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Creativity
Holding on to Aroha



Judith Grayburn-Moore

CREATIVITY

or

Holding on to Aroha

exploring, exemplifying and encouraging creativity in adulthood

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education (Adult)

Massey University

Wellington

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BA, Dip TESL, Dip Teaching, LTCL (ESL), Dip Art and Creativity

2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like creativity, the development and completion of a thesis is a collaborative process. I have stood on others' shoulders to render this work. For those people foregrounded below, please catch the verbal bouquet. Without you, this study would have remained another of my bright ideas.

First, I would like to thank the staff of Massey University, Wellington Campus, College of Education (Adult); in particular my supervisor, marg gilling. Just the way you spell your name, marg, all lower case, inferred that I would be guided by a creative mentor. I was, so thank you for all the encouragement to 'speak to truth' on a concept we both believe in.

Second, a loving thank you to my family and friends, near and far, for the time, support, and faith in me and my version of creativity. For you, this topic must have been *past-its-WOW-by date*: but you never let it show. A special appreciation for Chris as catalyst; for Olivia and Mui Leng who co-ordinated my text and images with aesthetic and technical expertise. Bart and Daniel - thanks for coming to the rescue of my exhausted computer and its owner.

Finally, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to The Learning Connexion (TLC) and in particular, its founder and managing director, Jonathan Milne, as well as the others who gave voice to their creative journeys. To be not only allowed, but welcomed at TLC, no questions asked on their part, just on mine, was a gift. Having access to this laboratory of creativity over two years enabled me to observe and reflect on the theories of creativity in action.

For that privilege, I thank you.

Judith Grayburn-Moore

October 2002

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For my two best examples of creativity
Olivia and Bartholomew Moore

Creativity Vitae



2

mother	believer	teacher	friend
wanderer	observer	entrepreneur	student
artist	writer	wonderer	lover

This mural, revised and hand-painted on our former house is based on M C Escher's *Sky and Water* woodcut (1938). The spaces between the fish and birds reflect the link between *being and becoming*, thus summing up the evolutionary process of creativity.

prologue

Creativity

The realisation that creativity is not only “an instrument for personal and social gain but in its deeper philosophical implications is a quest for meaning” has been alluded to over time by renowned writers and artists (Barron, Montuori and Barron, 1997: 2). Since it is **meaning** that confirms us as human, creativity matters.

Creativity’s role as central to the way we construct our lives has been gaining prominence over the past half century. This thesis sets out to explore its importance at a global, local and personal level. Setting the scene involved identifying its essential part in a ‘grammar’ for living, here and everywhere. The real life sentence goes like this:

The Subject equals life

One’s own *curriculum vitae*, literally life story, is the starting point, the true subject. It could be re-named creativity vitae as with the author’s CV (page viii above).

The Verb equals create

To create, along with its offspring creativity and creation, promises a bringing forth; a process of becoming and an outcome. It is both means and ends; being and becoming.

The Object equals what is important to a meaningful life

Every reader will provide his or her own answer. Many philosophers agree that it is *love* in the universal sense, in Maori, *aroha*, that makes life worth living.

In life we need the juice of creativity if we are going to sustain what matters. The subject and object can change place, as echoed in the closing poem (p 89) of this thesis, but creativity stays at the heart.

The decision to give creativity a starring role in a search for meaning involved designing the following proposal to direct my enquiry. I sought to:

- detail international opinion on the substance of creativity – some people, places, processes and performances exemplifying it
- discuss a place where creativity features and flourishes in New Zealand, namely The Learning Connexion (TLC), Wellington
- reveal the value of connecting with creativity as a life script through the stories of six participants, including the author

I have chosen narrative to provide a context for critical reflection of the creativity which informed several journeys convinced that within its subjectivity shelters a ‘regime of truth’ best revealed in story mode. Recalling teaching expert Stephen Brookfield’s (1995) admission that learning to swim as a 40-year-old taught him much about being an adult learner, I wanted to moisten the drier theories of creativity with real stories. In the interests of fair play I included my own. There seemed to be a symmetry between the domains of creativity and education and “the use of narrative which can provide an approach to education that encourages autonomy, imagination and above all creativity” (Gale in Craft, Jeffrey and Leibling (eds) 2001:113).

Answering the proposal meant looking at three aspects:

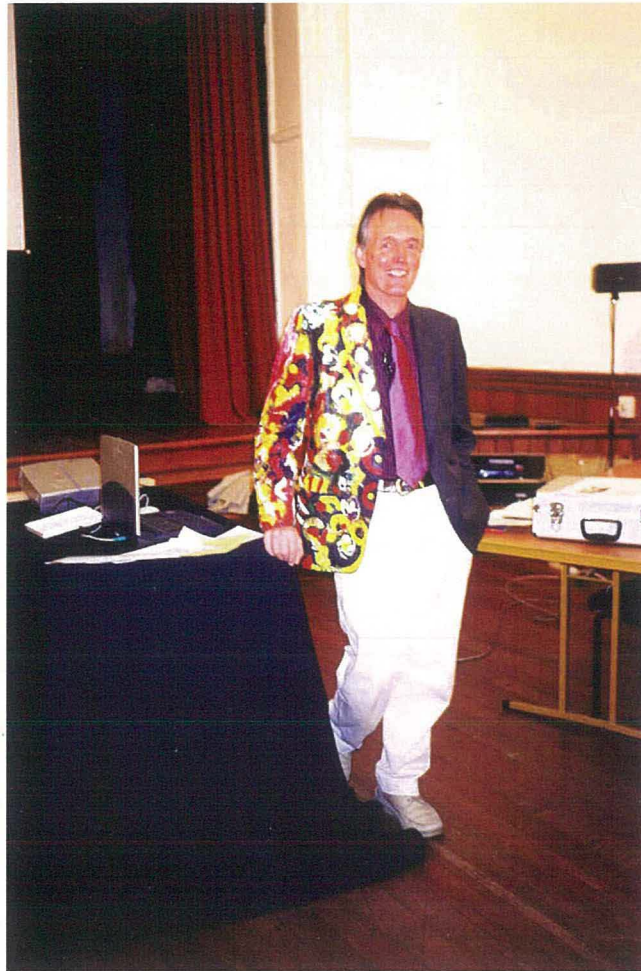
First: The literature review - The academic literature abounds with definitions and judgments about the personal and public aspects of creativity, including its cognitive, historical, personal, contextual, elite or universal, measurable and transferable components. These have been the subject of vigorous and conflicting research and debate over the past half century. A current consensus, though, provided me with a grasp of the unwieldy concept of creativity and a reference point for evaluating the local evidence. Much of the research on creativity comes out of the US, but I took care to look for other English language sources from the UK, Australia and New Zealand. The literature review of global understandings is intended as a sturdy canvas which, when coloured by stories from TLC founder Jonathan Milne and others, paints a picture of creativity.

Second: The Learning Connexion - TLC is a New Zealand venue for the encouragement and enabling of creativity. TLC declares that creativity is an “asset we can’t afford to neglect,” and its “goal is to awaken people to their creative potential and help them find practical ways of putting it to use” (*TLC Prospectus*, 2001). Finding out whether TLC does indeed help people toward realising their creative potential involved two years as a participant observer, both actor and reflector, on my part.

I had come upon TLC in the way that many others have; by seeing their eye-catching advertisements: “if you’re not having fun, you’re not doing it right.” This cheeky gauntlet kept tripping me up so I decided to pay a visit. It was not *The Slade* or *The Sorbonne*, but the implicit promise was one of creativity for all-comers. In a few hours and up a hundred stairs, I had stumbled on the grit that would later take on a more precious form. But not without layers of commuting, enrolling, sculpting, reflecting as well as researching through conversation, observation, frustration, flow and time.

That first night I joined a class of other adult students for *The Magic of Drawing* session run by TLC founder and managing director, Jonathan Milne, resplendent in a bi-partisan suit: half Rembrandt/half REMBRANDT. (see illustration 3, over)

He convinced us that drawing is a language and all you need do is trust yourself, show commitment and you can reveal meaning. Absolute beginners were able to achieve reasonable likenesses within an evening. Art was a creative conduit to an understanding that ‘give it a go’ courage matters far more than the likelihood of being New Zealand’s next Colin McCahon because it translates to other parts of your life.



3: Jonathan Milne in his Rembrandt/REMBRANDT suit

None of the course was exclusively theoretical. Action underpinned TLC methodology and still does. Once enrolled, we got the basic tuition and began our own projects. We were expected to be bold enough to put our works 'out there' as a reality check to see whether they were communicating our intentions. Here TLC practice reinforced the theory that creativity must have an audience if it is to breathe.

For me, the challenge was to encapsulate creativity's essence in a visual form. I wanted to capture the effort required to sustain what matters. I set about sculpting a bronze female hand, in assertive pose, a heart in the palm, almost slipping out of curled fingers. Its title, *Holding on to Aroha*, (see frontispiece, i) emerged from the subconscious. There was now some weighty evidence for that 'life sentence' spelt out earlier in the prologue. Life is about saluting what matters: aroha or love.

Over two years my own creativity grew. TLC provided a kind of oyster-bed where sometimes shiny and sometimes jagged processes and products found incubation. But study there had to go beyond a 'new-agey' search for self-actualisation. As a researcher I needed to test my hunches by observing and reflecting on others who were engaged in creative pursuits. Several people, willing to be identified, offered their insights for inclusion and brought the theory to life. Jonathan Milne's story zig-zags within TLC's throughout the thesis but the others appear **one at a time** in the:

Third: Personal Perspective of each chapter. As well as the author (Chapter 1) the following people shared their creative journeys:

Mihi (Midge) <u>Murray</u> - student, broadcaster, artist, whaea	(Chapter 2)
John <u>Brebner</u> and Allison <u>Brebner</u> – teacher-artists	(Chapter 3)
Philip <u>Bush</u> - motivational speaker, artist, gallery owner	(Chapter 4)
Matty <u>Warmington</u> - video-maker, artist, musician	(Chapter 5)

Their contributions and those of others such as tutor-artists, Dennis Berdinner and Caroline McGlinchy, were given without hesitation. All consented to be named, in the tradition of the artist, and have had the opportunity to read their input and discuss any concerns with the author.

However, collecting TLC tales was only part of the process. As a teacher and now candidate for a Master of Education, I wanted to report on the conviction that creativity can be re-activated in adulthood, discern how this happens and justify reasons for considering it worthwhile. TLC had given me the opportunity to experience and observe creativity in a New Zealand context. It was important that the experiences and insights (learning) of the writer and others, about creativity's contribution, could be shared with a new audience in the telling (teaching). A commitment to the ideal of an egalitarian learning then teaching partnership had validated my search for uncovering meaning via creativity.

To sort out how such insights had been arrived at and how they might be transferable I needed an understanding of patterns in adult learning and teaching. Therefore the

time at TLC, immersed in my own and others' art and creativity, was to be augmented by study with Massey University's Education Department (Adult) Wellington Campus.

I had picked up its prosaic yellow handbook, *The New Self Help Book for Teachers* (1996) and toward the end found a chapter by Nugent on how "a spiritual perspective on human growth and development" (p 264) had helped shape his teaching practice. It was not any more or less worthy than those of Zuber-Skerritt on action research, but it was there! A programme that acknowledged spiritual, as well as scientific strategies, was issuing me an invitation. The 'left' and 'right' sides of my brain were being introduced to each other by both Massey and TLC.

At Massey I was to be provided with a theoretical underpinning of the teacher-learner exchange, and later a 'critical' method for researching and communicating creativity's value. I found out what it was to be *An Expert Teacher* and DAYdreamed on *The Myths and Realities of the Adult Learner*, ultimately realising that the most potent informant of my teaching theory and practice was my own experience of being a lifelong learner (at TLC and university included). Standing in a student's shoes brings the teacher-learner relationship into sharp relief. To borrow Parker Palmer (1998), "you teach who you are," and as a practitioner and student of creativity I was now being groomed to convey its worth.

Rogers has reframed teaching in a way that gives central importance to his own role as a learner. He elicits self-discovery in others, first by modelling for others, as a learner, the open expression of his own deepest reflections ... then ... as he expresses his own uncertainties and conviction emphasises the 'merely personal' nature of his views and invites and listens to the reactions of others, he seems to be literally thought-provoking (Schon 1987:52 on Carl Rogers).

I had identified creativity as the energy in my own and others' lives and seen it encouraged in one particular New Zealand setting, TLC. I had also been introduced to the anatomy of adult learning and effective teaching. Next I needed skills in analysis to sift the treasure from the trash and to become familiar with "a process of noticing,

collecting and thinking” (Seidel, 1998), followed by telling, which is the business of this thesis.

Here, the research methodology paper came to the rescue. We were introduced to research as an ‘art’ as well as a science, and found out:

Doing research may mean taking risks, moving outside one’s safety zone, starting ‘in the field’ before you feel confident, learning to trust one’s gut, hunches intuition. This kind of research draws heavily upon one’s creativity, requires trust, and, perhaps a sense of adventure (gilling (ed) 2000:51).

Research seemed like an exciting place to be; reminding me of creativity.

I learned to look at types of analysis: qualitative and quantitative, various methodologies, the importance of an ongoing literature search, managing the task, gathering data and, most crucial, using one’s own voice to answer the research question with integrity. Such ownership, when substantiated by theory, gives authenticity.

It is for this reason that I have combined the formal verbal voice evidenced here with a visual one, in the sculpture, *Holding on to Aroha*, featured on the frontispiece. Intended as a companion piece to the thesis, it shows that we speak our truths in many tongues. In the context of creativity this seems appropriate and, for good measure, both book and bronze fit on a university library shelf. (See Appendix F)

Research families, approaches and techniques

This research belongs to the qualitative 'family' which has "the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel or live it" (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 1997:61). Creativity as a domain is well suited to a qualitative mode where investigating and interpreting the stories of people at TLC helped contain and illuminate the elusive concept of creativity, its transferability and worth. The work is not concerned with numerical measurement of creative output, if that were an appropriate or feasible step.

However it does not shy away from discussing the literature on assessment, and notes the approval of TLC courses by government agencies such as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). It also reflects on, and respects, the subjective opinions of informants, confident that stories offer evidence too.

It made good sense for me as a solo researcher to use the case study approach, namely a study of TLC and some of its associates, because its doors were open for me as both student and researcher. I observed classes, perused documents and videos produced by TLC and conducted interviews using notes, dictaphone or video. An introductory overview of TLC is transposed onto CD Rom in Appendix E.

An external addition, in terms of data, came from Jonathan Milne's former Palmerston North Teachers' College classmate, John Brebner, whom I had interviewed in preparation for this thesis. John and his wife, Allison, run a successful print-art teaching studio, *Homeprint*, in Feilding. Along with providing an informal peer review, John Brebner showed me copies of the magazine, *Earwig*, that Jonathan Milne founded and edited. They had worked on it together 30 years ago. The creativity evident then, still stands today in their respective venues of creative endeavour.

The data which addressed the research proposal was sorted, presented and reflected upon, in five primary question-headings. They form the title of each chapter and are as follows:

Chapter One: The What of Creativity

Global definitions/NZ Experience: The Learning Connexion / Author's perspective

Chapter Two: The Who of Creativity

International opinion/Jonathan Milne's story/ Te Manakorero a Mihi (Midge's story)

Chapter Three: The Where of Creativity

International Research/TLC as a location/ The Brebners at Homeprint

Chapter Four: The How of Creativity

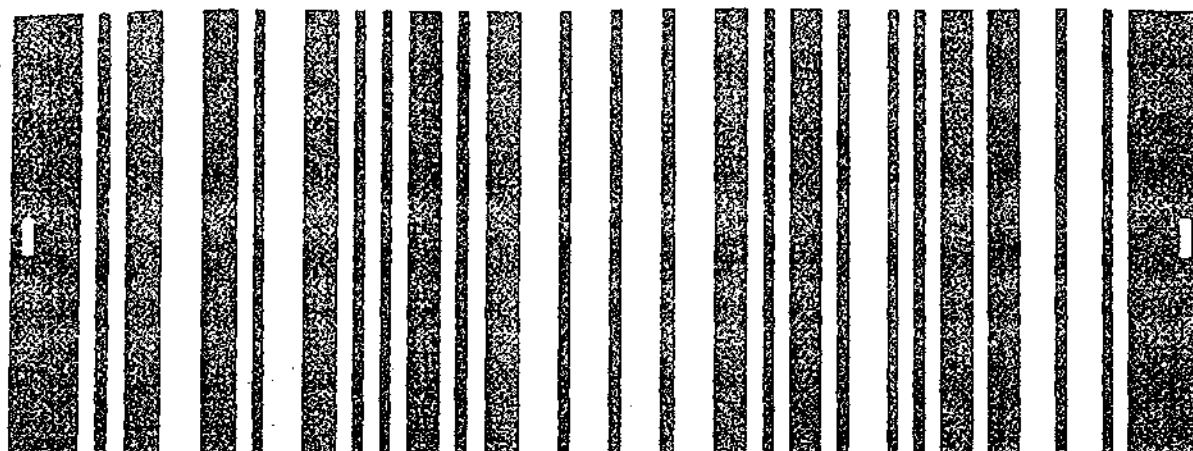
International Approaches/TLC methodology/Philip Bush's soliloquy

Chapter Five: The Why of Creativity

Renowned researchers/Jonathan Milne's view/ Matty Warmington's version

Each chapter operates at three levels: The **macro** with the literature review, the **local** where TLC is the venue and the **micro** or **personal** stories. The author's comments and reflections integrate the three strands showing how they inform and embellish each other to convince us of creativity's role as a director of meaning.

The Epilogue closes the thesis with conclusions and recommendations.



c o n f e s s i o n

I captured the overlap between the two domains of the art of creativity and *research, the art of juggling* in a barcode, sand blasted on granite. It is either a silent screen or a source of information. Just which, depends on the interrogator (researcher) asking the right questions and reflecting on the answers. If (s)he does, we have **CONFESSION**, followed by insight. If not, we continue to have barriers.

What?

CHAPTER ONE: THE WHAT OF CREATIVITY

Global definitions

Creativity is a kind of lifeline taking its lineage from mystical, religious, historical, psychological, cultural, intellectual and technical sources. It is what makes us grow, what establishes a useful encounter between the self and the world. The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* indicates the word creativity is derived from the Latin “*creare*” meaning to bring into being, to cause to exist. More fulsomely, it gives “a worthy human purpose and one most likely to produce knowledge that will provide leverage over the ever more challenging problems we most surely will confront as our species moves into the new millennium” (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi and Gardner 1994:175).

“When you take a new approach to what you’re doing – and the new approach works – you’re using your creativity. When you go beyond the traditional ways of solving a problem with a success that influences others, your creativity takes on a vital social dimension” (Goleman, Kaufman and Ray 1993:16). This TV series definition (PBS *The Creative Spirit: 1993*) seems too user-friendly, so it behoves the researcher to look at weightier sources to substantiate an answer as to what creativity is.

Creativity is rather like the fascinating but frustrating *Rubik* cube game of a few years ago. It is similarly multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary, multi-patterned and multi-choice and presents lots of challenges! “Creativity is a puzzle, a paradox, some say a mystery” (Boden 1996:75). As such it poses more questions than it has yet answered:

- Is creativity the province of psychology or sociology or ...?
- Is it concerned with person, process, product, performance?
- Is it just for the few geniuses among us or?
- Is it a potential available to all, given the right circumstances?
- Is it reliant on approval and ‘audience’ to exist?
- Is it time specific: is determining $E=mc^2$ so special in 2002?
- Is it measurable in a quantifiable sense?

