

Healing Hearts

Healing, Consciousness & Wellbeing News

July 2022



Artist/Blacksmith/Designer Pete Mattila

Photo by: Scott Gelston

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HEALING HEARTS

Edited by Suzanne King, *Reiki Energy for Life*

With snow atop kunanyi / Mt Wellington its time to gravitate towards the nearest log fire - and what a perfect time to get creative and learn a new life skill. There's plenty of ideas within this edition to lift your spirits over winter and beyond; from forging your own tools to mindful painting practices, mosaic art, ceramics, weaving, spinning and candle making.

All the art professionals who have contributed to this edition agree - art can make you feel renewed. Indeed Professor of Neuroscience and former President of the American Art Therapy Association describes creativity as "important for remaining healthy, remaining connected to yourself and connected to the world." By focusing on an artistic creation you can forget about your worries and even reframe your thinking to arrive at new and more positive perspectives. *Healing Hearts* hopes this edition will inspire you to get cracking and get creative.

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Editor's Letter

Have you ever noticed when you're creating you feel happier and calmer? Whether you're simply doodling, colouring-in, drawing, knitting, arranging rocks at the beach, even stacking wood in a certain way - all of these activities have the power to elevate your spirits. Now neuroscience has caught up with what we have always inherently known, proving that art (yes even doodling) is great for our health and wellbeing.

One article in the *Arts of Psychotherapy Journal* (Vol 55, Sept 2017) states that "doodling resulted in the maximum activation of the medial prefrontal cortex" which is slap bang in the reward zone of the brain. So to my mind, artwork can be considered chocolate for the soul with not a calorie consumed!

And while in reward mode, the brain responds by increasing the presence of alpha waves, which is the brain's way of saying "I'm pretty relaxed right now". In addition, your endocrine system sighs with relief, as artwork causes a rush of dopamine (the feel good hormone) to the brain, while cortisol (known as the stress hormone) levels reduce. As cortisol is related to increased heart rate and blood pressure, reducing this hormone can only make you feel calmer - you've basically doodled your way out of feeling like you want to fight, flee or freeze.

So now that we know the physiological and psychological benefits of creating art, it seems the hurdle for most people is thinking that they don't have an artistic bone in their body, so why start. Yet contributors like Phillip McKay of Hobart Art Centre are emphatic, that once you get people over the 'I can't paint' hurdle, then the skies the limit.

This edition therefore aims to help alter any entrenched ways of thinking that you can't create and promote the idea that creativity supports positivity. Contributors like Master Recycler, Nick McShane, urge you to take a risk, get out there, get creative and if you don't like the result, just recycle it! So while its blisteringly cold outside, why not immerse yourself in learning new skills (there's loads of ideas in this edition to get you enthused). Imagine by Spring you can say proudly "look what I created" or "look what I recycled"!

Best wishes to all,

Suzanne King
Reiki VII Practitioner
Reiki Energy for Life

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First snow atop kunanyi above reiki room
Battery Point (17 May 2022)

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The Healing Arts

Interview with Kate Tenni, Sensorimotor Art Therapist

About Kate: Kate brings a deep sense of compassion and intuition, oncology and palliative care nursing training and many years of art therapy training to her Healing Arts therapy practice. Her art therapy education includes a Diploma in Sensorimotor Art Therapy, a two-year experiential art therapy course plus a two-year clay-field therapy course.

Through colour and clay, Kate supports both children and adults to navigate life's difficulties. Whatever the problem, be it grief, loss, anxiety, depression, trauma, learning and behavioural difficulties, or mind-body disconnection, Kate provides a gentle yet expressive and creative way to enable her clients to feel more connected, more trusting of themselves and more in the flow of their lives.

Kate, how do you even begin to become an art therapist?: My art therapy journey started when I was in my twenties. It was a turbulent time in my life. I was struggling with my own significant losses and decided to leave the world of oncology nursing behind. It took a few years of coping and searching but eventually I found art through Steiner education. A few years later, after raising a family, I started to understand art theory and had become more immersed in my own art practice. I travelled to New Zealand for a training called 'Art for Health' which explored how art can support human development and I began to experience the healing potential of art as I joined an art therapy group. I then heard the calling to return to end-of-life care, and that's when I trained and worked as a volunteer in palliative care. I also participated in a Sensorimotor Art Therapy course spanning several years, living-in for days to weeks at a time. This was a real immersion and included aspects of Jungian psychology, Zen Buddhism, martial arts, myths and legends, Gestalt and Somatic therapies. So nursing, health and art have interwoven through my life and brought me to the present moment where I feel I'm in the flow, bringing my whole self to the work of supporting others move from simply surviving in life to thriving.

