



sonophilia
FOUNDATION

CREATIVITY MATTERS

INSPIRING INSIGHTS FROM
REAL LIFE FOR REAL PEOPLE

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to you

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WHY?

Because creativity is not a privilege, but it is the essence of what makes us human.

Most books on creativity put one individual at the center of their narrative as the sole genius. But in a world where we need everybody's creative input for finding fresh answers, glorifying single individuals as "creative geniuses" sends out the wrong message.

The book you're holding in your hands is filled with stories that aim to encourage everyone to unlock their creativity to tackle business, community and personal issues.

Our essays manifest that no one is too small to make an impact and that the definition of creativity is as diverse as the people putting it into work.

WHO?

We are Sonophilians!

We are a global community of change-makers in business, science, arts and technology, who dare to do things differently and resist the "business-as-usual" mentality. Sonophilians generate and implement ideas that ignite positive, creative transformation at scale.

WHAT?

Our mission is to make creativity a tangible science available to everyone.

Sonophilia Foundation is a non-profit entity devoted to promoting diversity, creativity and critical thinking as the cornerstone of societal well-being, progress and innovation.

We initiate projects, curate gatherings, design tools and share knowledge to promote a creative mindshift around issues of global and individual impact.

PART ONE:

Dare to Imagine

Seda Röder

AN ODE TO CREATIVITY

Unless you're a hopeless narcissist, you most likely don't refer to yourself as a creative genius.

Well, okay, "genius" might be a bit of an exaggeration, but a lot of people don't even consider themselves at all creative. Why? Because, they didn't paint a masterpiece like the Mona Lisa, nor did they discover anything similar to a light bulb.

Although the very definition of creativity seems quite simple – most modern dictionaries refer to it as *the ability to make or otherwise bring into existence something new ...*¹ – when it comes to its daily adaptation, we won't accept anything but the greatest performances that culminate in the most brilliant human achievements. Almost all commercially available books on artistic or business-related creativity focus on discerning patterns from the daily habits of exceptionally creative individuals. They glorify the image of an Übermensch –the single genius working in isolation.

Choose between perfection and superlatives, an intention or purpose that is meant to draw up emotional explosions, or life in solitude and madness. Such characteristics fit the romantic myth of the "creative genius," a myth we've carefully crafted to support the collective denial of the notion that anyone can be creative. This is a myth that separates people into different classes, benefitting the few and protecting the status quo by installing gatekeepers who create an artificial scarcity around creativity that is driven by their financial or power-related interests.

But what do you suppose would happen if we were to take this myth and flip it upside down? What if creativity was not

an exceptional gift granted only to a selected few. What if it were an inherent resource available to everyone?

Imagine what powers could be set free, how fast we'd advance as humanity if we could reactivate this dormant potential in millions of people and maximize our creativity to solve the most pressing issues our world is facing.

Imagine living and working in a collectively inspired society in a not-so-distant-future, a society in which all the dulling tasks unworthy of humans are done by machines so that we can concentrate on our unique qualities.

For such a future, we finally have to start believing that creativity is not a privilege, but rather the essence of what makes us human. We ultimately need to start preparing for the creative transformation in our lives, societies, and institutions.

As we move forward in an increasingly complex environment, the relevance of creativity goes way beyond rare, divine flashes of inspiration reserved for the elite. In this new world of unforeseen technological advancement and hyper-efficiency, as the tasks we usually perform become superfluous one after the other, sooner or later we will all feel an immense pressure to reinvent ourselves. In such a world, bringing creativity to the forefront and making it more down-to-earth, systematic, and accessible for everyone will mean survival in dignity for our entire species.

The demand for creativity has never been so acute as transformational technologies reshape the future of markets, workforces, and societies. We can no longer rely on single geniuses to find answers to global challenges; we need everybody's contribution to complement the greater picture. Just like in an orchestra, collective progress and enlightenment will only be possible if we allow everyone to play their part.

Therefore, let's talk about opening the doors to the ivory tower and bringing creativity back down to earth, back to the people where it belongs.

Let's democratize creativity.

Life itself is the ultimate artwork

If I were to describe my humble beginnings as a concert pianist, I would say it was calm and balmy, like a boat on smooth waters. I always thought the trajectory of my career was laid out in a failsafe way. There was nothing particularly unsettling in my way, no major surprises. It was a down-to-earth and foreseeable future. Or so I thought.

I am Turkish, born right after the military coup in 1980 Istanbul, during the state of emergency. On the night I was born, there was a stay-at-home order. My parents were held by the military police four times en route to the hospital. As if this wasn't enough, my mom almost died during childbirth because of an overtired doctor. A year later, my mother got a divorce. There we were, on our own in a period of Turkey's history that is defined by political and economic chaos and fear. An entire generation was growing up in anxiety and uncertainty about the future. Raising a girl as a single mom did not make matters any easier.

