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Muse: Demystifying the Artist

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Abstract
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Today, there are many misconceptions about what it means to be an artist. These false stereotypes surrounding artists are rooted in myths that have become known as true to artists and non-artists alike today. These myths make it extremely difficult for young, aspiring artists to follow their dreams because they are met with resistance from parents, advisors, and their own socially motivated ideas about what it means to be an artist. These myths are especially destructive to young artists because it is virtually impossible for them to live up to the myth of what it means to be an artist, which leaves room only for failure in the long run.

My research is motivated by my own personal desire to pursue a career in the arts and in a field I am passionate about. It is important to me to live a life that I enjoy. Many Americans get stuck in jobs they are not happy with, which translates directly into their personal lives. Not being happy at work has dangerous repercussions. That being said, why not do something that is both your day job and your passion at once? Why not get paid to do something you love?

I highlight the importance of doing just this - getting paid to do what you love - and show the possible job options that exist. There are more options for the creative individual than just working as a traditional artist.

It has been argued that creating art for a company is “selling out” as opposed to creating art simply for “art’s sake” because it furthers a company’s agenda instead of one’s own agenda. I argue that the process of creating art or creative work is the same whether it is being done for a company or for oneself. Therefore, the happiness generated from making a creative work is the same no matter who it is created for.

In addition, most traditional artists create art for the sake of selling consumers their work, which arguably, the consumers have no distinct need for. An artist working for a company also sells consumers a product they do not necessarily need. The two practices are direct parallels.

For this reason, I argue for expanding arts into the commercial sector to ensure financial stability while still producing important creative work.

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Introduction

A myth may be described as a widely held, but false belief or idea. The myth of the artist as a tortured and lone genius, a recluse inspired by divine inspiration, is one that is rampant in society today, but is not realistic or up to date. The artist as God-like genius who creates art simply for the sake of making art without any thought of profiting is a common stereotype that society has grasped onto and cannot seem to drop. Society consists of artists and non-artists, and both groups hold the belief that the artist is a mythical creature. This myth has detrimental effects; it breeds the idea that an artist must be a genius, and completely separated from the commercial world. The myth is dangerous to everyone, but especially dangerous to aspiring artists or young artists looking to get a start in the art world.

Many artists fail because they are so caught up in the mythical idea of what it means to be an artist. The artist in the view of the genius goes against the commercial artist. When artists are viewed as geniuses, it makes being an artist a nearly unattainable goal that few can strive to achieve. When artists are able to create art in a commercial space where they also earn a paycheck, the myth is eliminated and they are not thought of as crazy. Why? When artists work commercially, they are seen as regular working adults instead of tortured geniuses. Some people have difficulty accepting commercialized art as legitimate. What is crucial to note, however, is that the process that creates commercial art is almost identical to the process that creates “pure” art for art’s sake. The only difference is the function of the finished product.

With the emergence of commercial art and creative companies, it is crucial for artists to let go of these false expectations and acknowledge the many different career paths available. In *Muse*, a magazine I have created for my project, interview based research highlights the triumphs and difficulties of a variety of Atlanta based artists. This primary research is a way of proving that the findings of my thesis are true. By conducting interviews with arts employees, my project gains validity and truth. It is not only possible for artists to pursue a career that is artistically stimulating, but important for happiness. In addition, demand for artistic persons will increase, making it more important than ever for artists to pursue careers that make efficient use of their talents.

Overview

In my project, I argue against the myth of the artist as lone, male genius, or tortured and starving. I replace this myth with the view of the artist as border crosser and double agent – someone who is able to break down the traditional myths of the artist and work in a day job that is also the artist's passion. This view of the artist, as a normal, working American, is realistic and attainable, unlike the tortured genius view of the artist. It is imperative to turn away from the former understanding of the artist to this updated and realistic version in order to encourage young art students to pursue a career in the arts and show them the many opportunities available.

In order to prove this understanding of the genius should not be believed, I look to Walter Benjamin's writing, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," which examines where societal ideas about art come from and how mechanical reproduction and progressive thinking change the function and expectations of art.

To break down the myth of the artist as lone genius, I include information from the book *Finding the Muse* by Mark Freeman. In Freeman's own primary research, he recounts his interviews with artists who succeeded and failed in their careers. He implies that many of these artists failed because they were so obsessed with what it meant to be an artist and felt they could never live up to the stereotype. He also uncovers the similarities between making art for "pure" purposes and commercial ones.

To understand where the stigma of the "starving artist" comes from, I look at writing from a variety of intellectuals. My work examines writing by Rubén A. Gazambide-Fernández, which highlights the preexisting societal conceptions of the artist and why these ideas should be challenged. Work by Zachary Cahill, Phillip von Zweck, and Daniel Pink points out the importance of the artist working across a variety of different fields, such as art and business, to create a day job that involves the artist creating works at that job. They discuss the importance of working as a "double agent" or "border crosser" to achieve artistic success while at the same time earning a salary by working at a day job.

In "The Artist in Society: Understanding Expectations, and Curriculum Implications," Gaztambide-Fernández explains the implications of viewing the artist as a "divine creator." He argues that there are a variety of different views of the artist that society assumes to be true. He goes on to argue that young art students should challenge these assumptions and work as "border crossers," or individuals who cross the traditional boundaries of the disciplines; in this case, the boundaries between art and business or commerce.

In his work, Gaztambide-Fernández argues against Immanuel Kant's version of the genius. Kant states, "genius is the innate mental disposition (ingenium) through which Nature gives the rule to Art." He states that nature creates geniuses, and geniuses must create art. He basically argues that an artist must be naturally talented to create art and acts alone. In my own research, I also argue against Kant's view of the artist as the lone, male genius.

In "The Artist as Double Agent," by Zachary Cahill and Phillip von Zweck, the term "double agent" is used to refer to artists who cross borders to combine multiple disciplines. The notion of the double agent is based on the idea that it is possible for an artist to produce artistic work while still working a day job that will pay him or her a salary. Being a double agent requires the artist to be a border crosser in the sense that he or she must not adhere to the classic view of the artist by perpetuating the myth of the "tortured artist" or "starving artist" that so many people believe describes real artists today. These double agents must work to combine art and commerce by working in a job that serves two purposes: to produce artistic work that can also be used for commercial purposes.

Daniel Pink argues in his book, *A Whole New Mind*, that it is not only important for artists to pursue careers that they enjoy and feel passionately about, but it will be necessary for companies to hire artistic persons in the age of abundance. Abundance refers to the idea that there is no longer a struggle for survival in the developed world, so most people are able to be choosier about the products on which they spend money. Because of this, design and a higher meaning are necessary to convince consumers to

buy one product over another. It would help to specify which societies you're focusing on, because worldwide, many people are still struggling to meet basic needs.

All of these theorists fit together to support my understanding of art in the 21st century. Collectively, these theorists explain and break down the myth of the artist. Then, Freeman in particular, highlights how detrimental it is to artistic development to believe in the myth. Finally, these theorists give realistic examples of how to be an artist in today's society and how to defy the myths that are so rampant.

Ritualistic Art

To many, the title "artist" evokes the stereotype of an eccentric man wearing a beret, covered in paint. This eccentric individual creates art and is known for being a bridge between the human and the divine. The artist is believed by many to have almost supernatural abilities. This image of the artist comes from a variety of societal preconceptions.

According to Benjamin, "we know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind." The earliest art was created for religious purposes, a trend that continued for hundreds of years. Paintings, statues, and murals have been used for religious worship since the beginning of art. In fact, many famous artists are well known for work commissioned by religious officials. Since artists were trusted to create art for religious purposes, it seems feasible to believe that they were inspired to create these works by some type of divine revelation.

Today, many still see artists as almost saintly. This image of the artist gives the public something to worship or respect. Idolizing artists, makes them seem almost

immortal or elevated above the average person. People may benefit from viewing artists in this way, however, because it gives them an excuse not to be an artist. It is much easier to say that artistic talent is an innate ability, unattainable to the average person, than it is to be an artist.

Non-artists believe that artists have “access to higher sources of inspiration and talent to produce works of great value,” and that they are expected to “challenge the public to think in new and different ways and to inspire intellectual dialogue” (Gaztambide-Fernández 234). Believing that artists are able to access higher sources of inspiration leads many to believe that artists have a type of “genius” that is not available to a lay person, setting them apart from the rest of society. This view is in keeping with the theory of the artist as the “cultural civilizer” which is an idea grounded in liberal humanism. “The discourse of liberal humanism views artists as creators who are ‘gifted’ with natural talent and whose individual work demonstrates mastery of skill while pushing the given rules within their artistic domain” (Gaztambide-Fernández 234). The artist as cultural civilizer is a view focused on the idea that artists are almost “divine” beings who have natural talent that cannot be taught and who create works of art because they are naturally gifted and able to challenge and civilize the general public.

The Lone Male Genius

Liberal humanism is based on the idea of the male genius. Immanuel Kant studied the arts and articulated the view of the “genius” and argued that, “only genius could produce ‘great art’” (Gaztambide-Fernández 241). Kant proposed the view of genius as follows:

Genius is the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to Art. Since talent, as the innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to Nature, we may express the matter thus: Genius is the innate mental disposition (ingenium) through which Nature gives the rule to Art (Kant 188).

Kant argues that nature creates geniuses and geniuses create art, therefore nature gives rule to art and nature creates art. Kant also argues that “Nature in the subject must (by the harmony of its facilities) give the rule to Art; i.e. beautiful Art is only possible as a product of Genius” (Kant 189). Not only does he believe that nature creates geniuses, who create art, he also argues that no one except the gifted genius is capable of producing art.

He argues that artists are unable to explain how they are inspired to create art or communicate to others how to create similar work:

It [genius] cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, but it gives the rule just as nature does. Hence the author of a product for which he is indebted to his genius does not himself know how he has come by his Ideas; and he has not the power to devise the like at pleasure or in accordance with a plan, and to communicate it to others in precepts that will enable them to produce similar products (Kant 189-190).

