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Paper 1

Artful Creation: Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business

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This is the first chapter of a book of the above title, by Lotte Darso.

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Artful Creation by Lotte Darso: an endorsement from Dr Cheryl Kerr

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In this 'Introduction', Darsø (2004) asks: "What can Business learn from the Arts?" (p.18). Relevant to this IJPM special edition, that question reflects earlier trends where management education allied with arts-based pedagogical processes. Since Darsø & Dawids work in 2002 in Europe, one finds Taylor & Ladkin (2009) in the UK, Adler (2006) and Nissley (2008), in North America, Drew (2008) and Kerr & Lloyd (2008) in Australia, began to research and publish the impacts of arts-based learning in non-arts industries. Darsø underpins the ongoing work of these business educators and scholars through her articulated concerns with organisational performance in business. Such work has stimulated a shift in organisational development strategies away from skills training to transformational learning. In particular the new focus has been to generate developmental experiences that expand human potential, facilitated by artistic processes.

There is growing recognition that a more creative and innovative work and learning environment is necessary for organisations in the global economy. There is also growing recognition of the benefits from an alliance between the arts, business, and individual leadership and management staff development. It is significant that Darsø & Dawids (2002) initially identified behaviours and competencies that reflect improved performance benefits from arts-based learning. Such benefits are identified not as quick fixes but as significant organisational and human behavioural changes.

Of further import for the readers of this special issue of IJPM, is Darsø's (2004) question: "Do you have art in your business?" (p. 14). Her work addresses the variety of roles that art can and does play in business, and more significantly the implications of the creative in organisational development. As Darsø notes, "most companies use art traditionally as decoration and therefore the role of arts and business remains the same, with the arts being *sponsored* by business. This role is, however, changing (p. 14)."

In total, she presents four options to Arts-in-Business: "*sponsored art, entertainment, the arts as instruments [for innovation], and the arts as a strategic process of transformation*" (p. 15). Having found these four present in business, it is the latter two that Darsø introduces as responsible for a shift in business and art linkages. The shift is a move away from art as only an external element beyond the functional purpose of the organisation. Darsø stretches business mindfulness to include understanding the potential impact of engagement with the arts, and arts-based learning, through "arts as *instruments* for teambuilding, communication training, leadership development, problem solving and innovation processes" (p.15). She also stresses the presence of the *transformative learning process through the arts*. She introduces the reality that "Business integrates the arts in a *strategic process of transformation*, involving personal development and leadership, culture and identity, creativity and innovation, as well as customer relations and marketing" (p. 15).

In conclusion, Darsø's *Introduction* (2004) gives food-for-thought regarding the need for a mindful and artful awareness in business to the demands of our current business environments. Darsø provides explicit strategies for converting her findings and arts-based principles into practice within actual businesses. She presents a broad applicability for the arts as a dynamic sub-system, integrated with other organisational approaches, that aids in attending to the surprises in dynamic business environments. For business leaders and developers, she offers a valuable set of "real-life" tales of Arts-in-Business, where artists apply artistic methods to facilitate change, development and learning in organisations" (p. 18). For academics, the tales are based on an international research project, conducted during 2002 and 2003 by Learning Lab Denmark and Danish Centre for Management" (p.18). Overall Darsø provides business with a valuable and succinct summary of the opportunities present in transformational arts-based-learning processes.

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Artful Creation: Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business

Lotte Darso

Chapter 1

“The purpose of art is not the release of a momentary ejection of adrenalin but rather the gradual, lifelong construction of a state of wonder and serenity.”