So how do you feel when you look back on your art therapist journey?: Well it kind of looks as though it was all planned out, but I didn't have a plan at all! It was a matter of following the threads that caught my interest and made my heart swell. Making art, expressing myself creatively through paint, clay, voice etc. has helped me to hear what my heart has to 'say', to trust and tend to my Self. It's been a journey of discovery which has been enriching and healing. Art is a reliable companion for me. A nurturing practice that brings joy and contentment, a way to help me move through life's difficulties. This art therapy journey feels a gift, and doubly so to have the skills, training and experience to help others ease the burden of pain, loss and disconnection through gentle art practices as well.

What do you love most about your work?: I love the collaboration and improvisation that happens in a session. I love the variety of ways of working with creativity as a path towards wholeness. I love the intimate nature of the work and the opportunity to deepen my sense of intuition. It's amazing to help people 'see' their inner world anew as they express through paints, crayons, clay, collage. To witness growth, to feel people become more accepting and attuned - there's so much to love about it!

What happens in an art therapy session?: To begin with we get to know each other, building trust and safety. Emotional safety is always my priority especially as artistic expression can access some very deep and wounded parts of ourselves. So I might do some gentle breath-work and start with simple exercises which explore a person's life-story. As mutual trust grows we might work more consciously with wounds and traumas. I support an awareness of bodily felt sensations and inner impulses to guide art making and these sessions often include guided drawing and Clay Field therapy.



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Reiki Natural Energy Healing

How reiki and creativity work to support healing



Do you feel like you are traversing the emotional Himalayas? If you answered yes to that question and pictured yourself high on an exposed peak or stuck in a deep gully, then reiki and creativity could be just what you need to work your way back towards the peace of what feels like a safe harbour. This is because the gentle natural healing modality of reiki provides relief from anxiety, pain and tension, while creativity allows you to activate your imagination and as Dr Shamini Jain explains (in her book *Healing Ourselves*) "gives you the tools to connect with yourself."

How reiki and creativity promote beneficial physiological and psychological change: My aim as a reiki practitioner is to work with my client to plot a path towards calm. This plan encompasses the actual reiki healing session and the post-session briefing. Although each client is different, and each reiki healing session is unique, each session follows a similar format, as summarised below.

During a 90 minute reiki healing session, I work to:

- Pour reiki natural energy into each of my client's major energy hubs (known as chakras) and focus on minimising any pain and discomfort in the body. As the body soaks up new energising ki (energy which is fundamental to human health) and as old stagnant, bottlenecked energy is pushed out of the body, the client responds by:
 - Entering a deep sense of peace, relaxation and calm. This is because reiki activates the parasympathetic nervous system, moving them away from 'flight, fight, freeze' sympathetic nervous system responses.
 - Breathing easier and deeper. Shallow breathing synonymous with anxiety changes to a more rhythmic resting breath rate.
- Focus my attention on the areas in the body which are being impacted by negative emotions. For example, I often explain the solar plexus chakra in terms of radiance. It should feel like I have put my hand in a light bulb; it should be bright, bursting with energy and light. As I see the chakra colour, as well as sense it, I can determine if the chakra is insipid, maybe opaque, lacking in vibrancy as opposed to a healthy chakra which feels charged and is full of brightness.

During a 10-15 minute post-session debrief, I work to:

- Provide an understanding of the status of my client's chakras, their resting breath rate and other factors discerned during the 90 minute session. This is also a good opportunity for the client to provide their feedback as to how they feel now as opposed to when they walked in (i.e. that they feel calmer, comforted, in less pain, balanced and centred).
- Provide tips for post-session care which might encompass:
 - breathing exercises to promote emotional and mental equilibrium or ways to energise the body.
 - energy medicine exercises to soothe the vagus nerve which in turn reduces anxiety.
 - grounding exercises to promote better mind-body connection.
 - creative exercises to promote happiness and feelings of wellbeing and positivity.



