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Implementing an Arts-Based Initiative Pedagogy in a Business School Creativity Course

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Implementing an Arts-Based Initiative Pedagogy in a Business School Creativity Course

A Project in
Creative Studies

By

Joseph Ruiz

Buffalo State University

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science

May 2020

Abstract

Traditional education and training methods are not well suited to the task of equipping the new workforce. Different skills are needed to succeed in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment. Arts-based initiatives provide a new model for teaching twenty-first century job skills by leveraging an emerging arts-based pedagogy as a fundamentally different approach to teaching, training and equipping a new generation of worker, uniquely qualified to function in this new environment.

The new pedagogy is based on four arts-based processes:

- Skills Transfer
- Projective Technique
- Illustration of Essence
- Making

Keywords: arts-based initiative, creative pedagogy, creativity

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Dates of Approval:

May 10, 2020



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May 10, 2020



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Name

May 10, 2020

Date

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Dedication

This project and the master's program have been life changing. The content and training have been exceptional; however, in the end it is the people who make the difference. I dedicate this to my WOMBAT team members – Katy, Tom, Lalon, Kirk, Katherine, Marsha, Regina, and to Jeannette who embedded herself into our group in a most remarkable way. I can't imagine this journey without you; you are a wonderfully unique and diverse group. Thank you for the encouragement, the laughs and the support.

Most of all I am grateful for Carla, my life partner and cheerleader. She is a constant source of encouragement and support. Thank you for your patience, editing and the coaching moments that came at just the right time.

Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Shannon Mitchell for her support and encouragement. Thanks to her initiative, I was introduced to this program; I am forever grateful.

Prior to my enrollment in the master's program, Dr. Mitchell introduced me to Dr. Cyndi Burnett. Cyndi has been a coach, mentor, guide and friend. I am a better instructor thanks to her direction, patience, feedback and support.

I am grateful for the faculty at the International Center for Studies in Creativity who have modeled and demonstrated the practical value of creativity. A special thanks to Dr. Gerard Puccio for being my advisor and a very helpful resource.

I would like to thank Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers for her guidance. Her energy, experience, encouragement and availability have been inspiring and fun.

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Implementing an Arts-Based Initiative Pedagogy in a Business School Creativity Course

Section One: Background to the Project

I teach a creativity course in the business school at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), a large urban university. Based on extensive feedback from a number of stakeholders, they felt our graduating students were not adequately prepared to make meaningful contributions in the present volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous business environment. Global trends have a profound impact on the business environment. New competitive and collaborative challenges reshape business practices, often in dramatic and significant ways. A review of any credible list of desirable 21st century job skills confirms that some form of creative skillset is mandatory. In an effort to respond to the challenge of preparing our students for these present and future challenges, the school of business created a new strategy called Experiential learning, Problem-solving curricula, Impactful research, and Creative culture (EPIC). As a result of this new strategy, the School of Business now has an annual artist in residence, an International Consulting Program, and a required Creativity & Ideation course.

I have taught sections of the Creativity & Ideation course since we first launched it in the Spring of 2016. Soon after we launched the course, I became aware of the International Center for Studies in Creativity when I attended the CPSI (Creative Problem Solving Institute) in Buffalo, New York. While at the conference, I selected a one-day training workshop focused on the Lego® Serious Play® LSP methodology. Instantly, I was a fan and with the support of VCU, I became a certified facilitator. I regularly practice this method in my classes and workshops. VCU selected Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) as our artist in residence. The museum offers a distance learning program that teaches a variety of creative skills by incorporating various art pieces. Our Senior Associate Dean expressed an interest in exploring the connection

between art and business beyond having an artist in residence. While doing research to determine what I was going to do for my master's project, I discovered an emerging framework for leveraging art skills to help prepare students for the new challenges that lie ahead. When students are asked to define creativity, the familiar response is to think outside the box. I am excited about the potential of this new arts-based pedagogy because it is a fundamentally different approach to teaching students to think outside the box.

My personal goals for this project will be:

- To design a new arts-based pedagogy framework that develops creative thinking skills.
- To develop an arts-based initiative course segment within the Creativity & Ideation course.
- To disrupt the traditional approach to the classroom experience and create an adult learning pedagogy that is more dynamic and collaborative.
- To create an effective experiential learning platform that integrates Lego® Serious Play® and an experience with art.
- To enhance the VCU – VMFA partnership beyond the current academic year.

My rationale for choosing this approach is to heighten interest and curiosity by using the arts-based initiatives to create a relevant framework that provides credibility for a new experiential learning experience. The VMFA partnership as the current artist in residence provides a relevant and useful new pathway that allows students an opportunity to develop new skills in unexpected ways. This approach leverages the value of the Lego® Serious Play® experience while teaching several meaningful creativity skills like empathy, observation, and creating metaphors. The arts-based initiatives will also involve dealing with relevant business

applications that are appropriate for students in a Business School setting. For example, analyzing modern art teaches students to appreciate multiple perspectives, defer judgment, deal with ambiguity and increase awareness and empathy. There is also a significant benefit for my department within the Business School. VCU implemented a new budget program that assigns revenue based on student enrollment in courses. While the Creativity & Ideation course is required for business students, we have seen a significant new population of students from other majors taking the course and generating revenue for the department.

Section Two: Pertinent Literature

When I first thought about this project, my focus was primarily focused on exploring the Lego® Serious Play® (LSP) methodology as a means of teaching creativity skills in a fun and experiential manner. Now I am integrating Arts-based Initiatives with a Serious Play method in order to create a new pedagogy segment designed to teach creativity skills.

The Value of Arts for Business

The discovery of *The Value of Arts for Business* (Schiuma, 2011) changed the direction and design of this project. Following are my key insights and observations from the book along with other relevant resources.

The rationale for this book confirms that global trends are reshaping the business landscape which is characterized by complexity, uncertainty, volatility, and ambiguity. “Management, like the combustion engine is a mature technology that must now be reinvented for a new age” (Hamel, 2009, p. 91). Surviving in this new landscape requires agility and resilience. In this new age economic gain is insufficient; businesses must now master other forms of creating value by developing individual creative abilities that engage the heart, mind and spirit of team members so they may apply these skills to creative problem-solving. This was once the role of senior executives, but is now a requirement throughout the workforce (Nissley, 2010).

Traditional business skills focus on teaching rationale skills; however, developing agility and resilience require aesthetic skills. Traditional management practices viewed emotions as a variable that needed to be suppressed and controlled, rather than leveraged as a valuable asset. Dropping the tools of rationality opens the door to gain access to a different perspective, one that

brings a lightness in forms of intuitions, feelings, stories, improvisation, active listening, and a greater sense of awareness (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). Reading about dropping tools was enlightening and reminded me that businesses often hang on to existing practices to their detriment. For example, Kodak developed digital photo technology but were unable to drop their core film business.

The arts make an aesthetic experience possible; more importantly, they make it memorable (Eisner, 2003). “Art invites different answers by teaching different questions from different perspectives. Arts based training can be designed to teach corporate America about undefined outcomes, the allowance for failure and risk-taking” (Nissley, 2010, p. 9). Students experience this in class when VMFA present works of art that are subject to multiple interpretations. The skilled facilitators guide them through the process by highlighting, then drawing out these skills.

The author defines three forms of arts-based initiatives (ABIs). They are interventions, projects and programs. Elapsed time and complexity are the primary distinctions between these different forms. Interventions are simple and short-term. Projects are more complex, often involve multiple interventions, and last one to six months. Programs are even more complex, often involving multiple projects. The goal of these initiatives is ongoing improvement in business performance by direct or indirect means.

There are many different ABI formats based on the needs of an organization. Training, coaching, team-building, corporate social responsibility, and art collection are a partial list of the many formats that are available. These formats are not mutually exclusive. Developing the formats involves an understanding of how the arts will be deployed in a business setting. There

is almost an endless number of format configurations based on factors like location and the particular characteristics of the business challenge.

From an operational perspective ABIs can be divided into two categories, artistic products and processes. Artistic products are artifacts or artworks from the world of art while processes are artistic activity like artful creation or artful understanding. Works of art can involve pieces created by artists and recognized as such by experts in the artworld. These works of art are brought into the organization from outside the organization or works can be commissioned by an organization for the organization. The primary benefit of this approach is observing the works themselves. By contrast, the focus of artistic process is on the activity itself not on the product. I am particularly interested in artistic process because this form of art experience informs the work I will do in this project. Using products and processes has the ability to engage people rationally and emotionally through their participation in the ABIs.

In the literature review I discovered an additional arts-based method that has a supporting framework comprised of four processes: skills transfer, projective technique, illustration of essence and making (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). According to Taylor and Ladkin (2009) while these four processes are distinct, they do overlap. My project primarily uses the projective technique process which involves participants building external models to connect and reveal inner thoughts and feelings, in effect making an artifact. This process allows us access to a reserve deep within that might remain untapped without this methodology.

The table below provides definitions from (Schiuma, 2011) that identifies four arts-based processes that inform the framework of my project.

Table 1

Arts-based processes

Skills transfer	Art-based methods can teach artistic skills that are transferable to business applications.
Projective technique	The output of artistic activities allows an inner connection and revelation of inner thoughts and feelings through art products. Use of LEGO bricks is an example.
Illustration of essence	Art-based methods may provide a perspective that might not be available through more traditional methods.
Making	Making art can provide an experience of connection and presence.

ABIs activate a learning environment that exploits works of art as metaphors and analogies creating aesthetic experiences that initiate conversations and learning reflections (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). ABIs can address specific management competencies such as use of body language, ability to intonate the voice, the use of eye contact during communication and presentations, in addition to other skills such as self-management and the understanding of complex issues.

There are a number of artistic skills that can be transferred to the business environment. For clarity, these skills and definitions are provided in the table below. They have been adapted from (Schiuma, 2011).

Table 2

Key softs skills influenced by arts-based learning

Creativity	Arts can help generate a new perspective by providing methodologies designed to raise awareness, stimulate metaphorical and analogical thinking.
Imagination	The arts can change perceptions of our world, provide new frameworks for interpretation. Play is encouraged.
Risk-taking	The arts promote discovery through surprise. This type of discovery requires taking risks. Arts teach the process and benefits of taking risks.
Improvisation	Improvisation requires the tolerance and embracing of uncertainty and ambiguity by

	teaching skills that develop flexibility and the capacity to quickly change direction.
Observation	People explore and experience the world through their senses. Aesthetic experiences are all around our world. Artefacts and activities help shape aesthetic experiences. Tuning in to these senses is a valuable skill.
Criticism	The arts can teach convergent skills that allow the interpretation and integration of differing perspectives.
Awareness	The arts can teach self-awareness and self-management skills. In particular people can learn awareness of their emotional responses to situations.
Flexibility	The arts can teach people how to be accepting of diversity, ambiguity, volatility, and uncertainty. Because art has multiple interpretations it highlights the need and value of flexibility.

Playing Seriously with Strategy

Play overlaps with ABIs by transforming the nature of work, permitting the safe expression of emotions, helping to remove hierarchical barriers and helping to frame problems in new ways (Mainemelis, 2006). Numerous studies support the notion that there is a correlation between play and creativity. Sometimes play is directly related to the development of a creative product, at other times it serves as a diversion. Rather than a set of specific activities, play is defined as a behavioral orientation to performing activities that facilitate five relevant cognitive processes: problem framing, divergent thinking, mental transformations, practice with alternative solutions, and evaluative ability (Mainemelis, 2006).