- Is it provable?
- Is it age-specific?
- Is it different for artists or scientists?
- Is it important?
- Is it teachable/transferable?
- Is it transformative?

There is an alphabet-soup of world-renowned writers working to answer these questions: Let Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi illustrate the point, along with Barron and Boden, Feldman, Finke and Florida, Guilford and Gardner, Simonton and Sternberg, Runco and Rogers; not forgetting the motivating works of Teresa Amabile. They all form part of a register of twentieth century researchers (see Bibliography) intrigued by the field of creativity; all dedicated in their conviction that it matters. The flavour of their definitions is influenced by which discipline the researcher represents, the area and era of enquiry, and of course the bias of their enquiry.

By definition, creativity **was**, **is** and always **shall be**. It has been recorded in the creation myths of every culture. These stories detail the conception of light and dark, earth, sky and sea, plant and animals culminating in the Judeo/Moslem/Christian tradition at least, with: “God created *human beings*; making them to be like himself” (Genesis 1:27), then putting them in charge of his world and cautioning them to behave responsibly.

Over millennia many creative men and women have taken this responsibility seriously, be they Lao-Tzu, Homer, Newton, Gandhi or Cook as evidenced in the fruit of their talents. However we have little record of their reflection on the creative process itself.

It almost appears that an interest in the creative process did not become highly articulate until the very end of the nineteenth century, and that it was part of that general movement of mind we call the discovery of the unconscious (Barron et al 1997:7).

Hymn to Creativity

*All of us are endowed
With an amazing creative ability
That transforms our humble
Daily activities
Into images of shadows
And light,
Which are infused into the
World and
Impressed on to other
Worldly beings.
All of us – the high and the low
Are the continuous
Conductors
Of the source of all life,
Touching one another with
The unending
Life of creation*

6: LaoTzu : Chinese philosopher, 5th century BC

Twinned with such internal preoccupation was an explosion of scientific investigation and enterprise; exemplified in the works of Rutherford and Einstein, or Crick and Watson. Thus the twentieth century bi-focal gaze at psychology and progress has prompted our recognition of creativity and shaped the way we have handled its mystical and material features.

The genesis of modern study in the field of creativity is attributed to J P Guilford. In an address, entitled *Creativity*, to the American Psychological Association in 1950 (quaintly dated 50 GE or Guilford Era), he proposed an emphasis on ‘divergent thinking’ in an attempt to add urgency to post World War II America’s progress. “Guilford stressed the practical importance of creativity, the role of personality and

ability in its emergence and the possibility of fostering its growth" (Cropley 2001:2). People listened.

Over the past half-century research into creativity has concentrated on psychological and/or environmental factors as well as outputs to determine a definition and evidence of creativity. Eysenck (in Runco (ed) 1997:41) contends that "theories of creativity march on two legs. One is concerned with the nature of creative thought ... the other with the kind of person who is creative."

The 'nature of creative thought' camp was promulgated by researchers such as Guilford (1950) and Torrance (1974). They saw a close inter-relationship between intelligence and creativity and Torrance developed a set of tests to evaluate creativity in a 'psychometric' approach.

The enquiry was furthered by those who were interested in creativity's position in a psychological setting "where the cognitive approach to creativity seeks to understand the mental representations and processes underlying human thought" (Sternberg (ed) 1999:7). Boden has sought to identify the nature of human creative thought by using computers to chart our routines of creative cognition admitting as yet "it is of limited use in comparing the creativity of different creative products (1996:116).

Others, such as Csikszentmihalyi (1994, 1997), Amabile (1996) and Gardner (1983, 1996) have looked at the social-personality aspects of creativity. They remind us of the importance of traits such as independence, curiosity, confidence, risk-taking and intrinsic motivation. Csikszentmihalyi in particular has urged that creativity be contextualised. He highlights the importance of a systems approach where the 'audience' is crucial to the creative process. An individual's originality by itself is not enough; it must be approved by peers within the field. He suggests a triangular-shaped ecology of creativity made up of an individual's talent and temperament, the knowledge and expansion of a domain and an acceptance of the value of one's creative output by experts in the field (Csikszentmihalyi in Feldman et al, 1994).

Recently, Gardner has also sought to link patterns apparent in individual exemplars of creativity such as Freud or Picasso in order to ascertain wider truths about the 'laws' of creativity (Gardner in Boden, 1996).

“Creativity is the synergy of many sources, it is not only from the mind of a single person” (Csikszentmihalyi 1997:1). This broadening of the base to reconcile the personal and societal aspects of creativity, as well as its great and small accomplishments, is nourishing ongoing interest in both research and practice.

It is evident from the publication dates of much of the literature in the area that substantial research into this discipline is relatively new. Sternberg (1999) notes the paucity of commitment to the field and attributes its marginality to mystical origins that are assumed unworthy of scientific enquiry. There are also difficulties with definition and measurement and overlap in many domains meaning it belongs to no one: “traditionally it has been one of psychology’s orphans” (ibid 1999:4).

Despite these complexities, people have suspected creativity worthy of ongoing attention because they acknowledge, paraphrasing Boorstin (2001) it enlarges, embellishes, fantasises and filigrees our experience. Like love, you know it exists, it is probably good for you, but trying to catch its substance is the challenge.

There is now a ‘confluence to the study of creativity’ (Sternberg, 1999:10) that provides the new researcher with a more encompassing understanding where a blend of art and science, nature and nurture, poetic and prosaic all seem relevant. It is this interdisciplinary aspect which makes it both wayward and important. It has relevance in every field, be it psychology, arts, science, education, sociology, mathematics, philosophy or business studies.

Attempts to ascertain evidence of creativity have been variously represented in the psychometric, empirical and more recently a biographical approach. There have been reservations over the first two techniques (quantitative); wondering whether psychometric tests are more a measure of language competence than creativity, or if binary IQ (right/wrong) testing works for the open-ended nature of creativity. There is concern about the authenticity of experiments carried out in a contrived setting: for example, does it matter how many uses you can think of for a brick? However the life stories method (qualitative) also has its critics who see it as too soft and not capable of yielding generalisations about creativity. There are more recent enquiries

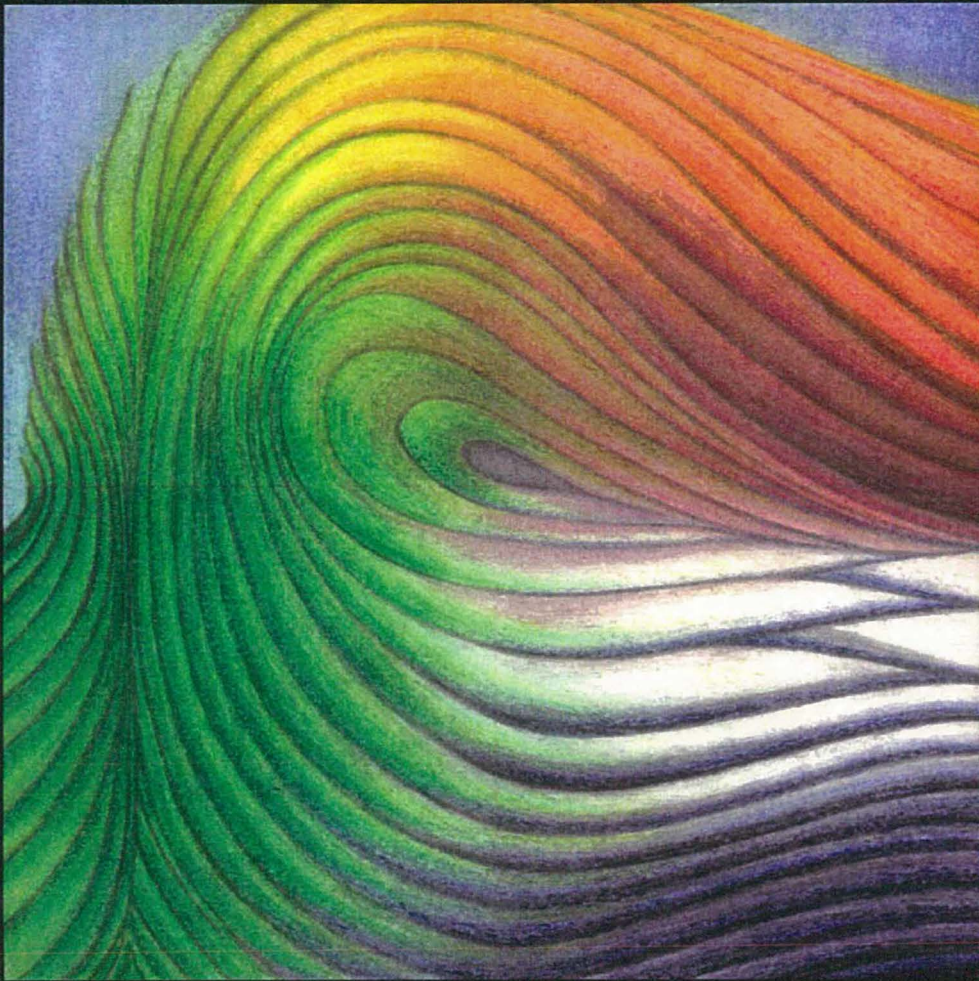
of a biological cum biographical nature. Gardner concludes, "it has not been possible to demonstrate that creativity tests are valid" (1993:20).

Another means of checking that creativity is happening has been proposed by Csikszentmihalyi who claims that when creativity is in full flight there is an experience of '*flow*' or state of blissful unselfconsciousness reported by those whose skills and creative endeavour match.

'Flow' tends to occur when a person's skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable ... A person in flow is completely focused. ... Self consciousness disappears, yet one feels stronger than usual ... whatever one does becomes worth doing for its own sake, living becomes its own justification. In the harmonious focusing of physical and psychic energy, life finally comes into its own (1997a:29).

Creativity is difficult to pin down but a number of people have attempted definitions. A thumbnail one from the American 'league' claims "creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel - i.e. original and unexpected - and appropriate i.e. useful, adaptive concerning task restraints" (Sternberg 1999:3). The second part of this definition hints at a third, namely that usefulness implies approval from external observers. It also discloses the need to count something as creative in the context of the time it occurred. Novel demands a temporal reference point because what has been novel before, logically, cannot be novel now. Amabile (1996) mentions the movie *Citizen Kane* as being a work of great creativity given the cinematographic technology of the time. If made today, it might be judged differently.

The British often define creativity in a more formal way, as "imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes which are both original and of value" (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:29 cited in Craft et al, 200:16). Boden takes this further. "Creativity in general is the ability to come up with new ideas that are surprising yet intelligible, and also valuable in some way. This is true for all cases of creativity, whether within science, art, politics, cookery, whatever.



7: Artist's impression of Flow : PRG

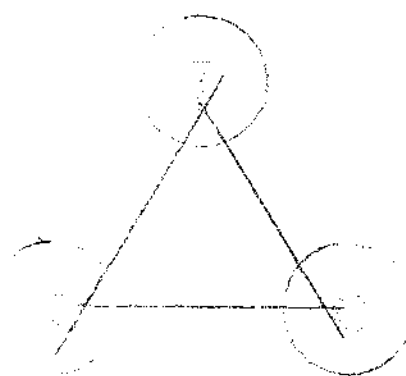
A new idea (Boden in Craft et al 2001:95) may be:

- New with respect to the whole of human history; or
- New with respect to a person's previous way of thinking"

This wider definition provides for the democratisation, as well as varying scales, of creativity. Creative persons, processes and products are not only the province of the bright and famous, but exist on a continuum. At one end ordinary individuals are doing everyday things in appropriate ways that are somewhat novel, sometimes termed *Little c creativity*. At the other, are found the highest levels of creativity, *Big C creativity*, where the likes of physicist Stephen Hawking or leader Nelson Mandela produce notable work which transforms fields and sometimes societies.

For a rather lyrical précis of creativity we turn to the words of a former student, now employee at TLC, Matty Warmington

It's so many factors in your life, living your life creatively, thinking outside the square, finding your own path, the unique side of you. My work is self-reflection, but in making your creativity you're automatically giving it, you're feeding it back into society. As much as I keep it all in here, because there's a product, its energy is given back. (*Interview with JGM - 31 May 2002*).



A New Zealand Experience – The Learning Connexion

Many of Jonathan Milne's statements in the interview that follows, concur with modern research as to creativity's characteristics and universality. He notes its organic nature and identifies some key psychological characteristics embedded in creative behaviour, such as intuition and perseverance. He sums it up as a means of growth and like most of the theorists sees it as multi-disciplinary, ranging across the arts to science to business etc. It will be evident that he sides with the more democratic, not-just-for-geniuses camp; advocating creativity is inherent in everyone and is activated by commitment. He mentions its intrinsic value as an interface between person and public when he recommends it be tested in real life.

Milne recognises the difficulties in pinning creativity down or measuring it. He also knows that creativity's crossing of thresholds often makes for reluctant acceptance. Such insights flesh out the theoretical findings in the literature. Milne reveals his preparedness to model the creative approach by having set up TLC, overcoming many obstacles along the way. He alludes to the evolutionary qualities of creativity, declaring his understandings are continually up for review.

TLC founder, Jonathan Milne's views on creativity:

Interview with JGM – 2 April 2001

How would you define creativity?

It is not just cerebral. It's like the fear you get when you try to climb a rock or something; that's part of the discovery. And until you come to terms with that, all the theory in the world is not going to get you up the rock. So it's the visceral aspect and the cerebral aspect and all the nuances of emotional learning that go into it. The final result is that people can do something that goes beyond what they could do in the first place; that's awfully simple.

So in a sense you could see it as change, it isn't static?

Growth is a better word, I know my personal view of creativity has shifted quite a lot, from the idea that techniques were useful to the thought now that you really have to work at the visceral level. Sure techniques interplay with that, but unless people explore things like boldness the theory by itself is not enough.

Milne continues:

There are two miraculous things about creativity. The first is that we all have it and the second is we barely make use of it.

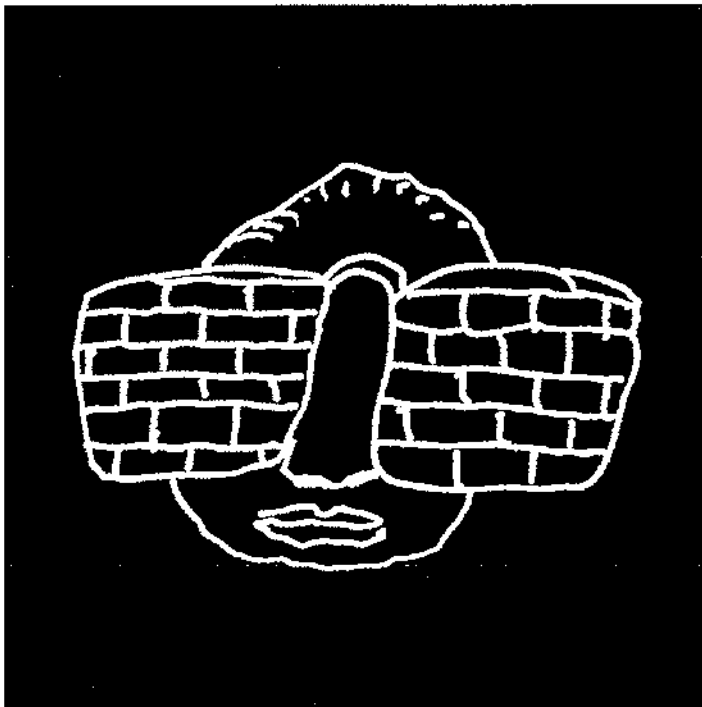
Creativity is at the core of personal and community growth. Evolution itself is a creative process – creativity is woven into the fabric of the universe. Evolution is an endless feedback process which is infinitely complex and remarkably simple. It's as if our entire past comes to focus in the present moment and confronts us with choices that shape the future.

Creativity is not just about the arts. The creative process is echoed in every field of human endeavour where new ideas make a difference. But the conceptual thinking required in art is readily transferable to other areas like science, maths, business, communication and so on.

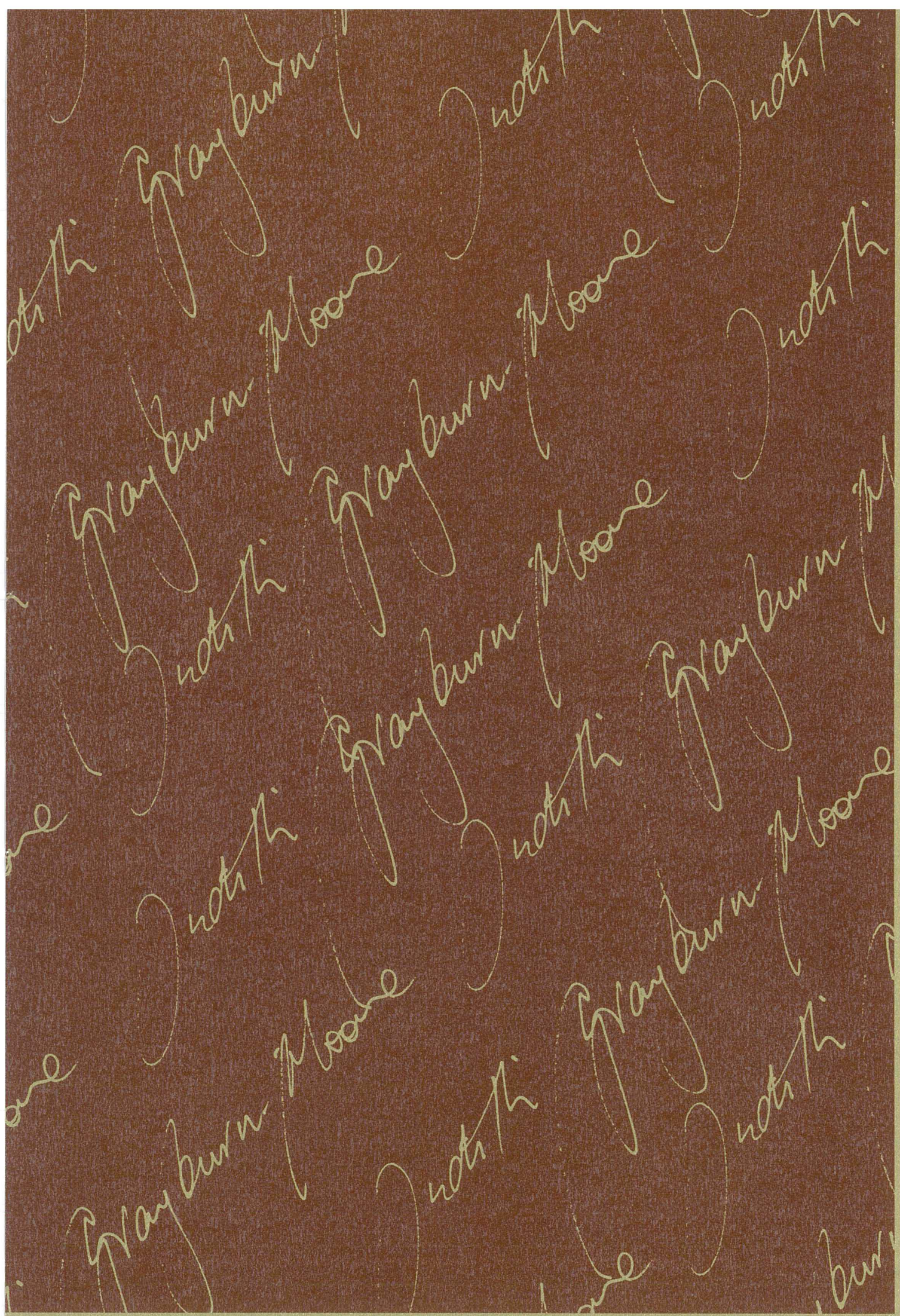
Another essential quality of creativity is persistence. Persistence isn't mere staying power – it can be about keeping a possibility alive long after you've given up. It seems paradoxical but "giving up" can be a crucial creative act because it gets the ego out of the road and our deeper intelligence has a better chance to deliver a result.