All of these exercises are a way for the client to carve out just a small amount of time for themselves. Doing something creative, even for a short time, enhances feelings of being in the flow of life. Creative examples include a journaling technique which is particularly useful in working to navigate feelings of grief, or just simple tasks like picking and arranging flowers, or placing rocks and shells at the beach into mini art installations. So from the reiki session onwards, the client can start their journey towards feeling calmer and more at peace within themselves.

Suzanne King, *Reiki Energy for Life*
(One of Australia's few Reiki VII Practitioners)

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Forging masterpieces on the banks of the Derwent

Shaping Steel and Touching Hearts: Interview with Blacksmith & Designer Pete Mattila



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About Pete Mattila: Pete is a world-renowned fine artist, sculptor, blacksmith and designer who creates masterpieces in his studio overlooking the Derwent. It has taken decades of grit and determination and a feat of mental endurance to arrive in the present and throughout his journey he has held fast to his vision of a flourishing life full of creativity. This vision meant taking many leaps of faith, a whole lot of risk taking, of jumping freight trains across America, searching and upskilling. Now all that tenacity and strength has paid off. From his studio, Pete forges masterpieces in steel and runs workshops in tool-making and knife-making. He has a Masters Degree in Fine Arts from UTAS, he teaches out of his studio, interstate and overseas. His work can be found in collections around the world.

Pete - what are you working on at the moment?: A 4 metre archway for Hanging Rock Lodge in NSW, then in September I'm off to Pennsylvania to run another master class at the Centre of Metal Arts. In between, I'm working on other commissions, like large-scale sculptural steel gates.

What do you love most about working with steel?: I like the fact you have to be present, you can't think of anything else, as there's a small window of time between activating the material and transforming it. Shaping metal has to be done very fast, so you need to have your creative vision beforehand. Through that creative process the object I'm making reveals itself. So I love the transformation that occurs on different levels; the material level and creative level. It's all about exploring possibilities.

Your journey is full of stories of self-empowerment. Would you say blacksmithing has been the catalyst for self-discovery and change?: Blacksmithing to me has been a vehicle for self-empowerment for sure. Making is thinking. You are using your hands and engaged in another way of being. So through making, being creative, you also become self-aware. The material is the ultimate teacher. So I've experienced positive change in myself and I've seen people in my workshops change for the better too. A student can see that their actions have a direct impact on the material and from there they've learnt that they can create. For example, I recently received a letter from a student which said "I had no idea that I was capable of doing something like this and it has impacted my life in such a positive way." I also worked with a young person who learned how to make tools and through that process became more self-empowered and changed their career as a result.

What do you love about teaching tool-making?: My passion for blacksmithing, designing and creating just pours out of me, so on the one level it's great to simply share the act of creating tools and objects with students. I love seeing the sparkle in people's eyes when they are learning. I'm also on a life-time journey of discovery and I've learned that what I am doing has an ancestral and spiritual aspect. For example, when I think of a hammer blow, how it pushes additional life-force into a piece, changing it forever, I can also think of life-force in a holistic manner. I can think of all those hammer blows through time, which means my skills are connecting me to the past and to the future, as these skills are indispensable and therefore, can never be lost. So I have a responsibility to teach important life skills, especially considering that we are living in the age of the Anthropocene.

Do you have favourite pieces?: The experience of making things is always really enjoyable. Many objects continue to hold a place in my heart like the piece that took about six months to create when I was working in-residence at the Inveresk Railyards. I would have to say that in terms of awesome, one of the most memorable collaborative pieces was designing a set of large-scale 'wings' for one of the Burning Man festivals (Nevada, USA). Once the design was standing tall, I worked with a team of international blacksmiths in the USA to collectively forge 'feathers'. The memory of being part of such an intense, uplifting experience, of having about 80,000 people view and love my work – now that was extraordinary.

Phillip McKay: Hobart Art Gallery



About Phillip: I've always drawn and painted. It was respite from a traumatic childhood - respite from an anxious mind. And a safe and soothing solution for both. I've always known the inherent healing qualities of art making, even if I couldn't articulate them at age 4. And so, it is no wonder that I have always tried to incorporate art into my parallel career, which has been mental health. When I was age 26, I experienced the positive impact art can have on the health and wellbeing of our most damaged, teaching art at Risdon Prison. This experience sparked a 30 year career working with at-risk youth, in Programs such as U-Turn, headspace and juvenile justice in the UK, utilising the arts whenever I could. Though I have a degree in the Fine Arts, I'm primarily self-taught and am currently running classes, including a group mindfulness art class at the Hobart Art Gallery in the Hotel Grand Chancellor.