Glenn Gould, pianist

“... So Izzy came up to me and said ‘Can you do this thing?’ which I had already briefly looked at and thought it would take too much time. But she said, ‘Look, it would really help me out.’ So I said yes. It turned out that it was this project called ‘Sticky’. The idea was that for two days, fifteen Unilever staff were going to do a series of workshops with Improbable Theatre, some of the most fantastically talented, theatrical people in this country. And then for the rest of that week we would rehearse a show and perform it as the highlight of the Mayor’s Thames Festival. I do not know if you have heard about ‘Jerry Springer, the Opera’, which is a big hit of the West End. You cannot get tickets for love nor money. And I was amazed because the guy I was working with on ‘Sticky’ was the creative director for Jerry Springer. So it was awesome to work with them. We did a lot of exercises, which were quite uncomfortable. For example, we were animating things, bringing things to life, and we had to bring newspaper to life. I was not the kind of child who played with newspaper and was very creative. I am not very good at painting or drawing, and personally I found it very challenging and I know that a lot of us did. It really pushed our boundaries as well as making us a new group of friends. We met a real mixture of people, all driven by that same, I-want-to-just-experience-life-to-the-maximum mindset. In an office environment, experiencing life to the maximum is not always easy, which is why I think people say ‘I am going to take a year out and go and work abroad.’ If you can have the same intensity of experience in your job, then that is what matters. ‘Sticky’ was almost like a dream. I look back, and it went so quickly, as these things will, and I can hardly believe it was me. Everyone afterwards was so jealous, and, as I said, I just fell into it. I said yes without thinking about it too much. Again, I think that is a good part of our company culture, which Catalyst has encouraged...”¹

This is just one example of Arts-in-Business, probably not very typical at this time, but I profoundly believe that this is the type of story we will be hearing in the future. Do you have art in your business? Of course you do, though you may not be asked to perform a piece of theatre in front of 15,000 people in the open air in central London. But surely you have art in your organisation, at least in the public places, like the reception, the auditoria, the meeting rooms, etc. In your own office you may have posters, photos, reproductions of famous art, children’s drawings or other items of your own choice, or you may have to put up with the choice others have made for you. Most people have some kind of art in their daily organisational life. Art, aesthetics and design also influence brands and the products businesses produce, e.g. in the design of labels, packaging and logos. Art plays a part in many internal as well as external business manifestations. The type of art, branding or design of these manifestations in many ways expresses the identity of a company. While

¹ Interview with Adrian Greystoke, marketing trainee at Unilever Ice Cream & Frozen Food, London

some companies pay little attention to this fact, others are very conscious about the signals they send through their annual reports, their ads, their product labels and their brand. Still, most companies use art traditionally as decoration and therefore the role of arts and business remains the same, with the arts being sponsored by business. This role is, however, changing, as we saw already and as we will examine in the following.

To use or not to use the arts in business

Basically there are four options regarding Arts-in-Business:

1. Business uses the arts for decoration.
2. Business uses the arts for entertainment, either by giving the employees benefits such as tickets for selected shows, performances and arts exhibitions in their leisure time, or they invite artists into the company for performances at annual meetings, customer events or special occasions.
3. Business applies the arts as instruments for teambuilding, communication training, leadership development, problem solving and innovation processes.
4. Business integrates the arts in a strategic process of transformation, involving personal development and leadership, culture and identity, creativity and innovation, as well as customer relations and marketing.

Arts as decoration

Even though the first approach of using the arts as decoration sounds very traditional the following two examples demonstrate that it is possible to use art as decoration in a strategic way. For more than 25 years Mads Øvlisen, as CEO of the pharmaceutical company, Novo Nordisk, has bought art from young artists, who were not yet known or established. This art has not always been popular among the employees. Mads Øvlisen had, though, a specific purpose:

“I hope that our art signals that this is a company where you are allowed to think differently, where you may make mistakes and learn from them” and “You do not have to like the art you see at Novo Nordisk, but I hope it makes you stop and ask a few questions.”²

Once during the visit of an important customer and a very intense meeting with a heated discussion, the art on the walls became very provocative. The first painting they met on the way to the guests' dining room had a strip across it saying, “Be aggressive.” The customer commented, “If that's the message from your CEO, then I better understand what is going on!” When the guests were seated, however, directly across from where they sat there was a painting with a ballet dancer, who gave his public the finger. The customer turned pale and said: “I hope you won't go that far!”

In an interview Mads Øvlisen explained that buying art was neither an investment nor sponsorship. Art was a management signal about the organisation to the organisation. It signalled experimentation, asking questions, contesting borders and limits, quality, originality and renewal. He hoped that the paintings and other art pieces would make people reflect and continue to wonder, and that it would help them not to get stuck in a groove of professional habits.