While all play is not equal, there appears to be agreement that it is helpful in promoting a climate where divergent thinking can take place. Organizations like Google and Facebook have designed their offices with space for both kinds of play. Play tends to build trust by the way it allows for people to relate on a personal level and this is crucial because psychological safety is necessary when experimenting with ideas and processes (Mainemelis, 2006). Play promotes

creativity in an organization through characteristics of openness, intrinsic motivation, collaboration and by fostering attitudes of nonjudgment among team members (West, 2016). All of the factors I have just referred to are important elements of what Ekvall calls an organization's climate (Ekvall, 1996). This simply means creativity must have the proper environment to thrive and play or fun are part of this environment.

When discussing education in *The Republic*, Plato defined play as frivolous, the aim of which is amusement, and serious, the goal of which was concerned with excellence in education (Roos, 2004). Prior to the literature review I assumed the term serious play was a branding term used to describe the LSP activity. "The originators of LSP reframed serious play as a practice that occurs when people engage deliberately in a fun, intrinsically motivating activity as a means to achieve a serious, extrinsically motivated work objective" (Roos, 2004, p. 237). Serious play was originally conceived as a new method of teaching strategy development to managers through the use of play techniques.

This new technique was based on Piaget's constructivist theory which states that the adult cognitive framework takes form as increasingly complex logical operations are enacted through play activities (Roos, 2004). More importantly, Piaget theorized that constructing things in the world constructed knowledge in the mind. Piaget's student, Seymour Papert, advocated a constructionist approach to teaching, simply put, a constructionist approach to teaching ensures that learners are put together with appropriate materials, in relevant contexts, and with set tasks directly related to the learning outcomes sought (Bürigi, 2005, p. 80). Both of these theories assume that action and cognition inextricably linked. "Providing a highly open-ended construction medium such as LEGO bricks in the setting of a group workshop dedicated to the

representation of the organization and its landscape meets the conditions of the constructionist ideal, putting together appropriate materials and appropriate context” (Bürge, 2005, p. 87).

As a certified LSP facilitator, I create the appropriate representation and organizational context by designing each activity based on a script format taught during the training certification process. The methodology involves a preestablished set of ground rules. Everyone participates, the facilitator will pose a question, all build a model, then everyone shares about their model and finally each reflect on what happened. All conversation must be directed to the model, not to each other. Each workshop begins with a few simply training activities to sanction the time and provide a warm-up for the specific challenges to be addressed in the workshop. The challenges are identified ahead of time between the facilitator and the client.

Working on this project opened my eyes to another aspect of play. We refer to this assignment as the Mini Masterpiece project. Students are asked to take any faceplate from a light switch and then decorate it to reflect some aspect of their personality. The only constraint is a decorated light switch. Previously we have gathered to view these interesting creations and had a brief discussion. This semester I added a reflection paper assignment. In the write-up’s students discussed personal insights, connected this experience to course concepts and they genuinely seemed to enjoy the activity. In addition to adding the write-up I scheduled the activity in closer proximity to the first online session with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Distance learning team. Students typically comment favorably about this assignment; however, this time the reflection assignment connected the experience to the course content which enriched my thinking and added a new play element to this ABI segment.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Distant Learning (VMFA)

I collaborated with key distance learning staff at the VMFA to help tailor the curriculum to align with specific course objectives. The staff have domain specific knowledge of art and are equally skilled in facilitating open-ended ABI skills. Working together, we designed each session and assignment with the objective of identifying and developing a number of the soft skills identified earlier in this section. The framework being developed will require multiple interactions with the VMFA so close coordination will be important. The specific framework details are discussed in section three. Internally I will be working with a couple of colleagues who are teaching other sections of the Creativity & Ideation course. We are jointly collaborating with the VMFA to expand their ongoing involvement in our program.

Our university has a mandate from our all our stakeholders to prepare our students with 21st century skills in order to meet the uncertain, volatile, ambiguous and complex challenges that are the new normal. The ubiquitous response when asked to define such skills is “thinking outside the box”. According to Weick (2007) traditional organizations focus on efficiency, study and scale success, simplify assumptions. In the 21st century decision making is not the concern, the real concern is making sense of the unexpected (Weick, 2007).

Section Three: Process Plan.

The primary goal of this project is an arts-based segment within the Creativity & Ideation course. The initial plan has four separate events, each with specific objectives. The first activity introduces students to arts-based concepts using a distance learning online video session lead by a trained VMFA staff member. Collaboratively planning the presentation script with the distance learning facilitators based on specific outcomes was necessary to ensure alignment. Two works, *No Pictures* by Roslyn Drexler and *Early in the Morning* by James Rosenquist, were selected and presented to the students. Using Zoom technology, the facilitator skillfully guided the students to explore each of these works using open-ended questions and facilitating group discussions among the class members.

Figure 1.

No Pictures by Robin Drexler



Selected Art for class activity

VMFA Collection

Figure 2.

Early in the Morning by James Rosenquist



Selected Art for class activity

VMFA Collection

Following the class students provided feedback and assessment of this activity through a Blackboard Discussion. These discussions help assess student participation in the course.

The second activity is called the Mini Masterpiece project. For this assignment students are required to obtain and decorate a light switch any way they wish. See the figure below for the specific assignment language. On the due date students bring their artifacts to class where they are displayed and arranged by the students. Several students volunteer to describe their creative process, then they are asked to write three words that describe their artifact. After the volunteer has written their three words the entire class writes three words describing their work on post-it notes I supply. Students are then instructed to place their three words beneath their work. Next students are asked to walk around and explore all the artifacts with the goal of identifying a few that are interesting to them. Once they find these pieces they write a note of appreciation using “I like.” as a statement starter. After creating their work, they write a reflection paper.

Figure 3.

Posted Student Assignment



Wk7.M Experiential Activity Mini Masterpiece 

Availability: Item is hidden from students. It was last available on Feb 24, 2020 12:00 PM.

Create your own mini-masterpiece using a light switch plate (they're cheap at Walmart, Home Depot, etc.). Decorate it however you want: images, words, colors. It's your choice! This project is a reflection of you and your creativity. Have fun with it! We'll have a Mini Masterpiece showcase in the classroom where you will have a chance to see your classmates' creations.

Make sure you bring your masterpiece to class on 2/24, I will collect them in class. You must have your name and section somewhere on your design to receive credit. No projects accepted after class on Monday.

Prepare a 250 Write up based on your experience and observations regarding this project. What did you learn? What are your takeaways? Upload your write up here.

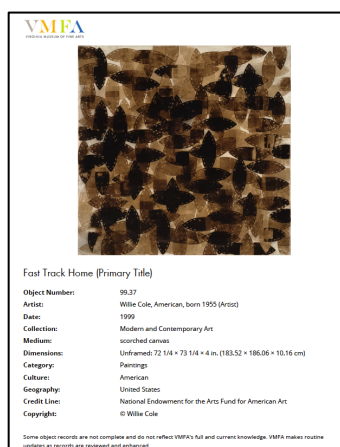
Assignment posted in Blackboard Learning Management System

The third activity is a physical visit to the VMFA by the students with a specific objective of evaluating their visit through the perspective of a unique visitor persona. The design of this activity will emphasize the business challenge of the initiative. To create a deeper and more meaningful assignment I collaborated with VMFA staff to ensure the relevance of the project to the museum and the students. The VMFA provided a specific template for us to use.

Finally, we planned an additional video conference session co-facilitated by the VMFA distance learning instructor and me. *Fast Track Home* by Willie Cole was the artwork selected for the assignment. We planned to integrate the Lego® Serious Play® methodology into the session. The objective was to build observation and communication skills through metaphors. Project timelines and goals are provided in the following two tables. However, due to a Coronavirus pandemic, drastic measures altered the remainder of the semester. The nature of the pandemic required facilities to shut down temporarily and class formats were altered to online only contact.

Figure 4.

Fast Track Home by Willie Cole



Selected art for proposed assignment

VMFA collection

Table 3

Project Timeline and Action Plan

Project Phase	Action	Deadline	Hours to Complete
Planning	Proposal Approval	February 3, 2020	12 hours
	Plan class one – introduction to art analysis. Highlight creativity skills	February 10, 2020	3 hours
	Sections 1-3 Draft – Add pertinent literature review to concept draft, make corrections based on feedback to concept document	February 17, 2020	8 hours
	Sections 1-3 Final – Incorporate instructor feedback	February 24, 2020	4 hours
	Plan class two – design assignment requiring visit to the VMFA for an assessment assignment to gather feedback based on student observations through different predetermined personas.	February 26, 2020	3 hours

Plan class three – the goal is another VMFA zoom session with a selected art analysis this time co-facilitated by LSP facilitator so students build models to respond to art.	Cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic	5 hours
Research & design classes	Cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic	15 hours
Sections 4-6 draft completed	April 15, 2020	15 hours
Implementation		
Class one (4 sections) – video conference with VMFA facilitators	February 12, 2020	5 hours
Grade/evaluate student reflection papers	February 22, 2020	15 hours
Class two visit to VMFA – Completing assignment	February 28, 2020	N/A
Grade/evaluate student reflection papers	March 14, 2020	15 hours
Class three (4 sections) – video conference	March 18, 2020	6 hours

	Grade/evaluate student reflection papers	March 31, 2020	15 hours
	Grade/evaluate student final reflection papers	N/A last class is April 27th	
Program Enhancement	Evaluate and refine methods based on feedback. Work with VCU colleagues and VMFA staff	Ongoing	
	Final Project Write Up	April 30, 2020	

Table 4

Evaluation and Assessment of Goals

Goals	Assessments
Evaluate the effectiveness of the initial video conference experience	Students are required to submit a written reflection paper based on their experience. The reflection will be guided by several specific questions.
Determine the impact of the art-based initiative strategy	Students are required to submit a final reflection paper. There will be a question relating to this strategy.
Study the efficacy of a consultative assignment approach to the VMFA visit	Students submit assignments, in addition to grading some of these will be shared with VMFA for feedback.
Evaluate the integration of LSP with the museum experience	Analyze the reflection assignments and discuss the process with the VMFA staff.
Share the results with the Senior Dean and my Department chair	Prepare a presentation and request meeting to gain support for future efforts.

Section Four: Outcomes

Three of the four project events are analyzed using the four ABI processes described earlier. They are skills transfer, projective technique, illustration of essence and making. For the first event the primary source of data is the Discussion Board Participation assignment. Students are accustomed to using this tool to provide thoughtful reflections and analysis based on prior experience.

First Event

The VMFA distance learning expert facilitated the first in class event. For a number of students this was their first art museum experience. Some recognized they had a fixed mindset and needed to switch to a growth mindset in order to fully participate in this activity. The facilitator was skilled at asking open-ended questions and guiding the class discussion. As a result, the first event successfully met the intended outcomes. Following are relevant highlights gleaned from student comments in the Blackboard discussion posts. Following are the comments organized by the appropriate ABI process.

Skills Transfer

During the introduction the facilitator told the students that the average museum attendee spends approximately seven seconds viewing a work of art. The facilitator challenged everyone to spend thirty seconds viewing each selected artwork. Based on the comments, the reflection time made an impact. By experiencing the value of taking time to observe, to be curious and to ask curious open-ended questions, students were able to assimilate the value of practicing deliberate observation practices. Some were able to connect this skill with the design thinking empathetic step. By modeling this process the facilitator created a bridge between observation

theory and the practical application of these skills. The second work selected was more ambiguous than the first, during the initial observation and analysis students were challenged to make a detailed list of all the items they could identify in the painting, especially noting things that did not seem to make sense. This time students highlighted observations that were a result of using critical thinking skills. The process of learning to evaluate and ask questions directly correlated with the design thinking teaching module covered in a prior class and the students were able to recognize and comment on this connection.

