



Finding Your Creative Why

Article by Rosemary Cronin

Commissioned by the Arts Students' Union, UAL

Illustrations by UAL student, Marco Riosa

We invited you to join [Rosemary Cronin](#), Artist, Educator and UAL Outreach Practitioner, in a session designed to introduce you to Socially Engaged Practice - the pursuit of working directly with people and communities.

The session's aim was to support UAL students in unpacking the 'why' in their practice, to create a creative manifesto for them themselves to add purpose and sustainability to their work, and to build confidence in talking about their creative vision and approach.

Rosemary Cronin bio: Employed as a Young Curator at [Tate Modern](#) as part of the Raw Canvas programme in 2006, Rosemary Cronin has continued as an artist, curator and project manager, with a particular interest in socially engaged practice. Project managing and coordinating participatory projects for [National Portrait Gallery](#), Art on the Underground and Museum of Brands, Rosemary has a passion to make art accessible for all, with particular experience of working with young people and vulnerable audiences. A fine art graduate from Chelsea College of Art & Design, as an artist Rosemary has facilitated on projects for Tate, [Victoria & Albert Museum](#), The Photographers' Gallery, South London Gallery and Watts' Gallery.

To allow UAL students to delve into the information provided at this workshop delivered in October 2020 in their own time, the Arts SU commissioned Rosemary to create a legacy resource. We hope it helps you in your continual creative development!

Finding Your Why

Written by Rosemary Cronin

It was a real joy to be able to talk to so many students across UAL courses and colleges. To paraphrase some of the content and questions into a short piece of blurb is tricky but I'm hopeful that this advice will help you navigate your creative why. First off, what do we mean by 'Creative Why?' Well, it's that inner sense of purpose and understanding what drives your creativity, and how you can align your creativity to a cause or a community.

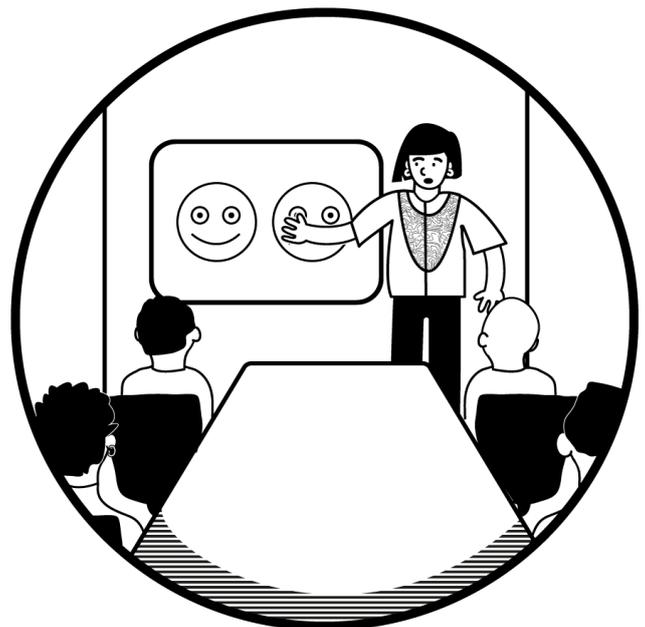
How did this come about? I discussed how after I graduated my Fine Art degree, I set up a studio on my own and had commissions coming in, but it all felt a bit vacant. I realised that the work I had been doing alongside my course - mainly assisting on workshops at Tate for their families and community learning programmes - was what I found deeply fulfilling, and helped me shape my creative works.