TLC Notes: Ready, Aim, Fire (2001)

A Creativity Free-Graduate



8: TLC cartoon: one use for bricks: JM



Author's perspective: JG-M

For me, creativity is both instrument and essence. It is a way of working out what matters and is matter itself, a kind of noun and a verb. It can be manifested in many forms, spiritual and secular, on many scales, and like love must be channelled from One to Other for it to exist. It can have practical objectives, such as the International Rotary organization's effective fundraising to eradicate polio worldwide by 2005, now eliminated in all but 10 countries. Or perhaps it may have poetic intent like *The Artists on the Ice* programme which sends three New Zealand artists each year to reflect on life in Antarctica.

Creativity is a sort of stamina urging one to continue to commit to an original quest(ion), a way to keep loving what is meaningful, despite difficulties, disapproval, flagging, interruptions, waning motivation and so on, a *Holding on to Aroha*.

As mentioned in the Prologue, I decided to make a bronze sculpture to encapsulate the nature of creativity and its role as a conduit in a search for meaning. There was something contradictory about using a solid and drab metal to capture the power of a mercurial and shiny notion like creativity. I rendered that paradox with a feminine clenched fist in determined salute, retaining her grip on 'aroha' acknowledging the effort required not to let go of what you believe. Perhaps it is better to 'read' the sculpture itself and add other layers of meaning. After all, as the literature suggests, a creative product requires audience.

The conceptualising process for this piece was not sequential in a linear sense, but spiralled back and forth as I toyed with creativity in the material world. Inspiration then needed to be shaped by procedures that would enable me to come up with a three-dimensional form. The practical steps to realise this notion were the perspiration part.

Using the 'lost wax' method I carved a rendition of my right hand in wax, with fingernails only just holding on to a heart or 'aroaha' in the palm. It was coated in a ceramic 'jacket' to create a mould, with channels for the wax to escape, thus leaving a vacancy for the molten bronze.

Finally a group of sculptors went to Campbell's foundry up a remote gorsy valley near Wellington. We stood by as the 1000 degree liquid quenched the thirst of our moulds, fascinated by how quickly it cooled. Then we worked on our own pieces with electric finger files to give finesse to the creations. The following week I repeated the process and added patina for the desired colour. Finished. There was a kind of alchemy apparent: liquefying a metal, surrendering it to the mysteries of heat and cooling, mixing in some insights and contradictions to come up with my own 'handout' on creativity. I had no thought of its public appearance until someone suggested it be entered in an exhibition. It has fared well.



Reflection

What is of interest in the context of this thesis is how the above piece, a 'creative What,' manages to encapsulate the passion, process, place, persons and product of creativity described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997). Within it lies:

- a conviction that creativity exists and matters
- a knowledge of its elusive quality
- initial sub-conscious passion to represent creativity in 3D
- a 'congenial environment' where the work was encouraged
- the fostering and planning of the process
- perseverance
- immersion in the sculptural 'domain' to make real the idea
- contradictory elements in the design (tough grip on love)
- paradox in the tension of English/Maori - male/female -strength/gentleness-luminous/dull all features of the work
- risk of surrendering the piece for peer approval (or not!)
- creative addition, integral to the thesis



CHAPTER TWO: THE WHO OF CREATIVITY

International Opinion

Who has creativity has long been discussed. On one side, a kind of monarchy reigns where the crown of creativity has been bestowed on a privileged few. On the other, democracy prevails where all potentially have access. In tandem with this elite versus everyman debate has been a focus on examining the creative person's contributions. At the grand end the 'product' has to be difference-making, furthering the field, pushing the boundaries in a radical yet recognisable way. At the humble end the impact has been more personal, where the output's chief value is novel and important to the individual. The product acts as a password, deciding whom to include in which creativity club.

Big C creativity clan – Who Belongs?

For many lay people, and experts too, creativity has often been associated exclusively with the big names, those catalysts for world-changing thought, action or invention. Like Einstein for example, they have been held in awe, a respect that probably has its origins in traditional regard for the divine creator-God, backed up by a stratified social structure where creative people are not 'like us.' The roll call for this clan includes well-known leaders in the arts and sciences over the centuries such as Plato and Petrarch, Newton and Galileo, Darwin and Picasso, Stravinsky and Scorsese, Shakespeare and Woolf, Bill Gates or Peter Jackson.

A preference for focussing on the greats as the loci of creativity still prevails. The authors of *Changing the World, A Framework for the Study of Creativity* declared their "primary interest is creativity as the achievement of something remarkable and new, something which transforms and changes a field of endeavour in a significant way" (Feldman et al, 1994:1). Their treatise favours those who achieve change on a grand scale as rightful heirs to creativity's laurels.

But leaning toward the glamorous end of creativity could also be viewed as rather conservative, in that it endorses the traditional norms of rationing approval to a select few. Amabile warns, “we’ve become narrow in the ways we think about creativity, we tend to think of it as rarefied” (in Goleman et al 1993:28). She contends that creativity exists at the elite **and** everyday level. Certainly the great creators give us pointers as to patterns of creativity but those patterns may well be duplicated at more modest levels, populating a Little c creativity clan. Irrespective of scale, though, what marks the creative person is a need to create. “They seek to construct a cosmos in their own experiencethe drive to make sense of everything” marks the creative person (Barron et al, 1997:13).

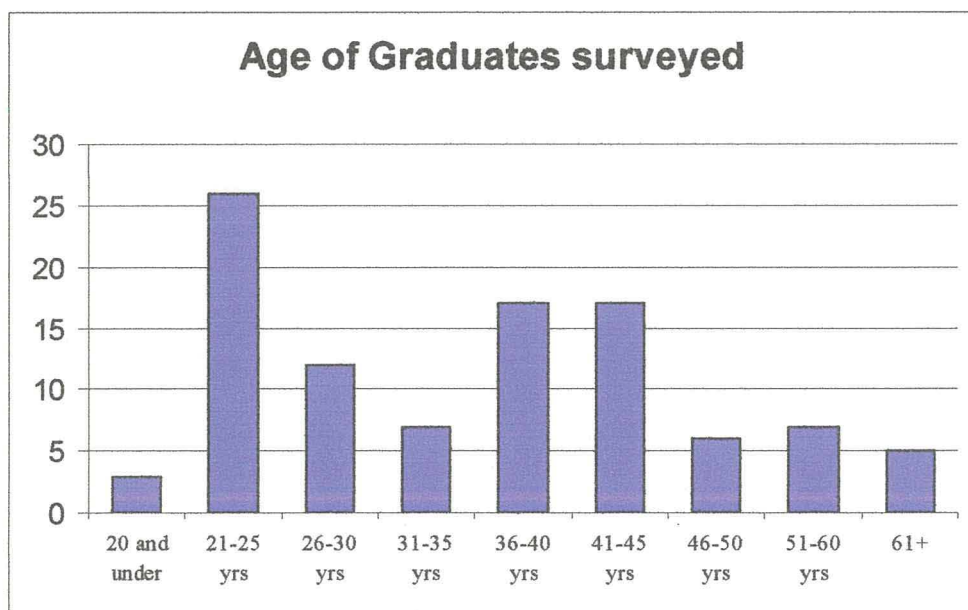
Boden (in Craft et al 2001) accommodates both sides in claiming that *Big C* creativity is a special subset of *Little c* creativity; the difference is what history makes of your contribution. This is not to downplay the value of impressing an audience, but the audience may well be **you**, not the world. If we put the size of the audience to one side, instead concentrating on the characteristics of creative people, major and minor, what do they have in common? The literature often nominates the following traits:

- The synthetic ability to see problems in new ways
- The analytic ability to recognise which idea is worth pursuing
- The practical-contextual ability to persuade others
- Enough knowledge of a domain to move it forward (Big C)
- Ability to think globally as well as locally
- Self-confidence
- Willingness to overcome obstacles
- Risk-taking
- Tolerance of ambiguity and paradox
- Competence across domains
- Standing up to conventions
- Intrinsic motivation or a passion for what you are doing
- Standing both with-in and with-out your environment
- Capacity to work in spite of anxiety
- Stubbornness , even selfish pre-occupation

In the education sector it behoves us to take a creative approach to creativity, not just look through “the rear-vision mirror at those personal traits and social circumstances that contribute to socio-cultural success” (Simonton in Sternberg (ed) 1999:116). It is important to see if more can get a ‘license,’ in other words, to determine how the traits outlined above can be identified and fostered to lengthen the list of creators.

Teachers are not only concerned with description of past extraordinary exploits, but with the future too. They are obliged to consider ways in which the attributes of creativity can be enlivened for individual, pedagogical and societal benefit. Boden reinforces this obligation when she says “teachers and psychologists need to know how children and adults can think up valuable ideas that they had not thought of before and how they can be helped to do so” (in Craft et al (eds) 2001:95).

In New Zealand a school for art and creativity, The Learning Connexion (TLC), is attempting to re-introduce a range of people to their own innate creativity. TLC is gathering information on the profile of its students. Their survey of the age of 107 recent (1999-2001) graduates, 75% of whom are women, appears in Figure 1.



9: Figure 1: TLC survey of age distribution of 107 recent graduates

Note: 2002 enrolments indicate that 70.8% of students are 25 or over

11% of current 2002 students are under 20

Jonathan Milne's 'magnum opus', could be labelled an exemplification of *Middle C* creativity, as it is still a work in progress and history has not judged it yet. However his vision, articulated in the interview below, affirms that his work certainly occupies a central place.

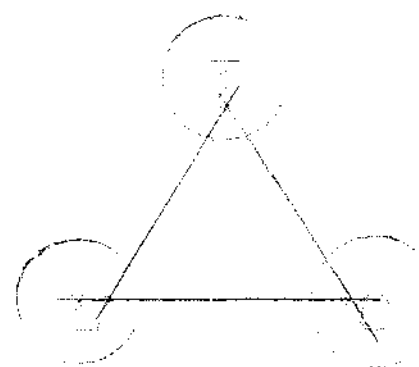
Milne embodies many of the creative person's characteristics identified in the literature. He admits he sometimes does not quite fit but often uses this irritant constructively. His commitment to challenging the stale status quo and doing something about it, be it at Teachers' College or work, provided early evidence of pushing the boundaries of a domain, later writ large at The Learning Connexion.

Milne mentions a willingness to take risks and an intrinsic motivation which lured him up "Mt Creativity" as he calls it. We will see that he stresses the importance of a supportive environment, be it family or formal, or something in-between, such as his mentors at Teachers' College. He relishes memories of the ambiguity of being involved with the underground press early in his career, then becoming the voice of the conservative Public Service Association (PSA).

His comments below exhibit that extra edgy energy as well as commitment common to creative people which eventually led him to push for a centre where others' creativity could be encouraged.



10: A youthful Milne challenging the status quo in the seventies



Jonathan Milne's Story

Interview with JGM – 2 April 2001

What got you interested in creativity?

I began studying creativity at university when I stumbled upon the work of E Paul Torrance in the mid-60's. It was an inspiring irritant because most of what happened in university seemed anti-creative. It wasn't until 1985 that I left the supposed safety of a well-paid job and seriously committed myself to creativity. At the time I felt a dread of growing old without making a whole-hearted attempt to climb Mt Creativity. It wasn't specific, just a diffuse awareness that creativity is generally suppressed and it was time to do something that made a difference.

When did you first realise you weren't going to be a man in a three-piece suit?

To me it was an odd conflict. At secondary school it was a toss up between science and art. I think I chose the art in the end because it suited me much better. I felt more valued in art than science. The curriculum in science was very oppressive. I felt in art it was like being in a wide, open space where you could do much more what you liked. With science the things you liked were too explosive and we weren't meant to test them out. I've still got scars!

How about your childhood?

My first five years were in a railway house in Ohau, south of Levin near Wellington. My father came back from the war and worked in the railways. What was significant was there were no other kids around. I was the first, later came three brothers and a sister and I had to amuse myself. Fantasy was my life, that was it. I must have felt very content with that. I invented and created stories and never stopped really.

Do you feel that your parents encouraged this?

My father is still going at 85. He has this view which, at the time, we took for granted, to be enormously encouraging of anything we did. The only rule, before he would support something with money or time, was we had to be passionate about it.

Quite an inheritance.

Yes. That was the rule really. He did quite well for himself as a plastering and concrete contractor and all of his children successfully went down different tracks. That was the first indicator for me, in the family context, of how creativity can be nurtured.

How about your schooling?

Secondary school was in Levin. I was a nuisance because I always asked questions, sometimes to learn but quite often to catch the teacher out. But there were some on the staff who were excellent and they influenced my choices, especially in English and art.

What came next?

I went to Canterbury University to study art. I was on a studentship. I was being paid to go to University. Seems very good now, on \$26 a week. Vogel's bread cost 15c a loaf so 26 'bucks' went a long way.

What did you think of art school?

Hideous. If you're looking for seeds or irritants this was a crucial time. I thought it was desperately oppressive and horrible and sort of cliquy. I felt totally a misfit there and didn't understand why.

Is that because it was a very prescribed programme?

No, probably because I'd never been used to being in that sort of context. It was a clash of someone who had just come out their own way, with their own ideas and no interaction with people like that at all. They couldn't handle me and I couldn't handle them. I resolved it by getting pneumonia and nearly died. Getting ill eventually led me to Teachers' College and that was a healthy change.

A lot of what happened at Ilam is just typical of what happens at art schools. Now I don't even feel grouchy about it as it did actually shape a lot of what followed. So it was quite an important experience.

I went straight from there to the Teachers' College in Palmerston North and at that time we had lecturers like Ray Thorburn and Frank Davis who were superb. It was like going from the depths of the 'gulag' direct to paradise. It was just marvellous and I had these two experiences back to back. And these days, I still feel the Teachers' College was educationally very sound. It has had quite a big influence on the way we've developed TLC.

I never dreamt I'd be running an institution that is bigger than the Teachers' College. I mean it seemed huge to us at the time. And the Principal was up at least with God, if not a bit higher.

There were some interesting things too. There was a kind of war between me and the Ed Dept within the college. They dished out these notes which seemed designed to be unreadable so I analysed them on a readability test from a book called *The Art of Plain Talk*. They were so bad they only just fitted on the graph. This little piece of research was published in *Earwig*, the student magazine I was editing at the time. The department didn't take kindly to criticism and one of the tutors did his best to straighten me out by putting me in the least suitable schools for teaching practice. What they succeeded in doing was inspiring me to leave teaching. I graduated and left.

I restarted the magazine as a public thing and went to Auckland. *Earwig* became part of the worldwide underground press syndicate. The police thought it was quite subversive. All we did was ask questions, and if that's what subversive means, I'm in favour of it.

And how did you make ends meet?

With huge difficulty. I remember allocating two ice creams per year as my quota of luxury living (1969 – 1973). We were on the bones of ... and we just put all the resources we had into what we were doing. We published the magazine and we produced posters and stuff to pay the bills. Very Spartan.

But we had some outrageous success. One of the posters in particular, based on an *Easy Rider* image (US film 1968), sold incredibly at the Auckland Easter Show. At the end of the week we had enough money to buy a house. So we had quite a spectacular experience of success with what we did. That shaped my attitude too because I think success comes in quantum jumps. It doesn't come in a 'steady as she goes pattern' at all. This was quite startling. It was a great release from any sense that you had to get a conventional job and stay in it forever.

It struck me as being part of the creative process in the long term. It's a bit like the cliché 1% inspiration 99% perspiration. You do have to put in the graft, and the graft is about learning whatever particular skills go with the area you're in. But often the culmination, the thing that people call success, is very tightly focused. Typically it takes many years but the results look as if they happened overnight. That's very much what happened with us.

After Auckland, what happened?

The poster production was earning our income, but it felt more and more like running a factory. So I put what I could into a car and drove off back to Palmerston North to work on the *Guardian*, a local paper, for a year. It was quite challenging because it was a paper just trying to find its way. It was a big task, belting out a weekly paper, writing, photographing, 'comping,' everything.

That was exhausting but quite a good experience. Then I went on what was to be a three-day holiday to Taranaki with my brother and, while I was there, I saw a job advertised in the journalist union paper. You see things and you know suddenly, that's your job. It was with the PSA and I joined them as Assistant Editor.

What were you doing?

Well, I'd come out of the underground press and I took all those values into the PSA which was hilarious because the Public Service is not terribly underground. I think they thought some screaming lunatic had taken charge. Still, slowly but surely, we developed quite a good interplay. My concern was to hear what people had to say so it genuinely grew.

The biggest controversy occurred when I launched a questionnaire which dealt with a whole heap of sensitive issues, including the abortion debate and rugby tours to South Africa under apartheid. When the Executive Committee heard about it they wanted to suppress the results without looking at them. Well, we finally published the results and the sky didn't fall in. It was just a straightforward bit of communication. But it had been done as a survey and some felt that surveys subverted democracy.

I continued for ten years, then left. That was the magic time when you were able to withdraw from the staff savings scheme and get the full subsidy. It's a quirk of fate but I'd painlessly saved the money which became the seeding capital for TLC.

Stepping outside his own story, Jonathan Milne has come up with an *identikit* of the characteristics of creative people. Here Milne demonstrates that apart from being the personification of a creative person, he is also an intellectual observer, manifesting the archetypal subjective/objective-insider/outsider traits of the creative personality described in the literature. In *Ready, Fire Aim* (2001) he states that creative people:

- Are pattern thinkers. Sometimes this type of thinking is called “intuition” – it’s a knack of being able to make sense of things without being able to explain why. Like risk-taking it is an internal process which requires endless practice. The practice isn’t always easy because Western education tends to be anti-intuitive
- Confront questions of meaning which can’t be translated into logical explanations but they can nevertheless inspire us with a sense of purpose and a joy for living
- Are conservative and radical at the same time. The conservative side is important because they need some sort of inner stability to enable them to take the sustained risks demanded by creative work. They also have to operate in the real world and this requires the ability to communicate with people who may be antagonistic to change. At the same time creative people are challenging established rules – it’s as if conflict goes with the territory
- Exhibit naïveté or innocence. It’s as if an innocent mind can somehow see outside the square. At the same time this childlike quality has to be accompanied by mature discipline to get results
- Have a high tolerance of ambiguity as they try to bring imagined ideas into reality
- Are typically passionate and critical at the same time. They will be driven by passion but can stand back and assess their work in a detached, rational way
- Have the ability to ride through negative responses to their work (even though they may get deeply hurt). Their satisfaction tends to come from the work itself rather than external rewards
- Are willing to make mistakes. They are the ultimate experimenters and will come back to ideas again and again – sometimes over a period of decades – until they find a way forward
- Have a strange relationship with society as a whole. They may be seen as fools or heroes depending on the results of their work. They require enormous faith in themselves to cope with the erratic nature of public opinion

The story that follows introduces a TLC student, Mihi (Midge) Murray, who exemplifies many of the features of a creative person. She studied political science, has been in broadcasting, is an artist and a mother (whaea) too. Midge’s Te Manakorero (prestigious story) speaks eloquently of the reasons creativity is another maunga (mountain) she identifies with. By her own admission, being part of a creativity programme has made a difference.

