling. Here there is a risk. To decide we are one thing and devote the time to become it, we are taking a chance. What if we fail? What if it doesn't work out? What if we can't make a living from it? What if the world rejects us?

These self-doubting thoughts are a trap and a mistrust of the process of creation present in all things. And when we get caught in those ideas, they kill our creativity. In this self-doubt, we live outside our minds and in the opinions of the

world. We've only got to trust the intuition, follow the path and do the work.

We must realise that all there is, is now. There is no future, and there is no past. Therefore, all we have is the present moment. Every moment we delay doing the work we deprive ourselves and the world of the art we were meant to create. It is our time now, our time to build, to serve our time, to be the apprentice, to do the work.

## Spirituality

Art is the expression of the soul, and to allow the soul express itself here, we must be willing to dig deep inside and find out who we are. For centuries those who came before us have laid the ground and set the rules of the game. The very structure of our DNA consists of these rules; therefore we have some work on ourselves to remove the layers and allow our true selves come through.

To connect with our spirituality is to accept that this is not merely a world of stuff. Now that is difficult especially for those of us who live in the city, yet even that possesses a spirit. Although not as strong as the country, the city can show us its spirituality and offer us inspiration. But the countryside is perhaps the best place for us to reconnect with our spirit.

The truth is easier to see in the natural world. There are no human-made things there, no noise, no distraction. You and I can become inspired by

spending time in nature just doing nothing, taking it all in. In the expression of the soul through our art, we shine a light on the old world sterile view of humanity lost in a cold and hostile universe, alone and directionless.

We put out of business the peddlers of nihilist ideology and replace them with the truth that only love and connection to spirit is genuinely worthwhile. By bringing our art into the world, we promote acceptance, forgiveness, love, and oneness in humanity. We make this place better one story at a time.

### Exchanging Art For Dollars

Now we've learned to be quiet it's time to take the art we've made back to the noisy world. When we spend time in solitude, when we've done the work, we can do this with ease. We learned the truth, and the momentum of things has little or no effect on us. Instead, we just show up with what we've made, and others will see the truth of it.

What's rare is wonderful, and people will want to be a part of it. They will want to have a piece of it in their lives. They will be willing to exchange pounds, shillings and pence for a portion of the truth that you've made. They might not know what how significant your work is, something in it will speak to them, and they will want to be a part of it.

We can't force this to happen. Instead, we must allow it. Hold true to your creative integrity,

embrace the silence of your own company and let that creative force express itself through you. Trust it, and the money will follow, doubt it, and you kill it. The internet presents the most significant opportunity for artists like us to share our work. But we must show up every day. Learn the necessary technical things you need to make the internet work for you. Take a course online or in the real world.

Write about your work, share pictures of what you make, tell your friends. Join others and form a cooperative, do something, anything to spread your work around the world and do it every day. Research, investigate, learn, do whatever you have to do to get your work out to people. If you are a portrait artist, you will look for a gallery to show your work right? You'd even sit on the side of the street to show your work, right?

Leaving your creations to lie on a shelf aids no one. As I mentioned above in *The Artist's Duty*, you must get your material out into the world. Without doing so you rob others of the enjoyment of owning a piece of something special, and you deprive yourself of the opportunity to share in that exchange.

Lose any negativity you have around money. If you don't, you'll push it away from you. Money is not inherently wrong, in fact, there is no wrong, just labels we've assigned to things. Money is a means of exchange. Just like the flower and the bee



are cooperative components in nature, we have the opportunity to receive a benefit from the transaction with others. You create something beautiful and unique, someone is drawn to it and gives you an equal exchange for it.

Where's the badness in that? There is none.

You are entitled to make as much money as you allow into your life, and you are entitled to be happy. However, if you believe otherwise, then you will prevent yourself from having it. If you find what you have read here is right, you will know that all things are spiritual. Everything comes from that quiet place when ideas and beautiful things lie.

It is our job to allow the vision to come to us, then get out of its way and let it express itself. We are in a partnership with the creative force of the Universe, and we get to experience the creation. Storymakers, our stories are beautiful things, let's make more of them and share them with the world.

Writer, Painter, Poet, Musician, Chef, Designer, Illustrator, Coder, Carpenter, Gardener, Barista, Plumber you are all Storymakers. Create your story – bring the love and expression of what you are into the world. Leave your legacy, make a lasting imprint. That's your only job here. You and everyone you know will be gone soon, now is your time.



# 1

## What Is An Artist?



LARRY G. MAGUIRE

What is an artist? What is art? How is an artist defined and who exactly gets to set the definition? Is everyone an artist like Picasso said or is it that creative genius is reserved for those fortunate enough to be blessed with talent at birth as the ancient Greeks and Romans believed? Some ideas of what constitutes art, and as a consequence, the artist, are narrow and elitist. Some, such as this manifesto, are open and all-inclusive, suggesting that everyone is an artist albeit perhaps lying in wait. In this opening chapter, we will explore the

possible answers to these questions and the nature of what it means to be an artist. We will look at what recent history says about art and seek to dispel some of the popular conventions we have established relating to art and work.

The use of term *artist* dates back to the 13th century and is derived from the French word *artiste*, the Italian word *artista*, and from the Latin *ars*. Initially used to refer to someone who exercised their skills in the areas of the arts such as history, poetry, comedy, tragedy, music, dancing, and astronomy, it later in the 15th century came to apply to those who were skilled in any of the visual arts or craftsmanship. In scholarly endeavours, the term, *Bachelor of Arts* was used to describe one who excelled at “human workmanship”, or systems of rules and traditions for performing specific actions in fields such as the sciences or liberal arts. The scholarly term is still employed today although many college graduates may not see themselves as artists unless of course, they have studied in areas of the creative arts such as writing, music or performance.