² Knud Aunstrup: Mads Øvlisen's use of Art at Novo Nordisk A/S, 1998

The next example concerns the company Raymond James Financial, Inc., who labelled their annual report from 1999 “The Art of Financial Planning” and explained on the first page that designing a plan is an art:

“We instruct our Financial Advisors in the art of financial planning so that each one can design customised solutions to financial problems.” This is later expanded, “just as an artist brings a canvas to life, the art of financial planning can bring our clients’ visions to life.”

Apart from using art as a metaphor in their annual report, the company has a large art collection, supposedly one of the largest privately owned collections in the Southeast of the United States. The collection is maintained by a full time art curator, who regularly conducts art tours for clients and community members. At the same time he explains the vision and the mission of the company. The company’s key goal is not simple investment, but rather customer-designed investment strategy and tax planning.

Arts as entertainment

Regarding using the arts for entertainment, many companies use the arts in this way as company fringe benefits. At Unilever Fabergé and Ice Cream & Frozen Food, however, not just any show will suffice. The entertainment has been carefully chosen, and is often very sophisticated. Marketing manager Lily Donagh explains:

“... but I think just having access to go and see the theatre and music is fabulous, ...new places and concerts, and that is kind of my main thing, getting involved in that, getting to see some really cool stuff that you would not necessarily be able to go to otherwise, so that is brilliant, I think, it is really good. We have relationships with the Royal Court, and I particularly like the sort of things they put on, because they are quite challenging and different and modern, they are thought provoking.”

Art as entertainment can also be in-house, as was the case when Clifford Chance, the world’s largest law firm, invited the London Musici into the company as ‘chamber orchestra in residence’. Under their conductor Mark Stephenson, the London Musici “*have become experts at putting on concerts in office atria and working with teams of business people to help them express themselves through music.*”³

Arts as instrumental

Applying the arts as an instrument has been applied by the pharmaceutical company Nycomed. Senior vice-president Alejandra Mørk tells the following story of how they were going to have a large team-building meeting for their project team of 50-60 people. They engaged two actors and a visual artist from ArtLab⁴:

“... and they carried it out and it was very much about being present and about communication on many different levels. It was everything from the room being decorated to finding your own small rock among many rocks with closed eyes. There were exercises of improvisation, there was non-verbal communication in the form of papers, a lot of different things, and it ended by us creating a picture where everybody identified a space and glued the rock they had chosen themselves on to a

³ David Butcher (2003:38 – 43): “A Fruitful Union”, article in Management Today, August 2003

⁴ ArtLab (now MAB) is an education for out-of-work artists training to become consultants in business, www.artlab.dk, see also Chapter 4, ‘How Governments Matter’

glass plate – it was the visual artist who directed this – in an almost ceremonial event with candles on a set table. And we still have that picture today and I still know, whenever I pass it, which one is my rock and where it is, because you were to choose where to place yourself in relation to the others according to the significance you had for the project. So we still have this, and it is hanging very centrally just in front of the project office, and it was not an event. It was a meaningful process in order to make something function in a project group. And that is what this is about, it is real work and not something we do for fun.”

Arts as strategic

Finally, integrating the Arts in a strategic process of transformation is apparent in project Catalyst at Unilever Fabergé and Ice Cream & Frozen Food, as we saw quite vividly at the start of this chapter, where a marketing trainee was invited to participate in creating an improvisational theatre piece in central London. In fact, Unilever’s project Catalyst applies the arts strategically by drawing on all four approaches, which you will hear more about in chapter 4. Unilever has focused a lot on expression and emotion, and one of the skills that are important for business is expression through writing. Isabelle King, Catalyst assistant, told the following story:

“So we have our reading group and we had a creative writing course, which was run by an author, Gwyneth Jones, and that ran 8 weeks. She was looking at lots of aspects of creative writing such as how you create atmosphere, how you develop your characters. She was looking at plots and structure and we were really keen to take this forward because, as I said, we looked at business writing and at creative writing and people can always be better at writing. Lots of people have not had anyone look at their writing skills since they were maybe 16, 17, 18, and we write all the time, so that was fantastic.”

“Then we introduced reading in schools. People volunteered to do it, and our staff go out and read in local junior schools and help the children who have fallen behind for some reason, whether they have learning difficulties or problems at home or simply do not have the interaction with an adult, that one-to-one time, which can make their reading a lot easier. And sometimes after a term they will have improved so much that they do not need that contact any more. Other children may need a whole year of that special time. And if they have difficulties at home, reading with them provides an adult they can rely on, who is supportive and in that way our staff act as ambassadors in the local community. We are a big company within this community and we want to give something back.”