This image shows a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf of a book. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some minor creases and discoloration, characteristic of old paper. Faint, repeating text is visible across the page, suggesting a watermark or bleed-through from the reverse side. The text appears to be "Te Hokiang-nui-a-mihi Murray" written in a cursive or script font. The page is otherwise empty of any other markings or illustrations.

Te Manakorero a Mihi Murray (Midge's Story)



11: Interview with JGM – 31 May 2002

Tell me about yourself.

My name is Midge Murray - Mihi is my Maori name. I'm Ngapuhi and Ngati Kahungunu. I was brought up by my grandparents. I was brought up in a Maori community but there wasn't much emphasis on it (Maoritanga). I was taught Pakeha (European) values, textbook table manners, ballet, lots of refining things so I could fit in the Pakeha world. Our part of the country, the Hokianga in Northland, has a strong Methodist missionary background. There were no Maori decorations on the local marae. Art and craft were not encouraged or discouraged. I don't come from an arts background, more church and hard labour.

I grew up on a farm and then moved to Whangarei, a small city north of Auckland, so it was a rural and urban upbringing. I was used to my own company, lots of time to think, without distractions. I was expected to enter a traditional girl's job, be a teacher or secretary, but that wasn't me.

Have you always been keen on art?

I have always been interested in drawing, painting but our art classes (at school) were a bit sterile: just paint the grass, the sky and a house. After nine weeks I thought "that's enough" - I closed my eyes and let my paint brush dip in any colour and I thought "WOW!" The sky was purple. The teacher screwed it up and threw it away. That had a big effect until I went to high school and had this great art teacher who thought everything and everybody was beautiful. He really built up this love of art. I was with him till the 7th Form, not doing art as a formal subject, but art history. I was winging it really, just getting books out and copying them, started drawing our '*maunga*'- that's the mountain used to identify and introduce yourself. I just dabbled because it wasn't encouraged in my community, it wasn't an option.

What about after school?

I came straight to Wellington after school. I wanted to do my own thing and went to university to study political science. Here I have been able to be myself.

And what next?

My creative journey was about trying to find my identity because I was adopted by my grandparents who did a fabulous job of bringing me up and making me aware of both my Maori and Scottish heritage – clans are very similar to Maori '*iwi*' with their *whakapapa* (genealogy/lineage). Because my family were so interested I learnt that I'm from all sorts of different backgrounds. I've become interested in myself and a Pacific Island connection and I was exploring that identity. We're all part of Polynesia.

After university, I got involved in radio, student radio, and ended up working there and I'm still involved in a wee way. That became my passion. Music's always been my passion.

I came to Wellington to be a writer. Instead I got involved in the local radio music industry and I played and performed as a DJ. As far as I'm concerned, the only thing worth spending your money on are music, books and art. I only spend it on music and books because I can't afford the art. That's why I do it, the art. I thought if I can't buy it I'll do it myself.

What interested you in this sort of course?

Seven or eight years ago I bought some materials and kept looking at night classes. I was drawing, writing and so on, and then I got pregnant with my third baby and this huge rush of creativity started coming out. I got on a roll, making things for the house and I got frustrated and thought I need to know more.

I had this friend who went to a community arts centre in town, Vincent's in Wellington. She started painting and she came out with some beautiful stuff, and I thought if she can do it, so can I. So I went along and at the same time I had been seriously considering going to an art school but it's really expensive. It was quite a commitment.

So I started going to Vincent's, and it didn't take me long to decide yep, this is what I wanted to do. I don't know how I happened on TLC, but one thing about TLC which is so attractive is that it is open to everybody whereas at a fine art school you have to have a portfolio and have accumulated skills, which I didn't have.

I came along to the interview here (TLC) and have loved it ever since. I did the foundation course extramurally and loved it so much, I thought I really need to come on site and do more.

What have you got out of doing a creativity course?

Well first, being able to do something I'm passionate about, having a ball doing it – it's been niggling at me for a long time. And second, a sense of discovery, knowing more about the process. Now, I go to an art gallery and appreciate more, which means I can appreciate my passion a lot more. I'm a lot more relaxed, in my outlook on life. I'm not so consumer driven.

What's your definition of creativity?

Making something that you love, something that's beautiful to you and hopefully something that somebody else will like as well. That's my take on it. Also making something that has never existed before, which relates back to the creator, i.e. that divine being who has created all of creation. What I'm doing I know, deep within me, it's original. I go to a gallery or exhibition and see something similar to what I've done and I get a bit anxious because I've got this thing about being original. I've always been like that, not wanting to come across as being a copy-cat. So the stuff that I've done I really don't want people to think that I've copied anybody else.

You said earlier, that you didn't want to be classified, exclusively, as a Maori artist. Can you explain a little more?

Because of my upbringing (outlined above) I have no background in Maori arts, whatsoever, even though I was brought up in a Maori community I don't really live that lifestyle except when I go home.*

I guess I'm urbanised now. I've never taken an interest – for me it's not my main interest. I like modern art and I wanted my art to be like the stuff that I like. I never imagined that I would be perceived as a Maori artist who does Maori art until I came here. Part of this course is that everyone has to do a presentation about something that they're passionate about at orientation. And I always thought that I was passionate about music, but other people seem to think I'm passionate about socio-political issues which I'd done a couple of paintings about, issues that are dear to me.

Later a tutor came up to me, weeks afterward and said: "You should talk to," and she listed the names of some prominent Maori women artists whose work is very Maori. And I thought, I don't know if I'd really have anything in common with them – what I want my work to be is going to be completely different to theirs. And then someone else said: "Oh great, we don't have many Maori artists here – it's good to see another one." I knew she meant someone who would do Maori art.

I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but I reject the notion that I am an artist, who does Maori art. I'm Maori and I want to be an artist but what I do has no connection to me being Maori, at present. Maybe later on, it might. * But doing this has really built up my confidence.

Postscript* *10 October 2002: Addendum to earlier Interview 31 May 2002*

Not long after Judy Moore interviewed me (above), my life took a dramatic turn of events. A death in the family and the resultant aftermath saw me uprooting and moving back home to the Hokianga to attend to family and legal matters.

The decision to move was a very difficult one and I dreaded leaving Wellington as it meant leaving my life, my studies etc even though it was only meant to be temporary. Also, another deterrent was wondering what I would be going to? Having grown up in the Hokianga, I knew what to expect – all the societal problems. On my return what I have actually discovered is quite the opposite. Oh yes, there is still high unemployment, people on the benefit and so on but what has made an impression on me is that there seems to be an increased awareness of self-worth, of the environment, and of things artistic and creative.

Local communities have a more pro-active, hands-on approach to creating fair employment opportunities which are relevant to the local culture and environment. More and more, people are taking pride in who they are, and what they are, and where they're from and this is evident in the general appearance of the environment.

There is strong evidence of a resurgence of arts-based interest, both Maori and non, traditional and contemporary to the point that plans to erect a cultural arts centre are underway. New role models are local sculptors, painters, sportspeople, singer-songwriters, actors, environmentalists. In short, a whole new generation of Maori who are implementing change – or rather, reclaiming, what once was.

And how, you may ask, does all of this relate to me and my creative journey? **In every way.** This new positive climate has instilled in me an enormous interest in what is essentially me – Maori: tikanga, reo, waiata, whakapapa, history. As a result I've been conducting research in all of these areas; acquainting myself with customs and laws, learning Maori language, singing songs and learning about my family history.

All of this has led to a new stage in my creative development. I've started composing waiata (of sorts), I get up on the local marae and talk in Maori (of sorts) and the biggest buzz of all is that I've started writing. The words are pouring out, terribly exciting! I'm still sculpting and painting too.

Coming back to Hokianga I am faced with new challenges and motivation, fanning the coals of creative inspiration and awakening in me a fiery taniwha (mythical monster). I never thought I'd ever come back here and all of a sudden I feel so comfortably at home.

I am home.

Te Hokianga - nui - a Mihi - Murray

Kia Ora

PPS

Dear Judy,
Helping with your project is actually helping me too. I'm evaluating my creative journey – my beginnings, my middle and where it may take me. Arohanui, Midge.

Note:

See Appendix C: Glossary of Maori language terms

Reflection

Midge's Manakorero-story reveals why being involved in research is exciting. The October morning the thesis zip disk and I were ready to go to the printer's, I received a hand-written letter from Mihi with her latest insights. She terms this an addendum, and was keen to update the further steps in her creative pathway. To be offered more of her evolving journey was a *koha* (gift).

Midge's tale epitomises many of the attributes of the creative person outlined in the literature with some of the insider-outsider traits of the creative personality. Brought up by a loving extended family or *whanau*, as an only child, in a rural Maori community, she was nevertheless introduced to *Pakeha* ways. For much of her adulthood she has lived a very urban life a long way from her *maunga*. That asymmetry has led to what Gardner (in Boden 1996:153) refers to as a 'fruitful asynchrony' which has nudged her creativity. As the addendum suggests, there are new experiences re-working and plaiting past and present into fresh creative patterns.

Like other creative people, Midge mentions the word **passion** several times, and indicates her niggling commitment to pursue her passion for the arts, over and above the more traditional roles expected of her.

She is convinced of the value of being true to herself. In the initial interview she speaks of a reluctance to don the 'Maori artist' label knowing that she is swimming against the 'politically correct' tide but confident that her primary allegiance lies with her art and her honesty. She is standing up to prevailing conventions which reveals an independence common to creative people. Even so, there's a sub-surface rider, that 'later on' she might identify as a Maori artist but not until she is ready.

The Postscript shows that she is getting ready. Circumstances have forced a reconnection with her Maori heritage and she has responded by recognising, in her own words, **I am home**. But Mihi is not sentimental. She brings urban skills and a discerning eye to the Hokianga, giving as well as taking, in order to honour her own, as well as her people's, stand in the new Aotearoa - New Zealand. *Kia ora!*



CHAPTER THREE: THE WHERE OF CREATIVITY

International Research

Where creativity can be found has long been a matter of conjecture. Some see it residing in the minds of a select few, and some say it is a common attribute. Others see it located at the intersection of person and wider society, including global society. Some identify locations where it may be happening, such as schools or de Bono training sessions or Silicon Valley. There are those who detect its **potential** presence by deducing where it is thwarted, as in over-supervised environments for instance. Some see it as the province of the arts while others see it crossing boundaries into science, business, technology and attitude to life.

To say that creativity is relative to the conditions of the social system does not mean that it is any less important, or less real, than if it had an independent, objective existence. But it does mean that if we wish to understand creativity we must search for it outside the boundaries of the individual person. The usual question of creativity research – What is creativity? – may have to be replaced by Where is creativity? (Csikszentmihalyi in Feldman et al, 1994:145).

Csikszentmihalyi locates creativity at the crossroads of individual, the domain (area of knowledge) and the field (experts and peers).

This model charts the changing focus and locus of creativity. Early interest concentrated on spectacular heroes, be they artistic or scientific. Now we acknowledge it may emerge from the talent and energies of many. The development of the personal computer “was the achievement of a creative ecosystem ... where the creativity of each person’s novel contribution was inextricably contingent on the existence of other people and processes” (Harrington in Runco and Albert 1990: 148).

Contemporary investigation, set against a current background of uncertainty and great change “has led to an understanding of creativity as an ongoing process, as continuous reinterpretation, renovation, evolution and improvement” (Weiner 2000: 261). It is really no longer enough to see it only as an attribute or accomplishment fixed on one person at one time.

Nor need it be a static contribution to a domain such as that found in literary works, but a ‘fluid’ activity or revision where creator(s) and audience re or co-create. Think of jazz or political activities such as Gandhi’s peaceful resistance movement.

It is evident that creativity is not an autistic activity. “It does not occur in a vacuum” declares Lubart (in Sternberg (ed) 1999:339). It can be found at both the individual and societal levels, in different times and places. “Simonton has conducted studies in which eminent levels of creativity have been statistically linked to environmental variables such as cultural diversity, war, role models and resources” (Sternberg 1999:9). Charles Darwin’s creativity in determining his theory of the origin of the species had as its ‘Beagle’ the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the insights of Malthus and an affluent, imaginative family willing to fund his curiosity.

Which brings us to the influence of family as a crucible for creativity. There have been several studies which concur that “families likely to foster creativity in children are characterised by a low level of authoritarianism and restrictiveness, an encouragement of independence and a somewhat cool interpersonal distance between parents and children” (Amabile 1996:229). Reassuringly, this format can be modified as Amabile notes in the upbringing of film director, Steven Spielberg. His parents supported his early passion for film making by buying the equipment and allowing him to use the house as a set. They even appeared in his films. Mother’s milk was supplemented by Mom’s movies, achieving significant results.

Howard Gardner’s work on seven great minds of the twentieth century, *Creating Minds* (1993), observed that creators often came from families on the margin. Freud was Jewish in a Catholic Vienna and Gandhi was an Indian born in South Africa.

Culture too is an important location for creativity. There is a tug-of-war between creativity and tradition. "One represents a commitment to the past, the other a push toward the future " (Weiner 2000:12), making for a tense border which the creative person must straddle. Cultures contain or transmit their belief systems (memes) in different ways. What is encouraged or permitted in one culture may not be in another. "As long as they (memes) are recorded orally ... traditions must be strictly observed so as not to lose information" (Csikszentmihalyi in Sternberg (ed) 1999:317). This has a restrictive impact since one of the fundamental drivers of creativity is to be able to access and alter the status quo. Cultures with written records and externally-oriented communication offer chances for perusal and adaptation, provided people are given access to the information in the first place and the tools to unlock it.

"Culture is involved in defining the nature of creativity and the creative process. Western culture is more product oriented while the East views it as a phenomenon expressing an inner truth in a new way" (Lubart in Sternberg (ed) 1999:347).

The advent of the internet and mass worldwide information will have an interesting effect on **intercultural** creativity because we can now so readily eavesdrop on another culture, question it, and perhaps, our own. But the downside of our village going global is we have to negotiate a mountain (of information) in order to locate meaning rather than rely on consulting our elders. Perhaps creativity will be the modern, as well as ancient, guide. Weiner's list (2000:9) of some of the categories where creativity is discussed, illustrates its ubiquitousness:

Arts and literature

Psychology (cognitive/social/empirical)

Computer software

New Age self-help books

Creativity in the classroom

Creativity-inducing exercises
Technological and scientific creativity
In historical tracts on the great creators
Creativity in the workplace and business practice

Economic parameters in a society shape creativity too. Most people living in a subsistence economy have little option but to concentrate on survival whereas financial comfort facilitates the building of universities, libraries and the luxury of some time to think.

Political conditions can help or hinder creativity. Consider city-states such as Renaissance Florence which sought expression of its power and prestige by underwriting creative endeavour. A walk down an avenue to Florence's famous Uffizi Gallery where Michelangelo, Botticelli, da Vinci, Galileo and Plato wait as intellectual butlers in this home of art magnifies the point. But politics can work against creativity too. In the cultural revolution of 1960's China, any challenging of rules (often a pre-condition of creativity) was not only forbidden but dangerous.

Narrowing the focus further, we can see how intra-cultural norms influence creativity. The work environment may be an important locus of creativity especially if there are qualities such as freedom, good management, encouragement of ideas, recognition, compatible companions and a sense of challenge (Amabile 1996:262).

Refining our view further still, we can follow Gardner's (1983) lead in seeing individual creativity located in one or more of seven talents or competencies. This *WHERE* is a kind of psychological street. A person's capacity to recognise the location of an innate predisposition (or unusual combination of predispositions) - be it in language, maths, music, spatial reasoning, movement, interpersonal or intrapersonal abilities - enhances his or her ability to contribute to a particular domain.

Places of learning can promote or discourage creativity. Bertrand Russell in the 1920's is reported as saying "we are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought" (in Craft et al 2001:17).

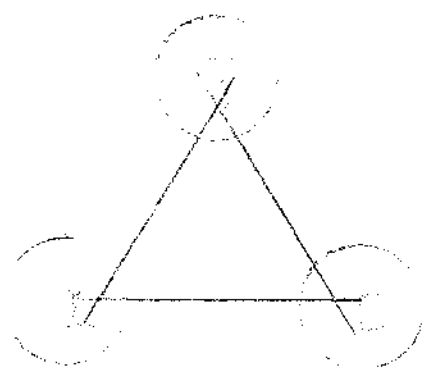
Beneath this rather cynical comment lies an awareness of the importance of intelligence and creativity. The twentieth century has done much for the nurturing of the former, but what of the latter? As Cropley (2001) notes, educational institutions were concentrating on intellectual advancement to the near exclusion of creativity when the call went up with Guilford, in 1950, to redress the balance. There was initially a surge of interest in the topic as it coincided with a drive for political superiority in the west after World War II. However during the hippie 1960's, creativity became identified with indulgence where 'kids' might neglect the '3R's' so it took a back seat again. This fear has since been countered by focussing on a balanced, humanistic approach which sees creativity as a way of developing the whole person, who can then contribute to his or her own growth as well as society's.

Modern teachers need to match an innate respect for creativity by finding out what makes for fertile ground to grow the creative person and performance.

And there is no time to waste. Adult education expert, Mezirow, has called for 'transformative learning' experiences that free people from the pattern of dealing with the present by recycling the past.

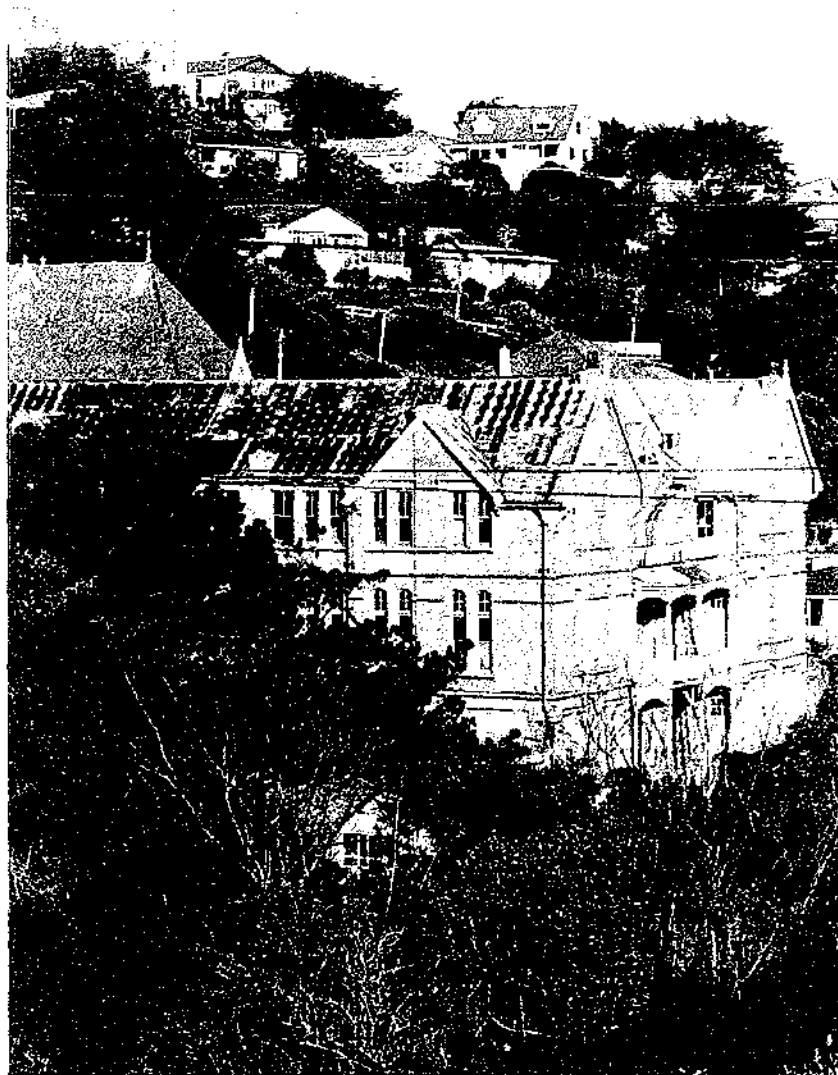
People need to be able to adjust to change that is both rapid and sweeping, both for their own well-being and for that of the societies in which they live. This means that education will need to foster flexibility, openness, ability to produce novelty, ability to tolerate uncertainty – in other words creativity (Cropley 2001:158).

