

# IMAGINATION UNLEASHED: A DEEP DIVE INTO THE THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF CREATIVITY

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**ABSTRACT:** This article explores the disconnect between art and creativity in our daily lives. It argues that art and creativity are closely related, and that both can be used to solve problems, express emotions, and make sense of the world. The article provides examples of how art and creativity can be used in everyday life, and suggests ways to reconnect with these important aspects of human experience.

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**Keywords:** Art, Creativity, Everyday life, Problem-solving, Expression, Meaning-making

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## 1. Introduction

This article addresses our disconnect with art and creativity in our daily lives. Reflecting on the art we have seen at local museums is challenging in our modern world. We have become too busy to pay attention to these artworks, which appear to have no bearing on our daily lives. In this way, art has become disconnected from our lives and feels distant. Additionally, the everyday creativity that enables us to solve small and large problems throughout our day is often ignored and disconnected from us. The extent of these disconnections is wide because there are many facets of art, creativity, and our daily lives. However, the scope of this article is narrow because it focuses on the similarities between art and our everyday creativity. For example, the research focuses on aspects of art that could be comparable to everyday creativity. In the same way, it also focuses on qualities of everyday creativity that could be associated with aspects of art.

This research aims to consider the similarities between art and everyday creativity. By identifying these similarities and raising awareness of them, we may see better that our everyday lives are creative and that art can be an element of our daily lives. Connecting art, creativity, and everyday life can help shorten the distance between them and reduce today's disconnect.

Accordingly, the objectives of this research are the following:

- Identify the disconnection of art in our daily lives;
- Describe the disconnection of our everyday creativity;
- Explore aspects of art and everyday creativity and identify those that are similar;
- Investigate our experiences of art and everyday creativity and identify similarities in those experiences.

The value of this study is a focus on those aspects of art and artists that are similar to aspects of creativity in our everyday lives. Here are some examples of these similarities that are described in this article.

Berger (1999, p. 20) indicates that abstractions exist in all works of art. Yet, we do not realize that abstractions also exist throughout our daily lives. We see these abstractions in pie recipes instructing us to add a cup of cherries and road signs telling us to stop at intersections.

Kant's (1987, p. 174) concept of the artist-genius who creates fine art has similarities with how we interact in our everyday lives. Each of us is a unique individual who excels at understanding how we

live in the world. Because each one of us is different, each of us is the master craftsman or genius of our own daily interactions.

Kant (1987, pp. 186-187) relates originality to the artist-genius, and this originality has similarities to the creativity in our daily lives. Here, our daily creativity is unique because it is based on our own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Accordingly, our daily creativity is original, as is the originality of Kant's artist-genius.

In Merleau-Ponty's account of art, the activity of painting occurs with the painter's body (Low, 2000, p. 57). In our own daily lives, movement is also essential. We realize the value of movement as it gives us vitality in our interactions with the world around us.

Merleau-Ponty (2012, pp. 153, 216) highlights that we perceive the world through our bodies. In this sense, our bodies are creative expressions in our development and experience of art. Creative expression also exists in our everyday lives as we develop creative solutions to many of our everyday problems.

Haworth (1997, p. 138) suggests that when painters create artwork, they incorporate their own style into the art. It is a style that grows from the painter's own perceptions and experiences. In our everyday lives, each of us also has a style that we have acquired from innumerable circumstances. We exhibit this unique style in the ways we creatively solve problems in our daily lives.

Wiskus (2013, p. 62) suggests that we do not regard an artist by a single work of art. Instead, we consider the artist's whole collection of work. In our everyday lives, we often consider ourselves and others in a similar manner. We do not define people by a particular action. Instead, we look at ourselves and others through all the actions and moments in our everyday lives.

The methodology employed in this research is based on our everyday creativity and the creative art we view in museums and galleries. Our everyday creativity is an inner creativity that occurs within us and is difficult for others, and sometimes even ourselves, to discern. The art we observe in museums is an outer creativity since it occurs outside of us and by artists who have their creative work on museum walls. An inner and outer approach is important in this research because the creativity we employ in our daily lives has an inner-outer nature. Ricoeur (1981, p. 170) describes such a methodology as a textual interpretation that enables internal and external perspectives in our research. Concentrating on these spaces of inner and outer, enables an expanded awareness in both our research and daily lives.