In contemporary culture, creativity in domains of the arts, science and crafts still possess somewhat of a mystical quality. Given that most religions refer to the creation of the world as the work of one or more divine beings and the degree of influence religious ideology has had on conventional thinking, that's not surprising. From

the earliest study of the design and structure of the universe, including human beings, there was never much doubt regarding the existence and influence of these supernatural forces. Greek mythology spoke of the Muses, nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne named, Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Thalia, Terpsichore, and Urania. Each of the Muses was believed to be the guiding spirit and source of creative inspiration to artists, philosophers and scientists of the time.

Despite the considerable interval since the days of Plato's ancient Greece, the term *muse* survives. Today, when I suggest that "I have lost my muse", I refer to my lack of creative inspiration, my control over it, and perhaps its ultimate indeterminate nature. The ancient Romans too had their links between the divine and artistic expression through the term *genius*. The term initially stood for the noble spirit who guided a person through life and afforded them distinct individuality. Later, during the Renaissance period in Europe, the word became a reference to someone with supernatural gifts, intelligence or talent. In the last one hundred or so years or so, however, with the development of empirical scientific methods of investigation, the idea of the artist's otherworldly source of inspiration has all but been removed.

These days, there exists the widespread notion

that creativity, and the artist by association, is something as banal as a binary system. To some investigators, our creative expertise is no longer mysterious. It is merely the result of practice and repetition, resembling that which is programmed into a machine. Psychologists such as Anders Ericsson mostly believe that your creative exploits are no more than the results of dedication to your craft. Maybe this is so, but if it was, how then would any domain of work ever develop something previously undiscovered? How would we ever see beauty in anything ever made if it were merely the product of ones and zeros? Through the reductionist ideas of science which have come prominence, we have reduced the wonder and marvel of art to a stale and soulless process of a dumb and random universe. Perhaps in this, we've gone too far.

“It is necessary to insist upon this  
extraordinary but undeniable fact:  
experimental science has progressed thanks  
in great part to the work of men  
astoundingly mediocre, and even less than  
mediocre.” — *Ortega Y Gasset / Philosopher*

### The Artist Stereotype

Today, when we refer to art and those who practice it, we are generally referring to someone we

consider creative, someone who makes original bespoke things, writes, paints, draws or performs in some way. We see craftspeople as artists or at least capable of being artists. Artists are slightly off centre, they live somewhat of a bohemian lifestyle, maybe a little crazy or challenged socially in some way. Artists indeed are not wealthy, in large part we see them as the complete opposite. Perhaps they are a little bit scatty, disorganised and undependable. But in all of these stereotypes, we never really get to the hub of what an artist is. We inherit these ideas and apply them unquestionably. The term artist is really quite broad and can include people from all walks of life, engaged in all areas of expertise, within all personality types and may or may not be doing their work for a living. In many respects, the concept we hold in mind of what an artist is, dictates how we pursue our careers.

There are many stereotypes we use to group ourselves and other creative people. Holding ourselves and others to a stereotype is fine, as long as we accept that stereotypical views are not necessarily correct and may inhibit us. As far as The Artist's Manifesto is concerned, an artist is whatever you decide it is. It's an open book. It's good to remember, however, that putting art in a box with a label limits our creative expression and slows our development. Ideas are powerful, they encourage thought and behaviour in you and me,

and if these thoughts of who we are don't support and promote, then they restrict. We've got to create the work for the sake of creating the work, let it flow, and allow it to be whatever it will be. In the process, we should be who we need to at the moment, then when we are done, let it go.

The limited ideas of individual creative potential are widespread in western industrialised cultures. Not least because of conclusions arrived at in early scientific study which filtered down through to popular culture. Take Francis Galton's work on *Genius* for example. Galton was a nineteenth-century explorer, anthropologist and psychologist most famous for his development of statistical methods of scientific investigation. One of his most renowned works titled *Hereditary Genius* added to an already growing belief at the time, made fashionable by Darwin's *Origin of The Species* that artistic prowess was the product of Genetic inheritance. In other words, if your parents were gifted then you were likely to have the gifted gene too. If they weren't, then you were out of luck.

So considering the dichotomy of thought and history's legacy on where creativity comes from, it seems we are a little confused. Is artistic ability innate or is it something that we can develop? For the reductionist theorist, creative genius is not very remarkable. Anyone can be that with hard work. From my anecdotal experience, I don't



believe artistic ability is necessarily genetic or the result of hard work. It may be either. Or it may be both, some or most of the time. In certain respects, I've had to work hard at, say, writing to be moderately good just like Ericsson reported. In other respects, like with say drawing, I didn't need to work hard at all to be good. I just picked up the charcoal, and I could draw. Now, to become what others might refer to as an *expert*, I'd need to put in serious dedication to the craft, but there was something there, to begin with.

Artists appear to be both the product of inherent ability and the product of deliberate practice. We define ourselves in the daily work we do, and for creative people, there is the open opportunity to redefine ourselves continually. That's the beauty of creative work. According to Andy Warhol; "*art is anything you can get away with*". So maybe you merely need to believe in what you're doing, make any crap you feel like, find some harmless gobshite who will buy it and et voila! You just became an artist. Ok, that's a little facetious, but there's some truth in it too. What I get from Warhol's statement is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Screw other people's opinion, stay true to your work, keep personally integrity your highest value, and keep making for the sake of enjoyment and self-expression.