"It is easier to enhance creativity by changing conditions in the environment than by trying to make people think more creatively" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997:1). The Learning Connexion has made a good start in establishing a site that both accommodates the creative spirit and enhances it.



The Learning Connexion as a Location

In Jonathan Milne's recounting of the 'David becomes Goliath' establishment of TLC we shall see some classically creative patterns which have had consequences in three dimensions. There is evidence of perseverance in taking the ups and downs of various economic trials and still hanging on. Sympathetic supporters facilitated opportunities which Milne acted on. Despite the venues and courses being modest initially, he did not lose sight of the dream. These small starts were foundation stones for what was to become a literal and metaphorical castle of creativity.



12: Erskine College – The Learning Connexion's castle of creativity

It is apparent that the risk in opting for bigger and more burdensome premises has for the most part, proved worthwhile. TLC has grown into the very substantial building it inhabits. However there are difficulties, such as substantial and frequent maintenance crises and obligations matched by uncertainty over government funding of private training providers and changing tertiary education strategies.

The headaches go on, but so does TLC.

The interview below (2 April 2001) outlines TLC's development as a venue for the fostering of creativity. Seven students in Milne's front room in 1986 have given way to nearly 500 at the Erskine College site in 2002. There are currently (2002) 479 students enrolled at TLC, Wellington. (see Plate 13) "We also have a steady trickle of prodigal sons and daughters who return to the fold and complete the course," adds Milne.

Full-time on site	127
Part-time on site	73
Extramural full-time	62
Extramural part-time	217

13: The front of TLC Erskine, Wellington

TLC has opened a small branch in Palmerston North where Milne had earlier grown a lot of his own creativity. It is now up and running with 45 students (September 2002).

There are also plans to market TLC abroad being developed.

Jonathan Milne tracks TLC's miniature beginnings to its substantial size today:

Where do you think creativity lives?

Creativity crops up everywhere and you get it happening with great eloquence in any area where people genuinely embrace the creative approach.

Tell me about how TLC itself started. Was it sort of kitchen bench?

Very much. It emerged out of a pivotal time with WEA (Workers' Educational Association) where I ran some occasional classes. WEA was willing to take some risks and the classes I ran restored my appetite for teaching.

So, in terms of making it your own, as opposed to being under the WEA?

I was desperate for income and I wanted to push it along with WEA but the organisation had lost its government funding and was in a pretty wobbly state. In the end I just became a free-lancer. Eventually TLC became much bigger than WEA but I would have been content to have done it all within WEA. I guess it was an impossible relationship because they felt uneasy about private enterprise whereas I enjoy the whole crazy game of the marketplace.

Realising you wanted to develop something of your own and grow out from under that umbrella, how did it take shape?

One quite exciting thing is that I went to a summer school at Wellington High organised by the then Arts Council. There was a big enrolment so they had to bring on a new tutor and I got Heather Busch, which turned out to be a great thing because it was an outstanding class. By then the re-inspiration of my art was unstoppable. It had languished since art school but it came out of hibernation in a big way.

A few weeks later I started organising and ringing people up because we'd all agreed to get together again – as people do when a summer class goes well. I thought Oh, this is costing me money (because it was, and I didn't have any) so I said it would cost 25 dollars for people to join me at a weekend workshop. It was really my initiation into running my own thing.

I had seven people for two days and I was the tutor and the model and the tea-maker and the cleaner and everything. And it went really well.

Where did you run it?

I ran it in my front room, in Mt Victoria, McIntyre Avenue. Just up a little goat track that overlooks the harbour. One of the people in that group was Sylvia Meek and she has gone on to a good career as a watercolourist.

And from that living-room beginning?

Things seed and it's important all the time to allow this process to happen otherwise nothing can change. Over a period the classes grew and at our summer school in 1988 we sold about 160 places in workshops in Lower Hutt, Hawkes Bay and Hamilton – it was like being in a circus, but hugely successful.

The following year the impact of the '87 stock market crash finally hit the market and enrolments dropped by 85%. It was very difficult. I'd go jogging every morning and kind of pray, on my way to the Post Office, that a cheque would arrive. We were very hard to mouth.

The two of us, Dianne and I, looking back, did the work of several people. Pretty tough and it didn't look as though TLC would survive. At one point our financial adviser said we should cease trading but I figured it was worth giving it everything I had.

For a while I had a great job as a relieving teacher at Naenae Primary in Lower Hutt. I became the 'technicraft' teacher, which more or less meant that I could do whatever I liked in this funny old woodwork prefab which has since been demolished. It just suited me fine. I had to work four hours a day teaching 10-12 year olds who were bussed in from other schools. The headmaster was wonderfully supportive and let us use the prefab for our own classes at the weekend. We weren't charged any rent so it was a real boost. It helped to get us going. We went from Naenae to the old Arts Centre at the top of Willis St, then to Allen St, off Courtenay Place, in Wellington.

The future TLC pattern really began at Naenae. One of the big jolts was a commission from the Australasian Ceramics Society in 1988. They were doing a conference and asked if I would do a drawing day for them. We had about 60 people to teach and we decided we'd charge the group \$900 which at the time felt enormous, like a lotto prize. That course was called *The Magic of Drawing* and still is. It became the engine room of our business for a while. People just kept telling their friends and it went on and on. I still do bits of it at our free previews and we also use it in orientation classes. It's now just a fragment of the diploma programme, but earlier it was part of the initiation into running a school.

What was your next step?

I decided that I was going to give all my energy to teaching. The tightness of the economy made it quite hard. One year we were spending 1 dollar to make 2 – which is not good business. We knew we had to do something different and the catalyst was a lovely woman, Dr XY, who came to a TLC class at Allen St and didn't like any of the usual projects I used to get the class under way. It doesn't bother me when that happens – I talked with her and we jointly came up with some fresh ideas which suited her. In the end she said it was one of the best courses she'd ever done and it turned out she worked for the NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA). She suggested we get in touch with QA. I thought it sounded like a good idea and in total naivety we applied for registration and were accepted.

A little bit later, still struggling and after we'd moved to Tory St in Wellington, we decided to have a crack at approval for our Diploma of Art and Creativity which we got in three months. Somehow we managed to achieve 18 enrolments for a one-year course. There was no government funding because a course had to operate for a year before it was eligible. Finally we did get some funding but the real breakthrough was that students were eligible for student loans. This was 1996 and the tide turned. In 2000 there were 203 equivalent full time students (EFTS) funded and 252 in 2001.

By 1996 TLC was beginning to outgrow the four rooms on the third floor at 148 Tory Street where Jonathan also lived in a tiny 'treehouse' tucked under the ceiling in the corner of one of the studios.

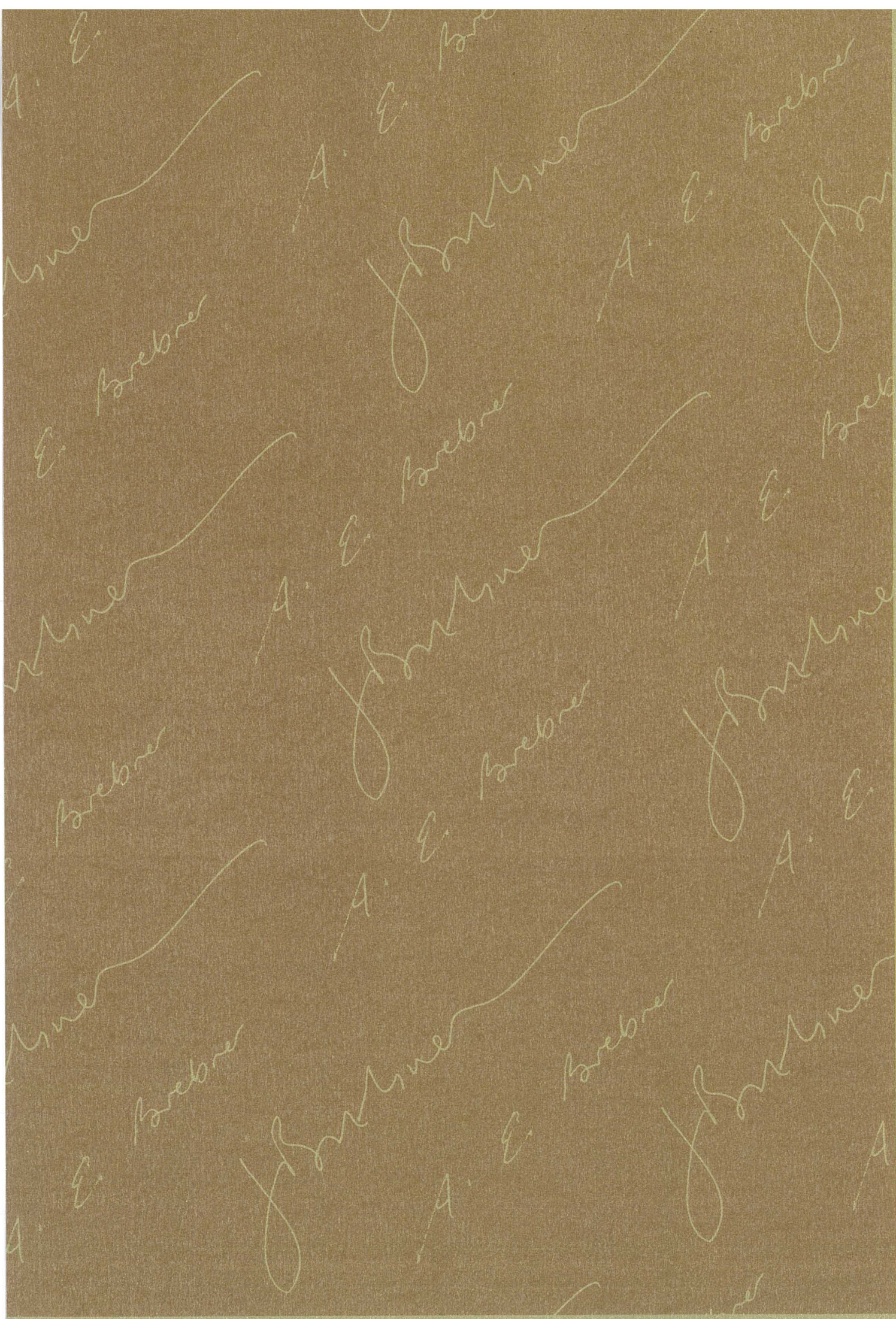
During the search for additional space former co-director, Marg Park, came across Erskine College in Island Bay, which had been a Catholic girls' school. This forlorn yet fantastical gothic building was up for tender and Marg inspired a group of eight people to contribute a combined \$85,000 which was 10% of the bid. In context it was a big sum because the TLC directors were working long hours for \$100 a week. The group won the tender but then encountered a variety of problems. In the end TLC got occupancy of Erskine as a tenant along with hundreds of resident pigeons. Once again the school found itself on hard times with no capital and 8000 square metres of leaking, desolate Victoriana. The one jewel in its crown was the beautiful chapel! (see over: illustration 14).



14: The chapel at TLC Erskine

By 1998 TLC was in the black and making the site work. The vision of a centre for art and sustainable creativity finally started to look credible.

We now turn to another venue for the fostering of creativity, *Homeprint*, in Feilding. While entirely distinct in style and scope, Homeprint nevertheless partly mirrors TLC from a philosophical and perseverance point of view. There are also personal links between its founders, John and Allison Brebner, and Jonathan Milne as they were friends and classmates at Palmerston North Teachers' College. I discovered this quite by chance when doing a research project on Homeprint as preparation for this enquiry. It therefore seems apposite to include another WHERE of creativity which has elements in common with the focus of this thesis.



Homeprint

The Brebners: Teacher-Artists of Feilding

John and Allison Brebner, both teachers and artists, have established a centre for creativity in Feilding, a country town in the Manawatu. Homeprint is their home, a teaching studio, a gallery and a functioning museum of types and presses, early and recent. It is also a place where the Brebners create their own art. They usually exhibit in Germany and have work in America, England, the New Zealand National Library, the Hocken Library in Dunedin as well as in the Manawatu Art Gallery.



15: At Homeprint

The Brebners

Interview with JGM - 25 June 2001

How did you meet Jonathan Milne?

I decided I wanted to go to a different college outside my hometown of Christchurch so after university I went to Palmerston North Teachers' College to do a two-year course. I was in the art elective along with Jonathan Milne. I was involved in both years, 1967 and 1968 with Jonathan on *Earwig*, the student magazine which he published and edited too. He worked long hours and was very creative. He found a niche for himself there writing his, and other students,' opinions by looking at the college and the society around us as well as creative writing. I was the art editor for a few months. He published 20 copies in the two years we were there. We were good friends with similar backgrounds. We had the art and writing philosophy and we were older.

It's interesting that you have both gone on to set up your own venues for fostering creativity. How did yours start?

Well, after spending several years teaching at Palmerston North Intermediate School I took the position of Teaching Principal at Mt Biggs, a country school. I'd always seen the validity of demonstrating education through art and developed it further. Sure, comply with the curriculum, but use the philosophy of making things yourself and learning by doing throughout the school syllabus. There were 18 kids when I started. People identified the school as being a creative, successful school and the roll climbed each year. When I left, there were 89 children and we had four staff.

I had 15 years there but the paperwork was getting beyond belief, holding us back from being creative teachers with children, which is what you're there for. Allison and I realised there was an opportunity for me to set up a teaching studio to see if I could establish the printing and book art and the teaching in a viable way. I took a year's leave of absence to have a good shot at it.

The first highlight once I came home was the fact that it was a wonderful place to work and that the classes were successful. People were prepared to pay to be taught and to make art and I had classes for tourists, primary, secondary, polytechnic and international students. Artists were booking in to use equipment and people felt comfortable here.

But it wasn't overnight success?

No. In fact this venture has taken 30 years to develop and we have something unique here. I believe it is a national treasure.

Has this decision to live a creative way of life been worth it?

I have had three and a half years to establish the serious nature of going it alone as an artist and a teacher, providing an art base and art school here at Homeprint. It's hugely worthwhile. I couldn't think of anything else better I'd like to do. I've had opportunities to move away but I've decided to work from this home base in Feilding. I think it's been more successful than I imagined.

Where do you see your strength creatively? As a passionate impartor of the creative process or as a maker of creative product?

I feel as an artist I haven't been able to focus on my art because the teaching component comes into my life and I get absorbed by that and I find that satisfying and rewarding. I guess the two go hand in hand. In fact it's all extremely satisfying, the making of the art, the teaching of classes, the development of equipment, the giving advice and support.

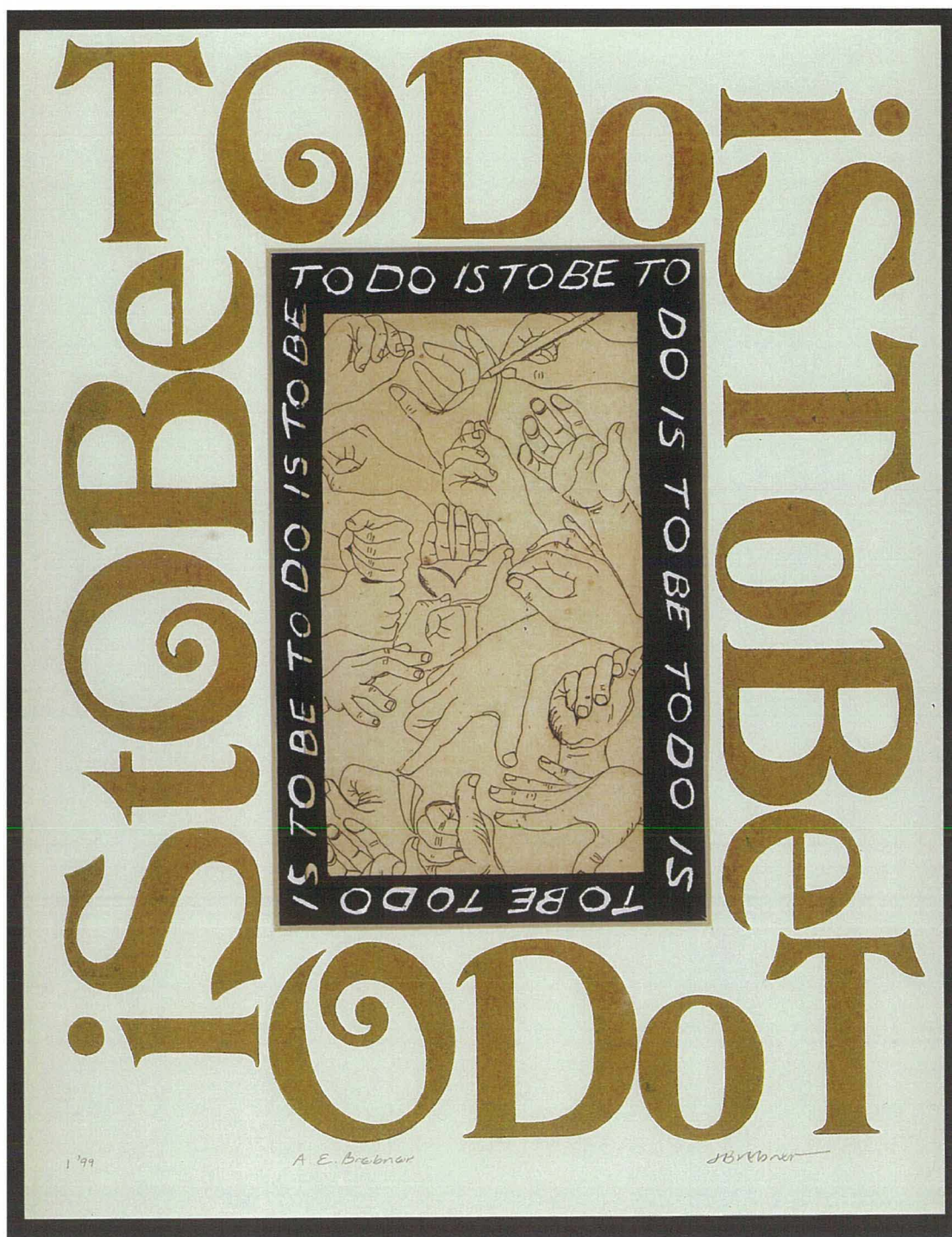
How would each of you sum up your vision?