This view of the artist leads artists and non-artists to believe that it is impossible for artists to explain their sources of inspiration or the motivations behind their work. It seems as if the artist isn't even responsible for his or her own work in this view of the artist. Through this writing, it may be perceived that artists are misunderstood and

therefore tortured trying to be understood. Being misunderstood leads to them withdrawing from society because it is too hard for them to communicate with the layperson, or non-artist.

Kant's ideas of genius as being inexplicable give grounding to the perception of the artist as the "tortured genius" whose ideas and motivations have no explanation. Another philosopher who agreed with Kant's ideas is Arthur Schopenhauer. "Genuine art on Schopenhauer's view is the product of a genius or someone who has been 'momentarily inspired to the point of genius'" (Shapshay). Like Kant, Schopenhauer believes that art must be created by a genius or by someone who momentarily has a fit of genius. He also believes that nature gives reason to genius for the most part. Schopenhauer states, "for all the fine arts... the genius produces at first by contemplating an Idea in nature or from human affairs" (Shapshay). All artistic ideas are created by a genius, who is given talent by nature, which is to say that people cannot even be deemed responsible for their own work. In addition, "Schopenhauer sees a relationship between genius and madness" (Shapshay). This idea is one that is at the heart of the myth of the tortured genius. In order to be a genius, one must be a mad, or tortured. The tortured genius perception of the artist supports the common idea that the artist has a very eccentric personality and is a dark and mournful person.

The Myth

By believing the myth of the artist as a lone and tortured genius, society has done a disservice to artists and aspiring artists everywhere. The lone genius is seen as a person who is misunderstood because of his inability to communicate his divine, or

naturally given, talents: “One of the primary images associated with the person of the artist was that of the alienated recluse, working away in terrible yet beautiful obscurity, a man (most often) possessed” (Freeman 37). The myth of the artist as a recluse, possessed with divine inspirations, is a common stereotype of the artist, but is not grounded entirely in facts. As one man commented in an interview with Mark Freeman, author of *Finding the Muse*, ““We walk that line between sanity and insanity every day”” (Freeman 44). Artists and non-artists alike believe this myth of the artist-madman.

Some artists throughout history do fit the mold of this romanticized myth, which is partially why society today has latched onto the idea of the artistic genius. The myth dates back to the times and work of Leonardo DaVinci, continues into the life of Picasso and progresses all the way to Jackson Pollock’s time. Pollock, known for his abstract paintings and his unconventional style of creation, is the epitome of the somewhat erratic artist. The general public sees him as tortured due to his troubled life filled with darkness and alcoholism, which was followed by his traumatic death in a car accident under the influence of alcohol, further mystifying his life story. His creative style is like a strange ritual where he created paintings in a secluded shed on a rural New York farm and danced around canvasses on the ground to distribute his paint strokes exactly as he visualized them. This gives his audience the idea that he has some type of communication with the supernatural that he expresses through this painting ritual to display for his viewers.

In the short video, *Pollock 51*, the audience gets a view of his creative process. The film gives an insight into what it looked like when Pollock painted one of his works.

Through use of music and dark lighting, he is portrayed in a way that makes viewers see him in an even more mystical way. By portraying Pollock as a misunderstood, tortured recluse creating art in a secluded barn in the countryside, the style of this film helps to reinforce the romantic myth of the artist.

Not only is Pollock's creation style unorthodox, his finished paintings are unusual as well. His very abstract creations portray what he envisioned before creating the work. This gives his audience the idea that what is going on inside his head is chaotic and possibly even tortured. In his painting, *Autumn Rhythm*, which stands at 17 feet wide and 9 feet tall, he portrays a mix of neutral colored brush strokes. It is difficult for the viewer to look at this painting and see any direct meaning, causing the viewer to feel as if Pollock has some type of genius that the average person cannot possibly fathom. This finished work combined with his ritualistic style of creation cause the public to see him as a divine creator with a genius that is impossible for the viewer to fully understand.

The Danger of the Myth

Though it may not seem important to understand and deconstruct the myth of the artist as lone genius, divine creator, or recluse, it is imperative to do so in order for young artists to achieve success in their artistic careers. In Mark Freeman's book *Finding the Muse*, his interviews with a variety of "failed" artists point to the idea that these artists "quit" at being artists because they were too wrapped up in the idea of what it meant to be an artist, and not focused enough on following their passions in a realistic way:

Financially unsuccessful artists are more likely to ‘parade their existential precariousness’ than successful ones; it is in the face of their diminished self-image that there emerges the need to maintain what he calls their ‘symbolic marginality.’ The result, he argues, is that the artistic ‘mystique’ is perpetuated more by them than those who have been successful, (Freeman 16).

Here, Freeman makes the argument that it is unsuccessful artists who perpetuate the myth of what it means to be an artist. They wallow in their deflated self-confidence and allow themselves to become withdrawn from society—which sounds very similar to the myth of the traditional artist.

For other artists looking for success,

These images proved to be inhibitory or even destructive in relation to both their artistic activities and to their personal, familial, and social lives. The result for some was either a difficult and painful career or the abandonment of art all together or, more positively, a process of realization: that they were carrying out their work or living their lives in ways that, in virtue of their unreality, were alienating them from their real concerns. Only when these mythical images could be identified as such, therefore, could they open up the space of creativity (Freeman 23).

The images that artists and non-artists believe to be what it means to be a real and true artist can be debilitating to an artist’s success. It caused many to abandon their artistic careers. The artists who were able to let go of these images rooted in myth were the ones who were able to obtain some success. The ones who were able to overcome the

myth were the ones with a strong support system. Many times, this support came from a mentor who could serve as a role model to show the possibility of a being an artist.

Many artists sabotage themselves by being afraid they will never measure up to the expectations they have set for themselves. It is important to note that many of these expectations are rooted in myth, so it would be nearly impossible to achieve this goal. In addition to this problem, many students lacked confidence in their own work, which perhaps is a comment on the attitude of snobbery in the art world and the effect this has on students.

Many of these “failed” artists resorted to working creatively in some type of different field. The three interviewees I found interesting worked in advertising, as a billboard designer, and a magazine editor. The billboard designer recounted, “The processes responsible for creating fine art and the processes responsible for designing billboards were not all that different. ‘I wouldn’t call it an opposition of styles,’ he said; ‘it’s an opposition of two kinds of philosophies’... whereas the first would lead to contemplation, the second would lead to consumption” (Freeman 59). This artist points to the idea that the processes for producing these two types of creative work were not very different. The difference lied, instead, in the finished product.

The billboard designer felt “guilt” about selling out. Selling out, by definition, means to compromise one’s integrity. Many people feel that when they stop doing art for the sake of doing art and start making art for the sake of a company, the work loses its integrity since it is now made for the purpose of selling something to a consumer. Freeman points out that fine art is many times rooted in marketing just as much as a

billboard advertisement. A fine artist tries to market him or herself in order to sell a product that a consumer doesn't necessarily need. An advertiser or billboard artist tries to market a product to sell a product that a consumer doesn't necessarily need. Both are able to be creative and artistic in their work. The difference? The artist survives on commission alone. The advertiser or billboard artist is paid a steady salary and knows where the next meal is coming from.

The advertiser said of his job, "It's a happy medium . . . You're not a total fine artist, but you can keep doing things that are similar and you can use a lot of artistic judgment" (Freeman 60). Again, it can be argued that the processes that contribute to fine art and commercial art are very similar if not identical.

The problem was not the work these "failed" artists were doing, but their inability to let go of "someone else's requirement, issuing from one of those purist myths they had heard so much about" (Freeman 63).

The Artist as Border Crosser

The artist as border crosser is someone who breaks down the traditional views that institutions and society have put in place. This person is not concerned with what is considered "true" or "pure." This person understands that realistically, an artist can be a border crosser or "double agent" in order to survive financially and works a day job that satisfies her or his artistic desires as well. This view of artist as border crosser differs from the artist as the artistic genius.

The border crosser is a person who does not simply accept the myth of the artist as tortured genius. The border crosser seeks to make new paths in the art world, find

new opportunities, and blaze into the unknown. There are a great number of artists who have served as border crossers throughout history, but were met with hostility from artists and non-artists. Andy Warhol and Takashi Murakami are both examples of artists who have combined the commercial and fine art worlds, and many members of the art community are not accepting of this practice. Some do not view border crossers as true artists because they are motivated by artistic motivations and monetary or professional gains.

According to Freeman, these are “the squabbles everyone is so worried about in the art world, concerning what was fake and what was real, what was craft and what was fine art, and so on” (Freeman 43). He argues that everyone in the art world is obsessed with the idea of what is fine art, what is craft art, and the implications this has for the people creating the work. In an interview with one man, Freeman asks about what it means to produce fine art versus creating commercial art for a company. “‘If you do commercial art,’ he said, in most people’s eyes ‘you’re just an asshole who advertises a product – crass, banal’; you’re another cog in the wheel of corporate America, hawking your wares. ‘Fine artists,’ on the other hand, ‘throw paint around, do whatever they want, live on some kind of pedestal, and what they produce is crap and doesn’t mean anything’” (Freeman 58). In these two conceptions of art, it is important to note the concept of audience. This artist assumes that a different audience will appreciate each type of art. There is the audience who is interested in fine art, who go to galleries and art shows to build their collections. Then, there is the audience who appreciates clever, commercialized art. Working in commercialized art involves much

more creation through working within existing parameters and fine art can be whatever the artist wants it to be. This man clearly believes in the importance of creating commercial art that has a clear agenda. He argues directly against the traditional view of art that believes art should be made solely for art's sake.

In her book, *7 Days in the Art World*, Sarah Thornton is apprehensive about commercial art when she visits Takashi Murakami, a Japanese artist who also runs his business as an advertising and marketing agency. Thornton's tone throughout the chapter where she visits Murakami's studio is suspicious and unsure of how she feels about an artist whose motivation for creating art is to make money and sell products for clients.

Murakami's studio also functions as an agency hired by other companies for the sake of making a profit. He was hired by Louis Vuitton to design a line of handbags and by Kanye West to design an album cover. Commercialism influences his work, and it becomes clear that Murakami produces art for the sake of making a living and running a successful business, as well as for the sake of creating a work of art due to passion.