"Art is anything you can get away with" —

*Andy Warhol | Artist*

## Societal Conditioning

Picasso said that every child is born an artist. The Artist's Manifesto supports this idea. What it means is that every child who comes into the world has the potential to create beautiful and unique things. Look at children, how curious they are. They want to experience everything; there's no such thing as "can't" to a child. When my children were young, about two or three years old, they didn't understand when I told them; "you can't have that" or "you can't do that." They would look at me as if to say; "what? This fella is crazy!" Their natural state was a curious one. They wanted to explore everything and didn't see any reason why they couldn't. Until that is, they were conditioned to the contrary. The broader environment, familial and peer influences, TV, radio, the Internet, news outlets, all get hold of the fledgeling consciousness of the child and condition it out of any creative potential it may have. Programmed like a Pavlovian dog, the child eventually loses the connection to its inner self and ultimately becomes dependant on the system and all the bells that it rings. Another pawn for the machine.

Why does this happen? Well, that's just how it is, it's how we've made things. It's certainly better today than it was one hundred years ago but we can definitely do better. Some might argue

sensationally, that there is a high-level conspiracy amongst the political, financial and corporate elite to enslave the populations of the world. And although I believe political and economic bigwigs do put their private and institutional interests before the people, it is the people in their mass subconscious consent to the rules that enable these unfavourable conditions to remain. En masse we have become soft and content in our discontent. Through our sheepish compliance, we have unwittingly become co-operative components in the system. In truth, we are the masters of our downfall.

In chapter eight we will explore in depth, the phenomena of group compliance, the nature of the self and the effects of the split in consciousness that occurs as we develop. For now, it is sufficient to say that the momentum of contemporary society draws most of us in and acts like a buffer to our creative expression. The majority inside the system refer to themselves as “normal” and are led to believe through popular media and self-supportive ideas that expressing individuality is dangerous. So we work within the boundaries of the system. The system, of course, maintains life and culture as we know it, but at the same time, it severely limits our progress toward solving our most significant social problems.

In the opaque atmosphere of our worldly social problems, consider this; imagine a society where

machines provide us with every practical thing we need to live comfortably, and every child is schooled in fields of endeavour that light their creative spirit. Imagine there's no need for a human workforce. Imagine money is not an issue. Everyone has everything they need to live comfortably, and we engage in things purely for the inherent enjoyment it brings us. It's a world filled with creative geniuses coming up with wonderfully creative ideas and solutions to worldwide and local problems. Idealistic dreaming? Maybe not. With the quantum leaps in technology and the advancement in AI, this future world may not be so far away.

“I want them to discover that they are artists; everyone is an artist, a creator, and a refiner of sensibility without knowing it.”

— *Yves Klein | Artist*

## Art In Work

We have seen how society has adopted stereotypical views of what art is, and of what it means to be an artist. Historical pretence and portrayals in our favourite movies, novels and TV have all played a role. The creation of art is otherworldly and impossible for us mere ordinary people to produce, let alone build a well-paying career around it. In many respects, we assume that

there is no room for art in our work. Our work is transactional, formulaic; we do as they tell us. You may be a graphic designer, a painter, a plumber, an accountant or a basket weaver and within the boundaries of your profession make useful everyday things. You make stuff, and people pay you for it, but on the whole, you feel there's nothing remarkable about what you do. You see your work as functional with no room for such whimsical notions as art. Therefore work has become a means to an end.

Professionalism in the arts is reserved for the elites, people exceptional enough to "make it". Utility for the rest of us is the name of the game, and if what we make cannot be utilised, then we risk becoming useless members of society. So we play it safe, and we make a choice; if we are to pursue this creative endeavour we love, then we better take it up a pastime, as an amateur. Because to work in this field professionally is the stuff of idle dreams. It seems to be set in stone then; in the humdrum of ordinary life, our work can never be remarkable or reflect anything close to something called art. Bringing art to our work is not an option.

So I call bullshit on this idea. It's a lazy conditioned mind that accepts this notion, a mind satisfied in its dissatisfaction. We are capable of experiencing so much more if we are only brave enough to graciously present the middle finger to these established ideas and take a chance on

ourselves. Art is giving a shit about the work we do, to such a degree that we become completely immersed in the doing of the thing solely for the sake of, and the gratification we obtain from it. Blinkers on, yet aware of everything – one with the work. Distractions, self-consciousness and the need to have results turn out a particular way are all removed. This is what art is, and this is what an artist does.

### Amateur Or Professional

Part of our underlying problem in our relationship with work is that many of us see the part-timer, the amateur as not sufficiently dedicated to, or proficient in their work as is the professional. We confuse the amateur with the dilettante or novice. We see the professional as more qualified and capable of producing quality, but often the opposite can be the case. This false idea seems to support the commercially focused transactional concept of work mentioned earlier, and I believe it negatively affects how and where we choose to focus our creative energy. At this point, it would be an advantage to establish, for this book, exactly what I mean when I refer to a professional versus amateur artist.

The word; profession, comes from the twelfth century Old French word; *profession* and refers to someone who has taken a religious vow. It also comes from the Latin *professionem* meaning “public

declaration". In the early fifteenth century, it came to mean "occupation one professes to be skilled in". The word; amateur, is taken from the sixteenth century Old French *amateur*, meaning "one who loves". Later in the eighteenth century, the word became defined as; "one who has a taste for some art, study, or pursuit, but does not practice it". In today's terms *professional* means; a person engaged in a specified activity as a main paid occupation rather than as a pastime. An *amateur* is; a person who engages in a pursuit on an unpaid basis. (Definitions as per the Oxford English Dictionary).