“... and then a final element of that program was to have literature events. We have had two events this year; one was where we invited all the children in the local community, who we had helped with their reading, and their teachers and our staff to Walton. The chairman James Hill awarded each child with a certificate to say congratulations, well done. After this we had a children’s author called Marcia Williams come in and read to the children and she was absolutely fantastic. That was one event. And the other event was to mark national poetry day with a celebration. We had looked at business writing and creative writing, but we had not looked at poetry. That was an evening event upstairs where we had three poets come in and read from their work, which was fantastic. Then again, creating unique opportunities for people, lots of people had never heard a poet read out loud, it expanded their literacy horizons. We got the poetry books here, which people have

bought, and as a result of the creative writing program we launched a competition for staff here. We wanted them to write a children's story aimed at children between 9 and 11 because we thought children are some of our most important consumers, we have got all these products for kids; captain Birdseye, kids' ice cream, kids' food and actually how do we connect with them, are we good at communicating with them? We wanted to find out what it is that makes them tick."

The point here is simply to show that everybody has art in their business, but how do they apply it, and do they get the full use of it? If you have art in your business, what is the role of art? And what could it be?

This book will tell 'real-life' tales of Arts-in-Business, where artists apply artistic methods to facilitate change, development and learning in organisations. The tales are based on an international research project, conducted during 2002 and 2003, by Learning Lab Denmark⁵ and Danish Centre for Management⁶. The goal of the research project is to map the field of Arts-in-Business and describe what is currently going on internationally through snapshots and case studies of both successes and failures. The intention is to provide a coherent theoretical framework for making sense of this new development and at the same time help this new field advance.

The research data include 53 qualitative interviews with artists, business people, researchers and people interested in the field from Europe, North America and South Africa. The data also involve participant observation, action research, collective reflection and explorative experimentation.

The guiding research question is: What can Business learn from the Arts?

The purpose of this book is to demonstrate the potential and variety of new artistic methods available for business and, of course, to point out in what ways business can learn from the arts, and why it is important. The message of this book is not to promote a new magical instrument, a new 'quick fix' for business. It is an attempt to define the contours of 'artful creation', a new paradigm that draws on our full human potential (body, mind, heart and spirit). Artful is here defined as a quality of expanded consciousness that evolves through profound personal experiences, and often facilitated by artistic processes. The emergent field of Arts-in-Business is one of the signposts of this new paradigm of 'artful creation' and could have an important and positive impact on future business and society. The book will tell tales of how it worked and how it did not work, of the difficulties and barriers that arose, and of the conquests and successes.

I am very aware that poverty of language is one major challenge in trying to pass on lived artistic experience. How can the dynamic quality of these engaging tales be kept alive? In the text I have tried to meet the challenge by giving room throughout the book for the interviewees to speak for themselves, in particular in the case stories, and by including photographs of artists and artistic products as well as artistic notes. Even though this cannot

⁵ Established by the Danish government in 2001, Learning Lab Denmark is a centre for research on learning, affiliated to the Danish University of Education. Learning Lab Denmark aims at solving urgent societal problems related to learning, through experimental and practice-oriented research and development activities. This is done with dedicated partners from different societal sectors. Learning Lab Denmark consists of a secretariat and six research consortia, working with both the educational sector and business. www.lld.dk

⁶ Danish Centre for Management is an association of 1200 public and private corporate members. It is a meeting place for developing holistic leadership in practice www.cfl.dk

replace the real experience, I hope that the tales will inspire you to experiment and try some of these methods for yourself.

The book consists of eight chapters interwoven with tales of Arts-in-Business. The organisation of the book is as follows:

In Chapter 1, the introduction, the basic ideas are presented together with the purpose and background. Here we introduce the four main levels of using Arts-in-Business, with a few vivid examples to bring the subject to life. In this chapter you can also find an introduction to the chapters.

