



By Kristina Urquhart

Or maybe creativity is
a skill that can be taught

Maybe They're Born With It

When a child is developing and learning about the world, everything they encounter becomes a creative experience. This goes beyond how they express themselves artistically to how they verbalize, how they interact with things, and even how they consider themselves. When a kid is faced with a problem, the permutations of how to solve it are seemingly infinite.

Faced with the same problem, an adult will usually fixate on one solution—the most obvious—and be done with it. On to the next. As adults, we lose a lot of the desire for creative exploration that we enjoyed as children. With intelligence and age comes more awareness—of time, of the extent of our own abilities, of outside factors that could get in the way.

Some would argue that adults transfer these mental barriers onto children as they grow up. In a widely covered 2010 study called “The Creativity Crisis,” researcher Kyung Hee Kim of the College of William and Mary in Virginia discovered that creativity in children has steadily decreased over the last 30 years. Among her findings: “Children have become less emotionally expressive,” “less humorous, less imaginative, less unconventional” and “less apt to connect seemingly irrelevant things”...all of which are required for creative thought. Ouch.

There are myriad reasons why this decline is happening, chief among them the reliance on technology to communicate and provide stimulation when we're bored. When I spoke with Irving Osterer, a teacher at Ottawa's Merivale High School for our feature on early design education (p. 34), he told me, “A lot of kids today don't have access to traditional media and the possibilities of what you can do. The reality is, when money is short, it costs a lot less to draw on a computer. There's no paint to clean up, no brushes to buy. It's just there.”

So how do we reverse this trend? Freedom, for starters—from time, from technology, from all the other constraints we impose upon kids (not to mention ourselves). And, to tie in the theme of this issue, start early. Whether that pertains to your education as a child or a young adult, or to your career doesn't matter—it's a universal truth when it comes to fostering creativity.

We're thrilled to show what starting early can do with our first-ever high school Student Award winners (p. 102). These precocious teens are being mentored by some dedicated and passionate instructors (p. 34) who have encouraged creative expression and helped their students realize the value of getting a head start. David McCreary, a teacher at Brantford Collegiate Institute, stages a film festival every year for his high schoolers to not only celebrate their creativity, but to also get them thinking critically about presenting to an audience—a skill they'll need in their future careers.

The rest of our Student Award winners starting on p. 107 reiterate that creativity in young people knows no bounds (take that, 2010 study!). “There was some really standout talent this year—student work that didn't feel like student work at all,” says jurist Marketa Krivy, also the executive creative director of Tribal Worldwide.

For those entering the work force for the first time or launching a second career in the creative industry, starting early means seeking as many opportunities as you can to advance yourself. In most cases, that means landing an internship. Several senior-level recruiters and creative pros spoke to writer Chris Daniels about what they expect of interns (p. 28), and on p. 52, Cinderbloc studio owners Ryan and Sandra Di Leo advise on what you need to begin your own freelance business.

The young partners at design start-up Post Projects did exactly that—and right out of school, no less (p. 38). Post Projects designer Beau House told our writer that he “knew we didn't have all the experience” but thought, “What the heck, let's try it!”

We could all stand to have the same attitude.

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