Students benefited from participating in the class discussion as individuals and as members of self-selected groups. There were a number of insights, that emerged in the discussion board after the class. This was particularly evident in response comments to other blog posts. The notion of building on the ideas of others or even extracting new meaning from group participation was as a key takeaway. The ability to gain new insights, especially in different directions, required application of the *resistance to premature closing* skill. Although the comments did not specifically use this terminology, they described the definition accurately. Other skills identified were the need to defer judgment, embrace diversity and tolerate ambiguity.

Projective Technique

Earlier in the semester, when asked to define creativity, most students immediately responded with a definition that either directly or indirectly referenced thinking outside the box. Working with art resuscitates pleasant memories and interests; it enables students to make a connection between a unique kind of serious play and thinking outside the box. This activity challenges students to put this definition into practice. Participating in this event appears to activate memories of creative activities that have been dormant for a long time. The experience

also taps into a deeper intrinsic motivation that appears to create pathways that encourage exploring creative solutions to business challenges.

Students consistently self-report one of the key takeaways from their experience is the role of mindset. At the beginning of the course there is an entire class devoted to the topic of understanding a fixed versus a growth mindset. This first event brings this concept to life. Numerous comments talk about the impact of mindset. More importantly, in the feedback comments students discuss how they were able to recognize a fixed mindset and then shift to a growth mindset. Still others recognize the need to defer or suspend judgment and as a result were able to shift from initially dismissing this activity to actually enjoying it.

After this initial exercise we discussed the value of self-management skills in class. This was a rich discussion and based on the interaction and comments it was clear that the concepts presented earlier were internalized and useful. The language of mindset allowed the students to become more self-aware and to connect with each other because of this shared understanding.

Illustration of the Essence

The selected works of art were intentionally ambiguous by design. The traditional business school curriculum is primarily linear. Most of the time the pedagogy is designed to teach a skill that results in responses that are binary, right or wrong. The lack of specific meaning in this case was an appropriate source of frustration for those needing to ascribe specific meaning. Articulating this frustration generated a rich discussion and some healthy debate which served to highlight the reality of different perspectives. This reinforced the situation and perspective concept. During a class activity the students learned how situations have an effect on perspectives. Witnessing the reality of the diverse outcomes generated from multiple perspectives during this event was powerful.

Many recognized the effectiveness and skill of the facilitator as she used effective open-ended questions to probe and allow the class to discover new insights. Using different types of questions was a skill discussed earlier in the semester. Students connected this and therefore the session was an excellent review and case study highlighting the value of this content. Students having previously learned divergent thinking skills, often mentioned utilizing a technique called forced connections. By associating seemingly unrelated pictures to the task of generating ideas, new ideas come to mind. Students cited examples of these particular activities. The use of art in this case brought to mind the forced connections skill set which reinforced idea generating skills. Generating multiple scenario concepts for the artwork and taking inventory of individual artistic elements required students to consider multiple situations and perspectives. This type of consideration reinforced the need for an empathetic mindset. Reflecting on this experience helped solidify the concepts and demonstrate their potential value for dealing with future business and personal challenges. More importantly, students referenced earlier content, experiences, and skills in the discussion board comments.

Making

The nature of this first event required reflection and discussion; however, no artifacts were created.

Second Event

Outcomes for the Mini Masterpiece assignment, the second event, are based on evaluating reflection write-up submissions. Following are relevant highlights gleaned from the write-up submissions organized by the appropriate ABI process. This particular activity turned out to be rich in outcomes for all four of the ABI processes.

Skills Transfer

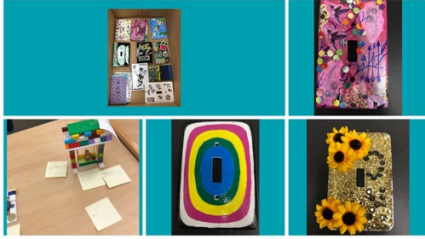
This activity was purposefully designed with a lack of specific criteria and instructions; as a result, it created some apprehension and stress for many. Upon reflection, those affected were able to recognize fixed mindset thinking and switch to a growth mindset. In other instances, it was not a fixed mindset, it was anxiety. In these instances, students were able to use processes taught earlier in the semester and were then able to engage and complete the assignment. Mindfulness was one of the skills taught. As an example, we practiced mindfulness breathing activities. In the reflections there would be a recognition of anxiety and then a pause to breathe and after that ideas would begin to flow.

Early in the semester students took the FourSight Thinking Profile creative personality assessment (www.foursightonline.com). Students were able to recognize then draw on the role of their preference and adjust to different thinking skills as they were required. For example, one might say they had a Clarifier preference and needed to access divergent thinking skills of an Ideator. Some chose to use a process approach, like design thinking or creative problem-solving. In the reflection they would describe the specific steps of their chosen process.

In the assignment, imaginations were actively engaged as illustrated by the wide variety of creative expressions (see Figure 5); I will say more about this later. Students were inspired by passions, hobbies, causes, and many explored their own core values. Taking risks was a significant factor. The thought of creating art aroused feelings of insecurity and concerns about how personal artifacts might be perceived by others. Being aware of these thoughts and seeking collaborative support from peers and family helped mitigate these concerns.

Figure 5.

Sample of Student Mini Masterpiece Artifacts



Sample of artifacts submitted for the Mini Masterpiece Assignment

Those using the design thinking process appropriately started by reframing the problem, most of the time this was required because of the way they were viewing the assignment. Reframing required deferring judgment. Once the problem was reframed they were able to view the concept of the artifact as a prototype that would require an iterative process. This concept removed the mental block and ideas began to flow. Several described multiple attempts of trying to express their mental concept using a single product while others bought multiple products. Different craft techniques were used and modified to reflect their personal vision for their masterpiece. Collaboration was frequently mentioned as a valuable and helpful resource in generating ideas or obtaining feedback during the creation of the artifact.

The creativity skills learned reinforced a new and specific language that helped generate self-awareness, self-management and provided a new way to think about and express ideas. Divergent thinking skills, particularly use of forced connections, helped with generating multiple ideas. There were many reflections that compared old ways of thinking, particularly when generating ideas, to a new and better way of brainstorming. For example, in the past the objective would be to quickly generate one or two ideas and then implement as quickly as possible.

Projective Technique

Students were challenged to create artifacts that were reflections of their identity. This stimulated cathartic reflections based on a wide range of experiences. Hobbies, early education

craft activities, music, grief, and other memorable experiences were popular choices. Reflections often focused on the specific process of reflecting and analyzing the appropriate expression or representation of these experiences. It is clear that this assignment pushed some to operate outside their comfort zone, but in productive ways. Sometimes this begins with a realization that self-limiting beliefs and anxieties that have previously been a barrier are now able to be addressed and expressed. Now, a new language helps identify and offer a way forward. Engagement requires that we bring all of who we are to our endeavors. Here students have a safe place to explore this process.

When reflecting in preparation for their submission for this write-up assignment, students seem to think about what matters to them, their core values. These reflections tend to lead to challenges that are personal; this exercise helps them address these challenges. For example, they may use a creative problem-solving process to address challenges like building a house, restoring an automobile, decorating a home or connecting creatively with family-members. Many commented on the stark contrast of this assignment to other typically business courses in a positive manner mentioning feelings of joy and relaxation. The connection between play and innovation is recognized and reinforced.

Illustration of the Essence

Student reflections that teach an ability to recognize a fixed mindset or judgment thinking and then decisively suspend judgment in order to move to a growth mindset is a significant validation of a key outcome for this course. Class discussions about critical thinking skills, like the role of situations and perspectives and how they influence the way we deal with ambiguity, anxiety and how they affect empathy are often positively cited in reflection comments. As a result of these new skillsets students are able to suspend judgment and then they learn to take

risks while exploring significant personal values and experiences in an environment that is safe and conducive to developing this skillset.

Recognizing and working with constraints was also referenced as a useful approach in responding to this assignment. Constraints brought helpful structure to this assignment. More importantly, the constraints were self-imposed through a set of critical thinking skills, not simply a framework to achieve a specific correct result. Divergent thinking and collaboration skills were also used to decide on a particular concept for the artifact direction or design. References to concepts of time and engagement reflected Csikszentmihalyi's flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Students mentioned spending significant time immersed in the expression and creation of their artifact. This state was achieved in part because they tapped into something that had significant personal meaning. I talk a great deal about intrinsic motivation and this experiential activity reinforces this in a unique manner.

Multiple references to the earlier VMFA experience are one indicator that students are making important connections between concepts and practices within this ABI pedagogy. For example, lessons learned or observations made in the initial VMFA experience are specifically mentioned as sources of inspiration in general and particularly useful for completing this assignment. Students demonstrated significant imagination, a few even assumed the persona of an art master.

I thought the following excerpt by one of my students was an excellent summary of the value of this activity. This highlights the kind of self-reflection this particular pedagogy can stimulate.

Figure 6.

Selected Student Self-Reflection Comment

Overall, I learned quite a few things from this process. First, even though I know the steps of the creative problem-solving process, it is hard to retrain my brain to follow them. I was aware that clarification is my weakest skill. However, it was not until skipping the step almost got me into trouble that I realized how much work I need to put into strengthening my clarifying skills. It will take conscious effort rather than passive awareness. Secondly, I learned the importance of collaboration. I would have never come up with this design without having my family to talk to. My tendency is to try and solve my problems by myself. However, I always end up reaching out in the end. Therefore, to start with others from the beginning was a time-saver and a relief. Lastly, I learned that things do not always work out the way you imagine, but you have to adapt and keep moving forward.

A comment illustrating student perspective

Making


For many, working with craft materials invoked fond memories of earlier creativity life events. For others, there was an epiphany of the unexpected value of a seemingly uncharacteristic assignment that was so distinctly different than any other in a business school setting. According to the comments, decorating an inexpensive light switch plate in order to create an artifact that conveyed personal meaning taught students a way to deal with ambiguity, increased their confidence level for taking risks, exploring new possibilities, and it helped them learn about self-management. Making an artifact was an effective tool for guiding self-reflection, reinforcing creative skills and concepts and demonstrated the value of having fun creating something outside the box.


Third Event

Outcomes for the VMFA Experience Map assignment, the third event, are based on evaluating assignment submissions. The assignment can be viewed in Figure 7 below.



Figure 7.

Student Blackboard Learning System Assignment



7wk.F Activities - VMFA Experience Map 

Availability: Item is hidden from students. It was last available on Mar 2, 2020 11:00 AM.

Attached Files:  [Wk7.F Activities - Creativity and Ideation VMFA visit assignment components.docx](#)  (15.87 KB)

We have discussed observing, empathy and journey mapping. Now is your chance to apply these practices at the VMFA. For this assignment, you will download then complete the assignment. The VMFA is interested in these results. Complete this assignment as if the VMFA is your client and you want them to read your observations.

Blackboard Learning System assignment posted for students

The goal of this assignment was to integrate the fun and playful experience of art-based skills with the needs and challenges of a business owner. This situation was designed from the perspective of art as a business, specifically focusing on different customer experiences. The nature of this particular assignment was quite different from the first two and therefore the outcome assessment is different due to the fact that the assignment is not conducive to review using the ABI processes.

This desired outcome was designed to bring a practical experience-based element to the ABI pedagogy. The VMFA distance learning team provided a specific framework that they were using for this analysis (see Figures 8 & 9). The specificity of the framework reinforced the practical nature of the assignment. Realistic experiential assignments enhance the student learning experience. Student evaluations of prior courses often suggested more realistic assignments.

Figure 8.