In Chapter 2 we paint the 'big picture', a brief analysis of the historical development and current trends. By introducing the framework of Ken Wilber we try to understand the recent development of business, from engineering models, Taylorism, rationality, efficiency, bottom-line economy towards a more ethical, sustainable, triple-bottom-line, aesthetic and even spiritual dimension. Next we discuss the role of the arts, from the sacred, through beauty, inspiration, provocation, anarchy, and industry, to becoming social. This is followed by some deliberations on the artistic process and a definition of the concept of artfulness. The chapter ends with some thoughts on the organisation of the future by trying to understand the current trends of Arts-in-Business as the beginning of a new integration into the 'creative economy' of the future.

In Chapter 3 we discuss and develop the theoretical frameworks. The main framework is the Arts-in-Business framework⁷, a matrix model, based on two parameters: the degree of ambiguity and the degree of involvement. Combining these characteristics produces 4 arenas: Capabilities, Metaphors, Events and Products. The four arenas will help us to describe the case studies and to understand the learning processes and outcomes. As learning is a focal point of the study, we discuss individual and organisational learning by introducing Crossan & Sorrenti's model of organisational learning followed by Cowan's concept of "Rhythms of Learning". Both complement the Arts-in-Business model and help to refine our understanding of the learning that takes place. A third framework is a model for social innovation, developed in my PhD, which facilitates understanding the dimensions involved in creating new knowledge. This process can evidently be energised through the arts.

Chapter 4 contains seven case stories and an illustration of how governmental initiatives can influence and help to develop a new field. The chapter starts out with the "Creative Leaps of Bureaucracy", a tale about the musical group, Creative Leaps International, who opened the George Washington University 'Centre for Excellence in Municipal Management' program in August 2002. It is a story about how music and song can enhance leadership development. The main aspects of learning concern the potential for inner transformation, so rare in ordinary leadership programmes, which are usually based on theoretical and intellectual discussions. Secondly, we can learn from this case study how music facilitates deep and almost immediate bonding (creating "common ground") in groups. This story leads to another tale of music, "Creative Leaps of Learning", which was basically the same process, carried out by the same group with 35 schoolteachers at Norwalk, Connecticut.

⁷ Lotte Darsø & Michael Dawids (2002): "Arts-in-Business – Proposing a theoretical Framework", presented at EURAM, Stockholm, May 2002, at The 5th Art & Business Conference, Borl, Slovenia, June 2002, and at The Art of Management and Organisation, London, Sept. 2002

The second tale poses the question “What happens when you PAIR a scientist with an artist?” It concerns the Xerox PARC PAIR Artist-in-residence programme that went on for 10 years. We briefly tell the story of this visionary project, which had no other goals than to create better scientists and artists, but which, in fact, has produced important learning and spin-offs. The narrative is based mainly on interviews with the late Rich Gold, director of PAIR, and partly on the book “Art and Innovation”.

After this we examine the metaphor of “Business Theatre”, carried out at Bang & Olufsen, a leading company that designs televisions and audio equipment. Since 1999 this company has applied artistic metaphors in their processes of training, development and change. In particular they have used a theatre metaphor for making their shops attractive and for making their products alive and ‘applaudable’ all over the world. The problem they faced was not only the challenge of making a shift from a technical approach towards a more visionary one, but also a high turnover in sales people. The theatre metaphor has proved helpful in their international training concept on “performing exciting sales” as well as in keeping their sales people.

After this we move into “I carry with a smile. Organisational theatre for domestic helpers.” The Dacapo Theatre is a corporate theatre group, who has existed for more than 10 years. Their work is inspired from the Forum theatre developed by Augusto Boal, the founder of “Theatre of the Oppressed”. A large municipality in Denmark decided to invite all their ‘domestic helpers’ to participate in 30 Forum theatre events with Dacapo. The goal was to bring to the surface concerns and complaints regarding funding cuts and future reorganisation, and to improve the working culture through involvement in theatre. The goal was achieved, but it is uncertain whether this was caused by the theatre sessions. What we do know is that the plays started a lot of good conversations. From here we will go on to describe “Art and Business for European Identity” by telling the tale of one of the drivers of the Art & Business vision, Miha Pogacnik, virtuoso violinist, cultural ambassador of Slovenia and business consultant. We will describe how Miha Pogacnik works with his violin and great classical masterpieces in order to help the audience sharpen their senses. The key words are deep reflection, transformation and new capabilities. Miha’s interpretations of musical masterpieces enlighten universal human archetypes, which are profoundly meaningful to individuals as well as to organisations.