The findings suggest that similarities exist between art and the creativity in our everyday world. These similarities include the abstraction in art and our everyday lives, the concepts of genius and originality in art and our daily living, and how we create through our bodies.

This article contributes to the literature by illuminating these similarities and helping us realize that art and creativity are essential elements of our daily lives. In this way, the article helps shorten the distance between ourselves, art, and our daily creative lives.

This article begins by describing everyday creativity and its significance in our daily lives. It then describes the disconnect we have with art and creativity. Next, the article depicts aspects of representation and abstraction in areas of art, creativity, and our everyday lives. It investigates the concepts of genius and originality in art and everyday creativity. It also explores our experiences of art and creativity. Included are topics about being creative through our bodies, creativity as a personal expression, and the unfolding of creativity. The article then highlights the challenges and benefits of making similarities between art and our everyday creativity.

## **2. Overview of the literature**

The literature employed in this research included a methodology from Ricoeur (1981), a description of everyday creativity from Richards (2007b), and descriptions of our disconnection from art and everyday creativity (Sayers, 2014; Piancatelli et al., 2021; Saito, 2013; Richards, 2007a). The literature also included concepts we can employ to relate art to our creativity and everyday lives. Here, Berger (1999) and (Heidegger, 2001) provide a focus on the artist. Berger (1999) also explains how art is an abstraction and shows the connection between theory and practice. Literature from Kant (1987), Martiniano (2016), and Hu (2019) enables us to see how genius and originality are important aspects of art and the artist.

Works from Merleau-Ponty provide further perspectives of art, the artist, and the experience of art. He helps us see how art reveals the invisible, those aspects of our world that are just beyond our experience and that we cannot grasp (Merleau-Ponty, 2012; Sallis, 2011). Merleau-Ponty (2012) describes how we create art through our bodies (Low, 2000), how art is a personal expression (Carman, 2020; Wiskus, 2013), and how creativity is non-linear (Wiskus, 2013). He also depicts how painting is an unfolding and recentering (Merleau-Ponty, 2004; Wiskus, 2013; Low, 2000). Merleau-Ponty (2004) further shows how the creation of art is a movement toward truth. Wiskus (2013) highlights the rhythm of creating art and how the artist is defined by her or his body of work. Indeed, comparing art to our creativity and daily lives is challenging, and Saito (2013) and Heidegger (2001) highlight some of these challenges. However, many aspects of art and the artist described in the literature can be adapted to depict our own creativity and everyday lives.

## **3. Everyday creativity**

When discussing creativity, some of us may consider an impressionist painting by Monet or an emotional poem by Wordsworth. Those creators and their works were indeed innovative, but that type of creativity differs from the focus of this discussion.

Here, creativity is not just for the few people whom critics and researchers have chosen. Instead, this creativity is for every person, regardless of who the person is or what the person does for a living. Creativity is not just for those who paint canvases or pen thoughtful wordings. This creativity is for every person who performs the ordinary activities of our daily lives. It is about the creativity we use to help a neighbor down the street and care about people in general. Ruth Richards describes everyday creativity as an essential component throughout our day:

Indeed, everyday creativity is about everyone, throughout our lives; it is fundamental to our survival. It is how we find a lost child, get enough to eat, and make our way in a new place and culture. It is not so much what we do as how we do it, whether this is at work or at leisure. With our everyday creativity, we adapt flexibly, we improvise, and we try different options, whether we are raising our child, counseling a friend, fixing our home, or planning a fundraising event. (Richards, 2007b, pp. 25-26)

In our modern day, our lives are challenged with hectic schedules, social complexities, and daily problems that range from small to large. To meet these challenges successfully, we must be creative in our approach to them. For example, we switch around work meetings to take a sick child to the doctor, devise new conversations in tense social situations, and find detours when storms block the road ahead. The creativity we use to resolve these challenges is vital in our everyday lives.

## **4. A disconnect of art and everyday creativity**

There is a disconnect between our everyday world and the world of art. For example, in our everyday lives, we rarely reflect on modern pieces we have seen at a local art museum. Nor do we stop and

consider a sculpture we pass at a library entrance. In our hurried pace, these works are only objects or, at best, decorations that have no bearing on our daily lives. In this sense, art feels distant to us and possibly so distant that it exists only in a different time and place. This disconnect is a challenge that museums and galleries confront daily. The distance of art can make it difficult to get people into those art spaces. Creating greater access is a priority, as well as increasing the diversity of visitors and the range of artworks (Sayers, 2014, p. 356).