Art is Art whether it is made by a professional who exchanges their work as a source of income, or by an amateur creating art solely for its inherent enjoyment. Professional artist or part-time amateur enthusiast, it has no bearing necessarily on the quality of the work. However, it often does, but not in the way we'd expect. A professional artist may adopt a higher degree of attention to their work, investing more time and money developing their skillset, refining their process and utilising more expensive tools of their trade. They may work to sharper deadlines and client specification resulting in the more significant development of the skills and final product. Pressures to deliver, unsuccessful delegation to staff, business and financial demands, however, often impact on the quality of the professional's work.

Many professionals take shortcuts for the sake of time. They become lost in the commerciality of their work and forget the reason they started. They sacrifice creative integrity, which we will discuss later, and often rationalise less than honourable behaviour in pursuit of arbitrary goals. I'm not only talking of traditional arts here; I'm referring to all people in all lines of work, especially those fields heavily influenced by corporate entities. Long story short, you don't need to be making a living professionally from your creative work to be an artist, and neither do you need to be in the traditional arts to bring art to your work. Art is a state of mind; it is an approach to thought and behaviour, and it is an intent to make of something, the best we can in an ever-evolving expression of who we are.

“I think the really good mountaineer is the man with the technical ability of the professional and with the enthusiasm and freshness of approach of the amateur”.

— *Edmund Hillary | Mountaineer*

## The Sense of Duality

As a naive young apprentice, I had the benefit in my training of the wisdom of a practical man and master of his craft. “*Assumption is the mother and father of all fuckups young man*”, he said once to me



as he stared beyond me dismissively. What he meant was; you're a fool, but that's ok you're supposed to be. It was like he wanted to show me my inherent stupidity, to be aware of it because without that realisation I couldn't learn from him. Or anyone else for that matter. He was in his late 50's I'd say and had been in the game since he left school at 12 or 13. It was common for boys leaving primary school at the time to go to work. The lucky ones got a trade.

By his years, he had become a master craftsman. Although that wasn't a label, he applied to himself. He was quiet and unassuming as he moved about his work. Rarely did I see him lose his composure, but when he did, he did it with ferocity and seemed to leave it behind easily. I remember once he fired a box of materials across the room in a rage. I was left brow raised and mute. He told me to get more, so I did. When I returned, he was sitting on an upturned box in the corner of the concrete shell where we were working, smoking. "*Right young man, let's get this thing finished so we can go for tea*", he said. It was like nothing happened. He is gone now. But as I remember that incident, it seems that he accepted he had a dark side. When it rose up, he let it express itself and moved on. Most of us are not that brave or accepting.

As a young man in business, I would be frequently intolerant of other people with whom I worked. I still am in no small degree. I had little

time or patience for anyone who was not up to speed and as such I would come across as rude, arrogant or dismissive. For a very long time, I battled to reconcile this trait of my personality with what I felt society expected. What I didn't realise was that this apparent trait of character was a consequence of limited attention. Psychologists understand attention to be a finite resource. That is to say, in any area of work, we must devote unwavering degrees of attention to the endeavour so to bring our imagination to life. Too much data from outside vying for that limited attention can be very disruptive, causing in us a negative emotional reaction. I don't take this as an excuse to be rude just for the sake of it. These days, having learned from the master craftsman, I'm content to allow other people their standards. But if you're on a project I have ownership of I expect you to come up to the mark or your out.

When other people, who feel they have a right to our attention, can't get what they want they label us as rude, insensitive and selfish. So for the artist that craves time to work effectively, there is the inevitable misunderstanding. We live in a world you see, where many people value us on how much of ourselves we give to others. It's probably a religious hangover. The truth of the matter is those apparent negative traits of personality so quickly assigned to artists are not inherent in them, but instead, are the result of other's expectation. They

are due to their lack of understanding of the creative process. Maybe we all crave time alone to indulge in single-minded focus, but broader society has taught us that this is wrong. I don't know about you, but these days I rarely question myself in these matters. I have little mental capacity for distractions, and I'll make no apologies for creating time for myself, and neither should you.

We can be a very judgemental lot we humans, both of ourselves and other people. We look at others through the filter of our own biases, inherited concepts and (mis)understanding. In large part, we fail to accept, or even see, that everyone has opposite poles to personality, or as Jung called it, a shadow side. Instead of embracing all the traits of our character and allowing them to be, we deny and suppress the ones we feel are not acceptable. However, for the artist rightly in tune with themselves, there is an acceptance of both poles, an understanding of the paradox of personality and an ability to ride the wave of what they are.

In Chinese Zen, they speak of the yan ying principle of the universe. It suggests that for anything to exist, it must have its co-existent opposite. Both rise mutually together in complementary fashion. For one to be without the other is an impossibility. Therefore, for you to exist, there must be both the positive and negative

aspects of you. These traits of personality are interwoven in constant stimulation and conflict. The physical entity that is you and the psychological construct of the surface level personality that represents it, may disappear from what we call physical reality, but the core being remains. In our daily playing out of things through these positive and negative traits, it is perhaps the artist that is best equipped to embrace both poles unapologetically in the constant creation and expression of their art.

## 2

# The Creative Work



LARRY G. MAGUIRE

When a discussion begins in the public domain about the process of creative work, it usually revolves around groundbreaking technological and scientific discoveries that change the world. Or it refers to significant works of art that command high prices produced by artists of notable acclaim. Seldom if ever does the creative work of ordinary everyday artists tucked away in studios down back alleys and up bóithríns instruct our understanding of the creative process. Nevertheless, this manifesto asserts that the creative process is a

dynamic, ultimately undefinable thing lying at the foundation of all creativity regardless of the artist's popularity or critical acclaim. This chapter takes a look at the often mystical process of creative work and offers a means by which we may understand it and apply it at an everyday working level.