Miha Pogacnik has started the initiative of IDRIART and his mission is to create “practical Utopia”. “Why not catapult a brand new Volvo?” is the story of a one-year partnership between artist Michael Brammer and Volvo Cars Corporation. Catapulting a brand new Volvo into a red heart was Brammer’s idea for the world exhibition of cars in Detroit in 2003. The idea was both provocative and controversial, but what was to be learned from this? People learned from this that, among other things, the organisation should have been better prepared for the ‘disturbance’ to make it fully effective, but also that there are different ways of marketing and of getting into the media. This was definitely a story that the media swallowed whole.

“Catalyst for change through personal development” describes a project at Unilever, UK, which started in 1999 and has continued since then with a lot of successes and some good failures. Unilever Fabergé and Ice Cream & Frozen Food seem to be not only the corporation that has experimented the most in this area, but also the only corporation in the research project that has applied the arts strategically to a process of transformation - for building an ‘enterprise culture’. Unilever has employed actors, directors, clowns, stand-up comics, business writers, novelists, poets, play writers, painters, drawers, perfumers, circus,

fashion designers, fabric designers, electronic designers, musicians, filmmakers, bookbinders, multimedia artists, cartoonists, library services, cooks and reading agencies. We have chosen to tell the tales of 'Urban Fiction' (a photography course), 'Sticky' (a live performance in London) and 'Live & Direct' (a feedback project, based on theatre rehearsal techniques, involving 80% and 50% of the two organisations).

We end this chapter by discussing "How Governments matter - The snowball case of Denmark". In year 2000 the Danish government decided to make an effort to try to understand and develop the interplay between Arts & Business. A joint effort between The Ministry of Culture and The Ministry of Trade and Industry resulted in a white paper and, as a result of that, in the creation of three initiatives: NyX, a meeting place and market place for connecting Art & Business; The Creative Alliance, a research consortium under Learning Lab Denmark, focusing on exploring the learning potential between Arts & Business; Louiz, a cultural entrepreneurial start-up organisation. Since then there has been great focus on the development of this field in Denmark and many projects, organisations and companies have been created. Even though it is too early to evaluate these initiatives, this story may inspire other municipal or federal governments.

In Chapter 5 the main idea is to weave the threads of learning from chapter 4 into new insights on transformation and into a theory of 'artful creation'. The main analysis is accomplished by applying the 7 steps of Otto Scharmer's model of 'presencing': downloading, seeing, sensing, presencing, crystallising, prototyping, and embodying. Each step is analysed and illustrated with several examples from the case studies and interviews. This forms the basis for building a new and more differentiated Arts-in-Business framework around a centre of 'artful creation'.

In Chapter 6 we try to answer the research question: What can Business learn from the arts? This is done through two lenses, first by introducing the revised Arts-in-Business framework and explaining the new insights for each of the four arenas; secondly by applying Ken Wilber's four-quadrant method for answering the research question from both a subjective perspective and an objective one, as well as from both an individual standpoint and a collective one.

Chapter 7 recaptures the discussion on transformation by distinguishing between two distinct approaches to Arts-in-Business, which leads to the introduction of an icon that symbolises a paradigmatic shift from the old instrumental management towards the birth of a new: 'artful creation'. The chapter contains both recommendations and admonitions, as artistic processes are extremely powerful and should not be used by all organisations. The recommendations include a catalogue of suggestions for people who are considering applying the arts to business as well as a list with guiding questions and some practical advice about how to get started.

In Chapter 8 we outline the visions for the future role of Arts-in-Business and for an artful society. We speculate on the future of capitalism, on the future role of business, on the future role of the arts, and on the future type of career path. Will capitalism become compassionate? Will business get a heart? Will the future career path be double? Joseph Beuys has said that the real art is the creation of social relationships. If that is the new role of the arts, what will the future look like?

Finally, some practical information regarding the artists, researchers and business people who have been interviewed for this book. At the back of the book there is an alphabetical (by surname) reference list of the interviewees including their titles, type of work, contact information (websites), and date/place of interview. This list has been created in order to avoid too many footnotes in the text.

The powerful real-life tales told by these artists and business people are woven throughout the book. Enjoy the journey!