Thornton is hesitant to believe this model of double agency is pure or true art that she should appreciate. Murakami, however, could be considered a genius who has managed to turn his passion into a successful business. He is the epitome of the border crosser who refuses to stay within the confines of traditional art, as well as a double agent who is able to combine multiple disciplines and have a day job, while at the same time creating art.

Double Agency

Similar to border crossers, who aim to break traditional molds in the art world, double agents seek to work as both artists and businesspersons at once. Their goal is to produce work that is artistically stimulating while working for a salary at a company. Phillip von Zweck describes his idea of the double agent: “for me the idea of double agency in art has to do with getting two (or more) seemingly unaligned results out of one set of operations—that is, doing something that is your day job while at the same time it is your art” (Cahill and von Zweck 66). These two results are usually achieved in the workplace where an artist is able to have a day job that also allows her or him to exercise creativity and artistic ability. “Double agency is an artistic mode of working that takes advantage of institutional structures and the technological demand to put ‘the soul at work’, as theorist Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi has put it” (Cahill and von Zweck 73). Through this type of work, an artist is stimulated artistically while at the same time earning a paycheck and working for an existing institution.

In an interview of Freeman’s, he speaks to one man who gave up on being the mythical artist as which he had always envisioned himself, and instead, worked as a billboard designer. This man, mentioned previously, seemed to actually enjoy his work. “My sense in speaking to him was that he actually quite liked designing billboards; that wasn’t the main problem. The problem instead was in the fact of his aborted project to become a fine artist and, more painfully still, in the image – conferred not only others, but by himself – of a man who ostensibly had capitulated to ‘going commercial’” (Freeman 57). This man enjoyed the process of creating art, but was dissatisfied with

his position because he was so caught up in the myth of being an artist who lived in seclusion and was in no way influenced by the commercial world or the world around him in general. He felt the world looked down on him for selling out, going commercial, working for corporate America. However, the man quite enjoyed his situation. “Regrets aside, when asked how pleased he was with his present situation, he was quick to answer: ‘happy as a fuckin’ clam’” (Freeman 58).

This man is a perfect example of a border crosser and double agent. He works as a border crosser by tearing down boundaries and stereotypes set by the art world. This man is an artist in the sense that he is creating artistic content. The only problem is that the traditional art world sees his work as “commercial” or “impure” because of its function in society. If being able to create art for a living, and getting paid to do so, is something that makes this man happy, there is absolutely no justifiable reason to look down on this practice especially since it is the same practice used to create fine art.

Andy Warhol is an excellent example of a border crosser who combined commercialized and fine art. He once stated, “Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.” Through this statement, he challenged previous notions of the artist and created a new type of artist, one who is able to overcome the challenges of the “classic” artist and make a living off his work. The idea of the lone genius involves elitism, because there is snobbery that goes along with it that says it is wrong to make art with the intention of making money. Warhol, who comes from a working class background, understood the importance of making a living from his work. He embraced the changing conceptions of art and challenged the classic view of the

artist by crossing over borders between the worlds of art and business. He served as a pioneer in the practice of being a “border crosser.”

Warhol’s art production wasn’t an inspired fit of passion, but a machine-like process. This process goes against the myth of the tortured, male genius artist. He struggled in prestigious art circles throughout his career because he went against tradition. “He still wanted to be recognised as an artist, as a ‘pure’ artist whose pictures would stand as a monument to himself” (Honnef 21). Though he had great success in the commercial sector, Warhol knew he would not excel as a serious artist through the eyes of his society. He gave up on the idea of being accepted by the traditional art world, and in true border crosser fashion, created a whole new genre. He made a radical switch from seeking to be recognized as romanticized artist to creating himself as a commercial pop artist.

Warhol, unlike many traditional artists, got his start in the commercial sector. He did business with a variety of clients, including Columbia Records, *Glamour* magazine, *Harper’s Bazaar*, NBC, Tiffany & Co., and *Vogue*, just to name a few. He designed store windows for a variety of department stores in New York and was active in the world of advertising as well. Throughout his career he infiltrated the worlds of fashion, music, media, and celebrity, all “pop” subjects.

What truly set Warhol apart, was applying the term “pop,” to his own work. The subjects of his work were everyday objects that had not been viewed as artistic images in the past. These household objects did not impress the New York art world, at the time, but had great success in the pop-markets. “Warhol’s transformation into a Pop

person was thought out and well-considered” (Honnef 30). He made a conscious decision to go against traditional beauty and create something completely his own. He came to show viewers that “it was irrelevant whether the subject of a work is beautiful or ugly; rather, the beauty of a work of art lies in the artwork itself” (Honnef 35). By using images in his work that were untraditional, Warhol went against the grain of the traditional, eccentric, and ingenious artist, and put forth a kind of art that could be produced many times over again and sold. His work can be considered the quintessential work of a border crosser. Warhol broke down the myths society had in place at the time and forged a completely new and unpaved path for him. He did not let his preconceived ideas inspired by myths about what it meant to be a “real” artist hold him back, and that is ultimately what led to his success.

Career Happiness

There are a great variety of different career paths an artist may choose as a double agent. “This might be the artist who works in arts administration, or within the academy—an institution that often has as its mission the idea of supporting artistic research,” (Cahill and von Zweck 66). Cahill and von Zweck draw attention to the artist-critic, the curator, the arts teacher, and the arts businessperson, just to name a few options available to the artist. In these positions, the artist can pursue a personal arts agenda all while furthering a career at an existing institution. There are many different options for the artist other than simply creating works of art with the so-called purpose of “art for art’s sake.”

These double agents have many different career options, and what is even more encouraging, many of these jobs have functions that artists find enjoyable. “In Gallup's 2013 State of the American Workplace study, 70 percent of those who participated described themselves as ‘disengaged’ from their work. Of over 150,000 people surveyed only 30 percent admitted they honestly enjoy their job” (Smith). These numbers are discouraging, but not overly surprising. The problem may be that employees are dissatisfied with their bosses or coworkers, but another issue may be that adults in the workforce work in a field in which they have no interest.

This problem starts in college when students choose majors that are not aligned with their interests. A study conducted by the ACT in 2013 showed that 32% of college students do not choose a major that matches their interests, as many students believe that it is advisable to choose a major that will help them get a job when they graduate instead of studying a subject they are passionate about. In the study, which involved a writing sample completed by students, the word “passion” was used very infrequently when students were asked why they choose a major. The idea is, “get good grades, go to college, and pursue a profession that will deliver a decent standard of living and perhaps a dollop of prestige” (Pink 29). What young students should really be focused on, however, is what their passions and interests are and what area of study and career will satisfy their intellectual desires.

This practice of choosing a major that a student is not interested in can inhibit students from being happy and fulfilled during their schooling and lead them to pursue a career that is not enjoyable. Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman, a professor at The University of

Pennsylvania and founder of the 'positive psychology' movement writes; "The things that contribute to happiness... are engaging in satisfying work, avoiding negative events and emotions, being married, and having a rich social network" (Pink 178). Since engaging in satisfying work is one of the most important factors that contribute to happiness, it is crucial to pursue a course of study that is enjoyable for the student.

Flow and The Good Life

Many students do not choose a college major because they are passionate about the subject, but because they are interested in getting a job following graduation. In Pink's book, according to Seligman, however, earning a high salary is not a factor that contributes a notable amount to happiness. "What doesn't seem to matter much at all, according to the research, are making money, getting lots of education, or living in a pleasant climate" (Pink 178).

This idea of doing work that makes individuals happy is studied by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly in a study he conducted on creative people. He notes of his interviewees: "all of the respondents placed the joy of working ahead of any extrinsic rewards they may receive from it" (Csikszentmihaly 121). This lines up directly with Seligman's ideas that earning a high salary, or in this case, other extrinsic rewards, does not necessarily constitute happiness. Csikszentmihaly adds that of the people who were successfully creative, "none pursued money and fame... what they felt fortunate about was that they could get paid for something they had such fun doing that in the bargain they could feel that what they did might help the human condition along"

(Csikszentmihaly 123). These people felt fortunate that they were able to act as border crossers and get paid to do what they love.

Earning a salary doing what one loves is what Seligman refers to as “The Good Life,” or following a calling to a career. “At a higher level is what Seligman calls the ‘Good Life’—in which you use your ‘signature strengths’ (what you’re great at) to achieve gratification in the main areas of your life,” (Pink 178). Seligman’s idea of the “Good Life” makes sense. If someone in the workforce is happy at work, the happiness carries over into his or her personal life.

This idea that using signature strengths to achieve gratification in life is something that seems obvious, but is still ignored by many. Many adults in the workforce are motivated by the material reward for their work instead of being motivated to work by passion. Many fear creativity because of the myth of the artist, and they do not believe they could make it as artists. What they are missing, however, is the importance of acting as a border crosser and finding the balance of a successful career and intrinsic reward. By focusing on the final reward instead of passion, many workers become bored, tired, and disgruntled in their careers. “A calling is the most satisfying form of work because, as gratification, it is done for its own sake rather than for the material benefits it brings’ says Seligman. ‘Enjoying the resulting state of flow on the job will soon, I predict, overtake material reward as the principal reason for working’” (Pink 178).

Here, Seligman mentions “flow on the job.” Flow is a term coined by Csikszentmihaly meaning, “the mental state of operation in which a person performing

an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.” Csikszentmihaly argues that obtaining flow is the highest form of happiness available to humans. “In the long run, the more flow we experience in daily life, the more likely we are to feel happy overall” (Csikszentmihaly 123). This contributes to Pink’s idea that being happy in the workplace translates into all aspects of a person’s life. Being happy in the workplace can translate into being happier at home as well.

Flow is imperative in the workplace, because when employees achieve flow during their work, they are experiencing the highest form of happiness and actually enjoy doing their jobs. Csikszentmihaly argues that the more difficult or challenging the problem or task, the more difficult it is to achieve flow, but once flow is obtained, hours could go by without the person noticing. In this sense, employees might be enjoying their jobs so much they don’t even realize how much time they have spent on a particular problem, question, or situation.

If adults pursue jobs where the work itself is satisfying, it changes their purpose in the workplace. A career transforms from something that is being pursued simply for a paycheck into something pursued because the work is satisfying to the employee.

