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Most of these prototypes were built out of necessity, as he was quite lazy and had bad vision so he wanted things to come to him as opposed to getting up to get them – my favourite was his Aphrodisiac Bed-side Lamp. He had found a female dummy's leg that they use in shop windows to display nylon stockings and he had then found a light bulb, a cord and plug and a lampshade. A brand new pair of stockings and, hey presto!, in a few hours he had it all working. He said, 'Just imagine, now every night to turn out the light I have to reach my hand inside a lady's skirt, touching her stocking, and grope around for the switch.'

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Creativity and education expert Sir Ken Robinson writes¹² and talks about the amazing creative abilities of children and the confidence they have in them before they are often knocked back by the adult world. In a speech at a recent TED conference¹³, an organisation founded around big ideas, he tells the story of how a little girl has much conviction in her own imagination and ideas. She is busily drawing away in class and her teacher asks her what she's drawing, and she explains that it's a picture of God. The teacher tells her that nobody knows what God looks like. 'They will in a minute,' the little girl says. In fact, data shows how as children get older they lose their ability to think divergently (see Chapter 2), which is a key component of creativity: 98 per cent of three- to five-year-olds tested showed they could think in divergent ways, but by the time they were 13 to 15 years old, only 10 per cent could think in this way. And when the test was used with 25-year-olds, only 2 per cent could think divergently.¹⁴

¹⁴'Creative thinkers wither with age', Elizabeth Bule, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 25 March 2005.

Multi award-winning film and theatre director, Matthew Warchus (he won the 2009 Tony award for Best Direction of a Play for *God of Carnage*), told Business Playground about his experience at school:

'I've often thought that the arts are a great recycling centre for people who've got certain aspects in their personality that might be seen as dysfunctional in other areas,' he told us.

'But, if you bring them to creative arts they find a fantastic role. My slight dysfunction is that I've always been a bit of a loner and an outsider and I can remember most of my time at school being spent on the outside, looking in, listening to other people talk and behave together and not really being in the middle of anything.'

Fortunately Matthew found a career that was based on his ability to step back from things somewhat: 'Someone like me is used to being on the outside and having an overview of things, and is able to see patterns in behaviour and life and the interactions between people. In conversations you see patterns that you wouldn't notice if you were on the inside of the conversation. And that kind of person doesn't make a very good actor, for example, nor a very good orchestral instrumentalist, and that could be an unfortunate type of person to be if there wasn't a great job for that type of person, which is being a director.'

CAN CREATIVITY BE REDISCOVERED?

If we don't make use of our creative skills they become weaker. But are they still there when we're older?

*The Moon and Sixpence*¹⁵ is a short novel by William Somerset Maugham, based on the life of painter Paul Gauguin. The story is about Charles Strickland, a stockbroker who, like Gauguin, leaves

Until a certain age children are not hampered by self-doubt. My daughters Kaya (10) and Indya (8) are constantly solving stuff through creative 'brainsailing'. To them everything is easy peasy.

Recently Kaya was in the car coming home from school and she was saying that the teacher was telling them that there needs to be more awareness about recycling and everyone should try to 'go green'. As she was telling me this we were stopped at a traffic light on red. When the light turned green Kaya immediately connected the dots and said, 'Why don't they write recycle on every green traffic light!'



So simple, and a brilliant way to brainwash everyone on the planet, plus it would be cheap and easy to do. In fact, after I write this I'm going to approach Mayor Villarraigosa in Los Angeles to ask if we can do a test in a small area.

his family to pursue a passion for painting. After a number of years living in poverty in Paris, Strickland makes his way to Tahiti where he eventually dies from leprosy (oops, sorry, we just gave away the ending). His greatest work of art is the one he paints on the walls of the hut in Tahiti in which he lives. But because he has no visitors to his remote part of the island, thousands of miles from civilised society, nobody from the outside world ever gets to see it. Following his instructions after he dies, his Tahitian wife burns down the hut leaving no trace of his life's work. The creativity was there in Strickland throughout his dull life as a stockbroker and eventually it broke free.

¹⁵The title of Maugham's book is thought to come from an earlier novel he wrote, *Of Human Bondage*, in which the main character is described as 'so busy yearning for the moon that he never saw the sixpence at his feet'. For both the fictional character, Charles Strickland, and for Paul Gauguin, the real artist Maugham based the story on, the desire to create was more powerful than the comfort and security of family and a steady job. Both went for the moon instead of the sixpence.