

# Chapter 5

## The Creative Process and Social Responsibility



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**Abstract** Creativity can have a communal aspect when a group of people have a common goal. With the added advantage of an objective, creativity can be channeled and directed in specific directions and become centered around a focused set of ideas and principles. This can be applied to particular areas of human concern such as civic society, health and well-being, health services, rehabilitation, business regeneration, wartime resilience, and preparing for the future. Examples from these areas are presented in order to understand how creativity has been instrumental in achieving positive goals and has acted as a driver and motivator of change for individuals and communities.

**Keywords** Civic society · Collective creativity · Collective action · Collective growth · Creative innovation · Creative health · Game play · Online toolkits · Personal development · Social change

### 5.1 Introduction

The British academic and writer, Oli Mould, suggests alternative ways of thinking about creativity. He sees it not as a neoliberal commodity, but more a freedom to reimagine the future. For Mould, creativity is not an individual trait, that selfishly exploits the marketplace, but a collective endeavor that can improve society without a focus on profit [1]. This modus operandi is evident in many current artist-led creative projects that sit outside the traditional market model, and rather than promoting the individual, they promote artists' collective actions. Socially engaged art practices are collaborative, often participatory, and involve people as the medium for debate or social interaction. This chapter describes the ways in which artists have contributed to the Covid-19 pandemic recovery through community action, useful art, arts in health and digital health. Ty Pawb, a creative collective hub and gallery in Wrexham North Wales is presented as a case study to demonstrate the unique way in which an arts organization can serve communities and foster creative resilience for the public good.

## 5.2 Creativity Technology and Social Responsibility

Over recent years, there has been a growing understanding and awareness of the impact that participating in the arts can have on health and well-being. The arts are uniquely placed to help people to gain a greater sense of control over their lives. Having a sense of personal control has been identified as a key to wellbeing [2]. Complementing medicine and care, the arts can improve the health of people, prevent disease, and promote well-being.

Technology has enabled the spread of creative projects and social movements that are key to health and wellbeing through facilitating the documenting and sharing of projects on the internet to new audiences. For example, the British artists and curators Frances Williams, Anthony Schrag and Becky Shaw critique the instrumentalization of the arts in the field of ‘arts in health’ by staged interventions that are documented for dissemination beyond the live event itself. They curated a number of arts projects with student nurses at Kings College London, entitled “Hiding in Plain Sight” to comment on the UK National Health Service cuts and austerity measures, by offering the arts through social prescribing to ameliorate health service pressures [3].

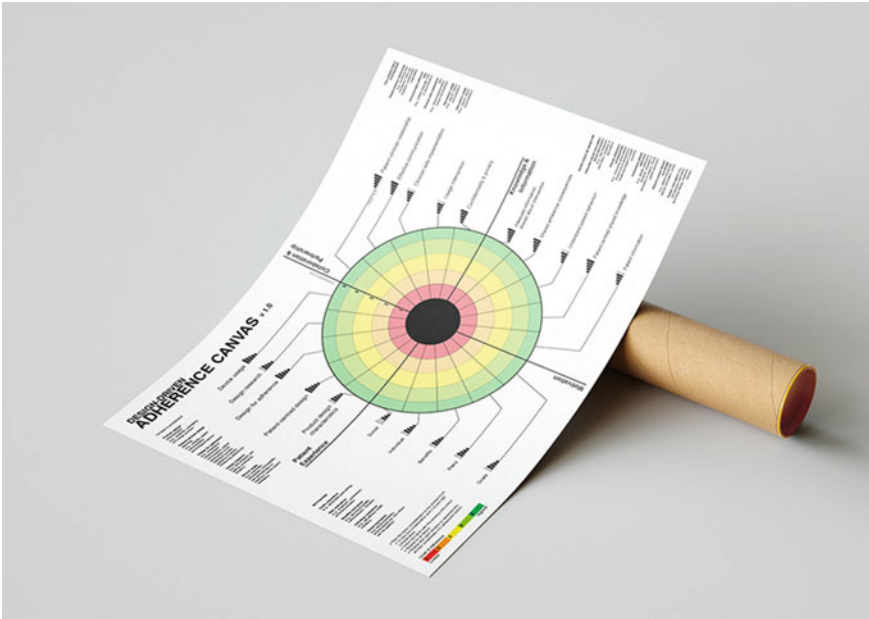
Their short film, “The Song of the Compassionate Robot” [4] comes from their ‘Secret Society of Imperfect Nurses’ and takes a near-future vision of nursing. In it the robot nurse suggests that the health care system is broken (ibid) and cannot accommodate human ‘creativity’, because of a lack of time.

‘Creative Health’ is the term used to describe a movement of artists and health professionals campaigning for healthcare systems to better utilize the creative arts in supporting health and wellbeing outcomes. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes that digital technologies can accelerate health innovation. Digital health has rapidly accelerated since the Covid-19 pandemic and The World Health Summit [5], ViVE [6], Reuters Digital Health [7] and The World Medical Innovation Forum [8] are now staging digital health conferences. One example of digital health innovation is graphic designer/academic Rafiq Elmansy’s adherence canvas research project. This focuses on the role of design thinking and technology in improving patient adherence to self-administered treatment technology (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2) [9].