Unfortunately, the challenge is not over when a visitor enters the building. One problem is that not everyone has the same education and cultural frame of reference needed to appreciate different artworks (Sayers, 2014, p. 357). Art spaces must engage visitors to create a bond between visitors, artworks, viewing spaces, and the overall experience. Increasing visitor engagement can involve educational activities within museums to enhance the visitor's experience. Recent engagement models include dialogs with the museum's brand (Piancatelli et al., 2021, p. 139). New technologies can also enable visitors to participate actively in creative processes (Piancatelli et al., 2021, p. 142).

The distance between fine arts and our everyday lives can seem immense. That is, it can be challenging to appreciate the aesthetics of art when it is difficult to associate art with our everyday lives. However, our everyday lives already contain a wealth of aesthetic experiences. These experiences are broad because we can like or dislike many different things.

Aesthetics can be viewed as an appreciation of the world around us, marking our degree of liking or disliking something. For example, an aesthetics of art could indicate how much we appreciate a traditional painting by Renoir or pop art by Warhol. Aesthetics can also apply to how much we like church steeples, bridges, and everyday furniture. For instance, you may like all types of steeples, only covered wooden bridges, and everyday furniture when handcrafted.

For Yuriko Saito, our appreciation of things in our everyday experience is sparse. When we think of aesthetics, we focus on fine art rather than things we interact with throughout the day. "As a result, other dimensions of our aesthetic life that we engage in almost daily, in forming preferences, judgments, design strategies, or courses of action, become neglected" (Saito, 2013, p. 11).

Our everyday creativity is also underappreciated and often ignored. In our hectic lives, it is easy to be unaware of the creativity we use to solve daily problems. In short, it is impossible to pay attention to everything. Unfortunately, for some people, our everyday creativity becomes unimportant. As Richards remarks, "for them, everyday creativity seems an 'extra,' set apart from the rest of life. People who believe this are depriving themselves of their creative birthright" (Richards, 2007a, p. 4).

For Richards, the general devaluation of our everyday creativity is more than simply ignoring it. Instead, it seems as if our everyday creativity has been taken away from us:

...it becomes even more important to ask why the creativity we take seriously is widely considered exclusive to eminent or exceptional people — just think about media coverage of famous artists, actors, authors, inventors, public figures — in preference to the creativity we all can manifest. (Richards, 2007a, p. 4)

In our everyday lives, we have opportunities to be creative through solving problems and trying out new ideas. Although we are creative throughout our day, we do not notice that we are creative. One way of taking notice of our creativity may be through associating it with art. In the sections ahead, this article will show that art is connected to our daily lives and that our everyday creativity is connected to art. In these associations, we may see the importance of our own creativity and the pervasiveness of it in our daily lives.

## **5. The representation and abstraction of art and everyday creativity**

In our everyday lives, we come across various objects, actions, and events that represent something. That is, they exhibit aspects of some other thing and, in a way, take the place of that thing. Art has similar qualities. According to Karol Berger, all art is a representation and is so through varying degrees of abstraction:

In this sense, figurative and abstract painting are both species of representational art. They differ only in the kind of concepts, figurative ("woman") or abstract ("rectangle"), under which we bring what we see in the painting. More precisely, I should prefer to say that they differ in the degree of abstraction of the concepts under which we bring what we see in the painting. (Berger, 1999, p. 26)

The abstraction that Berger describes does not come from the art itself but does so from the person who created it. Heidegger also suggests that to find the origin of art, we must not look at the art but instead toward the artist. (In the same passage, Heidegger also suggests that artwork's origin is art. The paradox of Heidegger's view of art is discussed later in this article.):

The work's createdness, however, can obviously be grasped only in terms of the process of creation. This, constrained by the facts, we must consent after all to go into the activity of the artist in order to arrive at the origin of the work of art. The attempt to define the work-being of the work purely in terms of the work itself proves to be unfeasible. (Heidegger, 2001, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, p. 56)

This quality of originality is intriguing because it corresponds to aspects of our everyday lives. For example, every piece of art, or every creative work of art, has a unique origin. Originality also appears in our everyday lives and our everyday creativity. Our everyday creativity is original because it arises from our own thoughts, feelings, and experiences, which occur in different places, at varying times, and in diverse contexts. These aspects of originality show that art and everyday creativity share a quality of originality. This sharing may seem insignificant, but it does point to art and everyday creativity having similar characteristics.

