

BEYOND AESTHETICS:
CREATIVITY AS A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

EST ——— 2021

**B O R N T O
C R E A T E**

DIALOGUE WITH CREATIVITY

PANEL DISCUSSION

BEYOND AESTHETICS: CREATIVITY AS A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Creativity as Social Responsibility emerges from a live panel conversation hosted by Born to Create, bringing together artists, facilitators, and thinkers working across performance, music, spoken word, and creative arts therapies. Rather than treating creativity as a specialised skill or aesthetic pursuit, this text explores creativity as a lived, embodied, and relational practice—one that shapes how we make meaning, care for one another, and imagine social change. The conversation unfolds not through definitive answers, but through shared reflection, vulnerability, and lived experience.

This essay has been shaped into a cumulative reflection that weaves personal testimony with contemporary theory, offering creativity as a process of inquiry rather than production. It invites readers to consider creativity as a form of social responsibility not because artists hold authority, but because creative acts—whether quiet or visible—restructure how people feel, belong, and act.

PEOPLE DON'T
REMEMBER WHAT
YOU SAY. THEY
ALWAYS *Remember*
HOW YOU MADE
THEM FEEL.



This panel conversation unfolds as a living argument for creativity not as ornament, but as a social, relational, and ethical force. Across disciplines and lived experiences, creativity emerges less as a polished outcome and more as an ongoing practice of connection, risk, care, and transformation. What binds the discussion together is a shared refusal to treat art as a sealed aesthetic object. Instead, creativity is framed as porous: embedded in bodies, communities, histories, and systems of power. This positioning aligns closely with contemporary understandings of creativity within psychology, cultural theory, and critical pedagogy, where creative action is understood as a situated, relational process rather than an individualised talent.

A recurring tension throughout the discussion is the opposition between product and process. From a process-oriented perspective, creativity functions as inquiry rather than display. This echoes the work of John Dewey, who argued that art is not an object but an experience—one that unfolds through interaction, perception, and meaning-making. When creative practice prioritises outcomes such as beauty, mastery, or recognition, it risks collapsing into what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi would describe as extrinsically motivated performance. When process is foregrounded, however, creativity becomes a site of exploration, where uncertainty, vulnerability, and collective authorship are not deficits but generative conditions. In this sense, creativity resists closure and remains dynamically unfinished.

Storytelling emerges as a central mechanism through which creativity exceeds aesthetics and enters the social field. The panel repeatedly returns to the power of embodied narrative to humanise abstract or politicised issues. Research in narrative psychology supports this view, demonstrating that personal stories shape identity, foster empathy, and reorganise meaning at both individual and collective levels. Importantly, the discussion resists the notion that meaning travels cleanly from creator to audience. Instead, creative work is understood as activating affective and unconscious material in those who encounter it. This aligns with psychoanalytic and post-Jungian perspectives, where art is seen as a symbolic container capable of eliciting projections, resistances, and unexpected emotional responses beyond conscious intention.

Responsibility, in this context, is framed not as moral authority but as relational accountability. Rather than positioning artists as educators or spokespersons, the panel situates responsibility within

participation, invitation, and care. This approach resonates with ethics-of-care theory, which emphasises responsiveness, attentiveness, and relational interdependence over prescriptive duty. Creativity becomes socially responsible not by delivering correct messages, but by creating conditions in which others can enter, reflect, and respond. Such an understanding destabilises hierarchical models of cultural production and redistributes agency across communities.

A particularly critical intervention in the discussion is the insistence on rest as an ethical necessity. Burnout is not treated as an individual weakness but as a structural outcome of cultural economies that demand constant visibility, productivity, and emotional labour from artists. Contemporary scholarship on embodied activism and somatic psychology supports this position, framing rest as a form of resistance against extractive systems. Creativity that refuses rest risks reproducing the very dynamics of domination and depletion it may seek to critique. Within this framework, withdrawal, silence, and recovery are not absences of action but vital components of sustainable creative life.

The panel also highlights creativity's capacity to disrupt norms by reshaping conditions of belonging. When creative spaces actively welcome voices that have been marginalised, they do more than represent difference—they materially alter who feels authorised to speak and be seen. Social learning theory and community arts research both suggest that visibility operates contagiously: seeing oneself reflected in a cultural space increases participation, confidence, and collective identification. These shifts often evade conventional metrics of impact, becoming visible only over time as creative work spills beyond its original frame and seeds new practices, communities, and imaginaries.

Another thread woven throughout the conversation is the idea of life itself as a creative act. Artistic impact is not confined to finished works but extends to how artists choose to live, collaborate, and persist. From an existential-phenomenological perspective, this positions creativity as a mode of being rather than a profession. Simply continuing to create—particularly in the face of precarity, criticism, or doubt—functions as a form of quiet activism. Such persistence can operate as permission-giving, signalling to others that their voices, stories, and imperfect expressions are also legitimate.

The discussion does not seek to resolve tensions between art and therapy, expression and care, freedom and responsibility. Instead, it holds these tensions as productive. While creativity is widely recognised as inherently therapeutic, the panel acknowledges the ethical risks of opening autobiographical

or traumatic material without adequate support. This reflects current debates within creative arts therapies, where the need for aesthetic freedom must be balanced with psychological containment. Ethical creative practice, therefore, requires reflexivity, ongoing learning, and a willingness to sit with ambiguity rather than mastery.

Looking toward the future, creativity is imagined as increasingly hybrid, interdisciplinary, and community-based. Rather than fixed trajectories, the panel emphasises openness to influence, cross-pollination, and synchronicity. This orientation mirrors contemporary systems thinking, where innovation arises through networks rather than isolated genius. Play, humour, pedagogy, facilitation, and care are framed as equally valid creative modalities, particularly in cultural moments marked by fragmentation, fatigue, and disconnection.



Taken as a whole, the discussion articulates creativity as a social responsibility not because artists possess special authority, but because creative acts shape how people feel, relate, and imagine alternatives. Creativity here is neither escape nor solution. It is a practice of staying with complexity, of cultivating relational spaces where something unexpected, and potentially transformative, can emerge. In this sense, creativity functions less as a tool for change and more as the ecological condition that makes change thinkable.



HOPE IS A QUIET *Revolution.*





BORN TO CREATE