How do Mindful Art or Paint and Sip Classes work?: Entering this space and learning how to paint is a beautiful mindful happy experience. Indeed, when I am painting, I don't have a care in the world and that's exactly the same for participants. Most people don't like to make themselves vulnerable, so art becomes a safe way to explore how they are feeling and become more comfortable with those feelings. So here in the gallery people can just relax and learn but have a laugh at the same time. And it's interesting to see people don't do too much of the 'sipping' during the Paint and Sip classes; they are too busy getting caught up in the camaraderie and the wonder of their creation.

How would you say art is beneficial emotionally? Art is simply transformational. I've seen the beneficial impacts of creating art across a broad spectrum of people. Certainly creativity and art therapy provide a wonderful way to identify negative beliefs and emotions and through art, you can reframe and rewrite a whole new narrative. Art becomes the mechanism and a powerful metaphor to change those 'rusted-on' negative self beliefs. For people who are clinically depressed, art can be pivotal to turning their lives around. The first thing is to get people over the hurdle, to invest in self-belief that they can paint. A lot of people have been told they can't paint, so you need to get them over that block. That is the most pleasing part of getting people to break through, to overcome their blockages. These are powerful, life-changing moments.

What would you say are students' key learnings?: I teach that you can physically release your negative energy onto the canvas. Also, I think there are many beautiful metaphors for life awaiting to be learned. For example, being free, seeing what happens, using techniques to see what comes out of chaos and being more confident. And knowing that it doesn't matter if you stuff up. I aim for the unintended - that is better than the meticulously planned. Then there's the idea of ourselves within the painting. You can see how you've pushed through - you've hit problems and you've managed to solve them. Also, consider the edges in a painting. Edges are like relationships. Where two shapes meet, how they meet, are they complementary or sharp and discordant. A good painting - like a good life - has all of these edges. So the act of painting for me is a conversation. We can continually move the lines and the parts between positive and negative states to create what we want in a painting - just like relationships.

What consumes you artistically?: My paintings are 'in-scapes'; what has been consuming me emotionally so my paintings become landscapes of the mind. When I paint I don't normally have an image in mind, I just see what happens. Over the past 15 years, I've been known for my landscapes which are dystopian and barren, reflecting the impact of climate change. These paintings are like my spiritual connection, linking me to the environment and projecting the necessity that we must look after ourselves and the earth.



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Anna Berger: Tasmanian Artist and Storyteller



About Anna Berger: After attaining a degree in Fine Arts, majoring in painting, the past 30 years has been a flurry of teaching art at St Mary's College, enjoying family life with my husband and two girls and devoting time to my own artistic endeavours. My Diploma of Printmaking (2012) cemented my professional artistic journey in creating collographs (a style of etching). I've been a member of several exhibition groups and have also exhibited in solo shows. So I'm often found working towards my next exhibition, which involves a lot of research, drawing and printmaking.

What is the inspiration behind your unique prints?: It's been an interesting journey of discovery as my art has reflected many different phases and subjects that have taken my fancy, although simultaneously, I like to hope that I have developed a certain style that might be recognisable. Conceptually, my subject matter has included ideas about Humanity's pre-occupation with Collecting; the classifying and categorizing of Nature; Cabinets of Curiosity; 19th century Naturalists; Tasmanian Native Flora and Fauna; European Architecture and Decorative Arts; Colonial Tasmanian history; Tasmanian wilderness mountain huts and French exploratory voyages of Australia. It was the theme of Tasmanian Native flora and fauna housed in ornate European Cabinets of Curiosity that carried through to my solo exhibition *Vandemonian Naturalia* at Salamanca's Wild Island Gallery in 2020. I'm always mindful though of what my old art teacher Carol Prichard said, that an artist must never rest on their laurels or "think they've arrived". I would hope my art practice continues to evolve therefore, and I never stop learning.