We are the same, yet incredibly different. Beliefs, ideas, experiences and thoughts, all weigh heavy on the nature of who we are and how we interact. At a biological level, we are almost identical yet on the surface we differ remarkably in appearance and behaviour. So too it is in the work we do and how we conduct it. Such is the complex and dynamic nature of human creativity. There is an infinite number of creative levels at which we operate, some of which result in beautiful things, and others result in destruction and human suffering. But in all of our creative experience, there appears to be an underlying pattern and process that we can observe.

The underlying pattern of creative work appears not to be linear. It is not a step by step process that we can read from a book, learn in a course or consciously adopted by following other people's success. It is a multifaceted and multidimensional thing, with all aspects arising together and separately, interrelating and mutually causative, coalescing beyond the attention of the conscious mind. In other words, although a master can instruct specific tasks to an apprentice, and the

apprentice can develop the skill to execute the job adequately, using that skill creatively requires something else, something perhaps ultimately unknowable. It is this almost unknowable process that we shall attempt to explore.

## The 4 Stages of Creative Work

One of the primary messages this book wishes to convey is that in the living of life there is no greater imperative for human beings than to engage in work that engages them, and to do so primarily for the inherent enjoyment it brings. Given that most of us spend up to half of our adult life working, is it not vital that we find fulfilment in our work? The alternative for us is a life spent toiling towards our physical demise in careers that do not bring satisfaction or happiness. Engaging in practice that does not challenge and stimulate growth breeds what psychologists call psychic entropy and disorder. These are the seeds of anxiety and depression in so many, conditions of consciousness that we can overcome by establishing meaning and purpose through work. The onus is on we adults to provide an environment where young people can explore their interests safely, with the freedom to choose without fear of ridicule.

A change of mind about what it means to be a valuable member of society. We must realise that life does not start and end with science,

technology, engineering and maths. Nor should our children be compelled to study medicine, languages, or any other domain of study that does not draw their natural curiosity. Because you see, real success in life starts with intense interest and wonder. Continued success comes about as a result of that initial curiosity being given the space to develop and mature into lifelong dedicated work. Basic communication skills are of course necessary, but there must be the arts, humanities and alternative fields of endeavour offered early, not as a by-the-way, but as a serious and sincere intention to meet the needs and interests of the child.

Once a developing child finds a subject that lights their fire and can practice their interests in an open environment, they will develop naturally, often pursuing their curiosity to mastery. This journey to mastering a craft is long, often lonely and is filled with peaks and troughs, challenging the artist and building complexity in ways nothing else can. On this journey, within the artist's field of study, craftsmanship or art, we can say there is a process containing aspects that seem present in all areas of creative work. Much of the process is unknown, said to be held in the secret black box of the unconscious mind. But once we engage in the initial curiosity, the apprenticeship can begin.



## APPRENTICESHIP

Taking into account our initial seed of interest has been planted, the first and perhaps essential aspect to all creative work is the apprenticeship. It is the lengthy initial period where the young person must learn the basic craft. They must know intently the tools and the materials and the means by which to use them to a satisfying end. They must know the space in which they work. They must understand the background and the history because without this they have no context. And most of all they must know the rules of the game. Having mastered these elements they may, with continued attention to detail and dedication to the craft, arrive at an opportunity to break those same rules and create something remarkable

The level of skill acquired by the young apprentice is mostly dependant on the personality and expertise of the master under whom the apprentice serves. Rarely will someone apprenticed to an inferior teacher excel in their work. Not because the skill is poorly instructed necessarily, but more so because mental attitudes can, and usually are, adopted unconsciously. Behaviours and attitudes come as part of the learning package and are transmitted invisibly from teacher to student. It may not always be the case, but certainly, that first teacher encountered is critical in the process. As a young person, I had plenty of poor teachers, and each of

them taught me something important, but it was those early teachers who had the most effect.

#### INCUBATION

The period of incubation occurs at a time when the artist has progressed successfully through their initial period of learning. Sparks of ideas may arise during their apprenticeship, but usually, the skill to execute is not yet well established. Often it requires several additional years of work for the novice to create something unique and significant. The incubation period is where thoughts and ideas begin to build and coalesce beyond the reach of surface level attention. In his work titled; *The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance*, Anders Ericsson suggests that at least ten years elapse between a scientist's or artist's earliest independent work and their first work of real note. Given an initial period gathering basic skills takes between 3 to 5 years, at least 15 years of dedicated work and experience are required before we can make something worthwhile.

15 years of dedicated work is a long hard road of ups and downs, and digesting it as such all at once, deters most from even trying. It seems hardly worth the effort. This is because most people, regardless of ability, want instant gratification. We've been trained in this way of thinking by marketers and advertisers in the modern economy. "You can have it all, and you can

have it today!”, they say. No wonder hardly anyone wants to put the time and effort into doing great work when popular media perpetually bombard us with messages of the merits to the contrary. Considering how we’ve constructed our linear concept of time, our belief that happiness is a thing to be acquired through stuff, and that work is a means to attain that stuff, it is no wonder that most of us have such a negative association with work.

For those willing to embark on the journey, they will find that during incubation, the regular work of the artist continues to develop and grow in complexity. However, as Ericsson also found, and on an anecdotal basis, I would agree, improvement is not necessarily predetermined merely by continuing the regular creative work. To develop and grow, we must be sufficiently motivated to improve through continued deliberate effort and the adoption of new challenges. We, of course, don’t do this in complete isolation. The interaction with other people and their sometimes opposition and criticism is an essential factor in pushing us to higher levels of creativity.

