

A DAY IN THE ARTS

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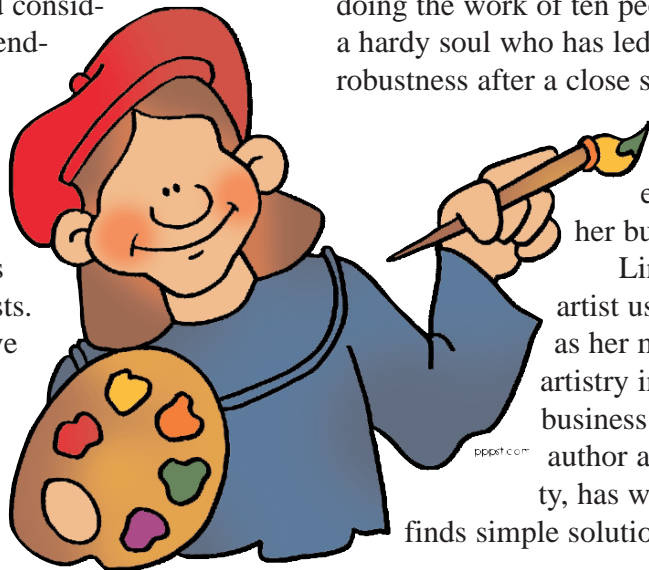
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WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? HOW ARTISTIC PRACTICES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

By Sandy McMullen

Resilience, by definition, relates to how well individuals and systems bounce back from disruptions to current conditions. These disruptions can knock people into a different reality, shifting their relationship to time, money, sense of security, even their sense of self. Certain practices can help an individual process disruptive change and make sense of where they are now in the landscape.

Artistic practices, for example, include such things as sketching different perspectives, taking time to reflect and consider subject matter, and spending time replenishing the creative well by visiting galleries and other similar experiences that provide inspiration. Buddhist thought teaches that what we resist persists. Rather than being reactive and trying to fight or fix things in a knee-jerk fashion, engaging in artful experiences can allow us to stay in the



new experience long enough to help us to begin to process its new conditions. This isn't an endorsement of non-action, but rather taking the pause required to be proactive rather than reactive. Life need not be a two-step of event and react, but rather can be a waltz of three steps. We get a better result when we take the pause to put our next "right step" into action.

Linda Lundstrom is an award-winning entrepreneur and Canadian fashion designer. She is a true entrepreneur with a huge capacity, doing the work of ten people everyday. Linda is a hardy soul who has led her business back to robustness after a close skirmish with bankruptcy. She used this setback as a learning experience to improve her business and her life.

Linda is a highly creative artist using fabric and scissors as her medium. There is also artistry in how Linda runs her business. Brenda Zimmerman, author and scholar in complexity, has written about how Linda finds simple solutions on the other side of

WORD OF THE DAY

KYLIX - in ancient Greek pottery, wide-bowled drinking cup with horizontal handles, one of the most popular pottery forms from Mycenaean times through the classical Athenian period. There was usually a painted frieze around the outer surface, depicting a subject from mythology or everyday life, and on the bottom of the inside a painting often depicting a dancing or drinking scene. Kylikes were often produced in sets to accompany a wine serving vessel, or krater.



"I know that to paint the sea really well, you need to look at it every hour of every day in the same place so that you can understand its way in that particular spot and that is why I am working on the same motifs over and over again, four or six times even."

- Claude Monet

ART AEROBICS

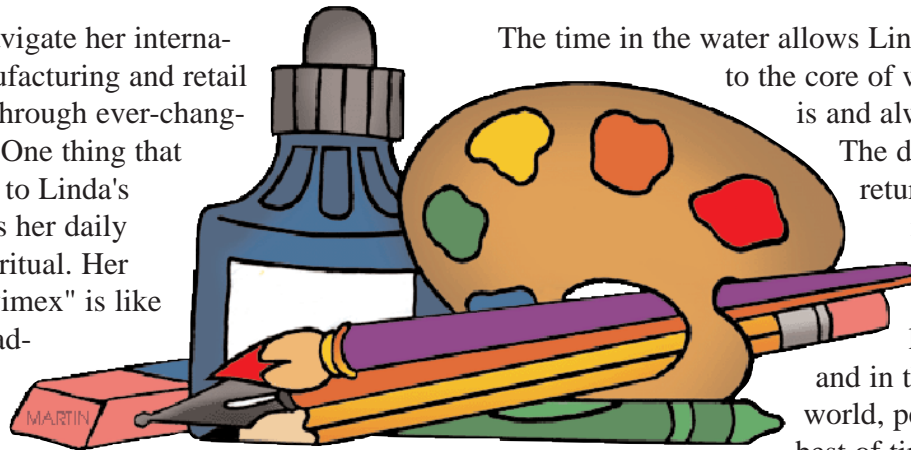
Practice you drawing skills

Draw your favorite vacation memento. Ten minutes. ✎

chaos to navigate her international manufacturing and retail enterprise through ever-changing reality. One thing that contributes to Linda's resilience is her daily swimming ritual. Her indoor "Swimex" is like a water treadmill in a personal-sized pool