Anna, when you reflect on your own artistic journey, how would you say art makes you feel? I love that art is a constant source of curiosity and creativity and that the learning is limitless. From looking at, and learning from, other artist's work to learning new techniques, attending workshops to the actual hands-on work; it all fills me with joy. I always make sure I go to see whatever is on at the galleries around Hobart and on the mainland. I've also been lucky enough to immerse myself in the bliss of museums and galleries in Europe and New York. I think it would be impossible to return from these trips and not be filled to the brim with inspiration. The question about how actual art makes me feel though is complex. Art to me is a lot of things, because I can feel fulfilled, productive, inspired, happy and content, but in order to achieve a high standard, it can also be downright frustrating and hard work. In saying that, I know art is good for my mental health, as it is an activity that I have always enjoyed ever since I can remember. I apparently used to draw princesses with huge decorative dresses even from when I was at Kindergarten - so it seems I was destined to become an artist!

Would you go so far as to say that art is a type of meditation for you? Well although art has been a constant source of sustenance in my life and a very positive aspect of my life, art is also "5% inspiration, 95% perspiration"! So yes, when I get a chance to work undistracted and undisturbed in the studio, when I am immersed in my practice, I find my worries do fade away. On the days that I pack up my car and head to the studio, I leave any stresses or cares behind. For the next 9 hours I am listening to music, inking up and printing my plates, and relishing the act of creating art. The feeling I get on those days is an uplift in mood, an empowerment of spirit and a sense of positive achievement. While the therapeutic aspect of making art is one of my goals, and a welcome one, my main goal is to make good art and to have something to communicate to others in a thoroughly visual art way. And if this happens, it makes me feel good all over again and means the fulfilment gained has been worth any challenges experienced during the journey.



Tasmanian Tigers, King's Iomatia and short spider orchids
(Wild Island Gallery exhibition 2020)

Nick McShane: Master Recycler



About Nick McShane: Gardening, art and creativity have been at the heart of my varied jobs and studies. My Certificate in Horticulture relates to when I was working as a nurseryman and gardener and my Diploma in Art, Craft & Design was during the time I was running a not-so-successful stall at Salamanca. I loved making boxes, mirrors and jewellery for the stall, specialising in recycled material (unfortunately, I was just ahead of the market!). Each step along the way built my creativity and skills though, until finally I attained a Bachelor of Fine Arts majoring in Furniture Design. Now I'm a secondary Design and Technology teacher which allows me to guide my students in a forum which not only relies on my creativity but also my humour (normally via Dad-jokes)!

Nick, can you describe how art and creativity supports learning and behavioural issues: Sometimes the most creative part of my job as a secondary teacher is how I interact with students. I am proud that many students with behavioural issues frequently respond to my style, and I have built some really positive relationships with some pretty troubled kids. Students with learning difficulties often thrive in a creative environment, and get such a buzz when they can take home a finished project. Often these students are not aware of just what they are capable of doing, and I am so lucky to work with some wonderful Teacher Assistants along the way to fulfil the potential within these students. As a bonus, they think my jokes are hilarious. I have come to realise that I might not see each person at their best in the school environment, and if my own journey has taught me anything, many will thrive as they get older. I see my part in their journey as keeping them in touch with being creative, and to see learning as a life-long journey.

Why do you think you've become drawn towards moulding natural objects or pre-loved items into works of art? Maybe it was coming from a big family where we weren't surrounded with possessions, and what we had was often a hand-me-down. Whatever the reason, I love that these objects have already been on a journey, and will then spend some time existing in an object that I have made. Wandering through an Op-Shop, the Tip Shop, or along a beach, I pick up items and think what use I might make of them. I am very aware that I enter a bit of a dream-state at these times, often singing along (very quietly) to myself as I browse. I am also very aware that many of these items I snap up are still stored somewhere about the house for use at 'a later date' (but don't tell my wife Anna).

Do you have a current creative project that fills you with joy? My current 'habit' is making earrings from Op-Shop necklaces, something that also fits with my philosophy of recycling and repurposing. As a bonus, these are frequently 'one-off' pieces. At the times when I am actually engaged in making, I enjoy 'the flow' that people often speak of; where time slips by and my focus is only on what is at hand - talk about a great stress-reliever!

Do they have to have a skill or is it just about becoming curious and allowing yourself to go on a creative adventure? People look at what I do and say things like, 'I wouldn't have the talent to do that', but they probably have - they just haven't taken the risk to fail. Many things I have made in the past were just awful, but I learned something in the process. Some of my recycling has been recycling my own creations! I've certainly picked up quite a few skills along the way, but I rarely use them as intended. The internet is a terrific place to start the journey, picking up ideas, tips, and skills. Just don't be put off by how talented some of those YouTubers are. Your local library also has a great range of books on art and craft, as do Op-Shops. Just get out there and be creative!