Student Assignment Template part 1

CREATIVITY AND IDEATION – VMFA VISIT ASSIGNMENT COMPONENTS:

Map: Use this [interactive museum map](#) or a paper version you can find at the museum to note locations for possible business decisions and opportunities as you move through the space.

Areas: Be sure to visit and investigate at least 5 areas. Chose from the following. Include at least one gallery, one exterior space, and one transactional space (example: Visitor Services), and one communal or gathering space.

- Parking Deck
- Sculpture Garden
- Entrance
- Visitor Services
- Atrium
- Best Café
- Museum Store
- Library
- SmART Space
- Marble Hall
- Art Education Center
- Galleries
 - American
 - East Asian
 - Ancient
 - English Silver
 - European
- African
- Native American
- Pre-Columbian
- Mid-to-late 20th Century
- 21st Century
- South Asian
- Photography
- Art Deco
- Art Nouveau

Persona: Choose one of the following personas to assume for this task. You may elaborate on each (i.e. think about identity, race, education, career, etc.) and note these aspects in your persona profile.

- Family with small children
- First time visitor to VMFA
- Person who regularly visits VMFA
- Group of friends, aged 19-25
- Retiree
- Young Professional
- Person who uses a wheelchair
- VMFA employee
- Person of color

Task: At each area:

- Identify evidence of one possible business decision made by VMFA. (It's ok to speculate, but back up your inference with specific observations).
- Reflect on how that decision impacts your persona's experience.
- Next identify an alternative way the decision could have been made. In what way would this alter your persona's experience?

As you work your way through the public space of the museum don't forget to consider business decisions that you think may be taking place "behind the scenes" and could impact the experience of your persona.

Page Break

An example of the assignment instructions

Figure 9.

Student Assignment Template part 2

Visit Documentation

Persona/profile: _____

Area of Museum	Business Decision	Evidence	Impact on Experience	Alternative Business Decision	Impact on Experience

An example of the assignment template

Submissions were evaluated based on their completion of the specific assignment framework for this event. The outcome was to practice observing and evaluating an enterprise from the perspective of a pre-selected persona. Students were free to choose a persona, and they embraced a wide variety of roles. Persona, is a marketing term for these types of roles. A persona is a fictitious person that represents a unique marketing segment. For example, a retiree is an example of a persona. The purpose of a persona is to view a specific relationship from the perspective of that designated target audience.

Student insights were consistently relevant to their selected personae. For example, one persona option was based on the experience of someone in a wheelchair. Using this persona required the student to be more attentive to details that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Their observations and recommendations highlighted many physical limitations that could potentially inhibit a visitor's experience to the VMFA. I believe earlier experiences dealing with situation and perspective concepts were particularly useful in this assignment. Students were able to observe nuances within each persona that affected the visitor experience and they may appropriate suggestions to address these.

Another persona selected was a younger first-time visitor. Alternative thoughts and suggestions reflected helpful insights. For example, utilizing technology to create virtual maps and tours would enhance the experience without requiring additional staffing. Other examples were recommendations for seasonal events, more effective use of signage, and alternative uses for technologies, all to enhance the customer experience. The assignment was designed to draw out observations and then evaluate existing strategies. Based on the comments submitted in the assignment, I believe this outcome was successfully achieved.

Using imagination, especially in the context of evaluating a situation and a corresponding perspective, was an additional expected outcome of this assignment. There was evidence of both imagination and situational awareness in the student submissions. Using personae provided a framework that enabled the students to engage their imaginations and develop stories appropriate to the persona of their choice. There were some references to the initial VMFA session because they had been exposed to developing stories by using their imagination in response to a specific stimulus.

Fourth Event

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were forced to cancel this fourth event. All university classes were transitioned to a strictly online format, and even though we planned to attempt a virtual assignment, the VMFA was forced to close admission to the public. Although very disappointing I do have future plans to implement this activity.

Section Five: Key Learnings

Arts-based Initiatives are effective in teaching transferable art skills that can work in a business environment. The four ABI processes, which are skills transfer, projective technique, illustration of essence, and making, are effective and interactive with each other. Their individual efficacy varies based on the characteristics of the assignment. As an example, the Mini Masterpiece assignment outcomes provided detailed results directly attributable across all four processes; however, for the VMFA experience map visit some of the processes did not apply and the direct relevance was less clear. This does not mean the processes are not useful, it means one has to plan the ABI pedagogy holistically in order to maximize the observed value. The second event, the VMFA visit assignment, reflected creativity skills; the meaning extracted from the assessment observations was more subtle.

As I anticipated, mindset is key to unlocking the value of this particular pedagogy. Disruption is challenging and incorporating art-based initiatives is outside the comfort zone of many students. Some struggle to understand the relevance of an arts-based approach in a business course curriculum. Fortunately, an early discussion on the state of the current education model, being linear and less well suited for teaching creativity, provided a useful foundation to help explain the role and relevance of the arts-based initiatives.

Having a partner like the VMFA in general and their distance learning experts in particular is one of the keys to the successful implementation of this ABI pedagogy. Articulating outcomes, providing context, and testing ideas all helped ensure that the experience was appropriately synchronized and it also provided an arc to the story of this particular pedagogy. The choice of artwork, use of open-ended questions and skillful facilitation added significant value through a unique experience-based learning model.

First Event

The first event, the online class facilitated by the VMFA distance learning faculty, is critical because it must set the tone and peak the student's interest toward this pedagogy. The introductory session provided a unique experience for everyone. Some were reacquainted with a fondness for the arts while others were introduced to this modality for the very first time. It was satisfying to hear from students who previously had little or no experience with art and were now taking friends and significant others to the VMFA. Increasingly businesses understand that addressing the holistic interests of their employees builds engagement. Whether art, hobbies, or other activities, allowing greater personal expression tends to facilitate innovation and engagement. The research suggests that art in particular has a great deal to contribute to teaching transferable business skills. I would agree with this assessment based on an analysis of the outcomes for the events outlined in this paper.

Through the ABI initiative, students were able to identify and apply a number of fundamental creative skills. These experience-based activities reinforced concepts previously studied. The idea of play, reflection and collaboration reinforced the importance of the creative environment.

In previous classes students worked in small groups to create meaning by collaborating in order to build a variety of very different artifacts that were used to create metaphors. Making artifacts early in the course reinforced the value of the constructionist learning theory. This theory states that we learn by literally making meaning out of what we build in the external world. Exposure to multiple formats adds credibility to this specific pedagogy and supports the overall objective of using teaching strategies that are adapted to the unique requirements to teach

the soft skills that suited to the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous business landscape. The current COVID-19 pandemic is one very powerful example.

When reflecting, students were able to identify frameworks, concepts and theories previously discussed. Collaborating and building off the ideas of peers was one of the more popular skill references. The choice of the artwork was helpful in teaching ambiguity and agility. Reflective assignments, collaborative projects, and online discussions all contribute to newer more effective adult learning strategies. I noticed an improvement in student comprehension based on a comparison of the results of this pedagogy with those of previous semester assignments.

Each of the selected art pieces were chosen based on the possibility of multiple interpretations. Students were able to recognize patterns of similarity and also saw very diverse interpretations. Learning to manage the tensions of the numerous interpretations and then learn what the artist intended was informative and instructive. Diversity now has new meaning based on cultivating new thinking skills. Other creative skills like divergent thinking, imagination, and risk-taking were reinforced and internalized.

In addition to the skills development, this initial activity connected the outward thought process with inner feelings. This is the definition of the Projective technique, the second of the ABI processes (see Table 1). Reinforcing skills is essential; however, establishing a deeper connection is even more important. One of the course goals is disrupting the traditional linear approach to education. Exposing students to art in a new way is instructive for those who have little or no previous exposure; it is a unique and new approach for those who may have or may enjoy art but did not think about the underlying skills, especially skills that facilitate innovation and creative problem solving. This facilitated event effectively trains students by guiding them

in the use of a framework they can use to analyze and interpret their experience. This analysis often leads to a deeper more emotional experience. Sometimes the lesson is self-managing, deferring judgment or delaying premature closure. This connection and experience are useful in developing the resilience businesses are seeking. Whether reflecting on past experiences with art or expressing the need to self-manage, students were aware of inner feelings and addressing them which is one of the outcomes I am looking for.

Teaching business skills using ABI processes in general and the illustration of essence in particular provides a perspective that is not available through other methods. Business leaders and owners, well aware of the constantly changing and uncertain environment, are looking for students who have the skills to survive and thrive in what is now considered the new normal. There is even more irony in this statement as this paper is written with the COVID-19 pandemic as a backdrop. The ABI processes were developed specifically recognizing the need for a new method of teaching creative skills more appropriately. Recognizing the fact that the average patron spends seven seconds viewing an artifact and then being instructed to spend thirty seconds studying the work had a significant impact on the student's perspective. The value of taking time to analyze something was internalized and often cited as a takeaway from this exercise.

The initial class experience assessment was based on reflections so assessing the making process was not relevant. During the guided discussion the VMFA staff did address some of the process of making art. More discussion on this process will follow in subsequent events.

Second Event

The Mini Masterpiece has been a part of the course assignments for several years; however, these past assignments were stand-alone events with minimal discussion. Student feedback was anecdotal and the perceived value was primarily as a crafts-based distraction to

typical college course work. This year I added a reflection write-up assignment and based on the assessment, this event offers the most robust learning by effectively integrating all four ABI processes. After analyzing the write-up assessment, it is clear that this event effectively connects inner feelings with output. The write-up unlocked insight that was lost in our previous class exhibitions. If it had not been for the popularity of the activity I would have eliminated it, now I view it as the cornerstone of the ABI pedagogy.

Although the activity builds creative skills, the real value is in the interaction of the other three processes. For this event I will focus on the Projective technique, Illustration of essence and Making since the skills identified in the skills transfer process were similar to those identified in the first event.

Projective Technique

The personal expressive nature of the assignment effectively connects inner feelings with course concepts. A summary from the comments suggest that working on something that reflects a person's identity activates intrinsic motivation and causes one to think about core values and things that really matter to them. Please see Appendix A for a selection of sample student comments. Even without instructor restrictions there were notable comments on the amount of effort, thought, and time spent on the project. In my experience, undergraduate students enjoy the path of least resistance and typically an assignment without specific restrictions results in less not more effort. In this case, however, it was not uncommon for students to cite spending multiple hours of work to ensure this artifact appropriately represented their identity. Others commented on purchasing more than one face plate so they could prototype and use the iterative process to produce an appropriate artifact.

The personal nature of this assignment was reinforced in comments expressing the feelings about the risk of being vulnerable by sharing publicly something that meant a great deal to them. Please see Appendix B for an example assignment.

More than simply recognizing this emotion, they were able to act in response by reaching out for support from friends and family. Please see Appendix C for an example. There was visible support from their peers when this was mentioned during our class exhibition. Students expressed empathy through a connection to the artists identified in the first event because they could now relate in a deeper and more meaningful way through a shared vulnerability.

What was most impressive to me was the universal level of sharing and engagement across all students irrespective of how involved they had been prior to this assignment. I have never seen this level of connection in any previous assignment. In the write-up students were sharing experiences about their connection with family traditions, interests in music, sports and other personal reflections.

Grading this assignment felt more like reviewing personal journal entries than critiquing an assignment. On the whole these reflections revealed diverse meaningful experiences from the past. Students were able to process these and identify useful personal applications. A few renewed connections with family members and were committed to moving forward in ways that would enhance personal connections. Others gained new confidence in their creative capabilities and committed to regularly decorating their homes or creatively expressing themselves in other ways.