If workers choose their careers in fields they are interested in, they will be more successful in the job role they select for themselves. Seligman argues that, “more happiness causes more productivity and higher income” (Pink 180). It is only logical that if students entering the work force choose a career they enjoy, they will be happier and

more productive in their work, because they will be motivated by their own interest in their work instead of monetary compensation.

Design in a Period of Abundance

Pink argues that currently, America, and most of the developed world, is experiencing a time period of abundance. Abundance refers to the idea that people have everything they need and are no longer struggling to survive. In previous times throughout history, people had less and survival was much more difficult than it is today. “The pursuit of purpose and meaning has become an integral part of our lives... abundance has freed literally hundreds of millions of people from the struggle for survival” (Pink 33-34). The freedom from the struggle for survival makes it possible for people to focus on the purpose or meaning of their lives. It is now possible to buy products that are meaningful and pursue careers that are worthwhile spiritually or intellectually.

Purpose and meaning have become popular topics among Americans. “58 percent of Americans say they think often about the meaning and purpose of life” (Pink 174). Pink goes on to argue that this time of abundance and the search for meaning can be called “The Conceptual Age.” He shows the progression from The Industrial Age, The Information Age, and now America is in the middle of The Conceptual Age. During the Industrial and Information Ages, the focus was on production of goods for utility.

During this Conceptual Age, utility and material need are not enough. Gregg Easterbrook, an American journalist, writes, “A transition from material want to meaning want is in progress on an historically unprecedented scale—involving hundreds of

millions of people—and may eventually be recognized as the principal cultural development of our age” (quoted in Pink 175). With this transition from the material to the search for meaning, the products and services Americans seek to purchase change. This is something crucial for businesses to acknowledge.

It is no longer enough for companies to manufacture products that only serve a utilitarian purpose; they must also have some type of significance. “Today utility has become widespread, inexpensive, and relatively easy to achieve—which has increased the value of significance” (Pink 60). It has become imperative for all commercial products to have some type of deeper meaning. How does a product move from utility to significance? Design. “Design—that is, utility enhanced by significance—has become an essential aptitude for personal fulfillment and professional success” (Pink 60). Today, consumers seek to buy products that have whimsical and interesting designs as a source of satisfaction.

Pink gives an example of the importance of design by describing a toilet brush that can be found at Target Stores. It is no longer enough to simply buy any toilet brush; Americans want to buy the toilet brush with the best design. In fact, there are even options to buy a “designer” label toilet brush. He points out the toilet brush example in order to show that something so small as a piece of equipment to clean a bathroom must still have an intriguing design. The utility of the brush is no longer enough for Americans.

Design is what encourages people to buy one product over another. “Design is the only thing that differentiates one product from another in the marketplace” (Pink 66).

During this time of abundance, people are more able to choose from the different options as they are no longer struggling to survive and focusing only on the utility of products. It is imperative for producers of these products to make their goods stand out among the competition. So, how can companies ensure that consumers want to buy their products over those manufactured by another company? Again, design. “For businesses, it’s no longer enough to create a product that’s reasonably priced and adequately functional. It must also be beautiful, unique, and meaningful” (Pink 31). Products must be pleasing to the eye and compelling to the soul. For this reason, designers and artists are in high demand by corporate America.

Artists are able to not only create products that look beautiful and create an emotional appeal for consumers, but they are able to serve as border crossers and look at a bigger picture. Pink argues that many people who can think creatively also excel at seeing the big picture and are less interested in smaller details. And today, this ability to see the big picture and solve problems creatively is extremely valuable. “What’s in greatest demand today isn’t analysis but synthesis—seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole” (Pink 57). These are skills that artists have cultivated and areas where they excel, making them extremely valuable to companies.

The idea of the artist as the border crosser is crucial during this Conceptual Age and time of abundance. It is crucial for artists to cross the boundaries of the art world and into the commercial sector. By doing this they will be able to use their creative abilities in the workplace, thus serving as “double agents.” Since the double agent is a

person who has a day job that is also a pursuit in artistic work, the artistic individual would be able to pursue passion while also earning a steady paycheck. This framework benefits both the company the artist is employed by the artist him or herself. “Boundary crossers reject either/or choices and seek multiple options and blended solutions” (Pink 110). The boundary crosser by definition seeks to look at the big picture and create an interdisciplinary mix of art and commerce, something not all analytical or straight arrow thinkers are capable of.

What is needed in business is what artists excel at: “recognizing patterns, crossing boundaries to uncover hidden connections, and making bold leaps of imagination” (Pink 103). Looking at problems or patterns and theorizing about them in new and different ways is something that artists can bring to any company. This is important not only in regards to design, but also in situations where problem solving is involved. In order to effectively solve problems, it is imperative to see the big picture and look at the situation in a different light. When artists follow their callings, it is not only important for commercial product success, but also for personal happiness.

Conclusion

With the demand for artists so high among companies, it is absurd to assume that an artist must “starve” for his or her art. Today, it is outdated to believe that the myths about the artist are still relevant. Past artists, such as Andy Warhol and others, have paved the way for today’s artists to work as double agents and border crossers. By blazing a bold new path, these pioneers have shown that it is possible to pursue a career in a creative and artistic field without “starving” for passion. When artists refuse

to adhere to existing stereotypes or expectations of the art world, they open up a whole new set of opportunities. With today's changing economy and social structure, young artists must challenge the preexisting myths of what it means to be an artist and work to further their own artistic agendas while being paid a day job salary by an institution. Today, it is not only possible, but instead, imperative for artists to pursue careers in which their creativity is put to work in order to ensure happiness and fulfillment, with which comes professional success and personal gain.

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MUSE

MUSE : AS A VERB - TO MUSE IS TO CONSIDER SOMETHING THOUGHTFULLY. TO BECOME ABSORBED IN THOUGHT. AS A NOUN - IT IS A PERSON WHO IS A SOURCE OF ARTISTIC INSPIRATION

**The myth:
How it leads to
failure and how it
can be overcome**

**WARNING:
Borders Are
Being Torn
Down**

ARTISTS ALL OVER AMERICA ARE CHALLENGING COMMON STEREOTYPES, MISCONCEPTIONS, AND MYTHS. FIND THEIR STORIES INSIDE.





thanks for
reading
along, i'm so
excited to
share my
findings
with you!
-sara

GRUBBY

Editor's word

Today, there are many misconceptions about what it means to be an artist. These false stereotypes surrounding artists are rooted in myths that have become known as true to artists and non-artists alike today. These myths make it extremely difficult for young, aspiring artists to follow their dreams because they are met with resistance from parents, advisors, and their own socially motivated ideas about what it means to be an artist. These myths are especially destructive to young artists because it is virtually impossible for them to live up to the myth of what it means to be an artist, which leaves room only for failure in the long run.

My research is motivated by my own personal desire to pursue a career in the arts and in a field I am passionate about. It is important to me to live a life that I enjoy. Many Americans get stuck in jobs they are not happy with, which translates directly into their personal lives. Not being happy at work has dangerous repercussions. That being said, why not do something that is both your day job and your passion at once? Why not get paid to do something you love?

I highlight the importance of doing just this - getting paid to do what you love - and show the possible job options that exist. There are more options for the creative individual than just working as a traditional artist.

It has been argued that creating art for a company is "selling out" as opposed to creating art simply for "art's sake" because it furthers a company's agenda instead of one's own agenda. I argue that the process of creating art or creative work is the same whether it is being done for a company or for oneself. Therefore, the happiness generated from making a creative work is the same no matter who it is created for.

In addition, most traditional artists create art for the sake of selling their work to consumers, which arguably, the consumers have no distinct need for. An artist working for a company also sells consumers a product they do not necessarily need. The two practices are direct parallels.

For this reason, I argue for expanding arts into the commercial sector to ensure financial stability while still producing important creative work.

The goal of this project is to show the possibilities for creative students at Emory. Through my senior thesis project, I have been able to create this magazine as my final project, which allows me to exercise my creativity through writing and visual design. Through completion of this project, I hope to show students the many opportunities for artistic endeavor available to them at Emory.

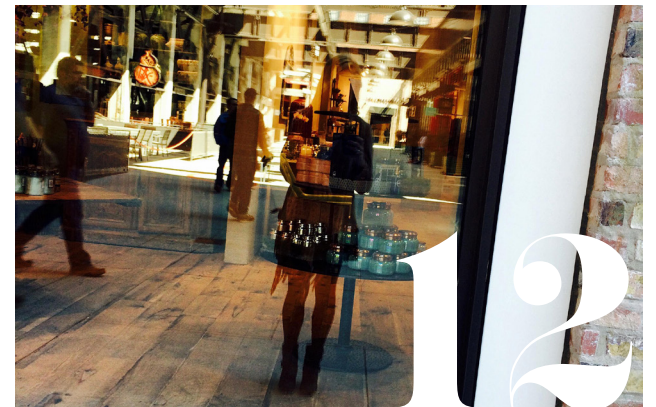
By highlighting the myths and misconceptions about art, I make study of the arts and a creative career more accessible for all students. Many are afraid to pursue a career in the arts because of what they have been taught it means to be an artist, which in most cases is that an artist is starving and unsuccessful. This does not need to be the case today. After reading this project, I hope that you, my reader, are convinced that there are a multitude of opportunities for young artists and they will be far from starving.

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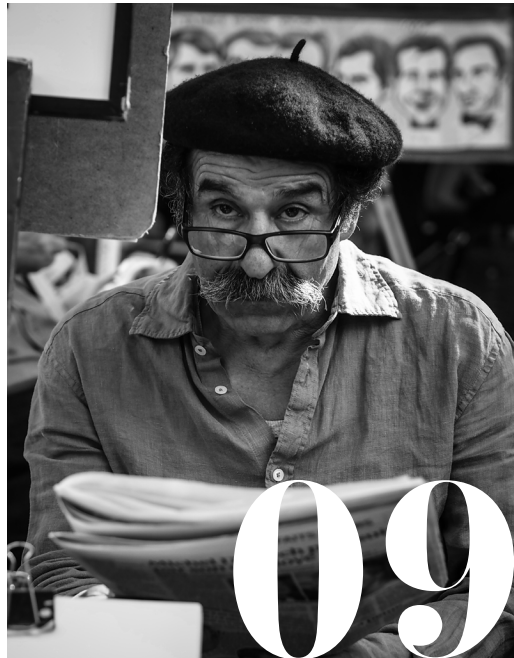
BELIEVING IN THE MYTH OF THE
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AT ALL.





