

CREATIVITY

Everyone is born creative. We are all given crayons in nursery school. Then the crayons are taken away and replaced with books on algebra. Perhaps like me, your inner 'wee' voice is telling you, 'I'd like my crayons back please'. There is an itch to do something - write a book, start a painting, for me it is to make photographs. Maybe you're not sure if you are any good or not, but you think you could be. The idea terrifies you, and you know nothing about how to go about it.

Go ahead and make something, anything, something special, powerful, honest, true - something you love. Your soul somehow depends on your 'wee' inner voice. There is something you haven't done, some light that needs to be switched on, and it needs to be taken care of. Now.

Listen to your 'wee' voice or it will die taking a big chunk of you along with it. They are only crayons. You didn't fear them in nursery, why fear them now?

HOW TO BE CREATIVE

Have your own idea. Do your own thing. Do it for the Joy of it. It takes time, effort and stamina. Think independently, articulate your passion, override the fear of being wrong. There is no correlation between creativity and equipment ownership. Your plan for getting your work out there has to be creative. Question how much freedom your path affords you - it's your freedom that will get you to where you want to go. Doing something truly creative is one of the most amazing experiences one can have. Know where to draw the line between what you are willing to do, and what you are not. Hang out with creative people. Merit can be bought.

Passion can't. The only people who can change the world are people who want to. Part of understanding the creative urge is understanding that it is primal. It is divine. Wanting to change the world is not a noble calling, it is instinctive. It is the same calling that makes us want to create anything in the first place - drawings, wheels, shelter, indoor plumbing, airplanes. It's about what you are going to do with the short time you have left on this earth - with or without the help of the world at large. Inspiration precedes the desire to create, not the other way round. Be able to make the most of inspired moments. If you have something to say, then say it. If not, enjoy the silence while it lasts and refill your well. Learn to sing in nobody's voice but your own - looking for that moment where you find your true voice, once and for all - like when Andy Warhol discovered silkscreen. Put your whole self into it, and you will find your true voice. Hold back and you won't. It's that simple. Find something you are good at and run with it. To thine own self be true - because the Truth will set you free. Create from the heart. There is no quick fix. There is only the love God gave you - your passion. True freedom is freedom to be your true self as God made you and meant you to be. To be me. To be free.

GOD THE FIRST CREATOR

'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.' Because of our divine nature we have a capacity for artistic creativity. When God created us in his own image, he made us creative like himself. We are 'creative creatures'. So we draw and we paint, we build and we sculpt, we dream and we dance, we write poetry and we make music. Human beings are both imaginative and innovative. We appreciate what is beautiful to the eye, the ear and the touch.

For me it is photography. I love to make photographs. I'm interested in making pictures that reflect inspiration, rather than simply providing information. I believe in beauty. 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

'God filled Bezalel son of Uri with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in every kind of craft to create designs and work in gold, silver and bronze, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.'

Repeatedly in the history of the Church, Christians have been tempted to devalue the richness of creation and therefore to devalue also the arts, as if it would be somehow more 'spiritual' to live a life devoid of beauty, of good things, of music, of literature, of painting, of colour. It is as if bare simplicity, barrenness, and even ugliness were somehow considered to be more pleasing to God. Behind this idea is the conviction that it is only what is 'spiritual' that matters, and that the physical, therefore, is only of secondary value at best. In this view, the arts are thought of as an optional, rather extravagant, and unnecessary extra in life. But this belief is nonsense, and is, according to Paul, a heresy of the most serious kind, for in the end it is a denial of the goodness of creation.

Our work in any field of the arts will though be imitative. We will be thinking God's thoughts after Him - painting with his colours, speaking with his gift of language, exploring and expressing his sounds and harmonies, working with his creation in all its glory, diversity, and in-built inventiveness. In addition, we will find ourselves longing to make known the beauty of life as it once was in paradise, the tragedy of its present marring, and the hope of our final

redemption. All great art will contain this element of being an echo of Eden - Eden in its original glory, Eden that is lost to us, and Eden restored.

ME? A CREATOR?

Is God calling you to be a creator? An artist? To use your talents for the glory of God? Maybe you are asking what is God's will for my life? Perhaps the question should be 'how can I give my life to fulfill God's will?' God doesn't want us to be shy with our gifts, but bold and loving and sensible.