#### REVELATION

From sustained periods of dedicated attention to the work over many years, the artist may experience moments of pure inspiration. As if downloaded in an instant from the lap of the gods, there appears in mind a realisation of something

almost magical. These moments can appear in clusters close together or singularly, many years apart. The frequency and degree ultimately depend on the individual and may or may not result in success or popular acclaim for their work. But that shouldn't matter. Because if applause and recognition become our driver, then our focus is off the work and outside ourselves, dependant now on the response of others.

This split in psychic energy between what arises as a natural consequence of immersion in the work, and the need to follow the rules results in a dilution of our creativity. We virtually kill the potential of that first idea to become something great by our focus on doubt and reservation. The results we produce will always appear less than had been promised in that first inspired thought. But it doesn't have to be that way. We've got to learn to trust the inspiration when it arrives. If we can cultivate in ourselves the courage to follow that good idea and ignore the dissuasive voices in our heads, then we may allow the idea a valid expression.

It has been one of my most significant personal challenges to overcome the voices in my head of friends and family who knew me as this when I now am that. My existence is entirely subjective and when good ideas land they are for me, nobody else. There's nobody else involved; it's just me. It has always only ever been me. Everyone else is a bit

player, to varying degrees, in my game of getting to know myself, and it's the same for you too. The challenge for us is in recognising that we are fluctuations, processes in constant flux, not static and unchanging. Some creative people have a smoother ride, others have a harder ride, but it doesn't matter because the challenge is personal. As Marina Abramovic said;

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Because in the end, you are really alone, whatever you do.

*Marina Abramovic | Performance Artist*

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## EXECUTION

Execution is the daily practice of returning to the studio, the yoga mat, the easel, the potter's wheel or the page, sometimes without even knowing why. To me, it feels like a compulsion, a draw towards the work, almost like I have no choice. I started writing ten years ago on a blog built with WordPress. I knew nothing about writing, and anything I have learned has been the product of research, trial and error, albeit with some lengthy breaks. Measuring my output in financial and other terms, I on occasion felt the uselessness of what I was doing. As such I left writing for other things, but always I've been called back regardless of what practical advice suggested I should expect to gain. Compelled to share my ideas, thoughts

about the world and the things I had discovered, I continue the practice regardless.

There is little in practical terms to explain why sometimes we should continue in our work. The truth is that the reason doesn't lie in practicality, we can only find it through engagement in the work for the sake of it. We must have a more meaningful basis for work other than shallow utility. Commitment to its execution comes from that very first seed of curiosity laid down early on. Nurturing that seed ensures continued interest, and builds commitment and dedication. In that commitment we find ideas move through many iterations, take on many insights, and progress or decline to varying degrees for many reasons. Then one day something clicks and all the years of dedication to the craft appear innocuously in the thing you've made. To your surprise and delight, you have arrived.

One thing holds in creative work; there are no shortcuts to success. As we will discuss in Chapter 3, success comes about as a result of Purposeful Accident, the dedication to the craft and sustained execution of daily practice primarily for the inherent enjoyment we gain from it. Any other reason for working will eventually breed contempt in us and afford no meaning or purpose in what may become a pointless existence. In doing work we despise, we can insist that we must fulfil our obligations, satisfy the demands of outside

forces such as bosses, banks or family. But in the end, it doesn't matter; extrinsic motivation to perform will never bring out our best work or make us happy.

Be prolific. Keep making every day even if to you it seems like you could never publish the crap you just made because it is the daily practice that brings about mastery. You're not supposed to create masterpieces every day, that's not how it works. Masterpieces surprise you; they come up behind you when you least expect it. One day you're in your studio, and you're doing your thing and et voila! You make something great. You might not even recognise it as such at first, but another will. However, in this, you need to watch out because there is a trap. The moment you take your eye off your practice and place it on arbitrary measures of success is the moment you risk losing heart and momentum. This is where you begin to question everything and doubt burrows a hole in your heart. So stay focused on the daily execution of the work.

### The Non-Linear Process

Although the above principles seem separate, laid out one after the other in a linear fashion, they are not independent of one another in all practical senses. They arise to varying degrees of amplitude and at different times during the life and work of the artist. They overlap and are often seen to manifest in parallel depending on the individual

and their particular stage of evolution, and indeed, in the development of the artist's idea or field of work. Other artists and the broader field also influence these four aspects of creative work. Other domains affect the process too with artists often finding unexpected inspiration for projects or breakthrough moments in barren periods in the experience of ordinary everyday life.

The ever-expanding process of our work is like the surface of a still pond on a rainy day, with raindrops creating ever-expanding circles that combine and overlap, becoming something new in every moment. We might also imagine this in three dimensions like pulsating magnetic fields, overlapping, interacting, coupling, amplifying and cancelling each other. It's like a fractal array of infinite creative interaction which we cannot avoid, but we may direct with focus. The process will never be truly understood, and that's how it should be because the nature of the self can never be fully known. We can recognise it only in a single moment, and as soon as we do, it's gone. It is fleeting and always a step ahead. It is akin to the collapse of all matter, energy and light to a single point of density within the centre of a black hole; at the very moment it collapses into the singularity it bounces back out, and the universe starts all over again. The creative work of people is the microcosm of the macrocosm.