Illustration of essence

Beyond deeper personal experiences, students made the connection between the application of theories and processes to this assignment. When struggling with a concept for this

assignment some would refer to earlier divergent thinking processes by name and then describe their specific technique for identifying ideas and then selecting an idea for implementation. Others used the design thinking process beginning with reframing the problem to move past initial mental blocks and then on to prototyping. A few created and embraced constraints. For example, deciding to use only materials available in their home or apartment.

It was clear that the playful nature of the assignment contributed to unlocking the relevance of the concepts so they could apply the principles in practice. As an instructor it was inspiring and gratifying to recognize the *aha* moments when the connection between theory and practice was evident. I was particularly pleased to see how initial fixed mindset limitations were recognized and transformed to growth mindset inspiration.

The nature of the assignment inspired a new confidence in many who prior to this had little or no confidence in their creative ability. Those who had prior experience often found a renewed energy and confidence. Others felt they had no creative ability expressed a recognition that they could be creative.

Making

This activity is ideally suited to the full benefit of the ABI processes. Many described in meticulous detail the making experience. There might be the trial and error of materials that would not cooperate. For example, paints that don't dry, markers that smear or other craft supplies that either won't stick or do not accurately represent what the artist intends. Favorite colors, themes like music, poetry, or perhaps a family pet are all mentioned as significant considerations. Students even demonstrated creativity in selecting the light switch plates. For example, one student used a 3-D printer to create a switch plate and another made a replica with materials on hand. Please see Appendix D for an example.

The iterative process taught lessons in dealing with mistakes and unexpected surprises. The wide variety of artifacts is always captivating for me. Please see Appendix E. Some artifacts are detailed and elaborate, some true works of art and others are simple but deeply meaningful personally. It is extremely satisfying to observe the presentations of these artifacts in our class exhibition. I believe it also creates a deeper connection between the students. Tangible artifact making teaches valuable lessons in taking risks, embracing uncertainty and ambiguity. It can be instructive in establishing more meaningful connections with each other. Seeing the ideas of others had a visible emotional impact which was evident in the interaction during the class exhibition. There were also a number of comments in the Discussion Board offering insights and observations about the specific classroom gallery experience.

Figure 10.

Class Exhibition



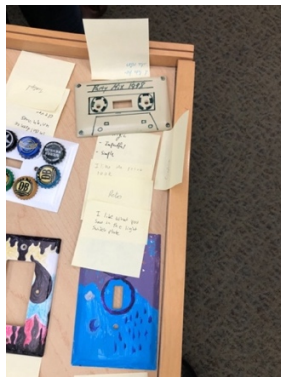
Student participation

Figure 12.

Artifact example

Figure 11.

Class Exhibition with comments



Sample of comments

Figure 13.

Elaborate artifact example



Interesting example

Figure 14.

Custom artifact sample



Elaborate example

Figure 15.

Homemade artifact example



3-D printing example

Figure 16.

Personal artifact sample



Custom made example

Figure 17.

Homemade artifact example



Personal reflection example Surprise artist example

Third Event

The VMFA experience was a different assignment by design. The assessment for this assignment does not neatly fit within the four ABI processes. This event is important to because it helps students learn how ABI processes can contribute to business challenges. Reviewing the assignments revealed a display of empathy and imagination in their selected persona. Overall, I was pleased with the variety of their choices. As I anticipated, many were appropriate to their age group, however, quite a few selected a unique persona perspective. A few examples are those with handicaps, retirees, individuals of color, and first-time attenders.

The observations and suggestions were appropriate to the specific persona. Those who selected the handicapped persona identified a number of realistic challenges someone in a wheelchair might experience and offered reasonable alternatives. Across all selected personae there were suggestions for utilizing technology to create a better experience.

The situation/perspective training was one skill evident across all assignments. Based on the comments, students used this skill when visiting the museum as a technique to observe and think differently. Many assignment submissions embellished the persona by creating context in the form of a story making the experience come to life in an appropriate fashion.

Fourth Event

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the final event. I was very disappointed because I felt the combination of the LEGO® Serious Play® activity and the VMFA Zoom experience would be the cornerstone of this pedagogy. Prior to cancellation we explored ideas for delivering this experience virtually. I will attempt this event in the fall semester.

Section Six: Conclusions

The ABI Initiative pedagogy was created to offer a different teaching model designed to teach a new set of skills for functioning in a volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous environment. Students in the school of business are required to take a creativity course designed to equip them to meet the needs of businesses that are seeking employees who can help them survive in a constantly changing environment, one that is ambiguous and where disruption is the new normal.

Although quick to associate thinking outside the box as one of the definitions of creativity, students need to learn the creative skills necessary to reflect this kind of thinking process. According to anecdotal and enrollment numbers, traditional business curriculums and business models are increasingly unable to adequately teach new innovation skills. The hypothesis of the ABI pedagogy was simple, use VCU's artist in residence partnership with the VMFA, a local museum, to teach creative skills that are transferable to the business environment. Based on an assessment of three of the four events in this model, the concept is quite successful. Had it not been for the global COVID-19 pandemic, all four events would support the ongoing development of this pedagogy.

The sequence of the planned events in this pedagogy are intended to reinforce creativity theories and principles taught in the course prior to the scheduled events. The ABI process effectively pushed students outside their comfort zones in a safe environment. The multifaceted art-based learning experience taught skills, connected the head with the heart, provided a unique perspective and offered the opportunity to practice constructionism by making artifacts.

The consistency of the four events reinforced concepts and proved an effective model for disrupting traditional learning styles that are focused on teaching concepts that are evaluated

with assessments measuring rote recall engaging short-term memory skills. In this pedagogy, assessment was based on reflective write-ups and discussion participation in addition to making artifacts. The ambiguous nature of the assignments in these events forced students to self-manage anxiety and to overcome other inner fears that can be associated with making and presenting artifacts of a personal nature. These same assignments demonstrated that constructing artifacts could draw out inner meaning. Research shows that learning is reinforced when it is experienced and this project reinforced this theory.

The distance learning partnership with the VMFA played a key role in the success of this experiment. From the selection of appropriate artwork to skilled facilitation in the classroom, the partnership was instrumental in teaching the relevant skills and creating an environment where students could experience creativity in unique and meaningful ways. For some this was an initiation into the world of art; for others it was a renewed relationship, for the rest a shift in perspective. In every instance the breadth of participation was unprecedented.

The ABI pedagogy will continue to be a part of the course curriculum. I will utilize the fourth event utilizing the Lego® Serious Play® activity. The timing of the sequence and placement within the semester schedule seem to be ideal in reinforcing the skills and concepts learned. The ABI events are introduced after students have had an opportunity to learn basic creativity skills and practices. Based on an analysis of the events I will try some new ideas in the fall. References to previous events suggests the events were close enough to be remembered without being too close together. At the present time the activity is individual, I would like to try a group assignment to evaluate the efficacy of the processes in a group setting. Based on the outcomes I analyzed, the ABI processes effectively teach business students the creativity skills that will enable them to thrive in a volatile, uncertain and ambiguous environment.

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Appendix A

Mini Masterpiece Sample Student Assignment Responses

Design constraints, MVP iteration,

Experiential Activity Mini Masterpiece

02/23/2020

For my Masterpiece I really went all the way in with my ideas, most of the time I like things to be simple and meaningful because that's how it will attract a lot of attention in my opinion. I feel like when you apply a lot of things into one piece it just becomes messy and doesn't look good, again that's just my opinion. So, for my masterpiece I went to Walmart and just purchased the two light switch plates, one was for the prototype and one was for the final masterpiece, however I did not purchase anything else. I decided to use stuff that I already have such as; tape, sharpies, paper and many more things I have around the house. For example, I used a bottle top as a design piece that will spin on top of the light switch, I also used double sided tape to make a trademark.

Throughout the project I learned that things don't usually come out the way you envisioned it to come out after the first try, you really have to keep pushing and trying to make it work and that's why I bought two light switch plates, By the time I got to my masterpiece that's when my vision really came to life. The design thinking framework that we talked about during class was what this project was all about, you go through steps to get to your final product.

Perspective

Mini Masterpiece Reflection

For this assignment, my first thought was “How am I going to design this?” and “What will I place on this?”. This caused me to sit down and just think of what is meaningful to me and my life. Every piece and detail on this light switch frame has a piece of meaning to me. However, it was definitely a challenge working with a smaller frame and turning it into art. I do feel like my final product is a brief, surface description of me, but not necessarily everything about me.

This project taught something about perspective. This piece could be perceived by everyone who takes a look at it. An example is how I spray painted it a sky blue. Some may infer that it may resemble the sky or my favorite color. Although it is my favorite color, the spray paint in itself represents a whole section of my life. My dad did art as a hobby and I was always amazed at his pieces. From using paint brushes to stencils and spray paint, I always wanted to try it and it was a way we connected when I was a kid as he taught me some tips.

Another example is the OVO brand tag in the middle. Some may assume I like Drake or love the brand, but that isn't quite the full story. Some of my family is from the Toronto (Where the brand is based) and it's the first place that I went to outside the country. I have cousins, uncles and aunts there who show me the culture and treat our family with so much love and respect.

To wrap up my reflection, this project taught me that there is usually more to something than what you see (or more that meets the eye). When it comes to art, people, businesses, and just life overall, there is more to it than what we see and it is up to us as humans to explore these subjects from other perspectives so we can understand the “how's” and “why's”.

Inner emotions

I opted for the creation of my imaginative subject using the colour blue, light switch plate and a moon and kitten sticker. The blue colour is a representation of tranquillity and innocence that is associated with young ones given the fact that I allowed my daughter to participate in this creative task. The kitten is a favourite pet in my household and always gives companionship to human beings while allowing them to feel loved and at peace. The moon and stars is more of the timing and a clear representation of how someone can sometimes come up with something creative during the night when mostly everything is quiet and peaceful. The light switch cover is depictions of how much of the earth's resources are misused when we do something as trivial as forgetting to turn the light switch off. Even engaging in something as innocent as watching a five-minute YouTube video can channel a substantial amount of energy. All of these items together indicate just how much of the earth's resources we put away in our run-of-the-mill lives without even comprehending the destructive impact it will sooner or later have on future generations. Creativity and ingeniousness is borne out of necessity and by realizing the needs of the present and future generations, we all need to engage in novel idea generation while also imparting the future generations to take part in saving and protecting the earth's resources and ensuring that we all do our part in the conservation of humanity and its existence.

Creative confidence

I learned a lot from this assignment. In the beginning, I had no idea how I will decorate the light switch plate in a creative way. But I actually got half of the Idea from my daughter. Because I was thinking do some thing for her bedroom. So since she loves birds I made her nice clouds and trees and birds. I really enjoyed doing this project because it made me think a lot and it was so much fun to do it especially with my daughter we really enjoyed it. However, I learned how to design my thinking to create some thing really nice by using some thing every one have it and if you do not have it you can find it at a cheap price. And that will make a really beautiful touch in the room so we can use our design thinking to create some thing simple and beautiful also without paying amount of money. Because I actually always pay for things that I can do by myself but I always feel like I can not do it because I did not use my thinking. But now after I traded this activity I will try to do the decoration in my daughter's room by myself.