If creativity leads to invention and invention leads to new innovations, then artists will always be necessary. FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) is



**Fig. 5.1** Design driven adherence Canvas, Rafiq Elmansy, 2021. *Copyright* © Rafiq Elmansy 2022 and reproduced by permission



**Fig. 5.2** Design driven adherence Canvas, Rafiq Elmansy, 2021. *Copyright* © Rafiq Elmansy 2022 and reproduced by permission

an arts organization in Liverpool that supports digital culture and enriches lives with exhibitions, film screenings and arts projects. Their workshop program DO SOMETHING SATURDAYS is aimed at whole families to engage in technology creatively, such as to bring digital avatars to life and provide an opportunity to play around with augmented reality. Game artist Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley invited the public to join his “Imaginists Society”, inviting the public to be part of a real-life video game and is also creating artworks with a group of local young people [10].

American artist and scientist Donna Cox champions the skills in visualization that an artist brings to ‘Renaissance Teams’ when working synergistically with others in the quest for knowledge [11]. Cox, a pioneer of computer art and scientific visualization, initially worked with research scientists at NCSA (National Center for Supercomputing Applications) because they needed visually literate people to visualize data changes [12]. In some projects she acts as programmer, in others a color expert, a designer, a maker, an animator, or even a producer.

### 5.3 Useful Art

The internet has enabled the collective growth of social movements such as The Arte Útil (useful art) inspired by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera. This movement advocates

artistic thinking for positive changes in response to current urgencies. According to Brugueras “Arte Útil” should be part of everyday life: it should be a daily exercise in creativity”. She sees art as a proposal to society to develop something that can be implemented with ‘hope’ and ‘belief and maintains that ‘art is living the future in the present’ [13].

The Arte Útil movement is promoted on arts organizations websites such as The Whitworth Gallery [14], and The City Lab, which is part of the Institute of Art and Technology at Liverpool John Moores University School of Art and Design [15]. The Association of Arte Útil has developed a shared open-source research platform known as Decentralising Political Economies [16]. This ongoing project led by the academic John Byrne offers online toolkits, including recoding of seminars, research resources, interviews, artist’s activities and action research [17, 18]. This research uses artistic thinking to test other ways of living together in recognition of the limits of current systems and the impact of Covid 19 on society. Mindful of Black Lives Matter and Climate Catastrophe the project will contribute to an exhibition “Economics: The Blockbuster” scheduled for 2023 at the Whitworth, Manchester [19].

#### **5.4 Case Study—Innovative Creative Environments: Lle Celf Defnyddiol, Tŷ Pawb, Wrexham, Wales**

A finalist for the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022, Tŷ Pawb, is a cultural community resource in Wrexham that hosts a public gallery and market under one roof that promotes useful art [20].

Play is recognized as an important component of creativity at Tŷ Pawb, and is nurtured through every element of the site. Even the fittings are designed and made by furniture maker Tim Denton [21] in dialog with Lucicology—the playwork experts y who have a track record of encouraging local authority departments and partner agencies to develop more play-centered policies [22].

Tim Denton’s Hippodrome Lampshade was inspired by the Art Deco light that hung in the Hippodrome Cinema in Wrexham until its closure in 1997. The light was restored to its former glory and given a new home in Ty Pawb when it opened in 2018. The bent plywood lampshade was designed for a social engagement project in collaboration with Ty Pawb and the charity CAIS, which is part of Adferiad Recovery helping people with the recovery from drugs, alcohol and mental health problems. The lampshade is being made and produced by volunteer from the charity to develop their skills and encourage personal growth through the design process (Fig. 5.3).

The market trader Steve Tapp has a trainer revival business based in Ty Pawb and sells refurbished trainers all over the world, using the internet (Fig. 5.4). The artistic community and a creative environment are perfect for his business, which in turn brings new audiences to the art gallery. It is an excellent example of the symbiotic relationship between business and art that a useful art space can bring.



**Fig. 5.3** Tim Denton lampshade—design for Ty Pawb. Photo Fiona Finchett. *Copyright* © Tim Denton 2022 and reproduced by permission



**Fig. 5.4** Wrexham trainer revival. *Copyright* © Steve Tapp 2022 and reproduced by permission

**Fig. 5.5** ‘Me New Do’,  
 Anya Paintsil 2022.  
 Copyright © Anya Paintsil  
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Ty Pawb has a strong creative community and has commissioned a short documentary film, which premiered at Black History Month, Wrexham October 2019. It featured artist Anya Paintsil (Fig. 5.5), locktician/hair stylist Rucher Gomes and braid stylist Admilda Rocha Da Gloria (Teca) who were celebrated for working innovatively with hair [23].

In the film, the three artists discuss how their creative practices developed differently in Wrexham and frequently using similar skills and tools.