**The Brahman is unknown to those who**



know it, and known to those who know it  
not — *Alan Watts / Philosopher*

## THE 10,000 HOUR MYTH

I've got a bone to pick with Malcolm Gladwell even though I'm very late to the party. In his 2008 book, [Outliers](#), Gladwell stated; "*ten thousand hours is the magic number of greatness*". He was mistaken and mislead thousand in his assertion. Typical of journalists looking for a quick hook easily absorbed by overeager minds, his interpretation was cheap and unsubstantial. Gladwell took his 10,000-hour rule from the general discussion section of K. Anders Ericsson's 1993 work mentioned earlier. Ericsson subsequently rebutted Gladwell's rule in his 2016 book, [Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise](#), where he stated;

*"Unfortunately, this [10,000-hour] rule — which is the only thing that many people today know about the effects of practice — is wrong in several ways".*

Ericsson went on to say;

*"Becoming accomplished in any field in which there is a well-established history of people working to become experts requires a tremendous amount of effort exerted over many years. It may not require exactly ten thousand hours, but it will take a lot."*

Expertise can often take much more than 10,000 hours to establish, but then that's merely my anecdotal opinion. When I first heard Gladwell's "rule" being spoken of a few years back, I thought;

no way, this is rubbish. I figured, for a full-time artist or craftsperson working their craft 48 weeks per year, five days per week, and 8 hours per day, 10,000 hours equates to 5 years. Starting straight out of the packet, this just about gets you through an apprenticeship. If you are passionate and intensely focused on your work, you may complete the initial period of training in say four years. But by my simple reckoning, at this point, you are merely on the start line, and it will take you another five years of intense work, at least, to reach an expert level of proficiency. Mastery is another ten years down the road perhaps.

The thing to remember here is that attention to this rule for success or any other rule takes our focus off the work and on exterior subjective metrics. Rules and laws only cover the mean and rarely if ever account for everyone. If you are a creative type, it's likely you already fall outside the bell curve of normal distribution of the general population so take with a pinch of salt these generalisations. There are always exceptions to the norm it seems; therefore, we must understand that what applies to others does not necessarily apply to us. The inaccuracy of Gladwell's "10,000-hour rule" is a stark reminder of how information calculated for the mean can become distorted by popular culture and by people seeking to sell you on distorted ideas.

## The Artist's Challenge

Considering Gladwell's 10,000-hour rule, we can see how there is often a great compulsion upon us to fit in with mainstream society and adopt their rules as our own. The momentum of the world is very strong and it draws us in, tempting us with the security that normality and sameness promises. Like the carnivorous pitcher plant to an insect, society seduces us with its vibrant colour, scent and sound. Many of us unwittingly fall for its empty promises of happiness only to realise later in life we were duped. The artist's challenge, therefore, is to remain centred regardless of how broader society says we should work and perform.

I remember talking a couple of years ago, to the author Derek Landy about his success. I was at that time, running an audio installation company and had just completed a cinema room for him. He had finally achieved financial success, but it wasn't always this way. He told how since he was a teenager, people told him he was lazy and pretty much useless. He'd work on his father's small farm holding in North County Dublin for a few quid while attending his studies in Ballyfermot. He told me how he couldn't complete his studies and subsequently went further down in the estimation of others as a result. He wrote a couple of scripts and managed to get by somehow but other people's opinion of him didn't improve.

Derek's challenging situation went on for many years without much change, until that is, he sent a draft manuscript of a title he had been working on to a UK agent. Long story short, he was out for a meal with family when received a call from the guy. "Are you sitting down?" his agent asked. "Harper Collins is offering you a £1m book deal for [Skulduggery Pleasant](#) Derek," he said. Landy was vindicated. Landy remarked to me how pointed it was that now as invites to speak and present around the world come in, the very people who said he was useless, that he should get a real job, were the ones cheering loudest. Derek Landy might tell that story different, but that's how I remember it.

The world of people is like that; we can never ultimately rely on their support. Society is like a whirlpool, always trying to suck us into the apparent safety of its centre where normality and sameness live. But it is not safe; it kills the creative spirit in millions of people, therefore, perhaps our greatest challenge is to remain focused on our work and disregard the opinions of others. They mean well, and only want the best for you. However, their motivation is fear based. Fear-based action never brings positive results and leaves us exposed to the constant barrage of events and circumstances in our environment. Instead, following the call of the creative spirit is the only voice we need to heed.

The world can be a very depressing place, but paradoxically, it can also inspire us to create the most beautiful things. Just as we can never overcome the polarity and duality of the self, we can not overcome the duality of circumstances, people and events in the world. Therefore we have little choice if we are to remain centred and at balance in our work than to accept that the conditions of our surroundings will change in due course. Which they always do. Our only role in this dynamic exchange is to produce creative work that reflects a better version of the world.

The days you work are the best days”

— *Georgia O’Keeffe* / Artist

### The Dissenting Voice

When I was a boy in school about 13 or 14 years old, I had a yellow canvas school bag. All the cool kids had these bags. We’d buy them from Army Bargains on Little Mary Street in Dublin and use different colour pens, markers and Tipex to write slogans and logos of bands all over them. I wrote, *Fuck The System!* down the side in big black letters. That didn’t go down too well with my parents. “He’s a rebel without a cause”, I heard my mother say to a neighbour one Saturday afternoon. In school, I’d hear *The Wall* play over and over in my head as I dreamed of a schoolboy revolution in the St. Vincent’s field. I would see myself play

electric guitar, calling all the kids to revolt against the adults and their oppressive school system. Teachers would be rounded up and made pay for their cruel oppression of the kids, for pinning us against the wall by the scruff of our collars for minor indiscretions. The revolution never happened though.

