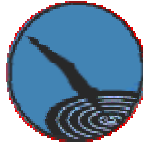




International Association of Facilitators  
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World of Personal Spirit

**THE ARTISTRY OF FACILITATION: A WORLD OF CHANGE**

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**Abstract**

Facilitation, like everything else in our world, is undergoing change. How interesting that we, as facilitators, whose job it is to help others navigate change, also must embrace it ourselves. And as we evolve, so will our work evolve.

There are many avenues of change to take and in our very hectic high-pressured world, it will be important to choose something that brings balance to the scene. One very effective way of counteracting stress is to contemplate beauty.

Rollo May in his book "My Quest for Beauty" tells us that art is the instrument that realizes beauty and that, according to the Greeks, one of the definitions of beauty is the condition where everything fits, where everything is in harmony. This echoes my definition of facilitation which is the act of moving individuals or groups to a place of higher resolution. So perhaps the



aim of art and of facilitation are very similar. By examining the premises of art, let's transfer them to our craft and see what is involved and how we get there.

### **What is involved**

Rollo May cites the work of Friedrich Von Schiller who said it is the struggle of creating and being aware we are limited, aware we are "nature and spirit, finite and infinite, objective and subjective" (p.30) that leads to beauty. This struggle of making form out of chaos is very familiar in facilitation work. Julia Cameron shares this quote in "The Artist's Way":

"The artist never entirely knows. We guess. We may be wrong, but we take leap after leap in the dark." Agnes de Mille (p. 121)

Rollo May's own account of creativity is also surprisingly familiar.

"When I began each of these paintings, I never knew how it would turn out. One can only know that this view, this form that I see, this conception of the world, has grasped me and will not let me go until I respond. As the colors flow into each other, merging and fading, and reforming, I have a sense of participating in the universe. I experience a kind of ecstasy, great or small as it may be. And when the sketch is finished, I look at it and feel a kind of surprise, as though I had not known beforehand what I was painting. It is not that I have made something pretty or attractive; it is rather that here is a view of reality that was communicated to me, and I form it on the paper and communicate it to my friends." (p. 133)

### **Six Major Elements**

May's reflections on a trip to Greece illuminate other important elements of art we can apply to facilitation.

- Beauty is born in play. Composers "play" their music; Shakespeare's "plays" are widely enjoyed. He says playing is "the most profound and humanizing of all human activities". (p. 34) Also that it helps overcome the anxiety in creating.
- Working from our soul requires rejuvenation which can be found in places that offer silence and serenity.
- We each see the same world but relate and respond differently. He reminds us of the well-known story of the blind men all feeling an elephant and each describing a different part of it. We, too, attempt to communicate to others what we see and know which is how art, poetry, dance, etc. are created.
- When we create, develop and transform elements in our world, we inevitably reform ourselves. The transformation of the self and of art go hand in hand.

Other principles to be added are:

- We need to be free of fear. Quotes of wisdom found in *The Artist's Way* can inspire us :
  - " To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong" Joseph Chilton Pearce (p. 29)
  - " ...we need to be willing to let our intuition guide us, and then be willing to follow that guidance directly and fearlessly." Shakti Gawain (p. 47)
- Interpretation of the outer world combines the artist's knowledge and observations with their inner perception, experience, and instinct to produce images for others to see. And the intensity of their imagination helps us see what they see. (*Arts and Artists*) According to Albert Einstein,
  - "Imagination is more important than knowledge."



These six elements form an important part of the definition of what is essential when creating as an artist and as a facilitator. Keeping these in mind, we move on to identifying the conditions of artistry.

### **How artistry is created**

According to the author, Jeremy Kingston, of *Arts and Artists*, the source of our creativity can be quite mysterious. Michelangelo probably said it best when asked what was the essence of his work as a sculptor: "liberating the figure from the marble which imprisons it." (p. 9) Similarly our work as facilitators is often to help a group uncover just what they were waiting to create in the first place. When it appears, it is as if it had been there all along and was just waiting to be discovered.

In *Arts and Artists*, we are told that artists are compelled to create and preserve what they see as accurately as they can.

Certain conditions are important:

- ❑ A combination of both receptivity and technical abilities. Training is vital.
- ❑ Experimentation comes after the basics of the craft are learned. Artists are imitators at first, then innovators.
- ❑ Constant practice is required.
- ❑ Originality is accompanied by doubt, anxiety and false starts.
- ❑ Inspiration can come in frenzy or while working slowly with painstaking care.
- ❑ One has to cultivate being in a state of wakeful dreaming i.e. staying tuned to both the unconscious and the conscious. The unconscious is a fertile source of images where opposites are felt as unities and contraries co-exist. This principle of unity brings balance and order to complex arrangements. (p. 18)

- ❑ Balance and harmony of elements can be accomplished by instinct or by rules. It doesn't matter which method is used.

### **Changing as a facilitator**

If we take this wisdom about what is involved in creating art along with the suggested conditions to be aware of and apply it to our facilitation practice, we may change in different ways. Here are some behaviours that might appear:

- ❑ More trust in the facilitation process. With lessened fear of outcomes, there would be greater ease in the planning and design phase.
- ❑ More acceptance of the creative process being at work in groups. If we are looking for the 'sculpture' within that wants to appear, we would be less controlling.
- ❑ More willingness to use our intuition right on the spot when making decisions.
- ❑ Building more fun and delight into our sessions
- ❑ Making sure we have our own personal time for rejuvenation
- ❑ Valuing ongoing training and self-development
- ❑ Perseverance to keep on practising
- ❑ Experimentation and observation in order to develop evolving strategies

What magnificent changes these would be! The beauty of them would not only be reflected in our work with others but in our selves as well. This would be something to aspire to.

"Artists are close and tireless observers of human beings and the world around them. The perceptive artist's eye does not content itself with surface appearances but delves deeper, into the very nature and structure of the object under scrutiny."

Arts and Artists, p. 48

Artistry in facilitation:



a world of change  
to embrace and enjoy.

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### **About the presenter**

Gail Burton, professional educator and facilitator, demonstrates keen insight and a collaborative teaching style enabling groups to find their common purpose. With her company, Bridges Unlimited Educational Facilitators, Gail helps accelerate participants' ability to quickly integrate information into their own experience, thus bridging the gaps to change.

Her role is to assist individuals and groups adjust to change as seen in her outstanding seminar "Change Doesn't Have to be Stressful". As a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers, Gail's timely messages of hope and encouragement make her well-loved by her audiences.