For more information about 'Rescued and Remade' range:
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The Meditative & Inspirational Practice of Mosaic Art

Mosaic Magic: Interview with Mosaicist, Donna Ritchie



About Donna Ritchie: Donna is an accomplished mosaicist, who has been inspiring and educating school children, social and community groups in the meditative and joyous art of mosaics for 22 years. She has held many solo exhibitions and guided large community projects and installations in England and Tasmania. A former member of the British Association of Modern Mosaicists (BAMM), she is now a current member of the Mosaic Association of Australia & New Zealand (MAANZ). Donna has taught diverse groups for over twenty years from Outreach Health in regional Tasmania to workshops at The Moonah Arts Centre (MAC) and is also available as a private mosaic consultant.

Donna, you literally light up the room when you talk about mosaic patterns. How did you come across mosaic art and learn the art of design?: While I was living in Bath, England, I literally fell into a mosaic tile shop located on the Pulteney Bridge. I fell in the door and fell in love with the beautiful patterns there and then! I ended up working in the shop for about ten years. Those beautiful Roman mosaic tiles got me hooked and started my journey of discovery and inspiration. I studied art to complement my mosaic art practice at the Bristol School of Art, then later at Hobart's College of Art, plus workshops around Australia and in Italy. Now I love guiding people, showing them how easy it is to create beautiful pieces that fill them with pride.

It sounds like mosaics have allowed your creative spirit to soar and opened opportunities that you never would have thought possible: Absolutely – I see the potential for mosaics everywhere; my mind is always brimming with possibilities. And mosaic art has allowed me to travel and fulfill my dreams. For example, I was lucky in 2019 to participate in a micro-mosaic workshop in Ravenna, Italy, where I worked with gorgeous Venetian Smalti (an exquisite tile perfect for micro-mosaics). Ravenna was so inspiring! There I was



surrounded by famous Byzantine mosaics and the opportunity to see The Biennale International Mosaic Festival (which showcases a huge variety of mosaic artists from around the world). I've been exploring micro-mosaics ever since and are now creating small mosaic curios. I'm still experimenting with using a variety of micro materials such as Venetian Smalti, porcelain, shell, convict brick and gold. My art practice explores ideas such as social, political and environmental issues. I tend to use a light hearted approach to deliver more serious messages. So whether I'm creating miniatures, guiding a large community project or working on a table-top or the backdrop of a walled garden, my sense of creativity and inspiration is infinite.

Is there a particular pattern that speaks to you? I have an affinity with circles as their beauty depicts friendship and speaks to me about community, about joy, positivity and togetherness. They make me think back to when I first started teaching, where I learned that a workshop is like a get-together of friends (and strangers who didn't even know they were friends)! I used to live in a large farmhouse which had views of valleys and villages, and eight people at a time would crowd around my kitchen table, enjoy each other's company and create mosaic magic. So I love bringing people together and giving people the understanding that they too have the skills to create their own patterns and designs.



What are a few of your memorable projects? I loved guiding the community project called 'Riverfish' in Somerset, England. A waterway was diverted while we placed the tiles depicting fish on the riverbed, then the water was allowed to flow over it. Then there was the 4 metre long mosaic of the Bristol skyline. But there have been so many projects close to my heart, like the mosaic of the Pulteney Bridge, featuring a golden light shining from the shop I used to work in. In between I've been inspired by everything from Roman mosaics, to vintage kimonos, to landscapes and seascapes to mandalas.

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Can neuroscience help me win the Archibald?



You may think your creativity and innovation stems from the brain's right hemisphere. You might even proudly say "I'm a right-brain creative type" or conversely, "I'm a left-brained analytical thinker". But hold that thought - science is now teaching us that responses in the brain are not just contained within one hemisphere. In 2013, a team of neuroscientists proved that "whether you perform a logical or creative function, you receive input from both sides of the brain"[1]. The Dana Foundation explains that creativity requires cognitive effort and playing an important role is a seahorse-shaped region embedded in the

temporal lobe of the brain called the hippocampus. Yet, beyond the function of the hippocampus (which pieces together memories and visualises the future), there's a web of executive control and default networks involved as well[2].

