

On Creativity by Charles Roland Berry

We probably all start out enjoying our creative genius. Then we get told to stop that nonsense, and do something worthwhile. The fantasy-plays and dreams from early childhood may or may not survive. For myself, I was too stubborn (or too stupid) to stop inventing images and sounds and stories. Now, at fifty-one years old, I have boxes full of creative odds and ends. This website gives a sampling of that diverse collection. The first thing we notice is: There is little commercial value to most art. There are only specific niche-markets where art makes money---and very few where art makes *lots* of money. Attaching a dollar-value to art is itself a creative industry.

Is the art we see on a Public Television program, or in a Major Motion Picture, necessarily more valuable than a piece of needlework by my Great Aunt Imogene? Attaching money to art is what the *Antiques Road Show* is all about, and its often a pleasant surprise. Why is that show so successful? Because the audience enjoys the wide variety of creative art---objects of all kinds. And, of course, we want to know how much we might get for it.

One of the biggest struggles in my life has been finding time and energy to make art, and at the same time making a living. I am from the middle-class, where having a paying job is mandatory. This means I have had many money-making jobs which had nothing to do with creative action. With most of these jobs, I reached a point of such total, on-going, excruciating boredom I had to quit.

The need for creative action trumps the need for a decent job. My parents never mentioned that to me. They assumed the need for a decent job always trumped *everything*. Viewing the world through practical eyes, art has little importance, and if you aren't earning a dime from it, you must not be any good.

Our culture seems determined to judge *value* by how many dollars someone will pay for a piece of music, a painting, a screenplay, a novel, a bronze sculpture, a clay pot. Our obsessiveness for cash causes us to ignore hundreds of thousands of works of minds and hands, works which contain

the joy we hope we can buy.

From experience I can say, the creative action itself is the vehicle for joy. That's not something I can ever buy. I can buy an education, and the necessary tools, but I can't buy the creativity. Talent is mostly a matter of working harder than everyone else. Talent needs exercise to remain healthy and sane. That is why creative action trumps a decent job, everytime. Sanity comes first.

2008.