Freedom to explore - creativity

I went a different route for my minimaster piece. I didn't get a light switch plate, I got a battery powered light. When you touch it it turns on and off. It was one of the first things I saw when I went into Lowe's and it made me think of what I could create with it. I really feel like I challenged myself because I took some random items around my house to incorporate with it. I configured my mini masterpiece so that when you turn the light on, you can see the light through the little holes of the paper I stuck in there and see the light through the back. Being that the paper is configured to it, it narrows half of the light. Similar to how the light from a flash light would look. I also took a little time to decorate the front of the paper, hoping the light would make the color glow. The paper is too thick, so it didn't work as planned. The meaning behind my mini masterpiece is that there are times when I shine bright and there are times when I don't shine at all. The switch of when I do and when I don't shine is completely controlled by me. The paper represents the block I put on myself when it comes to creating or anything I'm encountering in life. The paper represents me over thinking, whether it may be intentional or unintentional. The holes in the paper represent the potential success I could bring with my ideas even if there's a small break through. The open end of light when my switch is turned on, represents the ideas I have but ignore because I'm focused on the paper or the mental block I have. This made me realize that a lot of the time I put restrictions on myself, and that I should try viewing stuff from different perspectives. It also made me realize that even when I have a mental block, I still can create a lot of ideas small or large depending on how I look change the position of the light.

Inspiration

When I first got to designing this light switch plate, I drew a blank on what to create. At first, I thought of doing something generic like drawing rainbows and sunshine and happiness just because. But then I thought about it, because I didn't want it to just be another "generic school project". And in thinking about what we've been learning in class, I wanted to take this opportunity to really put "me" into this mini project. So I thought about it. I was fortunate enough to get inspiration from my classmates who had already finished theirs. Some were representations of generic joy, others were a representation of who they were. I wanted to go deeper than that. I decided to let it be therapeutic for me.

My representation of the light switch is a representation of my process of healing from death and depression in and throughout my life. From anger, to sadness, to realization and pure joy. It's been a struggle since I was younger, from dealing with suicides to unexpected deaths. I was able to release my emotion in this through the use of colors, shapes, and symbolism. It allowed me to release feelings and thoughts into this piece that I wouldn't otherwise vent out. Creating art is therapy, and it's amazing where your mind can take you when you really tap into what's most prevalent within your thoughts on a consistent basis.

Utility



MGMT 303 002

Mini masterpiece

When creating my mini-masterpiece, I first thought about the functions of a light switch which is turning a light on or off. When thinking about it I realized that off the top of my memory, I wasn't exactly sure which side of the switch turned the light on/off unless I was doing it instinctively. I created my light switch so that the part that turns on the light is represented by a yellow sky and to turn it off it would be dark blue. By doing this, anyone would be able to know which direction to flip the switch. On the other hand, the light plate could be turned the other way to actually go in the opposite direction which may challenge bias similar to the bike handle situation. Initially the "day" side of the light plate was a light blue color, but after painting it I decided I wanted more contrast, so I painted it yellow instead. I realized that after painting the color on, my light plate seemed to resemble Van Gogh's painting "Starry night" which wasn't my intention and admittedly made me want to re-paint it so it was less comparable. Instead of repainting the whole thing, however, I started to think about how I could differentiate it in another way. That's when I decided I should also decorate outside of the frame instead of limiting myself to the surface of the light plate. Overall, I found that this project encouraged me to think more deeply about a simple household object and the way it functions.

Unique Identity

I took this creative opportunity to display my five most essential characteristics. This project did not have much guidance to it, the instructions were simply to reflect our creativity onto a light switch. In beginning this project I couldn't come up with any creative ideas to display onto a small light switch plate. My initial thought was how in the world can I show something unique about myself in a confined space? Then I realized I can easily display my five core values in life in a symbolic way. I drew 5 key characteristics about myself in chinese symbols. My characteristics displayed are **self discipline, consistency, perseverance, optimism and strength**. These are five of the most important driving forces in explaining who Bruce Collins is. Over the past three years I have been battle tested in ways that are unimaginable. Developing a system of values and asserting them into my daily lifestyle has been pertinent in overcoming all of the adversity that I have faced over the years. The values are displayed in mosaic like chinese symbols because of how complex my journey has been. A person viewing my light switch from the naked eye would not know exactly what it represents. We as Americans are not accustomed to chinese symbols, were unfamiliar, and ignorant to what they represent, well this is also similar with who I am. When people view Bruce Collins they are unfamiliar, and very ignorant to the way I live my life. They see Bruce Collins as a stereotypical college student, who collected a couple bumps and bruises along the way, yet there is much more than that. The point of my mini masterpiece is to show my viewers that you do not truly know someone until you actually sit down and have a genuine interaction with them. What meets the naked eye is not always what it seems.

Self-reflection – divergent skills, defer judgment

The instructions for this project were quite simple, “create a masterpiece with a light switch plate.” But for some reason, the simplicity of the assignment made it that much more difficult for me. I am generally good at following directions and completing a task according to a set rule and plan. However, we were given a free rein on what we wanted to create, and it required us to practice a concept we have been talking about since the beginning of the semester: creativity. The fact that coming up with an idea for the project gave me anxiety despite the fact that there were pretty much no rules, expectations or repercussions made me realize something; I am conditioned to look at every problem and analyzing the “right” and “wrong” way of doing it. While that can be a good thing in certain situations, it can also block my creativity and ability to think outside the box. So, I had to make a conscious effort to not worry about how good/bad it looked and keep an open mind about the end results. Another thing I realized after completing the project is how I did not practice divergent thinking at all. From the beginning, my short mental list of possible ideas were all quite similar to each other and none of them were “crazy” or “peculiar”. I think that goes to show we tend to put limitations on our ideas based on our prior experiences even when these restrictions are just in our heads.

Connected to VMFA, Curiosity, ambiguity, generosity

Mini Project Summary

2/23/2020

After class on Friday, We were asked to create a mini project that resembles a reflection of ourselves. I was not sure of what to create on the light switch plate. In the beginning, I thought about writing something along the lines of "love" and showing representation of that because loving myself is such a big part of who I am. The hardest part was sitting down and deciding out of the many ideas I had, which one was the easiest thing to draw that had meaning that I could talk in depth about. Ultimately, I finally decided to hand paint a sunflower with a pink background that gives an understanding of who I am today. Sunflowers are my favorite flower and pink is my favorite color. Pink has always been my favorite color and I love wearing pink as it was a sign of universal love of myself. The color pink has meaning behind it to me that represents love and sweetness and is also a very bright cheerful color. In addition, sunflowers are often known as the "happy" flower. They bring so much joy to my life and make me remember to hold onto hope as something positive could always be on the horizon that I might not be able to see yet. I want others to look at the simple painting that I did a wonder why I painted two things and what the meaning behind it was? Just like in the VMFA lesson, people are not going to know what the true meaning is behind a painting except the original painter. Also, I want individuals to wonder why I chose to create a little switch into a flower because that's what makes curiosity so much more meaningful. Learning that even the simple things in life you paint have so much meaning can resemble so much in different perspectives and that's an important lesson for me to go through. I feel that guessing what a painting is about is unique and builds character and for me as the painter, I want others to make a story instead of figuring out my story.

Emotional, connection Clarifier

Apart of being inspired is paying close attention to behaviors, environment and self-reflection. I decided to design the light switch plate based off my own personal growth and development over the last 10 years. The top left of the plate symbolizes uncertainty and the top right symbolizes certainty. We learned so much in this class about processes and the cycle they go through, I was inspired to create a short life cycle. In the center of the plate I have the word milestones because the rest of the plate symbolizes each hurdle and milestone I reached. The uncertainty came into play, because I had no real direction ten years ago about where I was headed. The first step in the design thinking process is answering how to get started, after identifying solution, the next step is how to interpret what was learned and finally how to plan for sustainability. My experience with the project went through an emotional phase. Initially i was frustrated because i did not know what i wanted to put on the plate. If it would be too much or too less. I took a few moments to calm myself of my fears. As a clarifier i tend to overthink a lot and sometimes the answers are right in front of you. I believe the purpose of this project is to one test your creative skills by thinking outside of the box and then also have you dig deep within yourself for inspiration. Once you have your creative juices flowing in the ideation phase, you should be able to implement a prototype.

Out of comfort zone

My Mini Masterpiece

I must admit, much like this class, this assignment felt out of the ordinary for me. I have never been an arts and crafts type of person. I am very logical in the way that I think and trying to think creatively tends to make me uncomfortable. That said, I believe that getting out of my comfort zone is a good thing for me. As to this project, I have to say that after I sat down and thought about it, I knew exactly what I wanted to make. I am very interested in science fiction. Watching Star Wars as a child was integral to who I am today. Thus, I decided to make something that was both science fiction inspired, and theoretically possible with today's technology. The solar powered, land, air, and sea all terrain luxury vehicle, or LAS for short! In theory, with the LAS you could drive straight from Richmond all the way to Bermuda in one go.

Now what are my takeaways from creating my design? First, glue can get messy. Second, aluminum foil makes great rudimentary solar panels. Third, I am actually capable of being creative. The very thought of creativity has always been very foreign to me. However, now that I have started to let myself think in more absurd ways I can come up with interesting and creative solutions that I never would have been able to think of before. Something else that I have observed from doing this project is that there is so much material all around me to help me come up with creative solutions to problems. I have been reading science fiction and fantasy since I was a kid. I read Lord of the Rings at the age of twelve. Yet with vast cornucopia of books that I

have gone through, I never before thought to use them as inspiration for creative purposes. That is until now. So, if there is anything that I have learned from this project, and this class, it is to let myself think a little bit more absurdly, and to let what I read come out in what I create.

Creative problem solving,

This assignment was very enjoyable for me because I haven't been able to do any form of arts in crafts in a while so it was really refreshing to do. When initially reading the directions I noticed that the assignment required us to buy a light cover in which I didn't already have and my car is in the shop so I don't have any transportation until tomorrow. I instantly got nervous because I didn't know what I was going to do. Then I took a deep breath and starting wandering my eyes around the room. I was trying to see if I could find something that I could use to maybe make one myself. Within minutes of getting my hands on different things, I found this sticky note holder box that I ripped apart and cut so it mimicked the light cover. It worked out perfectly and I was actually really proud of how I was able to come up not only with a solution so quickly, but a good solution at that. I used the different color sticky notes I had to cover the whole thing and proceeded to draw and decorate it over top. When thinking about what I wanted to put on it, I instantly knew it had to be makeup related. It's the one thing in this world I identify with the most so I thought it was definitely appropriate. I'm not the best drawer but I liked that I was challenged to make something complete out of nothing.

Transformed mindset – reframe challenge

When I first read this assignment's instructions, I was confused and in denial. We couldn't really design a light switch cover for an assignment; what practical purpose does this bring? Then I realized a great value of this assignment. That kind of closed-minded questioning doesn't create great results. I reframed my problem from 'what is the purpose of this?' to 'what creativity could I bring to a cover?'

I benefited from sharing ideas when I told my father about the assignment. He had a large cover for three light switches in our garage that he was gladly willing to share. When I told him of the assignment I was in a cheerful tone and mood. If I had not reframed my mindset, then I would have been upset about the assignment and may not have told him about it. Even if I had, then he may have responded to my distressed mood with something to cheer me up instead of thinking of the cover he had.

Now that I had a cover, I was excited to see what creativity I could bring to it. I first thought about using each of the three light switch outlines to draw the three bears from Goldilocks. However, I couldn't decide on a way to draw the baby bear. Then, I changed my scope of view by looking at the cover vertically. I immediately saw resemblance of a railroad track.

During this assignment, I learned more about some closed mindset traits I hold. I sometimes don't think about great positive aspects of an assignment if I don't see an immediate benefit from the start. I generally try to hold myself to a philosophy that everything contains a lesson, but that was difficult with this assignment because I was stressed from my concussion over headaches and recovering. Also, I learned more about the benefit of sharing ideas when I told my father of the assignment and received a cover for it. I understand that this kind of luck won't follow me often in the business world, but I can receive benefit simply by sharing ideas and making connections of friends and ideas.