To be born is to be chosen. No-one is here by accident. Each one of us was sent here for a special destiny. Each of us has a unique gift. Each one of us has something to do here that can be done by no-one else. It is in the depths of your life that you will discover the invisible necessity which has brought you here. When you begin to decipher this, your gift and giftedness come alive. Your heart quickens and the urgency of living rekindle your creativity. When your soul awakens, your destiny becomes urgent with creativity.

If you can awaken this sense of destiny you come into rhythm with your life. You fall out of rhythm when you renege on your potential and talent, when you settle for the mediocre as a refuge from the call. When you lose rhythm your life becomes wearily deliberate or anonymously automatic. Rhythm is the secret key to balance and belonging - a dynamic equilibrium, a readiness of spirit, a poise which is not self centred. To be spiritual is to be in rhythm.

A GRAND STORY

We live in a storied universe. Stories are vital to life. Stories give us identity, provide meaning and shape our behaviour. Almost all of the Bible comes to us in the form of a story - Jesus understood the power of stories to change people.

The Bible provides a grand story, a metanarrative that offers a distinctive explanation of life. It explains the way things are, how they have come to be so, and what they will ultimately be. It is a story that is a rendering of reality. An account of the universe we inhabit and of the new creation we are destined for. The Bible is the grand story that makes sense of life.

The Christian worldview or metanarrative or grand story can be divided into a major and a minor theme.

First, the minor theme is the abnormality of the revolting world...

Men who have revolted from God and not come back to Christ are eternally lost - they see their meaninglessness.

There is a defeated and sinful side to the Christian's life. If we are at all honest, we must admit that in this life there is no such thing as totally victorious living.

The major theme is the meaningfulness and purposefulness of life...

God is there, God exists. Therefore, all is not absurd.

Man is made in God's image and so man has significance.

This rests on the existence of the infinite-personal God who exists and who has a character and who has created all things, especially man in his own image.

Man is fallen and flawed, but he is redeemable on the basis of Christ's work. This is beautiful.

This is optimism.

If our Christian art only emphasizes the major theme, then it is not fully Christian but simply romantic art.

On the other hand, it is possible for a Christian to so major on the minor theme, emphasizing the lostness of man and the abnormality of the universe, that he is equally unbiblical.

For the Christian, the major theme is to be dominant.

Story authority, as Jesus knew only too well, is the authority that really works. Throw a rule book at people's head, or offer them a list of doctrines, and they can duck or avoid it, or simply disagree and go away. Tell them a story, though, and you invite them to come into a different world; you invite them to share a worldview or better still a God-view. That, actually, is what the parables of Jesus are all about.

Stories determine how people see themselves and how they see the world. They convey fresh possibilities to the hearer otherwise unknown. Stories determine how they experience God, and the world, and themselves, and others.

Let us give thanks to God that he has given us a story that tells of origins and envisions a future, a story that constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority, and above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose - a grand narrative that has sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power so that it is possible to organise ones life around it.

A story of which my life is a part. A story worth telling.

We need to find fresh, imaginative ways to tell about Jesus. The role of the church, Christians, is to tell the story of Christ. To move people to take action. So that our culture can be filled with a resurgence of timeless Christian truth that is expressed and embodied in timely cultural ways. God is pro-culture - he is the creative artist behind and over human culture.

A STORY WITH PICTURES

I love to tell stories with pictures - to make photographs. I photograph life today to better understand what is created. To better understand the creator - my creator.

I'm seeking and striving to marry my gifts with God's call. To enter the zone in which I was made to live. The fulfillment of who I was created to be. To find my mission - being used for a purpose recognised by myself as a mighty one, so that God might smile upon me. That I might abandon myself into God's hands, and let myself be formed by his grace. Jesus restores us to the God who made us, and so sets us free to live the life that we were made for.

It is the function of art to review our perception. What we are familiar with we cease to see. I look for ways to say things that aren't obvious - looking for meaning. Often the extraordinary can be found in the ordinary. Simplicity in chaos. Beauty in the broken. I explore. I observe. I document. Often, God, is in the detail.

MANIFESTO

To create we must first dream, then act. As humans we have the capacity to think, choose, create, love and worship that together constitute the image of God in us. Searching for truth, beauty and meaning I seek to better understand the created universe through the lens of my camera, making photographs that engage, excite and inspire.

Make photographs. Tell stories. Share Jesus.

NAME CHECKS

Hugh MacLeod // William Shakespeare // Moses // Jerram Barrs // John Keats // St Paul //
John O'Donohue // Desi Alexander // John Stott // George Bernard Shaw // St. Ignatius of
Loyola // Randy Alcorn // Anais Nin // Francis Schaffer // Erwin McManus // God