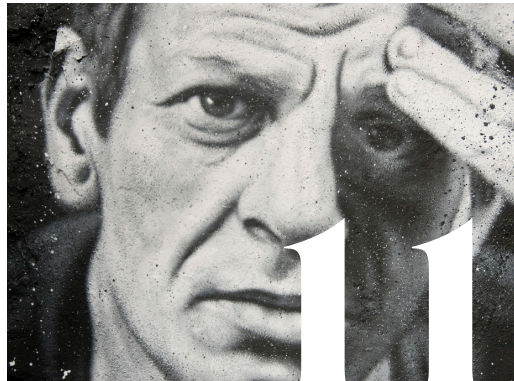
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CAN ANYONE REALLY MAKE IT AS A FINE ARTIST?

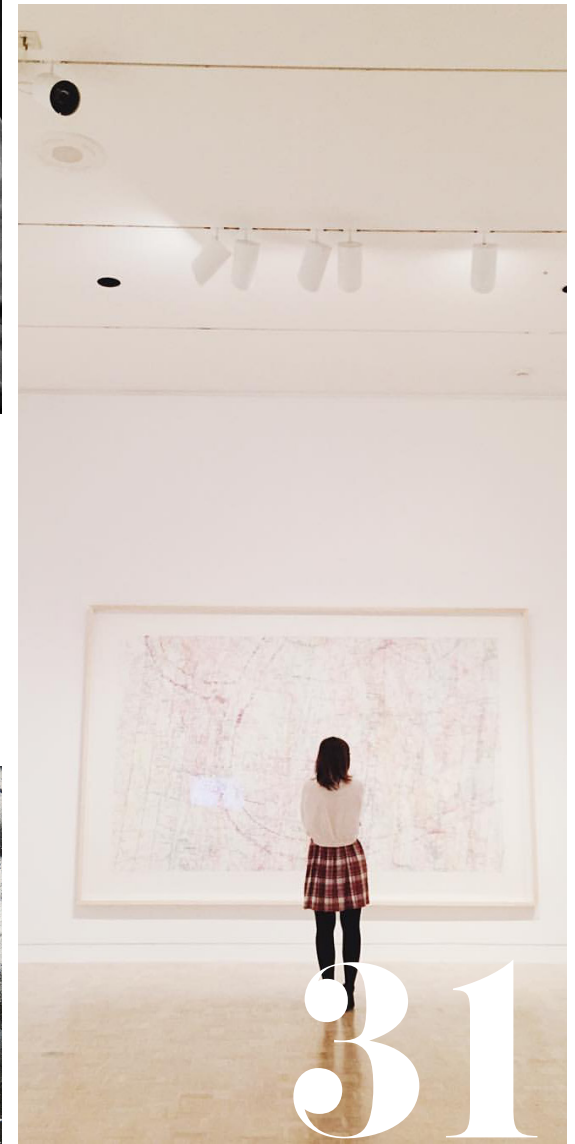


09

WHAT IS THE COMMON PERCEPTION OF THE ARTIST IN AMERICA?



11



31

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THESE
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Young Aspiring Artist

A recent t-shirt for toddlers was pulled from Old Navy shelves because of the huge controversy it sparked. What was this controversy, you ask? Old Navy found it appropriate to print t-shirts (for toddlers) that read “young aspiring artist,” with

“artist” replaced by “President” or “Astronaut”. These shirts put into perspective how feasible our society thinks being an artist is. Many people in our society, including the person(s) who created this shirt, believe it is more realistic or worthwhile to aim to be an astronaut or the

President than it is to be an artist. With the population of the U.S. being 318.9 million people (2014), and there is only one President of the U.S., chances of actually becoming president are pretty slim. In addition to this, with much of NASA’s funding being cut, there are only about 36 working astronauts in the whole U.S.A today. So, odds of becoming astronaut or president? Pretty slim.

So, when we think it is “unrealistic” to become an artist, but realistic to encourage any child to aspire to be the President or an astronaut, what are we

telling today’s toddlers? That art is unattainable and to dream in different directions. This is especially outrageous seeing as toddlers are the most creative thinkers out there. Seth Godin, an American author, entrepreneur, marketer, and public speaker, argues that schools stifle creativity in most children by forcing them into a box and not allowing time for daydreaming or developing creative practices. That being said, why would anyone discourage creativity in children at the toddler age? In our world of science and computers, creativity is seen as unimportant and frivolous.



Why, however, is creative thinking being discouraged by Old Navy, schools, and other institutions? As I will explain in greater detail later, the myth of what it means to be an artist is intimidating and frightening to many people. However, this

stereotype is nothing more than a myth and must be overcome. It is important to remember that without artists and creative thinkers, many things created by artists that our society takes for granted would cease to exist.

The Myth, The Recluse





A man: starving, covered in paint, and dancing crazily around a canvas. This is the image the term “artist” brings to mind for many. The earliest works of art were actually created for religious purposes, which has led many people to believe that artists still have divine inspirations and create art in some type of religious ritual. In later years, artists continued to create art for religious officials and the idea that artists were inspired by some divine being to create these works became the norm. With this idea came the idea that artists were geniuses and that nature supplied them with their artistic abilities. It became widely believed that unless someone was born with innate artistic ability, there was no way they could ever learn to be an artist. That then led to many people believing that many artists were tortured because they couldn’t find anyone who

understood their genius, which made the artist feel isolated. Artists came to be known as heavy users of drugs, alcohol, and other dark behaviors because of their inability to deal with their inexplicable genius. An artist interviewed by Mark Freeman claimed to “walk the line of sanity and insanity every day.” This negative myth of the artist also entertains the idea that artists achieve no success in their lifetime, leading to even more depressed behavior and a life of turmoil. It is difficult for anyone to believe that studying art or aspiring to become an artist are realistic or secure life paths, and for good reason. The lifestyle of an artist described here, and believed to be true by many, is not a healthy or ideal situation for anyone. This image that society has latched on to is inaccurate, but it is difficult to change the mindset of an entire society. It is important to understand the myth of the artist so it is possible to understand why it is no longer a realistic way to view the artist.

Jackson Pollock: The Man Who Fit The Myth

The few artists who have embodied the view of the artist as tortured and reclusive have perpetuated the myth of the artist throughout time. The myth dates back to the times and work of Leonardo DaVinci, continues into the life of Picasso and progresses all the way to Jackson Pollock's time. Pollock, known for his abstract paintings and his unconventional style of creation, is the epitome of the somewhat erratic artist. He had a volatile personality, a reclusive work space and life, and was an alcoholic. He went through psychotherapy as an attempt to deal with his alcoholism, which could lead some people to believe this therapy was a source of inspiration for his work. His life story was further mystified when he died in an alcohol



Jackson Pollock, painted portrait _DDC0006* https://www.flickr.com/photos/home_of_chaos/22172853748 by thierry ehrmann https://www.flickr.com/photos/home_of_chaos/ is licensed under CC BY 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

related car accident.

His creative style only adds to the mythical nature of Pollock. His process was almost like a strange ritual where he created paintings in a secluded shed on his rural New York farm. He danced around canvasses on the ground to distribute his paint strokes exactly as he visualized them. Many believe that through this ritual, he is able to express his supernatural communication with the divine. His paintings tell a story of these divine inspirations for his viewers.

While many see Pollock's creation style as unorthodox, his finished paintings are unusual as well. His very abstract creations portray what he envisioned before creating the work. These paintings seem to have no specific message and may seem disorganized and unplanned. This gives his audience the idea that what is going on inside his head is chaotic and possibly even tortured. In his painting, *Autumn Rhythm*, which stands at 17 feet wide and 9 feet tall, he portrays a mix of neutral colored brush strokes. It is difficult for the viewer to look at this painting and see any direct meaning, causing the viewer to feel as if Pollock has some type of genius that the average person cannot possibly fathom. This finished work combined with his ritualistic style of creation cause the public to see him as a divine creator with a genius that is impossible for the viewer to fully understand.

Biographical works about Pollock's life only reinforce his mysterious persona. In the short video, *Pollock 51*, the audience gets

a view of his creative process. The film gives an insight into what it looked like when Pollock painted one of his works. Through use of music and dark lighting, he is portrayed in a way that makes viewers see him in an even more mystical way. The style of this film helps to reinforce the romantic myth of the artist by portraying Pollock as a misunderstood, tortured recluse creating art in a secluded barn in the countryside.

DANGER: **Myth = Failure**

**I PROMISE
NEVER
TO MAKE ART AGAIN**



(you sign here)

How believing the myth Leads to downfall

Why is it so important to deconstruct the myth of the artist? Other than preventing some students from even pursuing a career in the arts, the myth causes many who start as artists to quit and fail. It is argued, however, that artists who are unsuccessful are the ones who claim to have the mystical personality traits of the mythical artist. They bask in their diminished self-image, and the result is that artistic mystique is perpetuated. Many of these artists end up failing and giving up at art because they are so absorbed in what they think it means to be an artist and not focused enough on the actual practice of making art. These images are destructive for artists in all aspects of life: personal, professional, and social. For many, the result of this illusion caused the artist to behave in ways that were detrimental to their well-being, or, the latter, they are able to identify this destructive belief in the myth and change their viewpoint. When artists are able to see how unrealistic it is to believe in the mythical view of the artist, they are able to open up their minds to the space of creativity.