CPS process – neuroplasticity

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Mindset – style awareness

Mini Masterpiece

For my mini masterpiece I wanted to do something totally unique for a light switch, but that also represents my passions in life. I know myself best, but still found myself struggling to ideate about a design although my mind was filled with images of my hobbies. In everything we do, I notice how I need to work on ideating. I am a finisher; I love adding finishing touches and making them visually appealing in the end. I also like implementing and getting my hands involved in building things because I have a very mechanically inclined mind. My problem always come in at the ideating phase and I wanted to use this project to practice how I could better ideate. I decided to use a divergent thinking method and was ecstatic when I came up with my idea. It felt great, instead of having a fixed mindset and saying, "I'm a finisher and can't ideate", I sat down and started writing ideas while looking at a picture of my car. I then looked up a light switch cover, my favorite color, and a random picture. After writing down a bunch of random ideas just like we did with the bathtub, I landed on the perfect combination of ideas for my Mini Masterpiece. I decided to turn my light switch cover into a gear shift knob because it represents my creativity and ability to implement, as well as my newfound ability to ideate creative and unique ideas. Cars are one of my biggest passions and I wanted to do something very involved and mechanical, so I made the shift knob function in a way it could actually work as a light switch and added a rotating gear set from my R/C racing hobby to the plate just to add

another mechanical aspect. One of my key takeaways from this project is how focusing on a growth mindset can greatly impact the outcome. In the past I would have been the type to look up ideas and polish or improve them and not even bother to ideate because I know its not my strong suite. However, this project I pushed myself to ideate and have a growth mindset and was able to create something totally unique and representative of me.

Utility

When I was creating my masterpiece I tried to focus on a functional purpose. Light switches can sometimes be hard to find in the dark, so I focused my ideation around solving that problem. Some ideas that I discarded were a light switch plate with an alarm device on it and a light switch with a miniature light on it. The idea that I decided to continue with is decorating with glow-in-the-dark paint. For the record, the prototype is just done with sharpie, not glow-in-the-dark materials. A light switch that is easy to find in the dark is useful but based on my classmate's ideas I know I need something that is thematically appealing as well as functional. Picking a theme was difficult for me because I am not artistically inclined, so it needs to be simple. My first inspiration was from these glow in the dark star stickers I had as a child that I put on the ceiling above my bed. I was attracted to the simplicity of the stars, but it felt too juvenile for me. I tried to brainstorm scenarios that I associate with glow in the dark and I thought of some other design ideas like UFO's and thunderstorms. I settled on a richmond city skyline for a few reasons - it's simple, I can incorporate stars, it's engaging for consumers who live in the city, and it's something that I would personally enjoy having in my room. I tried to involve the procedures we have been learning about in class to ideate for this lightswitch. When I was brainstorming it was a recursive process, I spent time reflecting on each round of ideas and pinpointed pros and cons for each idea. I was conscious throughout this process of my 'developer' mindset so I tried not to dwell too long on the practicality of my ideas.

Connect to passion - music

Mini Masterpiece Write-Up

My favorite medium of artistic expression is music and what I did with this assignment is I tried to translate music into visual art. What you see on my mini masterpiece is the 9 album covers from my favorite artist Kanye West done in a minimalist style. I knew I wouldn't be able to replicate the extremely detailed actual album covers so I decided I would try to still represent them but in a simplified way. I really had no idea how it would turn out, but after completing my mini masterpiece I am actually quite happy with the result. I think any fan of Kanye would be able to look at what I drew and would be able to tell that these drawings are representations of his albums. Regardless of what people may think of Kanye as a human being and his political ideations, I try to separate the art from the artist themselves. His music means more to me than I would be able to explain in words. Just like the assignment we did a few weeks back I learned that I am more capable at drawing than I originally thought. I wouldn't say what I drew was perfect or even close to perfect, but it definitely embodies what I was trying to go for. The album cover in the middle is also my favorite album of his as well as my favorite album of all time. I'm glad I was able to transfer my love of music into something visual. Though I liked how my mini masterpiece turned out I would say it was more difficult than I thought it would be, but that just may be because of my lack of artistic talent. However, I would say that I haven't drawn something in a very long time and I'm proud of the end result of what I created.

Collaboration - joy

I absolutely loved this project! I have a deep passion for art and this project allowed for my creative mentality to shine on through. Unfortunately, due to my work and school schedule I haven't been able to work on personal art projects like I used to. At first, I was confused on what the guidelines were for this project. After further investigation; it became clear that the goal was to be creative and have fun. Luckily, my dad is a handy-man and had a lot of light switch plates just laying around. It cost me nothing to work on this project. My girlfriend and her roommate had a bunch of paint. I had decided early on that was gonna be my tool for creativity. At first, I wanted to be very detailed with designing it. Oddly enough, my least favorite form of art is paint. I feel as if that is my weakness. It takes a lot of patience, which I don't always have. After talking it over with my girlfriend and her roommate, I changed my idea of being detailed to being "sloppy". Her roommate had a painting in their apartment that I used to draw inspiration from. She helped me follow the same process she used to create her artwork that was on the wall. It was interesting using paint with a sponge and water. After experimenting with colors and techniques, I was satisfied with the background for my cover. After the base dried, it was time to implement one of my signature techniques. I used a paint marker to create a dessert ground texture. I really enjoyed working on this project. This project has inspired me to start working on my artwork again.

Illustration of essence example

Just for a little explanation and background, I designed my light switch plate after an artist named Skizzy Mars specifically his "Free Skizzy Mars" album. Skizzy Mars is one of my favorite artists and his music always reminds me of some of the happiest days of my life. I thought this was even more fitting because he said in an interview that the reasoning behind the name of his album is because he felt free and open when recording it, and that "creativity flows from a place of openness and lack of restriction". When I first began this mini masterpiece project, I noticed that the hardest part of it was coming up with an idea that I thought was good enough to put on here and turn in. After thinking for hours and hours of ideas it finally dawned on me that this is a reflection of my creativity, ideas, beliefs and imagination and I could do whatever I want to do. After that realization, it all seemed so much easier and less like an assignment and more of what I wanted to express. This project only made me realize more how much of a Developer I am because I spent a great deal of time trying to develop and come up with the perfect idea when there really isn't such thing if it is based off of your own creativity. I had to tap into some of the other preferences to get myself out of the thought process that I had to carefully plan out a design/idea. I also realize during this process that I tend to have perfectionist tendencies which is bittersweet because it usually allows me to make things look as good as I want them to, but it also adds a lot more stress and takes more time. I had to tell myself it's okay if it's not perfect in order to get it done in time.

Connection to elements and life experience

I designed my switch plate this way to represent water. The reason I did this is because my creativity is always changing to the environments around me and is like a liquid. I mentioned this in one of my other writeups but I'm building a house with my dad right now and it's really allowed me to exercise my creative problem-solving abilities and my ideation abilities. Even though we're in the early stages of the project, we've had to jump through so many hoops of permit, setbacks, budgeting and logistical problems that don't have clear solutions.

This isn't the only place that I've had to use my creativity to solve problems. I just sold one of my Jeeps that I've been working on and it had so many issues, but the big problem was that the frame had structural rust. I've welded and repaired frame rust before, but this frame was by far the hardest with rust in hard to reach areas and large patches of it. With some creative fabrication I was able to make it work and improve the integrity of the frame.

The third area of my life where I've used my creativity is in school of course. I use my creativity for everything in school. Even in my statistics class where there's usually a clear-cut way to solve the problem it's the interpretation and application of those skills that takes creativity.

There are many other areas of my life where I use creativity, but they all use the same creativity rooted from different thoughts. That's why I'm representing my creativity with water, it conforms to different situations and is seemingly flexible.

Fun, relaxation, memories

Coloring the light switch was fun I found it really relaxing to create something instead of consuming something, for example, watching TV. In making my light switch I was really limited in the colors that I could use to design it. I only had blue, green, black and red. I opted not to use red because it didn't match the theme that I was going with by using green, blue and black.

The overall design that I went for was based on the theme of nature and positive energy. I used the green for the grass, the blue for the sky and the black to outline some clouds. The idea that I was going for was that the sun would be the light that turned on, when you flip the switch on and in the clouds I wrote "rise n shine" which has recently been popping into my head anytime I think of light switches. This is because of a meme that was going around less than a year ago and for some reason it's stuck in my head to this day.

In terms of creativity I think the true test of creativity does not stem from the assignment of painting the switch cover itself. But instead, comes from this assignment to write two hundred and fifty words about our time coloring a light switch. That is not to say that the light switch does not provide any means of creativity. During this project I learned how much I heavily rely on my past experiences in my creative process when my options are limited. With only a few colors to work with I found myself almost subconsciously drawing an image a lot like what I used to draw as a kid, and I didn't realize it until I was almost finished. This found interesting because, I highly doubt I would have drawn the same thing had I not been limited in my options.

Thinking skills, process

When I first heard of this project, I had a handful of different ideas zoom through my mind. However, since then, I have had a handful of different experiences happen in my life that has shaped the outcome I created. The cover displays a storm cloud striking lightning down with a blue and green background; beautiful chaos. I have a tendency to dwell on certain things, and allow them to control my thoughts. I have no problem being able to create the ideas, its choosing one that stumps me. I'm a very indecisive person. For this project, I noticed that while I originally had multiple different ideas, I very quickly limited it to one. A lot of my thinking process is formed by the events that occur in my life. I feel very passionately about a lot of events that happen in my life or I focus solely on certain things. At times, this can be a massive roadblock for my mind. I get so caught up in what's going on in my mind that I can not think about what's going on in the present.

This assignment has helped me to realize that so much more. From seeing my mind go from bumper to bumper traffic, to suddenly speeding on a wide open highway seemed a little weird to me, until I started to think about this process. This project taught me how I think and make decisions. I think that something that I'll need to do going forward is to stop from allowing my mind to get so backed up and be conscious to take mental breaks and allow for my to empty my mind. Being bogged up can cause me to be limited in my thinking, but I think that if I start to take my time and be more conscious of my mental space, I can start to think in a better way.

Described interests and the process

Initially when I read the assignment, I wanted to decorate the light switch plate so that I represented me or something I enjoyed or was interested in. I first thought about decorating it in a way related to sports, but I thought that's something a lot of my classmates may do so I decided to go with another interest that I have, anime. I immediately chose my favorite show from the genre, Yu Yu Hakusho. I decided to draw Koenma, ruler of the Spirit World. During the process of decorating the plate I did use parts of the design thinking process. For example, Koenma was not my first choice when it came to decorate the plate. I thought about drawing several other characters from the show and even characters from other shows. However, at the end of my ideation I realized that drawing Koenma would be the easiest feat to accomplish on the material of the plate. Before I drew on the plate, I did some testing by sketching out a couple of drawings on paper to see which would be the best position to draw Koenma in. I even did some testing on the actual plate, by just writing with the markers just to see how it would show up. The markers were permanent, so I had to use rubbing alcohol to erase them. I drew Koenma but I messed it up towards the end so I decided that it would be my prototype and I started a new one on another plate that I bought. I enjoyed the assignment because I was able to decorate the plate as a reflection of myself as well as use the design thinking process that we learned in class.

Connection to class discussion

Mini Masterpiece Write-Up

This project was very interesting for me because it gave me a chance to express my personality with pictures and colors. At first, I was not sure what I wanted to include on the light switch cover that would represent myself. However, after generating some ideas, I finally decided what to draw. I sketched everything first to make sure it would fit, and I was able to create 6 images on the plate. I colored each of them accurately to what they represent.

