



## ***Creative expression and why it matters***

CAROLE WILSON advocates for time to fan the creative fires.

**IMAGE**  
Richie Hodgson

**ABOVE**  
Carole Wilson

Creative expression, at its most fundamental level, is an integral part of all our lives. For some of us, it might be expressed through gardening or cooking or the way in which we arrange our living spaces, while for others it might be expressed through writing, playing an instrument or creating an artwork.

For some it is their daily bread and butter, while for others it is an occasional luxury. What is really important is that we honour this part of ourselves and create more space for it in our busy lives.

This is an issue that is particularly pertinent for me at the moment as I have made a transition from full-time artist and part-time lecturer to full-time lecturer and part-time artist. How does one make sure that there is enough time and energy for one's artistic pursuits and to keep that vital fire burning? For some, it is a case of allowing a day or two a week to be devoted to creative activities. For others, it may work better to find some time and space each day amongst everything else. I know that I operate best when I separate the time quite distinctly, to let that other side of the brain really take over.

As a teacher of Studio Art, these are questions that come up daily in my interactions with both undergraduate and postgraduate students, who are usually juggling work and family commitments along with their study. One of the common discussion points is that art is often "slow to happen" and is often preceded by a time of appearing to do nothing or day dreaming, which can often feel like wasting time but is, in fact, a necessary part of the whole process. Of course this can present problems when one is confined by external parameters such as semesters and assessment deadlines. Creativity doesn't always fit neatly into time boxes.

Another common discussion point is the question of what actually feeds creativity? This is also a really pertinent one for students, particularly when they experience the creative blocks that are common occurrences for many artists. If you ask this question of artists you get an incredibly wide variety of responses, but there are some common threads. It seems that doing physical activity of some kind, often in the natural environment is a common means of shifting the energy. Other responses include immersing oneself in music, visiting lots of galleries, socialising and having a holiday. Eventually we all come through those blocks and they often herald a new and exciting period of artistic activity.

The reality in Australia, is that a very small proportion of students who undertake undergraduate art degrees actually go on to have a career as professional artists; many move into teaching, arts administration and related areas. Nevertheless, I believe this early grounding in arts education has an important role to play and as the art critic Michael Kimmelman said in *The Accidental Masterpiece* "It is always good to keep your eyes wide open, because you never know what you will discover. The drive to live life more alertly being an instinctive need, whether you are an artist by trade or by desire, the art of seeing well is a necessary skill, which fortunately can be learned."

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### **ANTENNAE**

Dr Carole Wilson lectures in Studio Practice in the School of Creative Arts and Humanities. An artwork by Dr Wilson recently featured in Melbourne's Federation Square as part of the city's annual Light in Winter Festival.