### **5.1 Abstraction in art and our everyday lives**

We see abstractions throughout our daily lives. For example, when we bake a pie or drive to the store, we attend only to the general process of adding ingredients and following traffic signs. Rather than pay attention to whether we should only add one cup of cherries or whether to stop at the intersection, we attend to the recipe and road signs.

These abstractions exist everywhere we go; for Berger, they exist in all art (Berger, 1999, p. 20). In the context of creating art, abstraction comes from within us, as in the conception and development of the artwork. For Berger, this abstraction can become severe since, for him, art can be completely abstract: There is no reason to doubt that we are capable of making such objects, objects designed to be looked at, but not to represent any features of the visual world: in the late twentieth century, our public spaces are full of them. And not only an immobile, but also a moving three dimensional work can remain abstract. When a ballet is not narrative or representational in any way, we are not asked to see in the body of the dancer anything other than itself. (Berger, 1999, p. 20)

Berger's suggestion that all art contains a degree of abstraction feels right because no painting or sculpture could completely mimic what it represents. However, his claim that some art could be entirely abstract does not seem to fit our experience in the world.

In our daily lives, our thoughts, feelings, and experiences are about something. However, we can devise the idea of a thought that is entirely about nothing. In this devised thought, the nothing that we refer



to would be utterly devoid of anything, including other concepts. Although such a thought is conceivable in a theoretical context, in our actual daily living, even the idea of nothingness is about something.

Art is also about something. It could be as tangible as a small house on a morning prairie or as abstract as a circle of red on a white museum wall. Nevertheless, even that red circle is about something — it could be redness, circularity, or a rebellion against prairie houses in morning fields. The artist's motive may be challenging to see, yet the work is still about something. This discussion of abstraction shows that art and our everyday living share a quality of abstraction. Both are about something, even if that something is highly abstract.

## **5.2 The relationship between theory and practice**

The association between our everyday lives and art extends when we consider theory and practice. Berger's view of theory and practice is in the context of aesthetics, yet it matches how we use theory and practice in our everyday lives:

It is only when this practical knowledge begins to fail me in some ways, or, more crucially, when the practice itself runs into difficulties, that a need for a more explicit theory articulating the point and the norms of the practice arises. Once born, a theory may acquire an internal dynamic of its own and develop more or less independently of any promptings from a stalled practice. But it may also begin to influence the practice, to help it run more smoothly by making its norms more transparent and by correctly identifying its point. This sort of two-way traffic between practice and theory is to be expected in any area of social action that has achieved a certain degree of maturity. The aesthetic domain is no exception. (Berger, 1999, pp. 9-10)

The two-way relationship between theory and practice seems natural. In other words, we see many connections between theory and practice in our ordinary lives. They are closely twined to one another, even though we may consider them separate and distinct. For example, we may believe that theory must be developed before any practice occurs. However, we see that practice can happen before we develop a theory. Moreover, varying degrees of theory and practice may affect each other in different ways.

We see a multiplicity of connections between theory and practice through everyday observation. In various ways, theory and practice apply to many everyday situations. Baking a pie and driving to the store are two simple examples. Theory and practice also apply to our everyday creativity. We theorize about this creativity in journals and books, as this article does now. However, the usage or practice of everyday creativity makes it vital to the ordinary and not-so-ordinary problem-solving that our daily lives demand.

## **6. Genius and originality in art and everyday creativity**

In his book *Critique of Judgment*, Kant did not chronicle everyday creativity. However, in that book, his description of the judgment of beauty contains aspects of everyday creativity.

Everyday creativity is distinctive because it is based on our own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. That is, the creative solutions I devise may be different from yours. This difference suggests that each of us is the best person to create suitable solutions for ourselves. Since we are different from one another, I am likely good at creating solutions that accommodate the way I think and feel about the world. Similarly, you are likely to excel at creating solutions that are best for you. In this way, each one of us is the master craftsperson or genius of our own everyday creativity.