So while reading this you may have had a light bulb moment: "What if I use an Arnold Schwarzenegger approach and pump up my hippocampus and make my neural networks as bright and shiny as possible? Surely then I'd be on my way to winning the next Archibald Prize!"

Well the good news is that you can grow your hippocampal neurons through meditation, walking and exercise and having a diet which is high in omega-3 fatty acids[3]. Meditation for example will increase regional cerebral blood flow and the efficiency in the brain's executive attentional network as well as immersing the body in vast physiological benefits like reducing heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol levels[4].

In further good news, a 2021 study suggested that "both meditation and exercise activate[s] the medial orbitofrontal cortex which is involved in emotional reactions and motivational behaviour; resulting in mental refreshment[5]." This has been found to be the same region of the brain that lights up when we view art[6].

Indeed, whether you're an artist, sculptor, rock-painter, colouring-inner or doodler; when you enter the mindset of creating, you can enter a type of meditative state. Your worries slide away as you enter the 'now' and inner world of imagination, and focus all your attention on the 'doing'. We know it feels good and now neuroscience is getting to the point of recognising (like in the abovementioned studies) the parts of the brain which are activated when we enter such refreshing mind-states.

But, back to the big question - will meditation and exercise and the 'Arnold' approach win me the Archibald? Well, unfortunately neuroscience is still too much in its infancy to provide an understanding of exactly how to strengthen creative thinking abilities. This is because, according to one cognitive scientist, Joel Chan, creativity involves an interplay between attention, analogical thinking, network organisation of memory and imagination, and all these functions are impacted by environmental factors, mood and energy levels.[7]

So the best suggestion towards entering the Archibald is to expand your curiosity and learn skills within traditional art lessons and artistic past-times and practice, practice, practice to help stimulate the brain. Once you know how, then the next step might be to eat a diet rich in eggs, avocados and tuna, walk in nature to stimulate the senses, meditate, snack on some walnuts ... and just get started.

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Courses

Learn spinning and weaving with Rasa Dunlop of *MadebyRasa* hand-woven designs

Rasa weaves and knits unique scarves using Tasmanian wool, alpaca and other yarns such as silk, and teaches how you too can create such beautiful hand-crafted products. Her one day weaving courses are held every month at the Rubicon River Arts Hub, Latrobe. So if you've inherited a loom, or can't bring yourself to open the one still boxed in the shed, or simply would love to learn a new skill, Rasa can help you to weave your way to happiness. Rasa also teaches spinning, which she describes as being meditative and joy-inducing.



Small, fun classes (or solo tuition): One-day every month, at the Rubicon River Arts Hub, Latrobe

What's included: All the materials you need to get started (or bring your own loom)

Facebook: MadebyRasa <https://facebook.com/MadebyRasa-787574978030023/>)

Email: rasa.dunlop@gmail.com

Mobile: 0419 298 254

Handweavers, Spinners and Dyers Guild of Tasmania Inc.

The Handweavers, Spinners and Dyers Guild of Tasmania's main aim is to bring people together who practice textile and fibre crafts. The Guild can therefore link you to one of the many spinning, weaving and felting groups in Tasmania. For example, the Battery Point group meet most Thursdays and the 2nd Saturday of the month at Guild Headquarters, St George's Church, 30 Cromwell Street, Battery Point. For Members, the Yarn Store is also open on those days.

Email: info@hwsdguilddtasmania.org or phone 0418 485 868



Candle Classes with Richmond Botanicals

Classes: 4 hour candle classes every month at 16 Bridge Street, Richmond

Next Course: 7 August 2022

Cost: \$200

What's included: All materials to make 4 x soy wax, pillar & beeswax wrap candles.

Contact: kylieopray@gmail.com or visit website: www.richmondbotanicalsco.com.au



'Ornament Adornments' Workshop at Campo de Flori

Workshops: Over 2 days (across 2 x weekends) from Sept to Nov 2022

Where: Campo de Flori Lavender, Olive & Saffron Farm, Lanes Road, Glen Huon

What's included: Lunch and materials to make, bisque fire then glaze fire your pieces

Contact: lisa@campodeflori.com.au or visit website: <https://campodeflori.com>

October 2022 edition



- A mountain of wellbeing opportunities right on our doorstep
- Flourish like your garden this Spring
- Chinese Traditional Medicine - time to cleanse an angry liver
- Transforming stress and anxiety into vitality