in a beautiful, spa-like setting with a vibrant, beautiful painting in her line of sight. Linda uses her time in the water to just BE-in a moving meditation. "I get my best ideas when I am in the water." The repetitive nature of stroke after stroke has a calming effect on the nervous system, triggering the relaxation response. It also creates the space required to integrate past and current events so that the end result is restorative. When we don't reflect on and integrate past experience, the lingering effects can build and become a mental, physical, and spiritual drain that robs us of whatever resilience we might have.

Integrating a swim into her hectic life is very intentional on Linda's part. It is not merely about building capacity to handle more stress. It is a way to create the necessary expanded space required for the creative process to occur. It is also a choice for a certain way of living that is integrated, artful, and connected to something larger than herself. Linda does not simply design and manufacture clothes; she gets out of bed every morning eager to help make women everywhere feel really good about themselves.



The time in the water allows Linda to connect to the core of who she really is and always has been. The discipline to return to this connection fosters the resilience she needs to lead a business and in the fashion world, perilous at the best of times.

There are many ways to find this connection to self, and each of us can find our own unique approach. From one perspective, this is critical to an artist's work. On the other hand, some people cook or garden or putter with vintage cars as their way of slowing down and reconnecting with themselves. The question I invite you to ask yourself is, "Are you making time and space to simply BE?" or have you filled your time with frenetic busyness or with downtime that is merely numbing out, such as watching TV or surfing the internet?

As another example of artistic practices and their contribution to building resilient capacities, artists are a perfect example of the resilient motivational dynamic that is set up when people live according to their mental, spiritual, and psychological DNA. Motivation is intrinsic, so painters sketch, draw, and paint, and musicians, actors, and dancers rehearse over and over again. The work has a natural rhythm, and even when it is demanding, it is ultimately affirming and enlivening and not depleting. This discipline builds trust in their abilities. The magic of unconscious competence

brings a total commitment on the part of the artist that refuses to allow tentative gestures. Immersed in the work, artists are generally focused and grounded. They learn to see, not just look-to notice angles, spatial relationships, intensity, to see what is actually there. In one sense they are intimately connected to what is REAL in paint, gesture, or tonality. Experienced artists trust that mistakes or unexpected events can be used as a catalyst to create something new. They also develop the clarity to know when a disruption is of a scale that a fresh direction is a better choice.

RESILIENCE IN ACTION

Leif Benner is a masterful goldsmith and designer making one-of-a-kind pieces for his discerning clients. He is one of a handful of young designers and artists who have a strong client base and who approach their work in a way that integrates their gifts and talents with a successful business model. Three years after establishing his own studio in Toronto's newest arts center, the Historic Distillery District, Leif's studio space was brutally ransacked, destroying everything he had built in one devastating blow. Leif had a young family to support and from an outsider's perspective, he had a hard choice to make about his next step.

Leif is naturally resilient, a result of his self-proclaimed combination of bull-headedness and unrelenting optimism. To him he had no choice but to carry on. The work was integral to who he was, and no external event was going to be the arbiter, putting choices for his future out of his control. Leif has been manipulating materials in some creative endeavor all his life

and in particular, as a goldsmith, he has developed a refined sense of what he can control and what he cannot. He knows when to call it a day and when to trust his skill and capacity to stay the course.

In addition to this tangible, practical sense of awareness, Leif also has a bigger sense of purpose: He is more than a designer and goldsmith. As Leif explains, "I like people and making personal connections. The couples who come to me to design their engagement and wedding rings get attached, and I get the occasional invitation to the celebration. What it's all about for me is being part of that optimistic moment where people enter into that union."

As much as Leif's natural resilience helped him to start again, this alignment with his passion, talents, and larger purpose is what keeps him going. Leif turned things around, and in six months had recouped his losses and re-established his business with systems and strategies to protect him in the future.