Despite it all, however, I turned out alright. I was a well-behaved, hardworking, and responsible student. After my studies in Istanbul, I even received a full scholarship to attend the holy temple of classical music: the Mozarteum in Salzburg. On the surface, everything seemed to be running smoothly. But I'm getting ahead of myself; allow me to rewind a little.

Back in Istanbul, I had been considered one of the best, but when I arrived at the Mozarteum, I discovered that I wasn't the only talent they had recruited. Mozarteum was a cradle to some of the best instrumentalists from around the world. I was flattered and honored to have made it there, so I stepped up my game, practicing day and night, eating, sleeping, and breathing technique and proficiency. We were

obsessed with training our fingers to move with perfection and ease, consumed by our desire to transform our nerves into steel to function correctly on stage. We were told to do this, but the one muscle that makes us unique as artists, where the music truly plays, from which our creativity stems –that muscle, our brain, was systematically ignored. We didn't care about anything outside the sheltered walls of our conservatory. All our professors – and therefore we –cared about was who was faster and better. In hindsight, I realize we were relatively ignorant, disillusioned by the highly competitive lifestyle.

I'd spent 15 years of my life in a business that had promised creative indulgence, yet all I found was work that resembled a conveyor belt. Switch on > move fingers perfectly > switch off. REPEAT. Stability and financial security meant little when paired with the prospect of being trapped in a golden cage, forever running on a hamster wheel that took me nowhere. What had happened to creativity, to the transformative power of music? Was this the noble story of my life that I would tell my grandchildren? Is this all I would contribute to this world?

Something had to change ... but what?

As I pondered this, a friend asked me to return a book for her to the library. It was Erich Fromm's 1947 book *Man For Himself*. As I waited for the librarian to finish with another student, I started browsing through the book, randomly flipping through the pages and reading sentences. Suddenly, as I turned to page number 237, one particular paragraph moved me as none had ever done before! I remember it like it was yesterday. Erich Fromm spoke to me through ink and paper, transcending time and space itself, and this is what he said:

A man's main task is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality. One can judge

objectively to what extent the person has succeeded in his task, to what degree he has realized his potentialities. If he failed in his task, one can recognize this failure and judge it for what it is--his moral failure.

It was as though a lightbulb had switched on in my brain. I had been asking the wrong questions all along. The reason why I felt so miserable about myself was that I was confronting my moral failure and grappling with the knowledge that I was not living up to my potential. Life wasn't about what I wanted to *do*, but rather about *who* I wanted to *become*. Suddenly, it dawned on me that creativity was not merely an act of performing; it was about much more than that! It was about creating a life worth living. Life itself was the ultimate artwork, and all of us had the potential to turn it into a masterpiece.

We're all creatives in our own rights, but sometimes, for various reasons or because we struggle to break certain numbing habits, we lose the connection to the true artist residing within. Instead of creatively envisioning and building our dreams, we tame them. We make them small to fit within the perceived limitations of our surroundings, and along the way, we risk losing the music that makes our hearts sing.

For me, Erich Fromm's wise words provided the key to a Pandora's Box inside me. I had reached the point of no return, where business as usual could no longer be an option. This meant my art had to change, too. I knew I had to gear it towards my journey of transformation. I wanted to transform myself, my music, my instrument, and I wanted to encourage others to bring music back into their own lives. No longer would I waste creative potential; in a matter of minutes, being alive took on a whole new meaning. I was a girl on a mission.

Deep down -or perhaps, right on the surface -I knew I had to be the change I wanted to see in the world, but where to

start?

I sat back at my piano, passion and determination galore, confident that I would gain some revolutionary perspective that would forever shift the trajectory of my life and others who felt as I did. Instead, I got ...nothing. No sudden burst of inspiration, no epiphany. Theoretically, everything was there, but in reality, I was still imprisoned within the boundaries of what I already knew. My expertise and history with this gigantic, well-oiled machine known as a grand piano were standing in my way. How could I innovate or do something new within such an effectively functioning system? I felt hopeless and alone. I regularly doubted myself, and I'm embarrassed to admit how frequently I considered going back to my old life. Most of my old friends questioned my decision to change, which didn't help in the least. Why on earth would someone give up the life I was living? Wasn't I too old for this?

One day, however, in the midst of my creative slump, I found myself bearing witness to an incredible game unfolding between my children and the neighbors' kids. They were oblivious to my presence, so I stood by the door silently, watching. The longer I stood there, the more captivated I was.

A plastic ruler became a magic wand, a large blanket thrown on the floor became a treacherous ocean between two sofas, which had transformed into two countries. The captain, the wizard and the princess were fighting giant waves in their ship, which was nothing more than the back pillow of one of the sofas. I was in awe. The kids didn't at all care about the socially accepted purposes of those items.

Within the context of their game, to their childish and unprejudiced minds, anything could become anything. They weren't playing to win; they were playing to learn, to discover, and simply to be. I realized that I'd forgotten how to play, truly play, without the perpetual fear of losing, making a mistake, or not being liked. For years and years,