Kant also employs the concept of genius though he does so in the context of fine art. In his description of this genius, Kant mentions the concept of rules:

Genius is the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art. Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: Genius is the innate mental predisposition (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art. (Kant, 1987, p. 174)

In his detail of the genius of fine art, Kant shows that rules are vital to the genius's creative process: Since, however, a product can never be called art unless it is preceded by a rule, it must be nature in the subject (and through the attunement of his powers) that gives the rule to art; in other words, fine art is possible only as the product of genius. (Kant, 1987, p. 175)

However, as Martiniano highlights, these rules are elusive. The artist-genius cannot explain the creative process because this genius cannot recall the rules she or he employed. "The creative genius, however, produces 'that which no determinate rule can be given' and cannot articulate what it is or how he or she came to it" (Martiniano, 2016, p. 162).

A similar challenge occurs in our everyday world. When we solve a problem in our daily lives, we can express an argument that brought us to our solution. However, upon deeper reflection, the details of the actual internal processes we employed seem to elude us.

Another aspect of Kant's concept of the artist-genius is highlighted by Hu. According to Hu, during the activity of creating art, the artist-genius is the first person to experience its beauty. It is afterward, in galleries and museums, that others would also appreciate that beauty:

In the process of creating art, the aesthetic judgment is made firstly by the work's producer (genius is the innate mental talent of a gifted artist who makes genuine art). If an artwork is regarded as beautiful, then it means that the work will have been judged as such by its first observer, the artist, although the universal validity of taste Kant grants to taste guarantees that the artwork's beauty will be appreciated also by anyone else with taste. (Hu, 2019, p. 131)

This initial awareness by the artist-genius and later by appreciative observers works well in an art context. A work of fine art, for example, is a physical object that the artist brings forth and that others can later observe. However, a physical testament is not readily apparent in the context of everyday creativity. Accordingly, the inner creativity we produce throughout our day may be noticed by the person who performed it but could be difficult to discern by another person.

#### **6.1 Originality in everyday creativity**

Another aspect of our everyday creativity is its uniqueness. This aspect is interesting because it means another person cannot imitate our everyday creativity. This distinction of creativity makes sense when we consider that our everyday creativity is based on our thoughts, feelings, and experiences that cannot be completely imitated. In this way, our everyday creativity is original.

Kant also discusses originality, and he does so in the context of the artist-genius. For Kant, the significance of this originality is that it reflects the uniqueness of each artist:

Genius is a talent for producing something for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition consisting of a skill for something that can be learned by following some rule or other; hence the foremost property of genius must be originality. (Kant, 1987, p. 175)

Kant continues his discussion by saying that another person cannot imitate this originality. Although, as Kant describes, we can appropriate the originality from another person and use it in our own way as a model:

Accordingly, the product of a genius (as regards what is attributable to genius in it rather than to possible learning or academic instruction) is an example that is meant not to be imitated, but to be followed by another genius. . . . The other genius, who follows the example, is aroused by it to a feeling

of his own originality, which allows him to exercise in art his freedom from the constraint of rules. (Kant, 1987, pp. 186-187)

Kant's explanation of originality is similar to how we incorporate ideas and actions from others today. In the context of our everyday lives, we may consider another person's ideas from a book we read or a movie we saw. However, if those other ideas do not align with our inner selves, then our use of them will likely lead us astray.

Kant's concepts of the artist-genius and originality do not correlate precisely with everyday creativity. However, in our daily lives, each of us can be a master craftsman or genius of our everyday creativity. Additionally, everyday creativity is unique for each of us, and since it is based on our thoughts, feelings, and experiences, it is original.

Kant could not have anticipated the cultural and social structures that exist today in the twenty-first century. Accordingly, his work cannot be expected to meet all the challenges we face in our culture and society. However, some aspects of the artist-genius and originality discussed above could provide an impetus for further investigation and analysis of everyday creativity in the context of Kant's work.

## **7. Experiencing art and creativity in our everyday lives**

Our world consists of what is visible and what is not. In our everyday lives, we encounter and engage with things we can see, touch, and hear. These are the things in our awareness, knowledge, and deliberate interactions. However, there are other things that we cannot see — that we somehow feel exist, but we cannot put our finger on what they are. These are the things that Merleau-Ponty describes when he talks about the invisible:

For these truths are not only hidden like a physical reality which we have not been able to discover, invisible in fact but which we will one day be able to see facing us, which others, better situated, could already see, provided that the screen that masks it is lifted. Here, on the contrary, there is no vision without the screen: the ideas we are speaking of would not be better known to us if we had no body and no sensibility; it is then that they would be inaccessible to us. (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 380)

For Merleau-Ponty, art paintings reveal aspects of things we usually do not see. They enable a new visibility to arise and open up what is invisible to us in our daily lives (Sallis, 2011, p. 21). We may not have suspected that similarities exist between the art that Merleau-Ponty describes and the creativity we employ in our everyday lives. However, the descriptions and analysis below show that some similarities do exist.