In our youth, we are full of enthusiasm. We are brimming with fresh ideas and unbounded dreams of doing the impossible. That is, until the school system and adult notions of what it means to be a worthy member of society take hold. Traditionally, although the school has provided vital primary education, it has also been a means of indoctrination of the young into pre-established systems of thought and rule. Through traditional education, we become pawns for the machine, workers for the economy, numbers on the State's balance sheet. Is it no wonder, therefore, that the wonderfully creative ideas of the youth are lost mainly to what could have been. Is it no wonder that so many forty-year-olds face an existential crisis as they realise that they are nothing more than a cog in the wheel of someone else's banal commercial instrument.

Here lies the reason most people are afraid to challenge authority. We have been conditioned. However, challenging figures of power and their often dogmatic ideologies is vital in building a stable and healthy society. For creative people,

there are few greater imperatives. In systems of education, national and local government, in work environments, sports clubs and organisations, wherever there are those who would assume authority over other people there must be those who are willing to challenge them no matter what the consequences. There must be in the creative, a dissenting voice, a non-conformist. Someone who is willing to stand up against authority despite the weight of its opposition and often indifference of the general public.

Women and men must be prepared to highlight social injustices through their work, no matter how much negative sentiment they may invite on themselves. For where authority is allowed to exercise its power with impunity, people will suffer just like generations of people did in my country under the immoral and insidious gaze of the Catholic Church. In our sleepy false sense of security, we have become cooperative components in control wielded over us. Creative people are born non-conformists. We are catalysts for change, and we must exercise our moral and artistic obligation to break the rules of static and often oppressive circumstances at every opportunity. The rightful evolution of humanity by the disintegration of manipulative and duplicitous regimes no matter where we find them is critical. That is our job.

## Breaking The Rules

I don't know about you, but when I find myself in a situation where apparent problems exist, where someone is taking unfair advantage, and people are being exploited or mistreated, I'm compelled to open my mouth. Now, that can be disturbing for others around me including those who are negatively affected because you see we're not supposed to rock the boat. The unwritten rules say we're all supposed to keep our mouths shut, say nothing, keep our heads down because, despite the circumstances, the situation is tolerable. Listen, get what you have to do done and don't bring attention to yourself because if you do you're risking everything. Don't stand out, blend in. That's the unspoken rule.

These informal, standard behaviours come from a need to have approval and acceptance from the group. To oppose them is to bring unwanted attention to ourselves and risk isolation, and to be isolated is to be alone, and to be alone is to not exist. In our overreliance on the acceptance of others, we can never really be free and we can never create something of real integrity because our compulsion is to measure its value against popular opinion.

Why are we so willing to conform to authority? Why do we give up our individuality for the sake of group identity? What is it about uniforms and



other symbols of authority that makes people go placid and accepting of ordinarily unacceptable behaviour? Psychologist Stanley Milgram asked this question in the wake of the atrocities carried out by the Nazi regime during WW2 on the ethnic minorities of Europe. Milgram wanted to understand why seemingly ordinary compassionate, stable people blindly adhered to authority, often carrying out horrendous acts of brutality against their otherwise better judgement.

#### THE EXPERIMENT

Milgram conducted an experiment where he falsely told participants they were taking part in a study the effects of punishment on learning ability. The study included Instructors (experimenters), Teachers (participants), and Students (actors). All participants were assigned the role of teacher. The students stayed in an adjoining room out of sight but within earshot of the teacher and instructor. The instructor ordered the teacher to ask preset questions of the student, and upon receiving a wrong answer, they were to administer a (fake) electric shock to the student. The (fake) electric shock ranged from 15v to 450v and was to be increased by the teacher every time the student gave a wrong answer.

As the shock level increased, the student (actor) made audible their fake discomfort and pain. Despite the teachers believing this pain was real,

65% of them continued delivering what they thought were real electric shocks to the students. Some participants questioned whether they should continue out of concern for the student, but upon being pressed further by the authority figure to continue, they did so.

Popular expert opinion at the time held that only 1% of the population were capable of such obscenity and brutality witnessed in Europe during the Nazi regime. But the results of the study found this assumption to be grossly inaccurate. The study participants, ordinary American people, put aside their better judgement and concern for their fellow human being in favour of obedience to the authority figure. This was despite their obvious realisation that they were inflicting potentially life-threatening shock levels. Milgram found that people would suspend personal and societal values, core principles and proper judgement for fear of reprisal or desire to remain cooperative to authority.

## A Final Word

There is no more significant means of expressing who we are than to immerse ourselves in work we love to do solely for its implicit enjoyment. However, the noise of the modern world is loud and will always seek to convince us that our left of centre, non-commercially advantageous activities are an inviable waste of time. But you and I know we've

got to have another reason to do what we do because utility on its own is sterile and soulless. We might as well be machines as we do machine-like work. Is this not what the captains of industry want of people? Their bureaucracy, rules and regulations are means of control by the few over the many. They fool us into thinking that abstract inorganic ideas can be applied successfully to the lives of humans. And in that context, what other choice do we have than to nurture the creative spirit?

There will, of course, be other things we engage in, some will be enjoyable, and some will not, but isn't that the divine dichotomy of life; to weigh up experiences, discover what we like best and to make more of that? The compulsion to have our voice be heard and to speak our truth is difficult to ignore. When we do, we repress creative integrity and deny ourselves the opportunity to develop in new ways. In the creative work, we can make this world a better place and assign meaning and purpose to life and there lies.



# About The Author

*Find out more about the writer*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE



I'm Larry, born and bred Dubliner. I trained as an electrician from 1990 – 1994, started in business a couple years later and became quite successful counting US Govt and Intel as clients. But something was missing. After the 2008 crash in the economy, I realised I had myself invested in someone else's idea of who I should be. For a long time, I ignored my creative calling for the sake of commitments and responsibilities. Now I see no greater importance for me and you than to make things that reflect our inner spirit and positively affect this world.

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