

YOU! are Your Creative Capital

Today you are celebrating extraordinary milestones in your lives. Congratulations to you all! But, what is a milestone? A milestone is a day you remember. It is also a marked point along a continuous line connecting where you've been to where you are going, one that you will always treasure, and one through which you will pass seemingly in an instant. And, where are you going? You may have an idea of where that is, what it might look like. But it's also OK—totally OK—if you have no idea whatsoever of where that is or what it might look like. Because one thing we know for sure, it won't look like anything any of us are imagining now. For we live in a universe of endless evolution, and if we view it right, an endlessly inspiring field of emergence, of new phenomena that defy predictive description. How exciting! How stimulating! Your tomorrow—our tomorrows—will be tomorrows of endless discovery. How great it is not to know the future. How boring it would be, if we did. We could have no influence on it. How sad that impossibility would be. But happily, and alternatively, what a joyous life ahead we can envision, if we view it as one of infinite, even though unknowable, possibility.

Gone are the days of the pre-defined career pathway. You know that. We've been telling you that for years now. Now is the time when we must all carve out our own unique, heretofore unenvisioned, career pathways, define our own frames of reference, paint our own landscapes in which to live and work, form our own contexts inside which to construct our new languages of creativity. We don't stand in front of a crossroads. We stand in front of an undefined field of culture, commerce, collaboration, and community. This is not a field full of roads we might not take. It is a field that will hold new roads we're about to build, that YOU are about to build. Don't be afraid. You have the tools. You have the expertise. Start building!

Start building your creative, personal empire of possibility. But, what is an empire? An empire could be big or small, depending upon the optics through which you are peering, a telescope, a microscope, fuchsia-colored glasses, or even a mirror. There is an empire of possibility around every one of you right now, around every chair on this lawn, as long as someone is sitting in it. Ah ha, an empty chair is not an empire. It is a void. A chair with a person in it is the first member of a possible community, a context for your creative endeavors. Find your community! There is where you will find the value you seek, the place wherein meaning shines from the products of your work. Know your audience!

Speak first to those you already know and inspire them, by the magnetism of your ideas, to draw the attention of others. Build on the strengths you already have. Those are the stones to throw into the pond of possibilities, in which you can watch waves of influence expand outward. And be patient, they will expand. It may take a long time. Think of your daily work as having two circles of energy, one that contains that about which you are the most passionate, the other containing that which you must do to keep life together. Your goal is to make those two circles overlap as fully as possible. Be mindful, though, that none of us can ever make them overlap completely. But that's OK. It's the real world. And the real world is also the place that provides us with the raw material to build our lives. Thinking of things this way may help us keep our feet on the ground and our passions fully energized simultaneously, always, really!

Sometimes it feels like we live in a world driven by overwhelming and daunting, oppressive economic forces that are totally out of our control. Well yes, in a certain sense they are out of our control. But remember, money is just a form of energy. It's like a fluid of possibilities. It flows like water to and from areas of charged priorities born of assigned value. And like success, WE decide what those values are. This energy flows in waves we describe with the socio-economic language of particular times and

places. It is also channeled into magnetic pools of accretion, yes by political forces, but also even more powerfully by ideas. And you are the prime reservoir of ideas for the future. It's critical that you learn to identify and surf those waves of opportunity in this energy flow. Be watchful. Don't miss them, and when one appears, ride it for all its worth. You can learn this at the beach.

The primacy of ideas as drivers of this energy flow is why we hear talk all the time now about the *creative economy*. We are artists who believe in the primacy of our inspirations, the criticality of the points of inception of our ideas. But, if we examine some of the current language of business success, we might see that perhaps it is not so inconsonant right now. Think, for example, about what are often called the "Four Cs" principles in economics: Clarity, Courage, Creativity, and Consistency. Think how they might be related to ways artists might become more powerful forces for positive evolution in our culture and for their own success. [And, don't forget, YOU must define "success." That's critical. Maybe world peace is more important than financial reward, for example.]

Lately, "creative economists" talk about this version of the "Four Cs":

Critical thinking and problem solving

Creativity and innovation

Communication

Collaboration

OK. Wow. If this is the case, artists are indispensable, totally essential in future economies for the following reasons. Clearly, the arts and arts education are one of the best ways to acquire and develop skills related to these creative-economy “Four Cs.” They most certainly will be the keys to cultural and business successes in the future. Global thinking, interaction, communication, and collaboration will be prerequisites to any kind of success in the future, probably in any field; and our kind of education helps develop the right mind sets for them. And, creative innovation and critical thinking will be increasingly in demand by—indeed required for—all forward-looking business strategies in the future.

NOW, I CHALLENGE YOU. I challenge you as the most creative thinkers on the planet right now to re-imagine even THIS formulation; to seductively, with cunning, imagination, skill and maybe even stealth, re-conceive the models of socio-cultural-economic energy flow and channel them towards the realization of your most outward reaching, creative passions, in the most positive light, and towards enabling you, you together, to save this planet and create a better, peaceful, sustainable world that is full of possibilities for artistic enrichment. Think on both gigantic

scales and on tiny, tiny scales. Macro-global cultures and micro-local cultures are equally important and just a matter of focus and context. Think about how the traditional boundary separating customers (your audience) from providers (you) might be blending into something more like *symbiotic collaborators in a common purpose*; just like the boundaries separating artistic, musical, and fashion styles from each other have become transparent, and even the distinctions among what's commercial and what's not commercial have become so blurred.

Don't be molded or contained by cultural pressures or fears. ENJOY this ever-changing, evolving world and help channel it to a better place. You have to carve out your own career pathways anyway, build your own roads; so you might as well live free in the process, and in living free you will best succeed.

REMEMBER. You are passionate about your art, or you wouldn't have come to CalArts.

You are tenacious in your path, or you wouldn't have survived CalArts.

Tomorrow is the next day in your career of infinite possibilities.

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