### **7.1 Through our bodies**

We use more than our thinking and reasoning to create and interact in the world. In our creative actions, we consider whether we are creating in the particular way we want and check whether our results meet our expectations. This accounting of our likes, dislikes, and sensibilities is an aesthetic within us. It exists in our bodies, and as we move through the day, we survey our bodies to gather a sense of whether our creative actions are right for us.

For Merleau-Ponty, painting is an activity that occurs with the painter's body. This body is not an object but a body of synthesis, a body of "vision and movement" (Low, 2000, p. 57). Movement is vital to our interaction with the world, whether we walk up a rugged woodland path or sit quietly in meditation and feel the cool air in our nostrils. In many ways, we feel more alive when we participate with the world through movement.

Merleau-Ponty points out that our perception of the world occurs through our body (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, pp. 153, 216). Here, a similarity exists between our bodies and works of art because both are



creative expressions. The similarity highlights a meaningfulness, or significance, within those artworks and our human bodies:

A novel, a poem, a painting, and a piece of music are individuals, that is, beings in which the expression cannot be distinguished from the expressed, whose sense is only accessible through direct contact, and who send forth their signification without ever leaving their temporal and spatial place. It is in this sense that our body is comparable to the work of art. It is a knot of living significations and not the law of a certain number of covariant terms. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 153)

## **7.2 As a personal expression**

It seems evident that art is an expression. For instance, theatre, poetry, dance, and music are expressive creations of the people who write and perform them. Painting is also an expression though it may seem less noticeable when the painting is an accurately detailed portrait of a landscape or person. However, the work behind paintings permeates with expressive brush strokes, color choices, and a connection with the painter's own aesthetics.

Art allows us to see aspects of our world in new ways. The colors in a painting do this by drawing our attention to particular areas of the canvas and thus enable parts of our visible world to resound and come closer. The colors on the canvas enable expression to arise — an expression that becomes a work of art. However, the colors are also a style that emerges from the artist's creativity.

In Wiskus's (2013, p. 60) analysis of Merleau-Ponty, art is not a preconceived notion to be developed by the artist but instead is an expression of style that is part of who the artist is as a person. Here, art is not created to imitate life or to conduct oneself according to good taste.

Instead, it is a process of human expression (Wiskus, 2013, p. 61). This emphasis on expression shows the twined connection between art, style, and our own personal creativity.

According to Carman (2020, p. 173), Merleau-Ponty employed this creative human expression in our experience of the everyday world. Merleau-Ponty differentiated this creative expression from inadequate ways of experiencing by referring to a geometrical perspective as an older and insufficient view of our sensible world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 272).

In our everyday world, we can see how using such a perspective becomes inadequate. When we pay close attention to our senses, we find that geometry does not come into play. We must first think of the concept of geometry, then embed it into our senses for that perspective to occur. The result would be a false encounter that moves us away from an experience of truth. Rather than operate that old view, we should experience through the complementary association between ourselves and the world (Haworth, 1997, p. 137). That is, we should live through our own creative human expression.

According to Haworth (1997, p. 138), painters put their styles into their artwork. This style is a mastery that develops through their experience, perception, and overall view of the world. In our everyday lives, the things we build and the problems we solve also have a uniqueness that belongs to each of us. This uniqueness comes from the manner in which we build and solve. It is a way that we have learned from countless circumstances and predicaments in our daily lives. It is a creative style of our own that we develop and use every day.

## **7.3 Nonlinear creativity**

For Merleau-Ponty, according to Wiskus (2013, p. 63), the creation of an artwork arises through ponderous details that interact with other elements of the artwork. Over time the work achieves a form of completion but not in a linear process or as a manifestation of a predetermined concept. Instead, it is only afterward, in retrospect, that the painter can see the concept of the artistic result.