CONCLUSION

My final thoughts return to the phrase, "What's it all about?" When we open ourselves through self-knowledge and making choices to design our life to be true to who we are, it is amazing what naturally falls away and what opens up for us and for others. To quote Joseph Campbell: "When you follow your bliss, doors will open where you would not have thought there would be doors and where there wouldn't be a door for anyone else." Living artfully is connected to purpose, and purpose is the core to motivation and resilience. Perhaps Friedrich Nietzsche said it best: "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how." 🐘

Sandy is a certified member of the International Consortium of Business Coaches. In 2006, she was a recipient of the Prism Award for Coaching Excellence. Sandy is accredited in several assessment tools including the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Emotional Intelligence 360 (ECI) assessment.

Over the past eighteen years, Sandy has built recognition for her work as a professional artist, and she was a founding partner in the RedEye Gallery in Toronto's Historic Distillery District. She integrates her understanding of personality typologies and behaviour with the DNA of innovation into her work as a professional facilitator and coach.

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ART NEWS

THE ART OF FLORAL ARRANGING

Wednesday, April 29, 2009 10:30 AM

The annual Elizabeth Sites Kuhlman Lecture will take place on Wednesday, April 29, in the Marvin & Betty Danto Lecture Hall inside the Detroit Institute of Arts. Sponsored by the Friends of Art & Flowers, this year's featured lecturer is Retired Director of Special Events and Chief Floral Designer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Chris Giftos. For 33 years, Chris created floral arrangements and cultural and fund-raising events befitting the "crown jewel" of American museums. He has appeared on the Martha Stewart and Oprah Winfrey shows and traveled throughout the world giving lectures and creating floral arrangements. Chris will create floral masterpieces and also sign a copy of *The Art of Floral Arranging*, which will be available for sale in the DIA's Museum Shop. <http://tinyurl.com/cn5geb>

STEP-BY-STEP PAINTING DEMONSTRATION

Paul Foxtan offers shares many of his tips and struggles with art on his site **Learning to See**. Currently he has a step-by-step guide to painting Chrysanthemums that many acrylic and oil painters will find of use. To view the information, visit here: <http://tinyurl.com/dlfn55>





MONET'S WATER LILIES

The **Museum of Modern Art** presents Monet's Water Lilies, an installation that will, for the first time since the Museum's reopening in 2004, feature the full group of Claude Monet's late paintings in the collection. These include a mural-sized triptych (*Reflections of Clouds on the Water-Lily Pond*, c. 1920) and a single panel painting of the water lilies in the Japanese-style pond that Monet cultivated on his property in Giverny, France (*Water Lilies*, c. 1920), as well as *The Japanese Footbridge* (c. 1920-22) and *Agapanthus* (1918-19), depicting the majestic plants in the pond's vicinity. These works have long held a special status with the Museum's audiences and, much like the MoMA's Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, these paintings provide a modern oasis in the center of midtown Manhattan. These works will be complemented by a few loans of closely related paintings. The exhibition is on view from

September 13, 2009, to March 29, 2010, in the Special Exhibitions Gallery.

Monet (1840-1926) devoted the last 25 years of his life to the portrayal of the pond and its surroundings in Giverny. By the 1910s, his work centered on the creation of large-scale panels of the water lilies, a group of which he would donate to the French state for permanent installation in the Orangerie in Paris. After Monet's death, many of these last works remained in his studio, left under the care of the artist's son. But for two decades the art market and art historians reserved their interest for his earlier Impressionist work. The work of the 1910s and 1920s was regarded as far too messy and unstructured, and much of the work left in the studio was considered unfinished.

After the end of World War II, a sudden turnabout occurred, and art historians and curators focused keen attention on Monet's last paintings. In a quintessential case of 2 contemporary art transforming attitudes toward earlier

art history, the large scale and gestural freedom of Abstract Expressionism illuminated the late Monet as a predecessor of extraordinary relevance. In 1955 MoMA became the first public collection in the United States to acquire one of Monet's large-scale water lilies compositions. Since then, the history of their reception has been intertwined with the history of the Museum, both because of the water lilies' importance for scores of contemporary artists, and for the beloved position they hold for the general audience. The water lilies' special status was evident from the moment the first paintings came into the collection, but it was assured when in 1958, a fire at the Museum destroyed the two late paintings that founding MoMA director Alfred Barr, Jr., had acquired in 1955 and 1956. Widespread mourning for these two casualties spurred the Museum quickly to replace them with the triptych and single panel work in the present collection. www.moma.org 🐘