Allison:

We have a responsibility to record, we have a privilege, I suppose, that we can record aspects of our life that will remain when we go. If you can do that, and leave behind some lovely children, you've really done something for the world. You have to interpret your life.

John:

Our work is about making meaning of experience in an original way. The motivation is the making, the doing, the originality. For us,
to do is to be (see illustration 16)



16: To do is to be (John and Allison Brebner)

Reflection

The Brebners' story of Homeprint echoes, in part, Milne's account of TLC's development, and confirms a lot of the international literature. There is passion and integrity that informs the process. These are people who live and work creatively in order to enrich their own and others' lives. They do not leave it at ideas but have persisted over a long time to make their theories concrete. Manifesting Csikszentmihalyi's claim (1997) they believe in creativity's centrality to all areas of learning and being.

They too push boundaries giving voice to their reservations about issues such as the accounting framework imposed on the teaching profession. In a handmade book, *The Choice*, dedicated to Tomorrow's Schools, they make a creative response to their disenchantment with the status quo. The size of a prayer book, printed on onionskin paper and junk mail, it is a 52-line poem of things they remember, not so fondly, of current requirements like the pre plan, the appraisal and the

assessment

Their grander retort comes in the form of Homeprint, an alternative site for making meaning. There have been some difficulties and risks in terms of running a business from a provincial location but, like Milne, they have resisted giving up. At the crossroads of Bunnythorpe, Feilding and Palmerston North, stands an invisible signpost pointing to creativity.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE HOW OF CREATIVITY

International Approaches

“Creativity begins with an affinity for something. It is like falling in love. The most important thing at the beginning is for an individual to feel some kind of emotional connection to something. Without that initial love and emotional connection, the chances of doing good creative work later on are minimal” (Gardner in Goleman et al 1993:31).

Such starts are then woven with “common threads which might well constitute the core characteristics of what it takes to approach a problem in a way likely to lead to an outcome the field will perceive as creative” claims Csikszentmihalyi (1997:78). He, and others, identify them as:

- Preparation where the creator immerses him/herself in the situation and just listens
- Incubation where you let the problem sit in the unconscious and unexpected connections are sometimes made
- Illumination or the ‘Aha’ moment when you realise you have discovered something, often seemingly from nowhere
- Evaluation when you turn over the worth of the idea or project as in this context; slowly confirming its worth
- Translation when the realisation becomes action so that others learn of your discovery and you can justify it

The progression is not always linear as the process may circle back on itself with revisits to each of the stages as appropriate. The creative moment cannot be insisted on, but passion certainly energises an ongoing commitment to creative endeavour.

“Being creative is like making a stew,” says Amabile (in Goleman et al 1995:29). Her recipe has three basic ingredients:

- Expertise in the area or domain (like the vegetables or meat)
- Creative thinking skills so you pursue something new (spices)
- Passion or intrinsic motivation (like the fire under the pot)

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross provides an instance of a person well-used to cooking a creative stew. A psychiatrist, schooled in the Hippocratic oath and modern medicine, challenged the current Western taboos about embracing death to see dying as part of life in her radical work, *On Death and Dying* (1969). This led to the founding of the hospice movement. Now in her eighties, she is still burning to make a difference. She wanted to establish a refuge for toddlers with AIDs on her Virginia farm, but local authorities and public outcry thwarted the plans. Undaunted, she set up a foster agency instead and found 350 people across the United States to adopt AIDs children.

As mentioned earlier, Gardner has identified seven potential human competencies or “intelligences” (1983). He claims that for people to have the greatest chance of developing their creativity they need to locate their particular competence or, in the case of many creative people, a combination of competencies. Having aligned themselves with a particular sector until mastery is gained, they then get restless and push beyond the boundaries of existing knowledge.

Picasso, for example, had enormous flair in the spatial sector. He was skilled at, but not satisfied with, reproducing the masters in the traditional representational sense. He felt compelled to challenge the familiar and explore form, geometrically, in his groundbreaking cubist work, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1907). “Often acclaimed as the first truly 20th century painting, it achieved a basic breakthrough in art effectively ending the long reign of the Renaissance” (Wertenbaker 1978:53).

Sometimes difficult circumstances or problems can promote a creative solution. Take the New Zealand deer farming industry where, as it became less viable to hunt deer on foot or by helicopter, lateral-thinking farmers suggested using orthodox cattle-husbandry techniques to breed and farm deer. This industry now contributes substantially to our agricultural sector and yielded \$315 million in export receipts for the year ending 31 March 2002, according to Deer Industry New Zealand.

A more romantic route to creativity is manifested in the courage to create; “the capacity to move ahead in spite of doubts” (Rollo May 1984:21). British actor, Sir Laurence Olivier, confessed he “sweated blood” before every performance but still went on giving some of the greatest performances in English speaking theatre, such as his *Hamlet* and *Richard III*. Creativity researcher Antonio Damasio backs this up: “My list of requirements for creativity begins with motivation and courage ” (in Pfenninger and Shubik 2001: 64).

Amabile’s work has stressed the maintenance of intrinsic motivation as a key stimulus for creativity where the focus is on the joy of learning, the value of experiment, the journey, rather than the destination. This is not to denigrate the usefulness of extrinsic forces such as prizes and accolades but, for creativity to flourish, they must not dominate.

Sam Miklaus, founder of the American *Odyssey of the Mind* project which was set up to foster creative problem-solving, is forthright in his conviction: “I believe firmly that creativity can be taught. Creative thinking is a skill and can be honed like any other” (in Goleman et al 1993:96). His approach is one of posing problems and leaving students to find the solutions. In line with Amabile’s recent work (1996) he acknowledges the usefulness of some extrinsic motivation and sees competition as one way of boosting the creative process.

Alice White, deputy-director of TLC, endorses the problem solving approach:

Once you start looking at problems and how to solve them the creativity side emerges. Of course the best problem of all is looking at a white piece of paper, you’ve got so many problems to start with. What are you going to do with it?

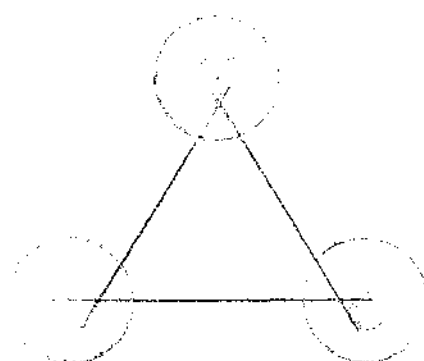
Out of that simple start comes a whole bunch of ways of relating to the world in a creative way. This is the base of our creativity here. We are keeping people on their toes, looking at new ways, being intuitive, opening up to the other side of their personality and their brain so they can explore a whole personality rather than just one narrow way of looking at things. (Appendix E, TLC Video, 2001, on CD Rom).

Each of us is born with two contradictory sets of instructions: a conservative tendency, made up of instincts for self-preservation and an expansive tendency made up of instincts for exploring, for enjoying novelty and risk. But whereas the first tendency requires little encouragement to motivate behaviour, the second can wilt if it is not cultivated (Csikszentmihalyi in Sternberg (ed) 1999:411).

TLC is providing conditions for students' creativity to flourish as the ensuing comments in this chapter indicate.



17: Two figures in a TLC garden



TLC Methodology

Nickerson (in Sternberg (ed) 1999) suggests it would be difficult to advocate the worth of creativity without also considering how it might be enhanced. In what follows we will look at how one site for creativity, TLC, approaches this.

Jonathan Milne is sure that creativity is teachable and should be treated as a core subject as important as literacy, numeracy, technology and science skills. He is convinced there is much we can do to nurture it. Accordingly, TLC offers:

- The Foundation Course – an 18-week introduction
- Stage I (Diploma) one year long
- Stage II (Honours) second year

But these are not off-the-shelf programmes. They are a flexible blend of attitude, ambience and method. The creativity underpinning them requires a partnership of mutual commitment, respect, trust, effort and enthusiasm between the organisation, the learner and the teacher. Teachers need to model creativity in their principles and practice for it to have resonance. TLC tutor, Caroline McGlinchy, tells us how she goes about it.



18: Caroline McGlinchy teaching

How do you teach creativity?

Creating an atmosphere where creativity can be unbounded is deceptively simple. As a tutor my job entails the drawing out of students' creativity and over the years I have found ways that work extremely well. It may seem obvious, but all that needs to happen is for students to be provided with a totally safe and stimulating environment. My goal is to provide an atmosphere of fearlessness, comfort, safety, a place where there will be no judgement. I feel that these are the same qualities I observed in the ten years I worked in early childhood education. Freedom to express yourself and an environment where it is safe to do so facilitates the growth and development of children and adults alike.

I work with a sense of fun and playfulness, engaging all the senses. I find this creates a collective energy in the class situation which seems to make learning feel easy.

What about ensuring creativity is growing?

For me the process is more important than the final result and I encourage my students to explore all possibilities. Placing no expectation on the end result allows the student to find their own voice rather than trying to anticipate any desired outcome, whether societal or personal.

I aim to create a place where students learn from each other, feel good about helping each other, being helped and asking for help. I set up situations where people are in control of their own learning and the direction in which they want to go. The pace of exploration has to suit each individual and, even though this may seem like I am teaching 20 separate programmes, it is important for every student to have their individual needs met.

What makes it worthwhile?

One of the joys of this process is that all the learning comes from within the student; it is learning that feels completely natural and right. This is because the student has willingly put inhibitions away and worked playfully and with confidence. If I can facilitate this achievement I feel like I have done my job. For some, the sense of accomplishment is instant, for others it may take a little time for the knowledge to settle. Students often return to give positive feedback and acknowledge the value of the learning.

Jonathan Milne is aware that determining how to teach creativity is not easy and it is something TLC has been working on since it began. “There is no question that creativity is valued but the problem is that there is no educational model (see Appendix D) to deal with the challenge of teaching creativity, ” states Milne (2002).

Cropley suggests “the desire to foster creativity is at the heart of a philosophy or principle that should underlie *all* teaching and learning in all subject areas and at all times” (2001:151). He is concerned it not be reduced to a set of techniques such as brainstorming. Even so, he and Urban came up with some recommendations (2000) for teachers who are interested in growing creativity. When blended with Nickerson’s (in Sternberg (ed) 1999), it provides a useful framework against which to identify and discuss the philosophy and methodology of TLC.

The framework is discussed in the following order:

Researchers’ creativity-fostering suggestions in the **underlined headings**

TLC’s methods which expand on the headings followed by

The thesis author’s **comments** on TLC’s alignment with the theory after each item.

- **Establishing the intention to develop one’s creative potential**

The learning process is driven by goals. It begins with the big picture – the purpose/vision. To determine the vision is a matter of connecting with your own energy or enthusiasm or passion (*TLC Magic* 2001:10). Your whole study programme is geared to fit your own goals. We encourage you to relate every exercise and assignment to what YOU want to achieve in terms of creativity (*TLC Prospectus* 2002:18)

Comment: TLC’s approach reinforces the theory. It emphasises the importance of identifying goals in a “belief housekeeping” to ensure a good fit between *what you want and what you are* which facilitates effective learning.

- **Constructive atmosphere free of anxiety and sanctions**

TLC is committed to development of trust, self-esteem and a willingness to respect and share knowledge with others (*TLC Magic*:5).

The major point about TLC is the course is much more individually tailored, it's about boosting ideas, about forming an original standpoint. You see other people creating and you think I want to create as well. It's the sort of place that you want to go to. There's a really positive group environment, it doesn't matter if you're Honours or Foundation (Student F Testimony: 2001).

Comment: Conforming to the literature, TLC is a very 'congenial environment' for creativity. The appeal of this atmosphere, coupled with a flexible entry policy (where the key requirement is commitment rather than portfolio) shows in the range of talent, qualifications, ethnicity, age and socio-economic profile of its students and the number keen to study there.

- **Co-operative climate - tolerance of own and others' creativity**

Be supportive of those who share the journey with you (*TLC Magic*:3). Treat yourself with kindness and generosity (ibid:5).

Comment: The Class Agreement requires students to commit to their time at TLC with compassion and perseverance. Students find these are not hollow directives and need to be implemented if creativity is to grow. Participant observation has convinced the author that staff and students alike are both encouraging and encouraged.

- **Alternating action with reflection**

We become who we are as a result of learning. The less you understand about learning the more you short-change your life (*TLC Magic*:6). Action learning has to have specific goals – it isn't just action for the sake of action (ibid:13). Out of the process of doing, testing and reviewing you rapidly discover what works and what doesn't (*TLC News*, June 2002).

I went to TLC because I always had this creativity but it was really knowing what to do with it. ...I didn't have the confidence to take it further. TLC was one of the keys for me. One of the most important things was I started to understand the process of creativity, then I was able to focus on what I wanted and where I wanted to go. That was quite a process to get there but when that happened my enthusiasm for the creativity started to happen and that was fantastic (Student J Testimony: 2001).

Comment: Students, such as those whose opinions are italicised above, are urged to think about the philosophy and practice of the education process and take responsibility for their own learning. They are asked to reflect on their earlier education and urged to understand that theory or practice is not enough. It is the combination that counts. That is what brings their learning alive.

- **Acting as a model for challenging of rules**

When education becomes an anaesthetic it is time to rebel. (*TLC Magic*:7). University in the 60's was a huge culture shock. I expected something wondrously creative and found the opposite – it was predominantly a conformity factory. But I did discover some of Torrance's writings about creativity and they were like a beacon (*Teaching Creativity* 2002:2). This later led to TLC beginnings.

Comment: The establishment of TLC is itself a grand product of challenging the rules. Milne exemplifies someone who has put everything on the line in his conviction that creativity matters. Despite the obstacles he has stuck with the 'inspiring irritant' of creativity and made something of it.

- **Accepting mistakes and risk as part of the learning process**

Item 7 of the Diploma Class Agreement states that "learning demands risks and mistakes – view each mistake as a gift that will teach you something if you choose to own it." However a proviso cautions "What is risk for one person may not be a risk for someone else. It doesn't have to *look* risky – it has to feel risky" (*Risking Success* 1998:26).

Comment: TLC invites students to take one step at a time out of their comfort zone, borne out in Caroline McGlinchy's summary of her teaching practice. It reveals an understanding of the psychological safety crucial in any teacher-learner exchange by acknowledging that courage is different for each individual.

- **Building motivation, especially internal motivation**

At TLC we begin teaching motivation and courage even before prospective students enrol (in free 'hands on' preview evenings). We've developed techniques which gently and reliably help most students to become more effective in their risk-taking and more motivated, not just in their art but in their lives. Creativity requires a high level of integration. Psychological and

social factors are just as important as intelligence factors (*Teaching Creativity*, August 2002).

Comment: Milne recognises the importance of supporting the original goal or motivation with a lot of tender care. This matches international opinion which concludes motivation and encouragement fuel creativity (Amabile 1996).

- **Stimulating and rewarding curiosity and exploration**

Learning may turn out to be the opposite of what you expect. Forget about schools and brains. Everything about you is an instrument of learning. You have natural abilities to pick up an endless supply of information about people, events and the world around you. You have phenomenal potential to respond to your awareness (*TLC Magic*: 6-7).

Comment: *A Guide to TLC Magic* (2001) outlines TLC's version of the learning process and its potential for joy. The reader is advised to read it carefully as "his life may depend on it." A lack of separation between learning and life is prominent in TLC culture where the distinction between work and play, home and school, you and me, is blurred. This place is about re-connection and re-creation.

- **Developing self-management skills**

Our role, as teachers, is to help you to find answers and to achieve your dreams. We are your guides and allies but not your masters. You will find your way on your own feet and good teaching will help you find it more easily. (*TLC Magic*:7).

Comment: After establishing a vision, TLC students are introduced to the steps to making their vision a reality, such as breaking down the goal into manageable parts and understanding various cycles of learning. Students become familiar with where they are and where they want to be and how to get the skills to bridge that gap. This bridge to independence reflects best teaching practice.

- **Supporting knowledge in a variety of domains**

Great art and great science come out of integrated thinking but the school system tends to separate the two. The challenge is to find ways to bring them

back together ... It means combining intuitive and linear thinking ... (Milne, in *Chaos and Creativity Notes*, 2001-2002).

Comment: TLC's programme ensures that students cover the fine arts 'vocabulary' namely painting, sculpture, drawing, photography and video-making. But they do not leave it there. Students are introduced to scientific discoveries like the mathematics of fractals or the role of computers in creative thinking or famous philosopher-teachers such as Joseph Campbell. For many, this is their first experience of such topics and the author has noted their enthusiasm for it. TLC does not patronise its students.

- **Attaching importance to the realisation of creative ideas**

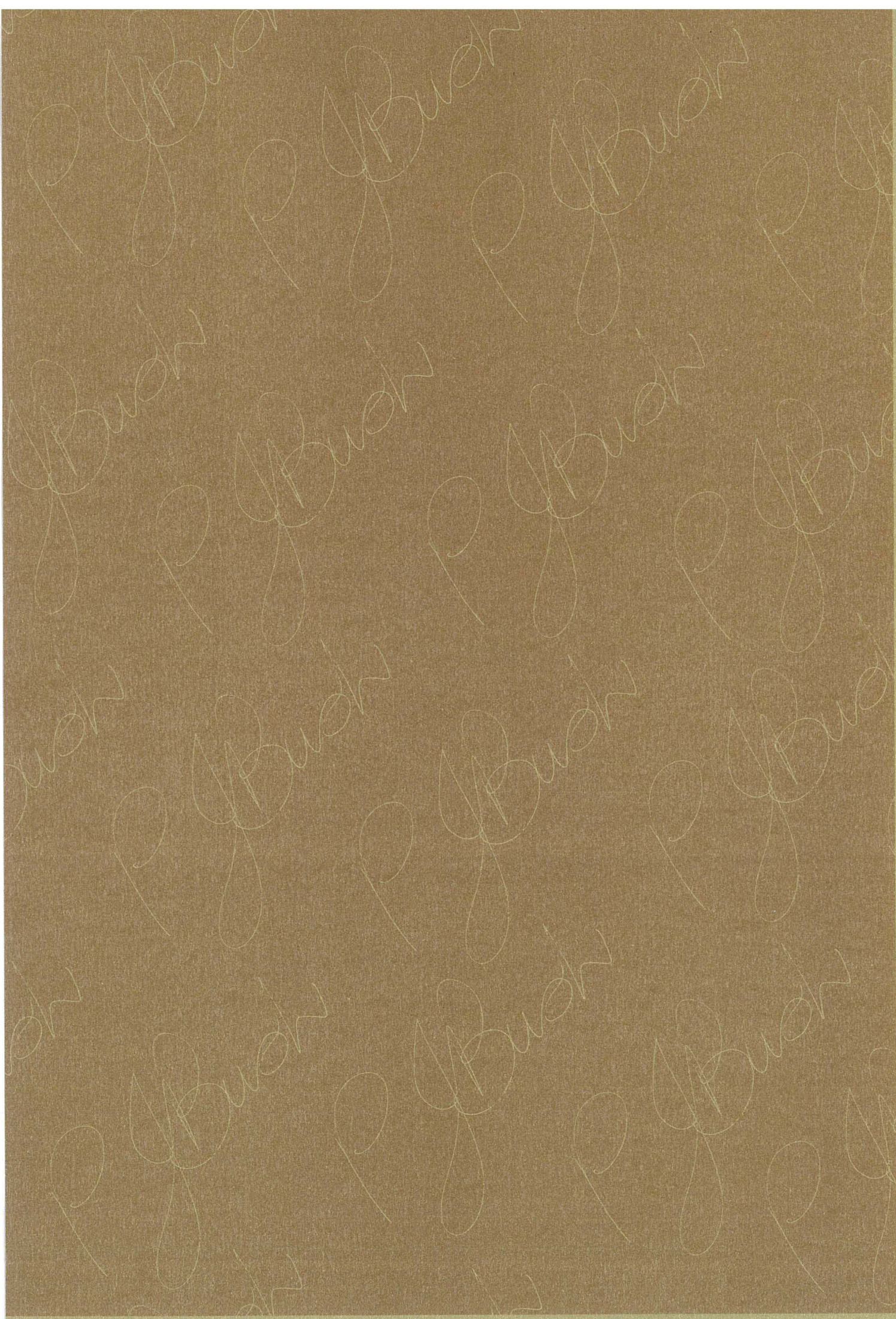
The important thing (about creativity) is that it's an action-based process. Theory isn't enough – your body and your mind have to discover how it goes. (Milne in *TLC News*, June 2002)

Comment: Jonathan Milne not only encourages students to put their work out there, but has done the same himself in line with research which insists on the 'field's' acceptance as a reality check. TLC courses have gained approval from the "New Zealand Qualifications Authority under the provisions of the Education Act 1989, and TLC is accredited to offer them (including distance delivery)" (*TLC Prospectus* 2002:5). This is important from a pragmatic point of view as students receive a subsidy on course fees in government-recognised private training establishments. It also matters in terms of credibility and promotion and keeps TLC on its toes too.