We tend to think that our actions and everyday lives occur linearly. In our childhood, we were taught that the world works in a sequential fashion. However, the more we learn about the world, the less sequential it appears. For example, our written language provides a linear framework — it is structured in a stepwise manner of sentences and paragraphs. Yet, we are challenged to employ language to depict our experiences fully. Even our memories maintain a set of linear steps when we replay how we made decisions. Though in this replay, our memory ignores the chance circumstances and awry decision-making that occurred along the way. Eventually, we learn that the experience of our everyday world — how we live and create throughout our day — does not occur in clear, sequential, or explainable steps.

#### **7.4 An unfolding of creativity**

For Merleau-Ponty, the art of painting is no small endeavor. Each brush stroke is vital to the larger composition that unfolds through effort and time:

If the painter is to express the world, the arrangement of his colors must carry with it this indivisible whole, or else his picture will only hint at things and will not give them in the imperious unity, the presence, the insurpassable plenitude which is for us the definition of the real. That is why each brushstroke must satisfy an infinite number of conditions. Cézanne sometimes pondered hours at a time before putting down a certain stroke.... Expressing what exists is an endless task. (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 400)

According to Wiskus (2013, p. 63), every brush stroke is a recentering. Each stroke is a new initiation of an element of the painting and evolves from a creative recentering of the work. Such an exercise may remind us of our daily lives when it seems that each step we take, each problem we solve, requires starting anew as if we had never learned from our past experiences. In this way, a work of art constantly unfolds toward new aspects. It is a synthesis that continually opens and is neverendingly developing and arising.

An unfolding of our everyday lives occurs in our ordinary ways of living. That is, our surroundings change, sometimes slightly and other times profoundly. The people we frequently interact with change; they alter their viewpoints and tastes of what they like and do not like. This operation of changing and arising in our daily lives is an unfolding of the day, our perceptions, and ourselves (Low 2000, 68). In a sense, like works of art, our everyday lives continually unfold with a never-ending developing and arising. As Merleau-Ponty (2004, p. 400) describes about careful brushstrokes and Wiskus (2013, p. 63) about recentering, the activities of expression and calibration also occur in the creativity we employ in our daily challenges.

#### **7.5 The rhythm of art and daily living**

Another similarity between art and our daily lives is the rhythm that exists within them. A work of art has a rhythm that highlights aspects of the art and aspects of ourselves. We see this rhythm in music and poetry, and this rhythm connects to us. It connects because we understand the language that rhythm speaks. Rhythm, though, does not belong only to music and poetry but also to painting (Wiskus, 2013, p. 123).

In a painting, a single canvas contains a resonance and rhythm that the painter expresses in the work. That is, it communicates a language of resonance that touches us. It depicts a range of rhythms in the exchange of small talk at a café and the larger cycle of woodland seasons.

In our daily lives, there is also a rhythm that is not easy to notice. There is a pace to our daily lives, a flow to how we move through our work, and a pattern to our social interactions. Such a pattern can be

seen when passing the same people on a busy sidewalk. Even the regularity of waiting in a coffee shop queue has a pattern of movement, while the banter in the background has a particular flow.

The creative activity that occurs within these rhythms — in the practice of painting a woodland scene or in the banter of a café lounge — is not readily apparent or even visible. However, that creative activity is crucial in the evolving cadence of the artwork and our daily lives.

### **7.6 A movement toward truth**

The process of creativity encompasses constant checking and re-checking. This monitoring helps us determine that our development is moving in the right direction. It allows us to discern if we are constructing in the proper manner. It provides the space to make improvements along the way. It examines our feelings about the things we are creating. Based on these inspections, we may change our path as we move ever closer to the composition of the thing we are building. This calibration of movement and pathways, this reaching toward the composition, is also a closer realization of the composition. In a sense, it is a movement that is closer to the composition's truth.

This association of creativity and truth arises in Merleau-Ponty's concept of art. For him, art is connected to truth because in the act of creating art, in the performance of art, truth comes into being. He remarks, "philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being" (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, pp. 115-116).

However, for Merleau-Ponty, this does not mean that creativity offers a concept of truth. On the contrary, truth is a movement away from concepts and toward an openness of perception and art. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, we must live with an openness of our senses in our experience of the world. Otherwise, we become disconnected from the truth and move further away from reality (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, pp. 110-111).

In our everyday world, we can see how pre-existing notions contribute to the challenge of our interactions. For example, we maintain concepts about others that are not based on our actual experience but are rooted in false notions. The outcome is conflict within ourselves, with others, and with the environment in which we live. In the context of everyday creativity, reducing our preconceived notions and experiencing with openness helps us resolve some of those conflicts and moves us toward a truth in our everyday living.

