



...But I'm not creative!

Have you ever said this to yourself? I'd venture a guess that you have at least once, if not more than once. Where does this thinking come from though? What is it that influences our thinking and tells us that we are not creative, nor are we artists? What is an *artist* anyway and what is *art*?

Ann Pelo suggests that, "*Art can be a way to be in the world,*" (p. 1, *The Language of Art*). Look closely at what she's saying here. Art is a way of *being* not *doing*. She goes on in her book to talk about how in this view of art, "*Children are immersed in a culture of drawing, painting, sculpting, and writing, as they represent and reflect on their encounters with the world and with one another,*" (p. 4). Art then is a way of telling about what we notice and what we think, rather than an activity for the sake of an activity. It becomes part of the fabric of how we live our life; a way to graphically communicate how we are making sense of our world; a way to give form to our ideas so that others can 'see' what we are thinking. Carla Rinaldi says that we need to, "*Reconsider our relationship with art as an essential dimension of human thinking,*" and that, "*The art of daily life and the creativity of daily life should be the right of all. Art, then, is a part of our lives, of our efforts to learn and to know,*" (p. 172, *In the Spirit of the Studio*).

It is possible that this is a much deeper and richer view of art than you grew up experiencing. As we live in this world, art can be a way for us to make sense of it and to express our theories, joys and confusions about it all. In this way, we are all artists, and creativity isn't about 'making something' but rather using art materials as a way of being in this world and a way of communicating our relationship with the world around us and all its intricacies. This is complex yet meaningful work.

It seems necessary then that we each have competencies with a wide range of quality art mediums and materials that will allow for clear communication of ideas. We also need time, space and relationships built on listening and respect, along with an open heart and mind and a willingness to live fully in this world. As adults, we have a high calling in this regard to nurture and sustain this creativity in ourselves because as Carla Rinaldi reminds us, "*There is no creativity in the child if there is no creativity in the adult. The competent and creative child exists if there is a competent and creative adult,*" (p. 172, *In the Spirit of the Studio*).

For this reason, to nurture adults' creativity and way of *being* in the world, the Artists and Children Together (ACT) initiative held its 1st Adult Art Night on Thursday, April 27th from 6:30-8:30pm. A variety of mediums were set up around the room to use and explore as people liked; there was no set product that everyone was to create. Professional artists, part of our ACT initiative, offered support and

guidance on the use of the materials as people needed. Mediums included wire, stoneware clay, watercolor and acrylic paints, colored ink and charcoal. There was also a table of items from nature that could be used as inspiration.

The evening was full of joy, exploration, friendship, creativity and... risk! Every adult that came took a risk this evening. They risked experimenting with materials and digging into their own creativity to see what could be unleashed. They risked being uncomfortable with the unknown at times and taking on the challenge of learning a new medium or bringing an idea to life. Despite not having as much of a demo on wire and paint as one participant would've liked, they showed their willingness to take a risk by commenting that they, "Gave it a whirl anyway!" Each person offered themselves fully to the materials and one another, in the spirit of creativity. As a result, the space became, "A place of research where imagination, rigor, experiment, creativity and expression interweave and complete one another," (p. 18, The Language of Art).



When invited to offer their perspective on the evening, participants made comments such as, *"It was nice to have time for myself in a creative environment,"* and *"It was great and has me thinking of what I could do to bring it to my children."* Participants also mentioned that, *"The atmosphere was friendly and relaxed... It was nice to 'let go' for a couple of hours,"* and *"It was very therapeutic. I would like to explore my artistic side and find more time for myself."*



As you ponder your own creativity and competencies with art, I encourage you to take up what might be a new view; one that invites you and allows you to be free to engage your body, mind and spirit in the process; to allow art and creativity to be part of who you are and how you live in this world, not just something that you do. In the words of Meister Eckhart, *"The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist."*