What often accompanies the mythical view of the artist is the idea that working as a non-mythical artist for a company is equivalent to selling out. The idea exists that someone is only an artist if they create art for art's sake. While it is important to create fine art and produce art based on one's inspiration alone, it is also crucial to give credibility to creating art for a commercial company. The difference between creating art for art's sake and creating art for a company is that the end result is used for seemingly different purposes. Fine art is made to be shown and sold, and usually, to make the audience feel something. Commercial art, in this case an advertisement or well-designed product, is produced with the intention of making the audience feel a certain emotion as well. In both cases, the works of art, whether they are a painting on canvas or a beautifully designed chair, aim to convince the audience to make some type of purchase. Fine art aims to sell a painting, sculpture, or another product. Commercialized art aims to do the same thing. In addition to this, the process that creates

fine art and commercialized art is the same. An artist must come up with some kind of creative idea and then physically bring that idea to life. The pleasure the artist receives from creating a work of art is the same no matter what the end goal of the art is. So, if the process and pleasure are the same for commercialized and fine art, why should anyone shame an artist for selling out? The answer is that no one should ever shame creativity and art, no matter the form.



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**You pick:
Fine artist, or sell-
out?**



Border Crossers

Breaking down

boundaries

A border crosser is someone who defies the clear boundaries that have been established in the art world: the boundaries between fine art and commercialized art. In the eyes of many, artists who do commercial art give their artistic gifts to corporate America and create for all the wrong reasons. This snobbery is not uncommon and leads many young artists to believe that it is impossible or wrong for them to be anything but a fine artist. Being a fine artist is directly tied to the myth of the starving artist, which makes many students forgo study of the arts at all because they feel it is impossible to make a living in the arts. It is important to note, however, that it is not impossible to rebel against these ideas and the snobbery that exists. Border crossers are artists who work against the idea that fine art is the only art and create art for whatever reason they feel like. They are unafraid of going against the traditional art world and making commercialized art if that provides them the same joy fine art does. These border crossers refuse to accept the myth of the artist and the stereotypes that run

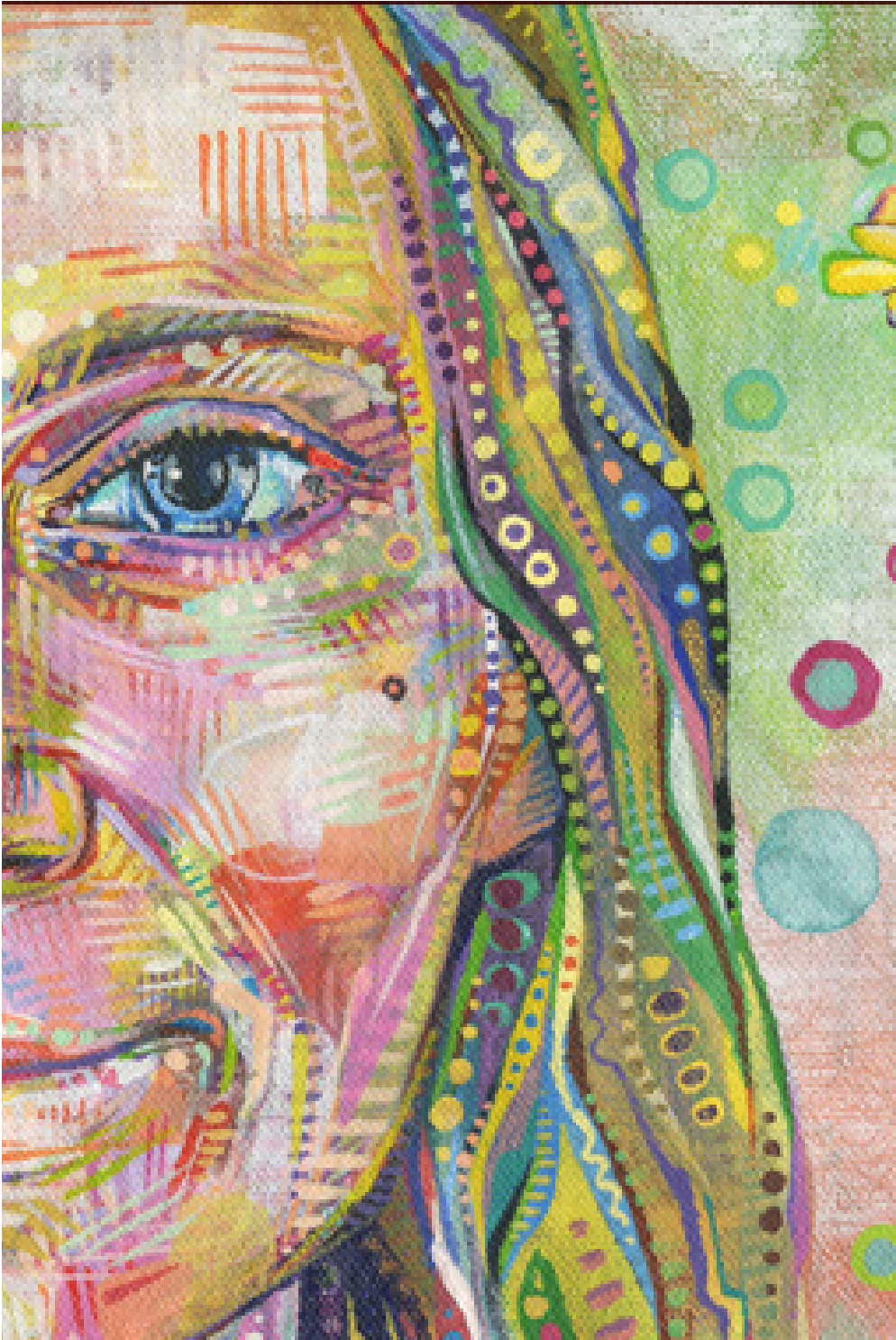
rampant in modern society. They have the courage to forge their own path and do art for reasons that are best for them.

Many participants in the art world even see making art with the intention of making a profit as impure. A border crosser doesn't have to be a commercial artist, a border crosser can be a fine artist who defies the traditional molds and myths of the artist. This working fine artist is able to work and make a living selling art and completing installations for companies or galleries. This defies the myth of the starving artist and tortured genius by proving that it is possible for an artist to be sane, well fed, and living happily as a working artist.

Being a border crosser, however, is no easy feat. Many border crossers are met with resistance and seen as irrelevant to some members of the art world. For this reason, border crossers must be fearless in their fight against the myth.



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Passion, not Pay- check

Studies conducted by Gallup revealed that 70 percent of interview subjects felt “disengaged” from their jobs. While this number is discouraging, it is not overly surprising. While some adults dislike their coworkers or bosses, another large issue is that many people in the workforce have no interest in their field. This problem starts early on, when students choose a college major based on what they believe will land them a job following graduation. In another study, done by the ACT, which involved a writing sample about why students chose their major, the word “passion” was used infrequently. Students are choosing majors based not on their interests, but on what they feel will be the most profitable following graduation. This habit that is common among many students can inhibit them from feeling happiness



and fulfillment during their schooling and can lead them to pursue a career that is not enjoyable to them. According to psychology research done by Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman, making lots of money isn't something that amounts to a notable amount of happiness. Most people who had successful creative careers weren't people who pursued money and fame, but felt fortunate that they got paid to do something they had fun doing. Earning a salary for something one loves doing, or following a calling to a career is referred to as "The Good Life." The Good Life model makes sense; if someone is

happy at work, that happiness translates into the personal life as well. Those motivated by paycheck instead of passion become bored and disgruntled. People working for passion are motivated by intrinsic reward, which encourages them to keep working to the best of their ability. This causes workers to be more productive on the job as well, because they actually enjoy what they are doing and want to keep doing more of it instead of counting down the hours and minutes until the end of the workday.

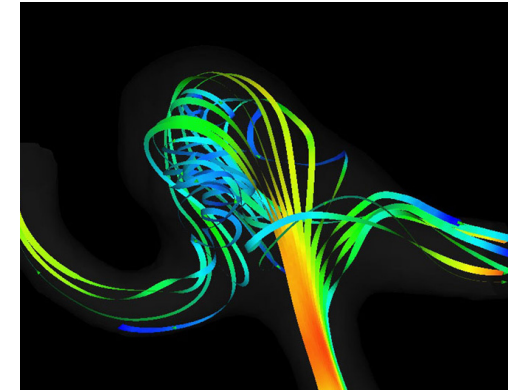
Flow

Flow is a term that refers to the state of activity where a person is so fully immersed in his or her present activity, he or she obtains a level of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the activity. It has been argued that obtaining

flow is the highest level of happiness available to humans. The more flow we feel in daily life, the more likely we are to feel happy in general. Flow is imperative in the workplace. When employees achieve flow in their work, they achieve the highest level of happiness possible and are able

to actually enjoy their jobs. In fact, they find their work so enjoyable, hours could go by with them immersed in work without them even noticing. Overall, this leads to higher workplace productivity and more happiness. Pursuing careers where it is possible to achieve flow changes the employee's purpose in the workplace. A career suddenly transforms from something pursued simply for a paycheck into something pursued because the work is satisfying to the employee. After pursuing passion, a paycheck can come as an added bonus. Being motivated by personal interest instead of monetary compensation keeps the employee from becoming tired or bored with the job. Achieving flow is imperative to overall happiness and productivity.

"TACC Visualization: Blood Flow in the Aorta" <https://www.flickr.com/photos/28285401@N05/4318538779/in/photolist-7zBD8a-qtUgMh-6aen3Y-4GME9h-CT9ZDh-bDSuiG-6aacHr-tbbAY-wxYa7-bFAoTF-GyCBr-dMx2Yt-eZQ19Z-a9gvLj-eTBgID-4jJA3c-cxquzG-a9gyvW-3fmst-feNbk-nEWTL-51vjBc-a3ZySZ-a43s8w-9ZHqHT-4Bq5oS-BvdsS-a3Zy-DZ-4ruki9-7BaNP-DIE6Ev-fezvZH-ift4e-48anQo-a7zeL5-q2gy6f-dKrInX-9YyjJ7-dqBQ-Ma-nhJAYF-tbb8g-9fJZfm-qbreUH-9RqUnZ-jeoIk-oxEuHa-EozDB7-dLRp4D-npKF-Pg-4D9sng> by electric8sheep <https://www.flickr.com/photos/28285401@N05/> is licensed under CC BY 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>



FLOW IS
A TERM COINED BY
MIHALY
CSIKSZENTMI-
HALYI AND IS AT
THE CENTER OF
PRODUCTIVITY AND
HAPPINESS IN THE
WORKPLACE

The age of Abundance



America, and most of the developed world, is experiencing an era of abundance. Abundance refers to the idea that people have everything they need and are no longer struggling to survive. The Age of Abundance naturally follows the Industrial Age and the Technology Age. During the Industrial Age, simple utility of products was enough to convince consumers to buy them. With the Technology Age, consumers became very aware of the different products available and how to obtain them. In The Age of Abundance, consumers are no longer satisfied with products that simply serve

a utilitarian purpose. Because abundance has freed hundreds of millions of people from the struggle for survival, they are able to focus on purpose and meaning in their lives. With the abundance of products available for purchase, consumers are able to choose one product over another, making the competition between companies that manufacture goods much greater. What sets one product apart from another in the marketplace? Good design. A consumer is much more motivated to buy a product, even a very simple chair or lamp, if it has a beautiful design. Today, products must have beautiful design to be competitive in the market.