Throughout this project I learned that I had to have a growth mindset in order to complete it. I wanted to put all my favorite sports teams, but that wouldn't give the audience enough information about my personality or what I like. I was encouraged by my girlfriend to ideate a few more ideas that I may want to draw. It did not take long for me to generate some different ideas and quickly add them to the mini masterpiece. In this situation, if I were to have a fixed mindset, I would have never thought to add more than just a few of my favorite sports teams. I was openly listening to the information my girlfriend wanted to share, and it led me to be much more creative. I even collaborated with her for one of my images and it turned out to be a great idea!

I certainly applied some of the knowledge we have learned this year into this project. Without the discussions we had in class, I am not sure that I would have created the cover plate the way I did. For this assignment, I was able to apply my creativity, rather than just talk about it during a class session. I am not typically a creative person, but our assignments (like this one) and discussions are leading me every day to have a more creative mind in different situations.

Deferring judgment

For this project I actually began with no idea of what I wanted to do and figured I would be stumped with what to do. Whenever I'm assigned something that I can take any direction my mind starts flowing with ideas but none ever stay or stand out. I realized I had to use some of the design thinking method to come up with an idea that made sense to me. I finally came to the realization that I wanted to decorate it with Greek mythology because I could include lightning and Zeus and a bunch of famous mythological figures which I feel fit a light switch. I put the lion from Hercules and also include Zeus and some guys throwing lightning to signify that this is a light switch that works. I'm not a good drawer in any terms, but since I used design thinking and was able to ideate what I wanted to put on the light switch I had a clear vision of what to draw and I went slow and did a pretty good job compared to my other artworks. One thing I hope my classmates do that I know I will be doing is deferring judgement, although I'm not self conscious about my artwork or receiving critiques I know other people are and I know my classmate are not the type to judge anyone harshly for this. This assignment made me realize that when we start on something that is a clean slate and we can take it any direction we shouldn't feel overwhelmed with the possibilities, we should organize and go through the ideas to pick the ones we have been able to identify will work.

Fun

I absolutely loved this assignment. I have heard from a lot of previous students who said they didn't like it, so I set out to have the most fun creating something that I could. In order to do this, I set myself up for success by doing it when I was in a good mood. I then set a few goals for myself. 1: I was going to use all the materials I could find on my desk at home 2: I was going to include different scenes from my walk to my car after school. As I started, I simply started cutting a few stickers up, trying to collage them to form sentences, but then all I would have would be a light bracket with stickers and that seemed lame. So I started thinking of things to do with the middle hole. I had a balloon so I blew it up, but I didn't have string to attach it! I then figured out I could use the handle of the plastic bag from target to tie it together. I was thinking about fun things to do with a balloon when I then thought about a ball in cup toy. By taping the packaging for an iPhone cord, I created a ball in cup. From there I cranked out some colored pencils and thought about what to draw on it. I then imagined my walk home. In the compass by the arts school, it is city property, so street vendors and protesters can be there as much as they'd like. One vendor was selling a poster for Tyler the Creator, Flower Boy. Another person was protesting internet porn. I combined the two. Why? Because I could and I was in a good mood and thought it would be funny.

This project was fun. I let my brain run wild and it just kept making connections and spewing out ideas. I didn't say no to a single one that I had. I had a large quantity of ideas and include all of them. I did the perfect design thinking exercise. I am very proud of myself. I think if I were to apply this to music or something else that I do, I could then simply trim down the ideas and make it more organized. This was very enjoyable.

Reframe the challenge

Just for a little explanation and background, I designed my light switch plate after an artist named Skizzy Mars specifically his "Free Skizzy Mars" album. Skizzy Mars is one of my favorite artists and his music always reminds me of some of the happiest days of my life. I thought this was even more fitting because he said in an interview that the reasoning behind the name of his album is because he felt free and open when recording it, and that "creativity flows from a place of openness and lack of restriction". When I first began this mini masterpiece project, I noticed that the hardest part of it was coming up with an idea that I thought was good enough to put on here and turn in. After thinking for hours and hours of ideas it finally dawned on me that this is a reflection of my creativity, ideas, beliefs and imagination and I could do whatever I want to do. After that realization, it all seemed so much easier and less like an assignment and more of what I wanted to express. This project only made me realize more how much of a Developer I am because I spent a great deal of time trying to develop and come up with the perfect idea when there really isn't such thing if it is based off of your own creativity. I had to tap into some of the other preferences to get myself out of the thought process that I had to carefully plan out a design/idea. I also realize during this process that I tend to have perfectionist tendencies which is bittersweet because it usually allows me to make things look as good as I want them to, but it also adds a lot more stress and takes more time. I had to tell myself it's okay if it's not perfect in order to get it done in time.

Inner motivators

Mini Masterpiece Write up

For my mini masterpiece I decided to decorate it symbolizing hunger and determination. The piece I had to decorate was a light switch. The first thing that came to my mind was flipping the switch. I've always heard from my basketball coaches to "flip the switch". So flipping the switch is instilled in my mind as it's time to turn it up and play harder. Whenever I heard this saying I knew it was time to compete and make my presence known on the court. So my light switch represents competition and the ability to compete with competitors with confidence. The two fists are boxing gloves having force on each other. The two fist are two very different sizes but they are at a stalemate because they are competing. Competition can come from anyone. That's because I try and not to underestimate anyone and keep my guard up. I would be doing someone a disservice if I'm not giving some effort.

I thought it was crazy how a light switch was able to make me think of competition. A light switch is a simple thing but it made me think of competing. My mind quickly went from competing in basketball in the past and competing now against different opponents everyday. Competition is still everywhere in my everyday life and I love to compete. I am a firm believer that good competition makes you better even if you lose. Losing is a good takeaway. To be able to learn from your mistakes, work on them and win the next time you compete with it is a satisfying feeling.

Appendix B

Sample student assignment disclosing personal risk

Mini Masterpiece Write Up

I generally like artistic projects like this, so I was excited when I began working on this. After I bought the light switch, I pulled out my art supplies and began looking for inspiration. This process took me a bit of time as I was quite lost on what to paint at first. I decided on painting a koi fishpond as they are one of my favorite animals and I have experience in painting nature landscapes and animals. The painting process took approximately five hours, which seems like a long time, but since I was using a detail brush for majority of the painting, I expected to spend much more time. While painting I was very worried about what other would think or how they view my artwork as I was spending quite a bit of time on it and wanted to feel proud of the outcome. As I neared the finishing touches, I was so tired, however, that I did not care. It was about 4:30am by the time I was done, and my eyes hurt from doing detail work so I threw a couple of white highlights around the lily pads and fishes before passing out. My friends were very sweet and stayed up with me and gave me feedback while I was painting which was very helpful. If they had not been there for feedback on detailing, colors, and general encouragement I do not think I would have done so well or finished in one night. I loved the finished product, but the process was so tiring that I wish I had spaced the painting process out more. Acrylic paints, however, dry very quickly and do not blend well after drying, so it was a race against time. My oil paints are fairly expensive and require ventilation when using the chemicals, so I chose not to use those. Overall, I enjoyed creating this mini masterpiece. I do not get to paint often or use my art abilities in my business courses, so it was nice to use those

abilities again. If I were to do this again, I think I would try not to care as much of what others might think and rather on doing my best to make my best creation.

Appendix C

Sample student assignment comment discussing collaboration

MGMT303

Mini Masterpiece

While making my mini masterpiece, I had a hard time thinking of how I wanted to decorate the light switch plate. I met up with my friend in the same class to decorate our mini masterpiece with paint and markers. All I knew was that I wanted mine to be my favorite color, light pink.

I went straight into painting the whole light switch plate light pink, but after this I didn't know what to do. I thought of painting or drawing one of my favorite albums, but I didn't want it to turn out looking bad because I'm not the best artist. I thought of what a light switch plate means and where I would put it, which helped me come up with the rest of the design.

One of my interests is interior design. I always decorate my room and a lot of my furniture or decorations are pink. My room is a reflection of me: lots of books, lots of pink, and lots of clothes. I wanted to make the light switch plate a reflection of me, to the extent of my drawing abilities. The first thing I could think of drawing was a house. My last name is pronounced my house, and I have a tattoo of a house to represent my last name. It also represents how a light switch plate goes in a house. Then I thought of other interests I have, and I came up with books. It worked perfectly because I love reading and I have many books in my room. Next, I drew a big jellyfish. Jellyfish are my favorite animal and I made it big on the plate to fill up space. I then drew a sun, coffee cup, and squiggly lines and my masterpiece was complete.

At first, I thought this assignment was silly, but actually painting and drawing was very relaxing, gave me time to reflect on my interests and spend quality time with a friend. I haven't done art in a while and it was nice to take a break from the screen. I definitely need to take more time to do more art or take a break from the screen and do something nice for myself.

I'm constantly busy and I was not looking forward to what I thought was a silly assignment. But I did it and I loved the freedom aspect to it. No rules except using a light switch plate and put your name and class section on it. It was also great collaborating with my friend and coming up with ideas for each other. We were both struggling to come up with ideas and we both starting naming things each other likes and it helped a lot. It makes me think of what we learned in class, that collaborating with a group of people is better than thinking alone.

Lastly, I thought of the design thinking model and how we should defer judgement while brainstorming. I was judging my artistic capabilities which prevented me from drawing an album cover, but in the end, I liked the way it turned out because it would fit perfectly in my room. It's not perfect but no prototype is perfect.

Appendix D

Sample student assignment comment discussing process

This weekend I spent about two hours completing my Mini – Masterpiece. In an attempt to use the skills we have learned thus far in class I decided to use the design thinking process in order to create my masterpiece. This being a personal preference project with little direction it was clear the audience I would be catering to was myself. Moving on to the next step I began to define my objective. I went to Walmart and purchased a light switch plate and contemplated how best to personalize such a template. I stood in the crafts isle and began the third step of the process; ideate. Looking at all of the potential customization made it much easier to imagine how my finished product may look. This step proved to take longer than expected as my mind raced from producing a face with googly eyes to simply decorating the plate with stickers. In the end after careful consideration I decided to move forward with producing a painting. My logic for this step was based on embracing a different approach as I have not painted since I was a child. When I returned home, I began the prototype phase. I sketched out five possible ideas on paper before I picked up the paint brush. It took some time and adjustments to reach a decision but eventually I decided on an abstract painting in which I would have less pressure to be accurate. The final phase of this process was by far the most fun! I spent about 20 minutes painting with every available color in order to create a rainbow collage. The end result is a piece of art that I feel captures my creativity well. This exercise has been a great reinforcement of the lessons we have spent some time talking about in class. A picture of my painting is below:



Appendix E

Sample student comment discussing process and materials

The mini masterpiece project was a great way for us to be able to create something with very little boundaries or instruction. I designed my light switch plate to basically be exactly what it is, except it's a switch to direct energy to creativity not to direct energy to a lightbulb. I incorporated a firm division between activity and rest with a bright noticeable line – both very important components of the design thinking process and creation of ideas and there must be a balance between both times in order to create and ideate to your full potential. The top of my switch is busy and intricate with chaos, colors, and varying media forms in order to convey a plethora of energy. When the energy is switched on for creativity to be active there is chaos and uncertainty, generally speaking, aspects that don't seem to have any concrete form or structure. The use of different craft materials, colors, and glues emulates the way I see a racing creative mind. On the polar opposite side, when the switch would be in the off position, I used a simple dark blue to show nightfall or rest. Resting your mind and nurturing your mental health is very important to remain creative, our minds are tools that need recharging to generate ideas. I added some small flairs in to take on the form of stars in the night, showing small energy snips where the energy of creativity is being charged and still active even while off. This assignment taught me to think outside of the box and physically create a product for something that is not necessarily physically tangible in daily life.