During the height of the pandemic Tŷ Pawb launched “Lle Celf Ddefnyddiol”, translated as “*The Useful Art Space*”; a space that offers communities a virtual and physical place to focus on creativity. Its aim is to use art as a tool for the people of North-East Wales to ‘reimagine’ a collective future and to practice the ethos of useful art for social change. “Lle Celf Ddefnyddiol” features as a case study for the Arte Útil movement website [24].

The Lle Celf Ddefnyddiol/the Useful Art Space gets transformed with its flexible furniture to accommodate Bom Dia Cymru (Good Morning Wales); a creative group led by artist Noemi Santos, who works in collaboration with Wrexham’s Portuguese language speaking community that creates artifacts to be sold in the market. There is also a group for refugees and asylum seekers working with the artist Ibukun Baldwin, who teaches them textiles, ceramics, printing, embroidery, accessory and product design skills to make things to also sell in the market hall. A separate Maker Space in the gallery supports the development of creative practices that may lead to start-up businesses. The artist and designer, Lorna Bates, was given a residency to showcase her surface pattern designs and launch her business (Fig. 5.6). Tara Dean

worked with the cARTrefu Age Cymru project that places artists in care homes to create a collection of greetings cards. Georgia Nielson, a final year fine art student at Glyndwr University, after graduating, took residency at Ty Pawb as an opportunity to set herself up in a career making rugs and banners (Fig. 5.7).

There are also touring exhibitions at Ty Pawb. For example, the work of ‘Tatty Devine’ was on show in 2021, in an exhibition supported by the Crafts Council [25]. ‘Tatty Devine’ is a company founded by the jewelry designers Harriet Vine and Rosie Wolfenden (Fig. 5.8). They promote their craft work (Fig. 5.9) by making kits, entering competitions, setting up workshops and publish blogs on their website [26].

Creativity and collective action are aided by technology. Ty Pawb’s website and social media sites have assisted in expanding audiences and have utilized community assets to encourage new collaborations.



**Fig. 5.6** Lorna Bates, artist in Residence Ty Pawb, August 2021–November 2021. *Copyright* © Oliver Stephens and reproduced by permission



**Fig. 5.7** Georgia Nielson, artist in Residence, Ty Pawb, April 2021–July 2021. *Copyright* © Oliver Stephens and reproduced by permission



**Fig. 5.8** Co-Founders of Tatty Devine, Harriet Vine and Rosie Wolfenden. *Photo* Jenny Lewis *Copyright* © Harriet Vine 2022 and reproduced by permission





**Fig. 5.9** Cabinet label statement Necklace, Tatty Devine. *Photo Jenny Lewis Copyright © Harriet Vine 2022 and reproduced by permission*

## 5.5 Possibilities for the Future

Art and politics are united in a desire to shape the future and recognize that creativity is an important tool for social change. The field of arts in health, that began as a social movement introducing the arts into hospital and community health settings, is now a global phenomenon. Participatory art projects and other models such as ‘social prescribing’ in which the arts are integrated into healthcare use technology as a facilitative tool. Digital health is another new field that integrates technology and health and includes mobile health (mHealth), health information technology (IT), wearable devices, telehealth and telemedicine, and personalized medicine. The *Arte Útil* movement reminds us of the importance of living ‘the future in the present’ through using art as a social tool to deal with issues that cannot be solved purely politically.

The future is one in which technology plays an increasing role in advancing society. However, Boris Groys warns that the future could be radically changed by technology with both positive and negative consequences such as dehumanization or even cyber wars [27]. The current war in Ukraine is a time to reflect on such a

catastrophic possibility of cyberwars, but art always offers hope. For example, the photograph of the little girl Valeriia fleeing Ukraine and entering Poland has become a symbol of hope. The Ukrainian photographer, Artem Lurchenko, shot the image using a drone and then the French photographer and graffiti artist, JR, used the image to stage a public art event [28] to publicize Ukraine’s wartime resilience to the world. He printed out a 148 foot version of the photo onto a tarpaulin and traveled to Lviv enlisting more than 100 Ukrainian volunteers to reveal the artwork in an event shared on Instagram [29]. The artist’ aim was to use art to change the war, launching a NFT (non-fungible token) to raise money for those impacted by the conflict.

## 5.6 Conclusion

What unites artists and politicians is a desire to shape the future, but political ideas quickly become obsolete and give way to the politics of the future. It was the French philosopher Michel Foucault’s Heterotopian promise that ‘artists transport the present into the future’, thus doing their work not for their own time but for the future [30]. Politics shapes the future by its disappearance yet art shapes the future by its prolonged presence [31]. Social movements such as Arte Útil and those promoting arts in health are examples of ways in which creativity enables societies to reflect on the future while living in the present.

Chapter 6 takes a different approach to social responsibility and collaboration through an exploration of creativity in science in technology. Here research environments include interdisciplinary teams and technology enhanced collaborations that allow for more creative and effective projects.

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