Double agency Get paid to do what you love

The idea of double agency has to do with getting two or more seemingly unaligned results out of one set of operations. In other words, a double agent is someone who does what is their day job while it is at the same time their art. These two results are usually achieved in the workplace where an artist is able to have a job that allows him or her to exercise creativity and artistic talent on the job. The artist is able to take advantage of institutional structures to “put the soul to work.” Through this type of work, the artist is stimulated intellectually while at the same time earning a paycheck and working for an existing institution, which provides stability. In his book *Finding the Muse*, Mark Freeman interviews a variety of individuals who are double agents, some intentionally and some not. One interviewee worked as a billboard designer and when asked how he liked designing billboards, it was clear that he quite enjoyed his work. He is the perfect example of a double agent because he creates art that is also his day job. His work at his job serves as one set of operations, creating billboards, but

produces two results, happiness from creating art and a paycheck. Double agents sometimes are met with some resistance because they are seen as sell outs who turn from fine art to commercialized art. What should be noted, however, is that double agents are able to be happy in their work and ideally achieve flow, while at the same time have the peace of mind of knowing they will earn a paycheck. Double agency is not only a way for artists to pursue a career they love, but is also practical.



An abstract background of various shades of blue and green, created with thick, expressive brushstrokes. The colors are layered and blended, giving it a textured, painterly appearance. The text is overlaid in white, serif font.

“

**Double agency is
not only a way for
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Megan Mosholder Fine Artist.

Starving? Maybe sometimes. Tortured? Definitely not. Megan Mosholder is an artist currently living and working in the Atlanta area making her way from beginner level to mid-career level artist. She was a painting major at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), and she has worked all over the world creating art. She says that though at times it is difficult, she is doing exactly what she is passionate about and puts her heart and soul into her work each day. Though neither of her parents or anyone in her family before her were artists, she has found support from her family as well as mentors along the way. When completing her masters at SCAD, she moved to New York to be near her mentor, Teresita Fernandez, who pushed her to do her best and gave her lasting support. “She was like my real world example, Teresita was proof that you could do it” says Mosholder of Fernandez. This relationship showed

Mosholder how possible it was to pursue her career as an artist. She was able to ask Fernandez what she did after graduating from art school, and learned she had enrolled in a residency program. Mosholder then made it her goal to find a residency program for herself following her graduation from art school.



Things didn't always go according to plan, however. At the end of her time at SCAD, she was heartbroken when very few people turned out to watch her senior thesis presentation. She returned home tired and discouraged after spending a huge amount of time and money on her project. Much to her amazement, a few weeks later, photos of her project went viral all over the world. Suddenly, her flopped project wasn't a failure, but a success.

Following her graduation, Mosholder knew she would need money. Her father, who is an NSF grant writer and reviewer, helped her write her first grant application and after that she was on her own. She started looking for money very quickly. "I can be very scrappy when it comes to

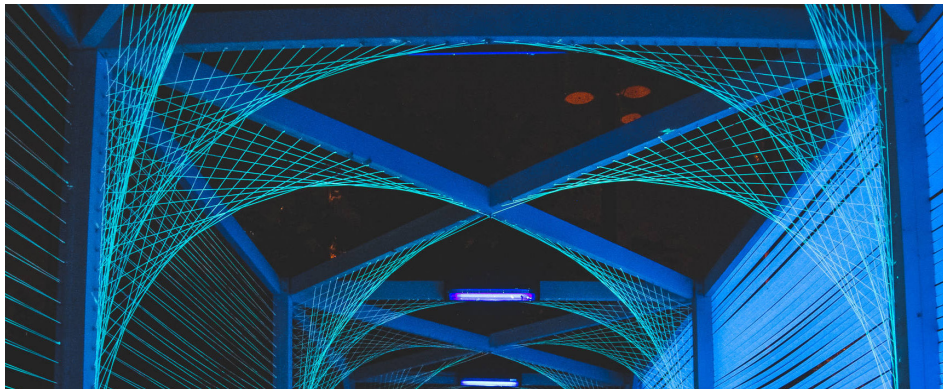
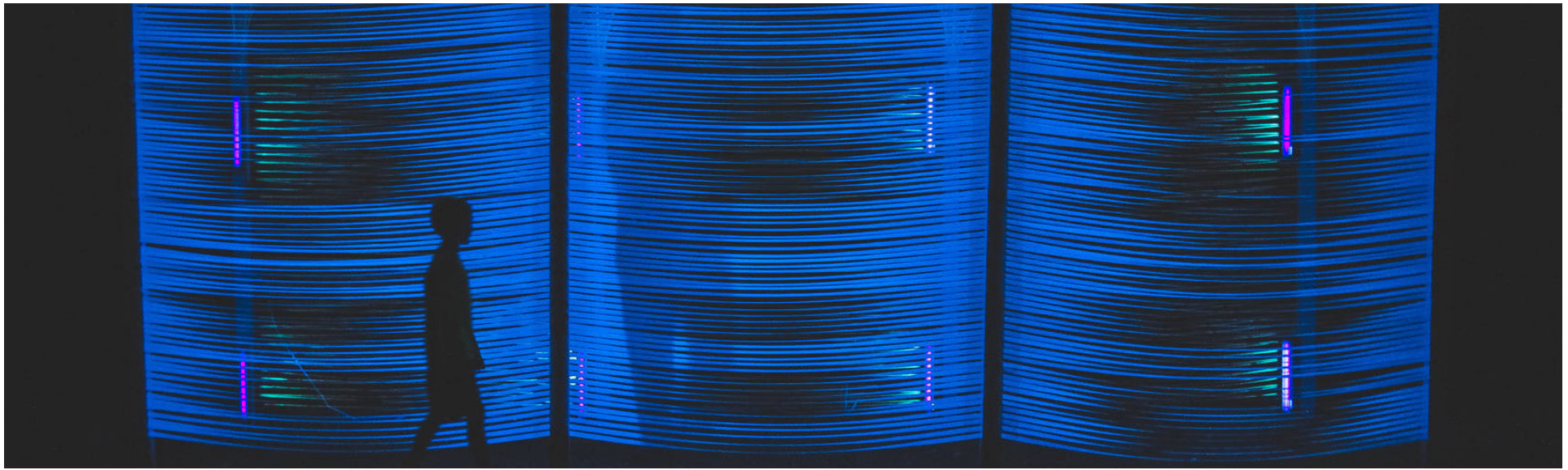
finding money, but I also learned how to give up everything and live very modestly," says Mosholder.

Eventually, Mosholder was asked to do her first public piece that was funded. This came from a former professor who was curating a show in Hilton Head and asked Megan to submit work for the show. She said she got \$2,000 for the piece, which is nothing for a professional installation, but she was able to take amazing photos of the installation that were then circulated. Mosholder learned to love these victories, however small they may be.

When asked about support from her family, she explained "my folks, they got scared and very nervous. My dad wanted me to have a practical career, like being a professor. I originally went back to school to be able to teach at the college level." Before going back to school, she was teaching at the high school level, which her father approved of. She explained that he felt that teaching was a practical way to fund her hobby. What Mosholder has realized since leaving teaching is that she can make money as an artist and really wasn't making much as a teacher anyway. "So my folks have always been supportive, but with money concerns and what not, they were always a little worried." She just got her first her first major contract, and her father, who is an attorney, looked over it and could see that there was real money to be made with this contract. She said that now her parents can see there is real money on the table and things are starting to pay off.

This contract will bring Mosholder's career from emerging to mid-level. This contract will not only allow her to continue working in the permanent public sector, which is what she wants to do, but it will also





help her to gain recognition as a mid-level artist. Moving from emerging to mid-level will allow her access to grants for mid-level artists. At this point she has exhausted all emerging artist grants, so moving to the next level is important to keep her practice running smoothly.

Mosholder is an example of an artist who has given everything it takes to pursue her dreams. She is not caught up in the myth of what it means to be an artist and remains realistic with herself. She understands that she works for a paycheck and does what she needs to do in order to fund her life. Sometimes this has meant moving back in with her parents, foregoing a relationship, or not having a steady paycheck. Mosholder said she feels that her motivation to keep working toward her dream comes from something inside her that keeps her going each day. Mosholder is proof that it is possible to defy the myth and be a working fine artist, but she is also proof that it is no easy task to follow this career path. It takes someone extremely dedicated to their work and someone who is ruthless in the pursuit for success. Mosholder embodies these traits and is able to be realistic and continue working her way up in the art world.

Gary Gruby

The Practical Photographer

Atlanta based photographer Gary Gruby prides himself on being one of the last fun photographers. Gruby sees the importance in working efficiently and in practical ways so that it is possible to have a little fun on a shoot. Gruby has worked mostly in advertising and has also done some fashion photography. He has been very practical throughout his entire career, which started in the music industry, transformed into writing jingles for banks, then finally moved into photography. Once in photography, he continued his trend of going where the work was and being flexible. He explained he was always able to find work by being resourceful. In the winter, when everyone was interested in going to Florida to do shoots, he would travel north to find work, since no one else

wanted to be there.