How to find your Creative Why

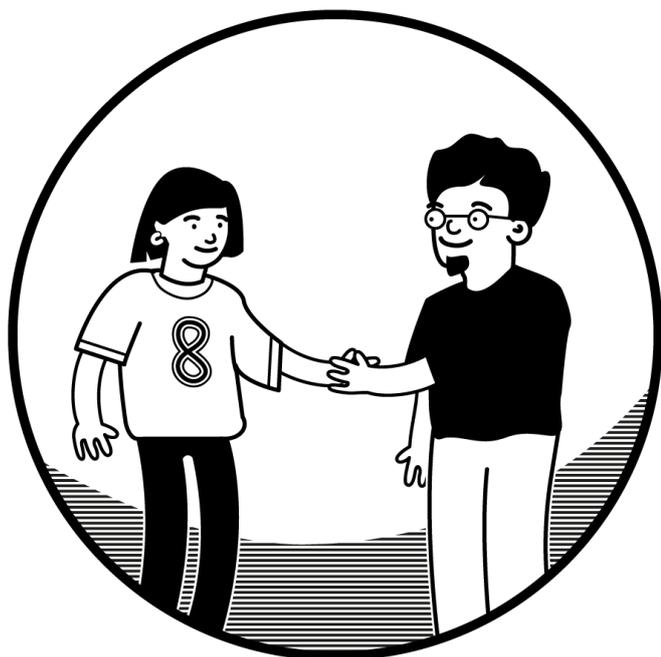
A little exercise we did as part of the session with UAL students was to map different parts of ourselves on to a page... you can do this now. In the middle of your page write your name, and in a spider diagram consider all the things that have shaped you to be who you are now. You might consider:

- Where you were born
- When you first took part in something creative
- The different moments that have shaped you in life (any deep significant changes, memories, people etc)
- Other things in your life beyond creativity that you enjoy
- What are you passionate about?
- What would you change in the world if you were given limitless power?

From that you start to build a picture of who you are to this moment. Now if we drive that forward.... Perhaps consider on the next page, what you can see yourself doing in the future, and how you can use your creativity for a cause or community.



Meet as many likeminded souls as possible



In the digital age this can be tricky or easy, depending on how you navigate it. But I really recommend joining activities or clubs that you're drawn to. I always try and join one new club/network each year, just so that I can meet new people and go to new places. Even though I've gone to new things for a while now, I still might get nervous, but just be a bit brave and a bit smiley, and you soon find yourself next to a future friend. Or at college, if a particular visiting artist/tutor makes an impression on you, make a note of their next show or talk. I also still keep in contact with my past tutors 10 years later!

Museum/Gallery Opportunities

Museums and Galleries have great opportunities for young people. Below I've put some of my favourite programmes that you might be interested in:

- South London Gallery's [Recreative Editorial Board](#)
- Tate's [Tate Collective Producers](#)
- V&A Museum's [CreateVoice](#)
- Camden Art Centre's [Youth Collective \(Online\)](#)
- The Photographers' Gallery's [Develop Creative Careers Through Photography](#)
- BFI's [Film Academy](#)
- The Horniman Museum's Youth Panel <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/about-the-horniman/opportunities/young-people-at-the-horniman/>
- William Morris Gallery's [Young Producer's Group](#)



If (like me) you are a little bit older for the programmes above (most of them are for under 30s), then here's some other ones you might like:

- [LUX Critical Film Forum](#)
- [The Conch](#) at South London Gallery (Artist presentations followed by a discussion)
- [Drop-in Drawing](#) at the National Portrait Gallery (The gallery is now closed until 2023, but do keep this evening in mind for the future, it's a great programme with free drawing materials and activities)
- [Mimosa House](#) run a range of really interesting events in relation to the artworks on display; these have included Reading groups, tarot workshops and self-defence classes
- [Siobhan Davies Dance](#) Monday Night Improvisation Class

Expand Your Radar

We talked about how you get to know the different creative communities around you. In this amazing online world, the first step to help you get to know what's going on around the capital (and beyond!) is the many sites that list for free either Private Views and Exhibitions, or one's that focus more on artist opportunities.

Events & Exhibitions:

- <https://www.artrabbit.com/>
- <https://www.galleriesnow.net/> (they also do a great printed map that can be picked up in selected galleries)
- <http://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/galleries>

Opportunities:

- <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/for-artists/edigest/>
- <https://www.curatorspace.com/>
- <https://www.artquest.org.uk/opportunities/>
- Arts Council England's [Jobs and News Bulletin](#)



No Expectations

We ended the session by discussing 'no expectations' and I say that with love and hope. If you are approaching organisations or curators, try and be specific about what you want, be realistic, but also be hopeful. I always operate on a no expectations basis... just reach out, be friendly and have no expectations. Everything happens for a reason.