

# Creativity Where Art Thou?

## Some Candid Thoughts on Life and Business

by Dave and Sylvianne

There was a time when ‘brainstorming’ was fashionable in boardrooms! Or should I say Bored Rooms? It’s a bit crazy to believe that you can command someone to be creative, especially in an ‘Bored Room’ putting the pressure on in this way is just an accepted form of bullying ☺. In the advertising industry, the creative people are almost always assigned tiny soul-crushing cubicles with flat, ugly, florescent lighting while their superiors, who are rarely in the office due to lunch and golf, have spacious interesting spaces. Psychological studies have found that our creativity is greatly stimulated by interesting environments while boring environments, such as offices and boardrooms, dampen creativity. Time to tear out the white drop-ceiling, beige carpet, and tart up those bland white walls with some colour and interest!

Here’s our ‘formula’ for seeking the elusive brilliant idea ...get out of the office or studio and disconnect – disconnect from all of our electronics, mobiles included! Boredom is the fertiliser of creativity so shut down, be quiet, let boredom set in, then accept it and let it flow through you – boredom only lasts a short while before your creative mind kicks in. We believe that too much structured time is the nemesis of creativity. We both worry about the future of present-day children whose time is over-scheduled with sports, ballet, music lessons, homework etcetera and almost no time to themselves. These activities pushed by well-meaning parents inhibit creativity, and free thinking. Also, there seems to be a correlation between non-structured physical activity and creativity – the more you are active, the more your conscious and subconscious mind have room to ‘breathe’. We often walk sea paths near where we live while indulging in random conversation. We prize the silliest ideas and thoughts, trying to outdo each other – competitive silliness if you will. The more we laugh the more relaxed and creative we get and then the usable ideas begin to flow. After walking for an hour or so, breathing in the lovely ocean air, looking at people, spotting the occasional eagle or otter (so cute), we almost always come up with a framework for a campaign, a new promotion, decide on a new market segment we had not considered before, and of course which coffee shop to stop at! We are masters of working ‘on’ our businesses rather than ‘in’, sometimes maybe too much ‘on’ and not enough ‘in’, but then we are trying to balance out our earlier years where it was way out of balance the other way – all ‘in’ and almost no ‘on’. Part of learning to work ‘on’ is learning to let go — outsource the parts you really don’t need to do, which is just about every aspect of your business, and only do the parts you are really good at and love. For example, even when we were just beginning and were really struggling we always outsourced book-keeping and accounting. We realised our time was better spent getting business and shooting than it was crunching numbers — something neither of us had any aptitude for. With this approach you have more time to work on your business. We have observed in so many businesses, the proprietors struggling because all their time is spent doing all the jobs of their business. As a result of this, these owners and their businesses are very disorganised. I, Dave, often think of my photo studio as a big sailing vessel with a crew, if I’m busy setting rigging, tying things down etcetera I can’t see what needs doing or where we are headed; in general, I cannot captain the ship. If I stand back, observe, reflect and problem solve, then I can direct the crew and make the ship more efficient, safe and profitable. One common aspect of wealthy people is they hire people to do just about every part of their business, they really get the, ‘Be the captain of your ship’.

We know you are thinking, that’s just fine but I don’t have the money to do out-sourcing. Well we didn’t always have the dough; when Montizambert Photography was starting out, my partner/brother Mark and I (Dave) out-sourced with no money so we did everything on contra or barter – shot our carpenter’s and accountant’s weddings, did family portraits for our cleaners, did promo shots of printing press house for printing of our promo materials, did promo images for designers for design of our promo materials, did product shots for massive amounts of beer ☺, etcetera. You might be shooting for no cash, but it’s way better doing what you love and were trained to do than crunching numbers or fixing plumbing or designing a bad looking promo piece. Also, you will create new business this way; these people you have bartered with would most likely not have hired you, but now you have created images for them they will spread the word to others! This is how we got to shoot for Tsing Tao Brewery of China; they were printing in Vancouver for some reason and saw a beer poster we shot that was done as a contra deal and was hanging up in a printing house that we also had done contra work for.

Also, when we travel we often search for exhibits that are of interest. Each country has a wealth of historical and pictorial depth to explore. We look for an experience to challenge our ideas, even our moral compass. The painter, Francis Bacon (<https://www.francis-bacon.com/>) is fascinating and disturbing. Both of us certainly would not choose to own (if we could afford it) one of his paintings. We find them brave and his anger and disgust at what to him was a repressed, hypocritical society, is in full view for you to see and react to. Some of his paintings are ‘raw’, ‘disgusting’, even ‘violent’ but they move you and make you see things differently.

...Or only just recently we caught on to what painter Mark Rothko (<http://www.markrothko.com/>) was doing! A massive canvas of just colour or colours, no people, buildings or even abstract shapes – he wants you to just sink into that space and experience it without any narrative – each person viewing his painting will have their own reaction unlike any others – that’s just brilliant and really challenges both of our aesthetics, opening us up to new creative ways of thinking.

...and yet another, Velazquez () – *Peasants at the table*. You could recreate the composition in a modern setting and it would look ordinary – he too broke the mould of rich society portraits; the subject is just that ordinary. Yet if you look at the skin tones, the way the light streams across the table, the texture of the table cloth, all with pigment and a brush – how glorious! The sheer joy of observing it opens you up.

We both believe that music is important; it speaks to you on so many levels. Often Dave will know even before I, Sylvianne, what mood I’m in by my choice of music. We listen to a lot of music that is not main-stream. For example we both love Arvo Part ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arvo\\_Pärt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arvo_Pärt)), he is a living ‘modern’ Estonian composer and has composed for movies such as *Avengers Age of Ultron 2015*. His music is both choral, minimalist, silent at times, repetitive, haunting, spacious ... such a beautiful uplifting world, filled with hope and longing – once again creating mind-opening joy. And then from time to time we will chance on a concert and just ‘go for it’, don’t know the artist, not sure about the music and quite a few times it has become a new favourite. For example we recently saw the Irish/American group, *‘The Gloaming’* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Gloaming\\_\(group\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gloaming_(group))) – it was a delightful foot-tapping discovery. Anyhow the point is, move out of your comfort zone by experiencing new things in other art forms. This is all rich ‘manure’ for growing your creative mind!

To wrap it up, we’d like to finish by saying, ‘We are so bombarded, over stimulated by social media and endless devices’, we really need to shut down on a regular basis, then take a nap, go for a walk, swim, clean your closet, do the dishes by hand ...anything to let your mind just wander and wonder! Seek and ye shall find!



**Bio**  
Dave Montizambert lectures internationally on lighting, digital photography, and Adobe Photoshop. He is also a published author having written two books on lighting and digital photography ([www.montizambert.com](http://www.montizambert.com)) plus numerous magazine articles on these topics in North America, Europe, Russia and Asia. Dave also creates lighting and Photoshop tutorial DVDs for [www.softwar-cinema.com](http://www.softwar-cinema.com) & [www.PhotoshopCAFE.com](http://www.PhotoshopCAFE.com)/video and authors ‘Dave On Demand’ ([www.montizambert.com](http://www.montizambert.com)) lighting tutorial based photo-training. Dave is available for lectures and workshops in your area and can be reached through [www.montizambert.com](http://www.montizambert.com).

*Dave and Sylvianne working their socks off!*

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