Gruby notes the importance of preproduction, of being prepared. He explained that if a photo shoot is set up ahead of time, things will be finished more quickly and then he and his team have more time to do fun shots or shoot something for the model's portfolio. He is creative in both composition and shooting, but also in his work style. Gruby has made his way as a creative professional by being resourceful, which is something imperative for all artists. Sometimes artists must go where there is work in order to be successful. By choosing this specific career path, Gruby may have had to think outside the box more than he would have had to in a more traditional job, but it has proved fun and rewarding.



Laura Relyea

The Editor

She doesn't have a typical day-to-day, and says that she works from her couch on some days. As the executive editor of ArtsATL, Laura Relyea said her time is split up into about 40% meetings, 40% editing, and 20% answering emails. She said she usually has a couple of meetings a day, normally with the social media manager, with the managing editor and executive editor, and also meetings with thought leaders and leaders of other organizations and publications around Atlanta. These different thought leaders work toward unifying the Atlanta art scene. "Usually I've got a couple meetings a day. And then I try and go to a couple of artistic events a week to make sure I'm out and about in the community as well. So its kind of a 24/7 type of job, which is awesome. Things I used to do for joy are just kind of the job now, which is amazing."

When asked how she got here, she explained, "I had a weird, unwieldy path to this position." She graduated from Ball State University with degrees in audio design and creative writing. She moved to Atlanta after graduation with the ambition of becoming an audio engineer, but reported that she "ran headfirst into a lot of very well built



Photo by by Brandon Barr

brick walls." But, as the saying goes, when one door closes, another opens. From there her career as an audio engineer may have crashed, but her writing took off. A record label she worked for in Indiana introduced her to a magazine in Atlanta, where she wrote a few book reviews, then became the managing editor for Scout Mob for a few years, then freelanced for a couple of years

before she was snatched up by ArtsATL. “So, I didn’t think this is where I would be, but its definitely my vocation and what I want to be doing.” Though she didn’t plan for her career to go exactly this way, Relyea says that what she is now doing is something she is passionate about and she wouldn’t change her journey. Relyea says that for her, it has always been about the creative storytelling, but it just turned out that written was a better medium than recorded.

When asked if she felt that her day job was also something she was passionate about, Relyea explained that she does do some fiction writing and nonfiction essays on the side for passion, but as an editor, finding interesting stories and shaping them is also a passion of hers. Her job and her passions aren’t mutually



Photo by Stevi Waggoner, Honey & Salt Photography at the IMA in Indianapolis

exclusive and overlap, but she does other creative work outside of ArtsATL as well. In many ways, Relyea is the ultimate double agent. Her job allows her to do something she is passionate about, while at the same time she earns a paycheck. The fact that some things she does for her job are things she did just for personal enjoyment in the past is something noteworthy. Her work is the quintessential work of a double agent. One action delivers two seemingly unaligned outcomes—Relyea being intellectually satisfied while at the same time earning a paycheck. Relyea serves as an example for young students hoping to pursue a creative career. If young students follow what they are passionate about, it eventually leads to a stimulating and rewarding career.

Erica Jamison

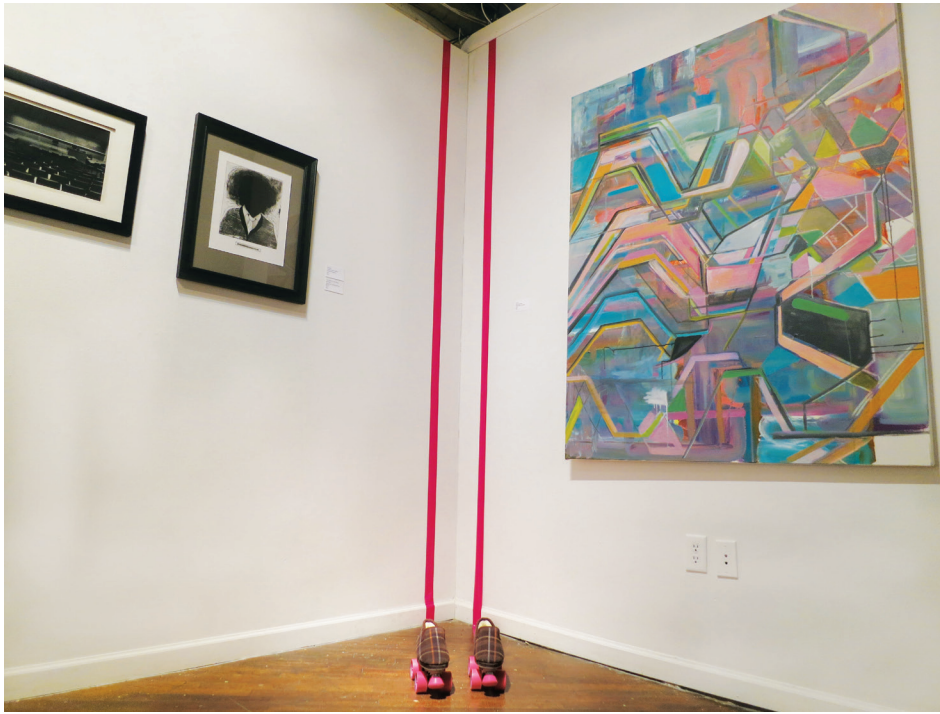
The Gallery Owner

When I entered Mint Gallery, Erica Jamison, the founder and owner, immediately asked me if I would like a beer during our interview, and I knew instantly this was a different type of gallery. This laid back attitude was apparent in all aspects of the gallery. Jamison explained that she didn't want to be the type of gallery where there was any snobbery involved. "We wanted it to really be this open door, everyone is welcome, no art experience required."

She was also interested in showing works of art that might not be showable elsewhere because they are not able to be sold by their nature. For example, she was interested in showing performance pieces, video work, things that weren't sellable, which is difficult to do with a traditional gallery. "A lot of galleries are founded by people who might not be older, but they have a lot of connections and people interested in buying work. And we weren't going to have that, that wasn't really the world I was kind of living in." Jamison was able to defeat the traditional gallery mentality and create

a space to feature emerging artists and welcome everyone to view art without intimidation. She wanted to be able to support artists without putting them under the pressure of having something to sell, and that is exactly what she did.





“We had our first event around December, 2006 and had about 200 or 300 people show up. So I kind of thought, wow, maybe this is something I really want to do.” Along with the gallery, Jamison has always had some type of other day job. With a background in film, and having been a film major at Georgia State University, Jamison worked in a post production house and a few other film related companies. The deeper she got into running the gallery, she realized it was a passion project for her, but wasn’t certain she wanted it to be her entire life. “We were going to hire staff and I told my board I did not want that staff person to be me.” She knew that the gallery needed a curator, and having no formal background in art or curation, Jamison knew that the gallery needed a formal curator to be taken seriously. “I wanted

someone with a really strong curatorial vision because we were a young and fun place, but the quality of the art was not very good. It was actually pretty bad.” While the gallery was young and fun, people would show up and drink PBRs and stay up until 2am in the gallery, Jamison knew it was time to take a more serious route to stay relevant.

Now, Mint has a few full time staff members who are in charge of the day-to-day operations and Jamison is more of the face of Mint in the community and isn’t in the gallery as much as she was five or six years ago. In fact, she recently took a job in advertising, a different type of creative community she is currently enjoying. She explained that working in the commercial ad world is refreshing in many ways. “Something that really frustrated me about the art world was that there were so many incredible people making amazing work, people running galleries that were representing artists doing amazing things, but it all felt like it was a little bit in a vacuum.” Jamison said she loves to be outside of the bubble of the art world because it gives her a whole new perspective.

Jamison has proven it is not only possible, but important to work against the myth of the artist. Her work embodies the ideals of demystification by giving emerging artists a space to show their work without making them feel as if they must rise to an intimidating ideal of a traditional gallery. She serves as a border crosser by breaking the boundaries of the traditional gallery structure and gives opportunities to everyone. She is also a double agent in her work in advertising. She is able to have a day job as well as a second business that both serve two purposes- to earn her a paycheck while at the same time satisfying her passion.

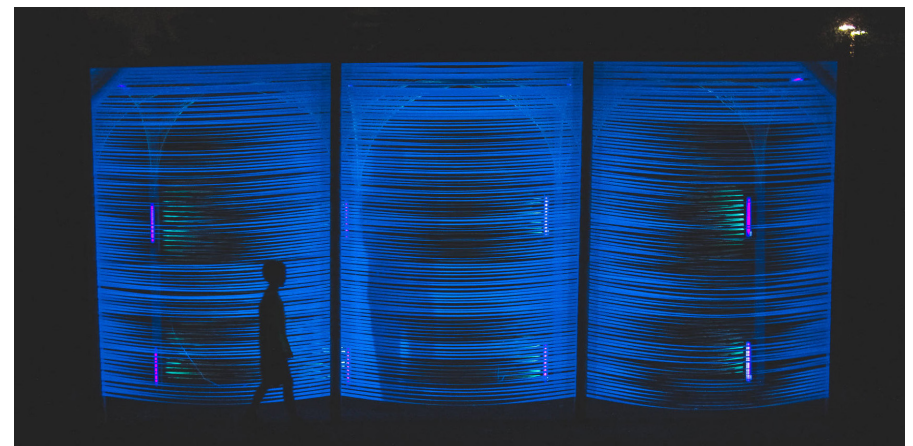
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There were
amazing people
making
amazing work



Muse:

Through my research, I have shown what the myth of the artist is, the danger of this myth, and the many ways to overcome the myth. The conclusion I draw is that it is important to drop the mythical view of the artist and the snobbery that suggests commercialized art is in some way less pure than fine art. By dropping these unrealistic views of the artist, it is possible for young people to understand realistically what it means to be an artist in the world today and take advantage of existing institutions that give them steady pay and creativity in the workplace. It is important for students to pursue studies they are passionate about to achieve lasting happiness and fulfillment. Achieving flow in the workplace and living The Good Life are especially important to employees in today's search for meaning and purpose in the Age of Abundance. Not only will pursuing these creative careers provide employees with happiness, they will also be in high demand as design and meaning become more important in business strategy and product design. Pursuing a creative career is not only possible for young artists, but essential for happiness and career success. Creativity must be pursued.





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