- **Open-ended learning – 'what if'; taking care with feedback**

The TLC website www.tlc.ac.nz states: "In the context of art, students explore creativity equipping themselves with skills that can be applied to any situation in which open-ended problem solving is required. In many areas of creativity there aren't rigid rules about what is 'good' and 'bad' – you often have to get a range of opinions. (*TLC Magic*:27). There isn't any foolproof way to assess creative outcomes (ibid:32).

Comment: Former student Philip Bush's story, which completes this chapter, gives evidence of an evolutionary pattern of creative growth and shows how it works. He left TLC to become a sculptor, now owns a gallery and is a motivational speaker.



Philip Bush's Soliloquy



19

I was 36 when I came here and I was excited almost every day. I started at TLC to learn more about art but what I've actually found is that I've learnt more about life.

The three things that summed up TLC for me were:

- The wow factor
- Work ethic
- Sticking to what works

I came every day possible and I also went to some lectures at university.

The class I enjoyed at TLC the most was *Art Meaning and Myth* (based on philosopher Joseph Campbell) because learning about myself and where I've come from is helping me every day. It made me think about what I wanted to do and where I was going.

I did eventually leave TLC and wondered what I was going to do. I was still going to be an artist; I thought about that a lot. Sticking to what works, I'd discovered bronze sculpture at TLC with Jonathan Campbell's block course. I went out to his foundry and saw molten bronze and thought that was pretty cool, part of my Celtic heritage.

I needed to think about the job thing so applied for a job as a part time cook for a senior centre as I'd had a lot of experience in the hospitality industry. I sent in a CV and later rang them up and the guy said it was too late. But I wasn't going to give up on this one, that's something I learned at TLC, commitment. As it turned out I got the job ... Then some things changed (behind the scenes) and I ended up being the manager. I used the logical side of my brain, I drew on the resources I learned here and it worked.

It takes time, you can't rush it; creativity is like nature, it takes time. So it was good to learn that.

I worked there and accumulated enough money to start on a body of work to become a bronze sculptor. I felt that I had done well and asked a prominent dealer to come and see the work, which he did. He was ruthless – he spoke to my partner about me in the third person. At the end of it I was sweating and wondered, what was going on. Then he said he was impressed (that was good), then he said he was disturbed (that wasn't so good). He said I went too far, I didn't know when to stop and what's the name of that piece and so on.

It was a good learning experience. And at the end he said, "Well I don't know if you're serious or not," and that was true.

But actually he was right. He couldn't risk representing someone who was not serious. People are prepared to support you if you're serious. Was I going to be an artist in two years? For someone in a dealer gallery, he needs to be sure of that. He said he would look at the next body of work in three months but it had to be twice the size.

Getting people's feedback is very important in terms of confidence building but it shouldn't be the *be all and end all*. If people don't like it that's OK as well. There are lots of good people out there who will give you constructive criticism. You should present it in the best way you can – put your most into it – that's equally as important as selling it.

You have to be not too pretentious about your work – keep on doing it and get it right, sticking with what works. When you do something that works you need to exploit it. I have found skills I never knew I had.

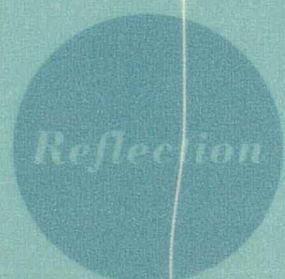
I guess confidence is the other thing and I don't let myself stop me. If you think positively you can do it, just do it, but take it incrementally, a step at a time. You're not going to make it overnight but you are going to make it if you keep at it.

He updates his current situation in an open email dated 28 August 2002:

It's hard to know where to start but the journey at TLC has definitely had a profound effect on me. I think the main thing has been the facing of myself. I have been teaching a whole range of skills to different people and I am making art that I love. I am working in a gallery part time and am involved with sustainability and earn quite a bit of money selling my ideas.

He added on 20 September 2002

I've just got the go-ahead for some funding to start my own gallery.



Reflection

Philip Bush's story traces one version of the How or iterative nature of creativity. He has 'to-ed and fro-ed' through the process, outlined in the research of Csikszentmihalyi (1997). He identifies as an artist as well as an entrepreneur and follows up with the effort involved. He puts up his work for evaluation acknowledging the importance of audience if creativity is to flower. However he does not surrender his self-esteem to feedback as shown in preparedness to take criticism, but not consider it *'the be all and end all.'*

He has translated his dream into action by organising a body of work and lives out several of the criteria on the researchers' framework such as risk-taking, broadening skill bases as well as noting the value of a tender environment like TLC where he feels he learnt about life as well as enlivened his creativity and confidence. He manifests the interconnectedness of creativity in his conviction that it colours his whole way of life.

I've changed my way of thinking. I don't think in terms of retirement anymore, like 65. I think with creativity you just keep on creating for as long as you can (PB).



Why?

CHAPTER FIVE: THE WHY OF CREATIVITY

Renowned Researchers

In a sense, it is not that we choose creativity, but rather it has chosen us. Creativity is what marks us as different from other animals; our instinctual selves are embellished by reflective and pro-active characteristics. We do not have to limit ourselves to evolutionary pre-programming (genes) or even cultural habits (memes). Free will gives us the capacity to decide whether to develop such gifts, *or use our creativity*, in a major or minor way or at all.

Eminent researcher Csikszentmihalyi contends that human beings are most rewarded and happiest when they are being creative. While the main parameters of life are fixed, that is the imperatives of rest, eating, interacting and doing, the variations come when we can make some choice, however modest, about how we live.

It is within these parameters that life unfolds, and it is how we choose what we do, and how we approach it, that will determine whether the sum of our days adds up to a formless blur, or to something resembling a work of art (1997a:13).

To counter this noble challenge, we should mention that post-Freudian psychologist Alfred Adler was less idealistic. In his '*compensatory theory of creativity*' he claimed "that human beings produce art, science and other aspects of culture to compensate for their own inadequacies" (in Rollo May 1984:37).

From a religio-philosophical point of view "creativity is, foremost, being in the world soulfully, for the only thing we truly make, whether in the arts, in culture, at work or at home, is soul" (Moore 1998:168). In a similar vein, St Augustine in the fourth century saw it as our way of taking charge, of being God's co-creators. "History was a continuous unfolding of man's mysterious capacities for creation" reports Boorstin (1992:63). He goes on to suggest that this view has held sway over the past 2000

years, giving man a chance to get off the wheel of pre-ordained existence and influence his fate. “When the creative spirit stirs, it animates a style of being: a lifetime filled with the desire to innovate, to explore new ways of doing things, to bring dreams to reality” (Goleman et al:15).

Rollo May considered holding on to creativity is crucial in many spheres. He saw it as the link between ‘*being and becoming*,’ as a way of “reaching beyond our own death. To the extent that we lose this free, original creativity of the spirit as it is exemplified in poetry and music and art, we shall also lose our scientific creativity” (May:71). It is its universality that makes creativity central. It has a role in economics and politics, in science and art, in business and in relationships, be they personal or institutional, formal or informal.

None of the advances in human endeavour would have happened if the status quo had prevailed. Consider the highway between hieroglyph and the internet, or the taming of the horse and taming of continents by its iron counterpart; roads all paved by creativity. The realisation that creativity is not an indulgence but vital, if an individual or society is going to handle an increasingly complex life, has got traction in the last, hectic twenty years. “Creativity is good for the economy, good for the individual, good for society and good for education” (Craft et al:11). It is evident at:

- **Work** Creativity is increasingly important in the workplace as the world is changing fast and responses from innovative employees are needed to match. Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business recognises this by running a course on creativity which asks students to “reflect on true potential – that which gives life meaning, satisfaction, and a driving sense of purpose,” (Goleman et al:106). Interestingly, it is the commercial sector that has promoted alternative ways of creative problem-solving with people such as Edward de Bono, Tony Buzan and Charles Handy. In a project entitled, *The New Alchemists* (1997) Handy identified twenty-seven people who had shaped part of contemporary British life in a creative manner. He instances Dr Dee Dawson (see 20 over) who began medical training at thirty-five, as a mother of four, and went on to found the acclaimed and effective first residential home for anorexics in Britain.



20: Dr Dee Dawson's Home-Work

- **Play** Sometimes the creative spirit straddles the work and play of those who have made their mark. Sir Edmund Hillary, since conquering Everest in 1953, has spent much of his life setting up hospitals and schools in Nepal. He could have rested on Everest's laurels and left it at that, but instead wears a different hat (or scarf), putting his gratitude to creative use to improve the Sherpas' lives.
- **School** Where education for creativity is seen as a vehicle for a society gaining an economic edge as well as a means "to enable people to adapt positively to rapid social change and to have lives with meaning" (All our Futures, Creativity, Culture and Education, Labour Govt UK Report, 1999 in :Craft et al:2001).

TLC tutor-artist, **Dennis Berdinner** claims he did not have any choice whether to be creative or not. "Being involved in creativity gives a bigger scope, like being part of an extended, rather than nuclear family," he says. Dennis Berdinner expands on creativity in a prose-poem shaped *Interview on 3 May 2002 with JGM*.



21: Dennis Berdinner explains

Why does it matter to live creatively?

Well it gives you self confidence
and the drive to make something.
It's analogous to rafting down the Whanganui River:
Jumping in and dealing with what comes up
You can be ready for anything in attitude
You see potential rather than failures
I trust myself and others.

What else is important about it?

Creativity is a pulse generator
Good art transforms people and materials
It's about surrender, letting go and watching the ripples -
In teaching or my own art
I can't predict where everything will go
Like life

And the teaching part?

Creativity engages me as
A teacher/organiser/administrator/facilitator and artist

Do you think you can induce creativity?

You can draw it out, but can't impose it
You can show them (students) sights/sites along the way
You can alert them to their creative potential

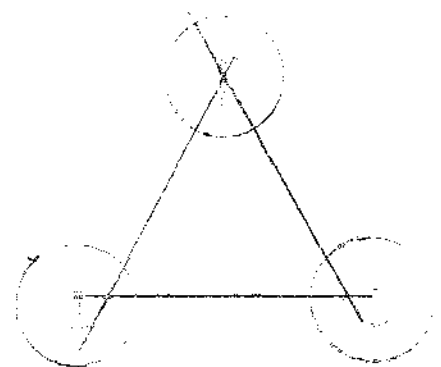
I see no boundaries
The work (for myself or students) that I do is like mirrors of
psychological self-realisation
Revealing other layers, followed by confirmation of thoughts
Jumping in/starting/doing/feedback/possibilities
Selecting what one feels is best/intuition

How does it work?

When it works it's like meditation
Time disappears
Creativity is about establishing certainty through doubt
Mementos of time/space/social events
comfort and discomfort.
I agree with Teilhard de Chardin
We need to identify talents and live them.

The Learning Connexion shares Dennis Berdinner's confidence in creativity's role in shaping personal good and sees broader societal and economic benefits too.

It appears others agree. Peter Biggs, Chair of Creative New Zealand, made the following statement about creativity and the relevance of The Learning Connexion:

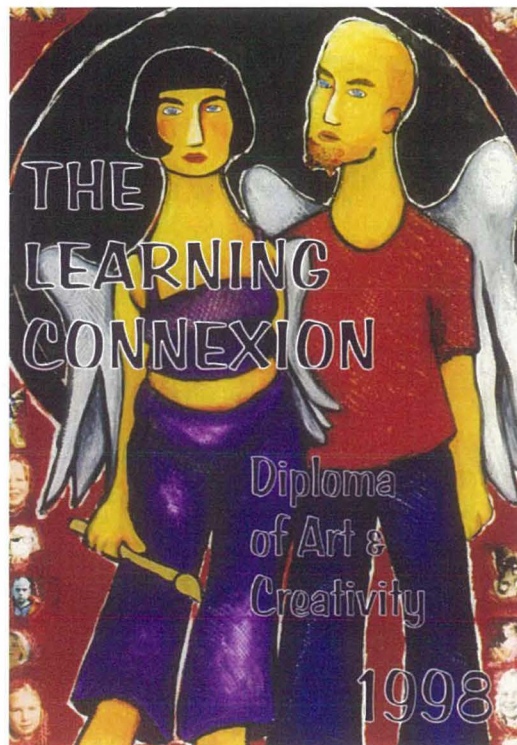


"Like many others who champion creativity and innovation, I welcomed with enthusiasm the Government's Growth and Innovation Framework released in February (2002). Its ambition is to see New Zealand, among other things, as "a great place to live, learn, work and do business; a birthplace of world-changing people and ideas . . ." To make this vision happen, we need to develop a national culture of enterprise and innovation, a culture in which creativity is a core competency of our country and its people. Places like the Learning Connexion are crucial in making the Government's vision happen. The Learning Connexion itself is an innovative concept and what The Learning Connexion offers is what the Government's vision is all about - achieving sustainable art and creativity. I unashamedly champion the work and dreams of The Learning Connexion. They are an example of "the new economy" - where innovation, ideas and knowledge are the new currencies of value - at work. I have seen the profound and positive effects of the Learning Connexion on its students. Places like this give me pride and hope about living in New Zealand - and the future of our remarkable islands - in the twenty-first century."

(email from Peter Biggs, Chair, Creative New Zealand, 26 September 2002)

Jonathan Milne's View

There are many reasons to hold creativity in high regard, some of them philosophical, some of them pragmatic. On a philosophical note Jonathan Milne's conviction is that creativity is an 'article of faith' underpinning a passionate and effective approach to living and learning.



22: TLC Prospectus Cover 1998

From time to time sceptics ask me: "What use is creativity? Maybe this is like asking, "What use is love?" We take the question seriously ... but in the end facts and figures are no substitute for the personal experience of creativity. It's a matter of embracing the whole of our minds – of combining logic with the less understood dimension of creativity. This, in a nutshell, is the secret to realising our potential (*TLC Prospectus* 2002).

Just about any profession benefits from originality, confidence, assertiveness and a sense of fun. At a personal level it makes for a dynamic and exciting life. At a group level it makes for dynamic workplaces and inspiring communities. At a national level it's what New Zealand needs (*TLC Prospectus* 2001).

In the following comments from an interview in *New Zealand Education Review* (10 November 2000), he paints creativity as a motivator and a meaning-maker. He also recognises that it must be nurtured in a reassuring environment that has trust at its core. He knows his own organisation does not have all the answers. However, like many involved in creativity research and practice, he is sure that educating for creativity is instrumental in helping people and society grow.

We (at TLC) don't get out of bed in the morning for the knowledge economy; we get out of bed because we believe in each other. There's a feeling that creativity is exhilarating and our students matter. Somewhere in this, is the heart of meaning.

On the face of it meaning has become a do-it-yourself affair, outside the scope of secular schools. Perhaps this is sufficient for those of us who have bought into the message of 20th century existentialism – create your own meaning and get on with it.

Our students at TLC want life itself to have meaning. Initially we had no intention of dealing with such a big and seemingly unanswerable question, but we did establish a fertile environment for meaning to grow. It starts with values ... which stress trust and mutuality rather than dominance. The result falls a little short of nirvana but something is working. For example students who have had a hard time elsewhere in the education system often find a home in which they can do well. In itself this isn't meaning but it is a step in the right direction. . Slowly but surely you can see people change and grow.

Milne contends, in a document submitted to the Ministry of Education (27 September 2002), that TLC's "vision and goals are clearly aligned with this Government's strategic vision" for tertiary education as well as for the wider economy.

New Zealand depends on creativity and innovation to maintain its place in the world. New Zealand is an ideal incubator for creativity but the school system could and should be doing a great deal more.

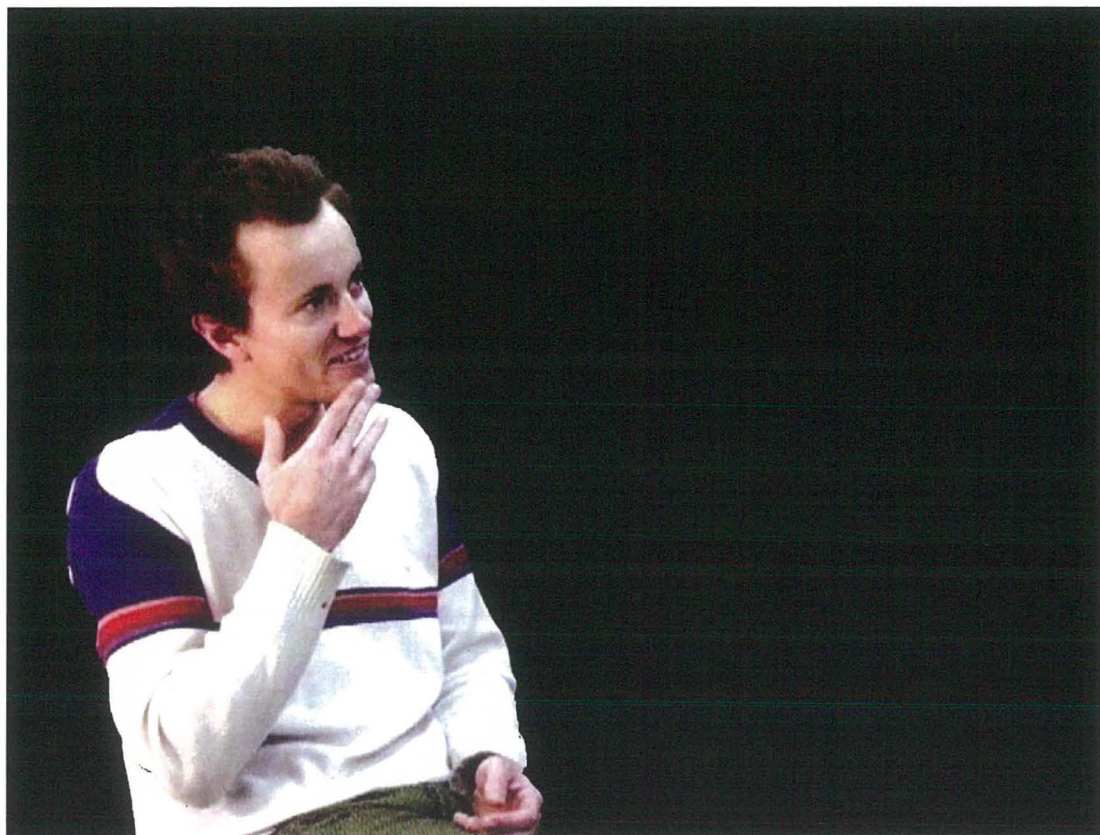
At present there is widespread agreement that creativity and innovation are important in industry but there still seems to be an assumption that it 'just happens'. We (at TLC) recognise that New Zealand as a whole depends on creativity to 'earn its keep' in a world which is increasingly driven by ideas and imagination rather than by commodities. TLC's input is accelerating the change.