### **7.7 A body of work**

A further similarity between art and our daily lives arises in how we define artists and ourselves. When we describe a particular artist, we do not consider only a single work. Instead, we realize that every work from that artist is a movement toward a more complete compendium, and in Merleau-Ponty's terms, the artist's move toward a complete encounter with the phenomenal world (Wiskus, 2013, p. 62).

Our everyday lives are similar. We are not defined by a single action we perform, a book we read, or a moment with a friend. Instead, our lives, basically who we are, can only be described by looking at all our actions and moments, which also can be described as all the creative activities in our everyday lives.

## **8. The challenges of similarities**

The analysis of art and everyday creativity suggests that the two may be more similar than expected. However, comparing art and everyday creativity has challenges; two are described here.

One challenge is based on Heidegger's suggestion that art is a riddle. In his essay, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger indicates it is challenging to tell where art comes from, its purpose, and what it means to us. After discussing art in the context of work and truth, he explains in the "Epilogue" that

we are left with a riddle. "The foregoing reflections are concerned with the riddle of art, the riddle that art itself is. They are far from claiming to solve the riddle. The task is to see the riddle". (Heidegger, 2001, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, p. 77)

If we accept Heidegger's view that we do not understand art, we cannot compare art well to everyday creativity. Accordingly, in this quandary, we do not know enough about art to say whether it is similar or dissimilar to everyday creativity.

Another challenge is based on Saito's suggestion that not everything in the world is art and that not every person is an artist. For Saito, non-art objects can express ideas and values. However, they cannot make statements the way that artworks can (Saito, 2013, pp. 35-36). Accordingly, it is wrong to look at everyday things as works of art (Saito, 2013, pp. 40-41):

If everyone is an artist and everything is art, then those features which characterize art, whether of paradigmatic Western art or including contemporary Western art and non-Western cultural practices, will lose relevance because there will be no distinction between art and nonart. This will signal the demise of art-centered aesthetics. (Saito, 2013, p. 42)

Saito's point challenges the similarity of art and everyday creativity. Appreciation of art and artists is important because they provide meaning to our cultures, societies, and even the events of our day. Diluting these sources of meaning could diminish their value and the meaning in our everyday lives.

#### **9. The benefits of similarities**

Similarities between art and our everyday creativity have been depicted throughout this article. In presenting those similarities, the interconnections of art, creativity, and our everyday lives were described. These similarities and connections point to benefits that may arise from simply being aware of the similarities and connections. Here is a summary of those benefits:

- The belief that each of us is an artistic genius in the way we uniquely solve everyday problems and interact with the world around us;
- The understanding that our creative problem-solving and our view of the world is original for each one of us;
- The awareness that we can view ourselves as individuals who create and live through our bodies — through movements and with our senses in a tactile world;
- The perspective that our living, like our thinking and creativity, does not occur in a linear fashion;
- The sense that our creativity and lives occur in a rhythm of people and places and that we are immersed in that rhythm and participate in it;
- The realization that we are a body of work and are not defined by a handful of moments or a single creative act. Instead, we are defined by all the moments and all the creative actions in our lives.

#### **10. Conclusion**

This article began by explaining our disconnect with art and everyday creativity. It discussed similarities between art, creativity, and our daily lives. The article described the representation and abstraction of art and how that relates to our daily creativity. It also discussed the concepts of genius and originality in art and showed how they exist in everyday creativity.

Further similarities were depicted in our experiences of art and daily creativity. Those similarities included how we create through our bodies, that our creativity and lives are nonlinear, and that we live and create in rhythms. Finally, the article pointed out the challenges and benefits of making similarities between art and everyday creativity.

These findings show that similarities exist between art and the creativity in our daily lives.

Awareness of these similarities is important because they help us realize that art and creativity are essential elements of our daily lives. Through this awareness and realization, a shortening of the distance between ourselves, art, and everyday creativity could emerge.

Further investigations could identify additional similarities between art and everyday creativity. For example, an investigation could focus on the experiences of exploring a modern-art museum and an old barn filled with everyday farming artifacts. Examining the works in those spaces and how we use those works could provide insight into the aesthetics of our daily lives and how this aesthetics is connected to our everyday use of tools.

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