Many people, expert and amateur alike, extol creativity's personal or public virtues while wrestling with its definitions and scope. They see it as a chance to craft our lives ever anew in response to an innate wandering and wondering. In our lifetime space exploration gives spectacular evidence of the 'magnet' of creativity.

As a young university student, I recall the entire campus stopped on 21 July 1969, when Armstrong walked on the moon. We clambered on friends' shoulders, sat on bookshelves and tables witnessing the 'techno' version of the Homeric tradition which peered fuzzily out of the cheap TVs. Commonsense questioned why three men would sit on top of a 'bomb,' disputing gravity megatime, in order to stumble around a hostile desert, in ungainly bespoke suits. But even as teenagers, we sensed this adventure was part of something bigger – part of a spanning of yesterday-today-tomorrow, part of the creative process of finding out, of what links being to becoming.

Former student, now employee of TLC, Matty Warmington, is also an explorer; in his case in the two domains of art and music. He describes his creative voyage and considers why creativity is his compass.

Matty Warrington



23 Interview with JGM – 31 May 2002

Tell me about your background Matty.

I was brought up on the Kapiti Coast, in a large Catholic family. I was the youngest and it was a very stable background.

I did art through secondary school, left, and went fruit picking for a year. Then I heard about TLC. The thought of being able to do art all day was unreal.

When I got there I got into painting, but then there was this whole creativity element in the course and visualising your future. I used to play a lot of tennis so had a lot of visualisation techniques that come with intense sport. I was good at giving myself those mental pictures and at TLC subconsciously built towards those thoughts.

While at school I'd been in bands playing guitar and singing, from Form 2 on. I didn't have a lot of confidence, the youngest child syndrome. After one year at TLC I realised if I really wanted to make music I should record it so I went down to Greymouth to an audio-engineering course. Amazing. Made some great friends and formed a band, then did a second year at TLC, in 1997.

What was effective about this kind of course?

Here there was real nurturing, not being one of thousands. You're an individual and in a private training establishment you're an important person to them. You get involved with a small group of talented people and a mixed bag of all different ages. That helped me grow up. You couldn't really make mistakes and you weren't really comparing yourself to other people – I was mostly trying to better myself.

What happened after you finished?

I got a job here – they needed someone to set up the extramural course. Jonathan gave me a punt (in the audio-visual department) and thought that I might excel at it and I've been here five years.

So what drives you?

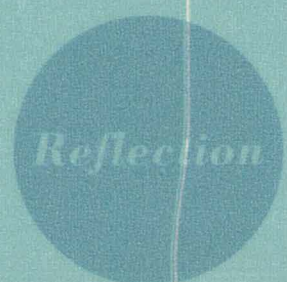
Music and art are my true passions. It ebbs and flows. I paint a lot and then the guitar takes over. If one (art form) isn't going anywhere or I'm feeling stuck I'll go hard out on the other.

Ultimately music gives me the most satisfaction because it's so 'in the moment.' With painting you can't see someone paint live; it doesn't give the same feel but performing live is something I really enjoy. I really lose myself completely and don't even know I'm on stage performing to a couple of hundred people. It gives me energy and it gives me peace.

Lately I've just been concentrating on music because I've just finished recording a CD, *Flow*, and it's to do with the creative flow. It took three years to get it together – it was mastered in Sydney. Really hard work.

Why was TLC important to you?

I think if I didn't have this expression I'd be a closed, quiet person, part of the youngest child thing. But because I have this talent that I've worked on here (at TLC) and these outlets to let everything out, it gives me a confidence and satisfaction that I'm expressing myself as a human being, 100% with integrity and integrity is a big part - it's gotta be real. I sing with emotion and conviction, it's your pure essence.



Reflection

The final paragraph of Matty's story wraps up why creativity matters. Like a skilled guide he identifies it as a map with destinations of integrity and authenticity; a trip which will make you whole. He treads the alliterative steps of person, process, place and performance, starting with his own background and the importance of his family, and his ranking within it. He reveals the process that has helped to develop his creativity from schoolboy beginnings to other places of learning such as TLC and polytechnic, culminating in creative performance and products (fatherhood too).

He identifies the importance of being with like-minded people, yet also sets his own agenda which echoes Gardner's findings (in Boden, 1996). He articulates the process of losing oneself in creative activity in his recently released CD (2002) aptly titled *Flow*:

*Bursting thoughts and vision grow
Creating old thoughts into new
Comes to me with a splash of colour
Red, gold and orange too (Verse 1)*

Coincidentally this first verse also reflects the colourful rendition of another artist's impression of *Flow*; see illustration 7 in Chapter 1.

Matty's account provides a succinct testament as to why creativity is a synonym for both finding oneself and simultaneously giving oneself up. For the academic among us, it matches the theory in many places, with its perseverance and *flow*-inducing focus for example. It bears witness to the fact that creativity is a multi-voiced language underpinning this man's search for meaning.

epilogue

Conclusions

My thesis began as a response to Viktor Frankl's challenge that "(wo)man is a responsible creature and must actualise the potential meaning of her/his life." (1976). To realise that potential meaning it is essential to create it, not unearth it. This enquiry determined that a key agent in manifesting meaning is CREATIVITY. It is not an instant product but a process which moves us from where we are to where we will be.

To confirm creativity's relevance as meaning-maker it was necessary first to define it, then to position it in people or place. Next, there was a responsibility to determine how it can be encouraged and ultimately justify its centrality.

Confirmation that "creativity is a central source of meaning in our lives" (Csikszentmihalyi 1997:1) was found in:

- international opinion (cited in the literature) as to creativity's characteristics, people, places, processes and worth
- a local context for the encouragement of creativity in New Zealand, The Learning Connexion
- personal views on the benefits of creativity as a life enhancer elicited in six stories, including the author's

I had given myself four parts in this play:

Designer choosing **what, who, where, how and why** to observe

Questioner/Listener framing the questions in an interview-dialogue

Participant/Observer artist-researcher

Reporter after actively absorbing, sorting, sifting and writing



24: The observer:OVGM

I did not realise there would be another role for me, that of reviser and re-framer as the process continued. Also, I was not in sole charge here. This was 'Theatre-Sport' where all the players (including the many writers on the subject) shared the power, deciding if, or what, they wanted to say and when. Some of their contributions did not conform to my lines. This meant re-working the noticing, collecting, sifting, and evaluating to detect, then reporting on the shape and universal value of creativity from the particular instances available to me.

Eventually the sources were able to provide answers to my major questions which form the five chapter headings, namely: **What/Who/Where/How/Why.**

What: In attempting to define creativity I was alternately overwhelmed by optimism and pessimism; both feelings attributable to its mercurial qualities. Optimism was represented by the welcome challenge to analyse an elemental and luminous concept. Pessimism accompanied its shape-shifting and runaway qualities. Using findings, both ancient and modern, global and local, I established a working definition which could be loosely summed up as *creating something new (idea or product) that is esteemed as appropriate*. Research indicates there are scales of creativity, from the significant history-making variety, to the minor (personal insight sort) and considerable argument as to whether the latter should be labelled creativity. I concur with the liberals that it is appropriate that the creativity appellation no longer be confined to the radical products of a ground-breaking few. It should also attach its name to the developmental processes and products initiated by many people across many disciplines.

At a more metaphysical level, creativity is the vigour that propels us toward discerning meaning. Participants interviewed for this thesis confirmed its evolutionary role in their own lives. A visual precis was found in the Brebners' work: *to do is to be* (Chapter 3 – see illustration 16).

Who: Regardless of the scale of their creative contribution there was evidence that many creative people shared common traits. The most consistently mentioned was a single-minded passion for what they were doing and a commitment to create. The founder of TLC, Jonathan Milne, exhibited many of these traits as did the study's other participants. Their stories reinforced the literature with reassuring symmetry.

Where: Creativity does not exist outside relationship. This enquiry identified many venues for creativity, ranging from cultural to psychological, from politics to poetry, from Island Bay to the Hokianga, from actual to theoretical. The theory, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994, 1997) determines that there is a kind of creative ecosystem where individual, domain and the field meet. TLC provided a three-dimensional model of that ecosystem.

The TLC story yielded an example of creativity in action and in situ by detailing the practical steps Jonathan Milne has taken to share and realise his conviction of the value and transferability of creativity. It was not intended as homage to a guru but rather to evidence the lengthy development of a creative journey from ‘solo flight’ to ‘creative Concorde’ with five hundred people on board.

But beneath the tangible loci, lies the real position of creativity. It is a tension stretched between here and there, now and new, the known and beyond. A new idea is dependent on context to place and approve its contribution. Without that, it is invisible. The line connecting the new with that context is the true ‘where’ of creativity.

How: The theory suggests recipes and conditions for the nurturing of creativity. At a more practical level, TLC acknowledges it can be done but it is not easy with a paucity of pedagogical models to follow. TLC’s expansion gives evidence of how an institution promoting creative endeavour is in demand. Approval by government agencies, as well as from the many students past and present, implies that fostering creativity should be taken seriously.

There are substantial and light-hearted approaches to the encouragement of creativity. They range from well-reasoned psychological and pedagogical suggestions to softer self-help handbooks. TLC’s planning and practice probably veers toward the former. Its success is somewhat anecdotal. However research is currently being done by TLC (Pip Cotton in Appendix D) to follow up former students. The aim is to ascertain how time in a creativity climate affected them and align their responses to a model of creativity being developed. “There’s a long way to go but early indications are that the course has enduring value in changing lives” says Milne (*TLC Prospectus* 2002).

The participants who told their stories for this thesis were unanimous in their belief that creativity matters, and can and should be encouraged. Their stories, along with that of TLC as an organisation, often validated the theory. There was a good match between TLC principle and practice when put alongside an academic checklist of how

to enhance creativity. It was reassuring to see that, for the most part, the local microcosm and individual judgments, stood up to scrutiny furnished by international research. However, the author's observation and experience suggest ongoing research is needed to refine methodology, here and abroad. TLC is making headway in the local setting but we need bigger players too, such as universities and the Ministry of Education, to confirm creativity's worth by promoting the development of creativity-enhancing methodologies.

Why: There are both lofty and down to earth reasons for esteeming creativity. In a changing world where the familiar is constantly up for revision, reference points for living are no longer fixed. Paradoxically the ancient art of creativity, in its role of meaning-maker, provides us with a modern compass.

The subtext underpinning this enquiry, however, was a philosophical wondering: Why bother with creativity? Is it important? Does it matter? These are questions which have tantalised the minds of major thinkers from St Augustine to Einstein. This thesis agrees with their conclusions; that it does. The capacity to reflect, re-form and re-create is what marks us from our companions on the planet and what makes life worth living. The poem below could serve as an anthem for creative people who know about holding on to the grace or *aroha* which leads us from being to becoming:

They love to let go and they love to get going

They get themselves going and they let themselves go

They let love go and they get love going

They get others going and they let others go

They let life go and they get life going

They live to give love and they love to let live

25: Dinah Hawken

Recommendations

Three archetypes took this thesis journey into the wonderland of creativity; Alice the adventurer, Dodgson the academic and his alter ego, Carroll, the storyteller. Despite things becoming rather perplexing they/we persevered, deducing that creativity is a key to adaptability, growth and making sense of life. It is important to remind others of their creativity especially in our 21st century world which is getting ‘curiouser and curiouser.’ The following suggestions provide a start in an educational context:

ONE:

Set up accredited centres of creativity which students could attend as an adjunct to the main institution at which they are enrolled. This could be an effective and viable catalyst for the recognition of creativity’s worth and lead to its infusion in standard programmes as suggested in Recommendation Two.

TWO:

Let a creative approach inform every programme, from arts to science, medicine to sport or business; not as a luxury but as a matter of course. Value its interdisciplinary connectedness which promotes an holistic, rather than mechanistic, approach to learning. Blend the measurable outcomes of the curriculum with an appreciation that as an ‘enabling device’ creativity counts too. Encourage creative learning in higher education by acknowledging skills in problem-solving and independent thinking as well as offering and testing domain-specific knowledge in lectures and examinations.

THREE:

Establish seminars on the theory and practice of creativity in teacher training. Persuade teachers to model creativity in their work practice. Suggest they undertake a creative endeavour outside their professional lives. Highlight ‘creativity-killers’ such as over surveillance, time pressures, closed answers and a blind obedience to assessment procedures which is often what drives the curriculum and practice. Put AS Neill’s *Summerhill* on their reading list.

FOUR:

Make **commitment** the only initial criterion for gaining entry to an educational institution. Ascertain after one year, through dialogue and evidence, if the student's pledge is being sustained. If not, make way for someone else. There is a confident democracy here where power is shared by institution and learner alike.

FIVE:

Introduce a wider audience to the pragmatic as well as philosophical reasons for honouring and encouraging creativity, through television programmes or community education or museum discovery centres. Clarify it, show how its many facets are reassuring touchstones in an uncertain world.

Like Alice, looking for the way in Wonderland, make your life a work of art.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:	Letter of Introduction to potential participants
Appendix B:	Sample Interview Questions
Appendix C:	Maori-English Glossary
Appendix D:	Executive Summary of Pip Cotton's research on a creativity model – commissioned by TLC (2002). Ongoing research
Appendix E:	CD Rom of Introduction to TLC Diploma of Art and Creativity
Appendix F:	Bronze Sculpture: J Grayburn-Moore at Massey University

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction : Research into Creativity by Judith Grayburn-Moore.

Hello, My name is Judy Grayburn-Moore

I have a background in teaching adults and an interest in creativity. I am writing a thesis on creativity as part of a Massey, Master of Education degree. A lot of people acknowledge the worth of creativity but I would like to enquire further by asking:

What is creativity?

Who has creativity?

Where is creativity?

How can we encourage creativity?

Why does creativity matter?

Some answers can be gained from international writers in the field but to bring the theory to life it is important to locate a venue where creativity features and flourishes. One such place is The Learning Connexion whose story I am telling.

Personalising this more, I am keen to interview five people who are convinced of the value of re-connecting with their creativity as adults.

If you **choose** to take part in this research, the interviews will last around 1 hour.

The interviews will be recorded by notes, dictaphone or video.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

You can decline to answer any question and/or seek clarification of my questions.

You will be sent a transcript of your interview, for comment and/or amendment.

You will be asked to confirm if you are comfortable with being identified or not.

A copy of the entire thesis draft will be sent to TLC's, managing director, Jonathan Milne, to ensure the accuracy and integrity of my observations.

Thank you for reading thus far. If you are prepared to participate, I look forward to hearing from you, care of The Learning Connexion, Island Bay, Wellington.

Regards

Judy

APPENDIX B

Sample Interview Questions

What is your definition of creativity?

Where and when did your creative journey start?

What doubts have you got about the creativity topic?

Were you encouraged by your family to be creative?

What have you got out of doing a course aimed at enhancing creativity?

Where do your creative strengths lie?

How do you manifest your creativity?

What would happen if you ignored the creative impulse?

When do you identify with the creative state (flow)?

What is difficult about following a creative path?

What are the benefits of creative awareness?

How does it show itself in non-artistic fields?

Tell me about some creative endeavours which have made a difference?

What makes creativity matter from a wider point of view?

Note:

Each interview had a life of its own, which took the discussion out of the pre-ordained plan of the author. Semi-structured questions gave way to more open-ended dialogue allowing the interviewee to influence the direction of the discussion too.

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY (Maori –English)

Aroha	love/yearning
Iwi	strength/nation or people
Marae	enclosed space in front of meeting house *
Maoritanga	Maori culture *
Mana	authority/influence/prestige/power
Maunga	mountain
Pakeha	personal of European descent*
Te Reo	language
Taniwha	fabulous monster*
Tikanga	custom, habit
Waiata	song
Whaea	mother
Whakapapa	genealogy/lineage
Whanau	offspring/family group

*Reed, A W and Karetu T S (revised) (1998) *The Reed Concise Maori Dictionary* NZ:Reed
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APPENDIX D

Executive Summary

Learning and personal development through creativity-orientated education

A preliminary investigation into the enhancement of creative potential through the practices and philosophy of The Learning Connexion

This study explores creativity and creativity enhancement in the context of The Learning Connexion (TLC), an NZQA accredited private training provider that delivers a course entitled the Diploma of Art and Creativity. The project aimed to link the philosophy and practices of TLC to creativity-related research, with a view to this informing current practice, contributing to new course development and identifying areas for future research.

An initial survey of the literature generated a **creativity model**, which focused on the individual in relation to their Motivations, Intentions, Processes used and Outcomes achieved. In particular, the model emphasised the combined use of imagination and analysis, or divergent and convergent thinking styles. In-depth interviews were conducted with students and interview statements that matched the model were used to develop a level of 'connectedness' rating. This process was guided by a hypothesis, that students who showed higher levels of connectedness with the model would also be seen to be more engaged and productive within the learning environment. The findings generally supported this position. A range of personal and background factors were also identified which appeared related to 'levels of connectedness' and this formed the framework for a more focused return to the literature. The findings and the literature indicated a need to revise the initial creativity model and a multidimensional framework was developed to portray: the personal and cognitive characteristics of the learner; how these connect to a particular knowledge domain; and how this connection may be facilitated by an educator.

Moreover, as the project unfolded, it became important to clarify how creativity, or effective novelty, might be defined, recognised and validated within the specific context of TLC. Discussion gave rise to the notion of TLC relating to an artistic/developmental domain, which is based on an organisational culture that implicitly reinforces and encourages certain styles of creative behaviour. The concept of a self-defining Boundary Rule was put forward as a way to describe the focal point for identifying and validating effective novelty. Vygotsky's concept of a Zone of Proximal Development was also found to be useful for describing the creativity-enhancing environment and the roles of the educator.

The project generated a series of propositions which are suggested as some of the necessary elements required to support creativity-based education. In brief, this approach to education is conceived as becoming possible when particular types of organisational cultures come into being which attract and support people who are intrinsically motivated to become engaged and self-directed in areas of learning and/or personal development. The educator meets its objectives by establishing and maintaining these cultures, and by selecting candidates who are suitable for these. Moreover, the educator plays a pivotal role in introducing novices into the culture in ways that strengthen 'assisters' and weaken 'blockers' for self-directed work, and which help participants come to an understanding of the rules that function within the learning environment.

The report indicates that TLC can be seen to be part of a broader movement to find effective strategies for achieving creativity-oriented education. In general, the project achieved its aims and demonstrated that there is a breadth and depth of research material which is able to guide and inform this movement, and which can specifically describe and inform the educational practices, strategies and philosophy of TLC

Pip Cotton

Wellington