

■ Living Books About Life

# Creative Evolution Natural Selection and the Urge to Remix

Edited by Mark Amerika



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# Creative Evolution

Natural Selection and the Urge to Remix

By Mark Amerika

## Introduction: What is Creativity?

In his *Process and Reality*

Alfred North Whitehead writes that

Creativity is the principle of novelty.

The concept of novelty or more specifically novelty generation as the modus operandi of all living creatures mutating in the remix pool relates to current trends in networked art where the artist-as-medium postproduces the Source Material Everywhere as part of a larger co-poietic unfolding inside the networked space of flows

This ongoing remix practice procured by all living creatures feels like an innate biological imperative

one that indicates an aesthetically charged culture of intersubjective jamming where the cut-and-paste as-you-go open source lifestyle practice of the artist-as-live-medium stimulates the creative environment to the point of excess

In an interview titled 'The Creative Urge' Elizabeth Grosz is quoted as saying:

That's right, there's something about art that is an abundance of excess. Art is the revelry in the excess of nature, but also a revelry in the excess of the energy in our bodies. So we're not the first artists and we're perhaps not even the greatest artists, we humans; we take our cue from the animal world. So what is it that appeals to us? It's the striking beauty of flowers, it's the amazing colour of birds, it's the songs of birds. In a way, it's that excess which, I think, is linked to sexuality rather than to creation or production directly.

Which then gets me thinking about the formation of an uncanny sense of measure (an intuitively generated aesthetic fitness) artists unconsciously manifest / *em*-body while navigating the networked space of flows

*Aesthetic fitness as an outcome of overflowing sexual urgency?*

Randomly Google-searching the phrase 'aesthetic fitness'

my click-happy networked persona comes up on this:

If art is an adaptation, what possible function could it have served? From the viewpoint of current animal communication research, art is a signalling system. There is a signaller (the maker of the art), and a set of receivers (who perceive the work of art). The prototypical functions for animal signals include long-range sexual attraction, short-range sexual courtship, sexual rivalry, territorial conflict, begging by offspring to solicit parental investment, warning signals to deter predators, and alarm signals to alert relatives of danger.

And a bit further:

What sort of evidence could support this sexual selection theory of art? One clue would be an example of convergent evolution: the independent evolution of art-like abilities in another species through sexual selection. Bower-birds offer strong evidence along this line.

Bower-birds are natural collage artists  
caught in their perpetual blue period  
who create readymade nestworks  
to attract attention to themselves  
in hopes of finding their soul-mate  
(or maybe just an on again off-again

affair with their love bird)

They are naturally inclined *remixologists*  
(cut-and-paste as-you-go synthesizers  
abstractly expressing their need to attract  
sexual partners in search of beautiful experiences)

They do not need paint or canvas or verbal  
constructions  
to make the point nor do they need a white cube  
to exhibit their animal instincts *in*

But we digitally connected humans treat  
our remix / compostproduced / readymade art  
in a quite different manner—no?

In contemporary networked and mobile media culture  
Remixology presupposes the prophetic act of  
*making things with and out of code*  
whether it be a poet's direct presentation  
a programmer's hacking aesthetic  
a net artist's targeted action scripting  
or a live A/V artist's patchwork performance

Whatever the mediumistic delivery mechanism  
(and here artists can morph at will)

it still comes down to a root measure  
a random association of selected thoughts  
coming to the fore via intuitive memory trance  
(an admixture of habit and novelty that informs  
the remixological gestures of the artist-medium  
as they perform the pseudo-autobiography of their  
"always becoming" narrative-in-the-making)

Words rolling off the tongue  
images conjured at the keyboard  
sounds blasting through headphones  
bodies bobbing off the balls of their feet  
while *qi* electrical impulses structure  
every pivotal move into makeshift  
choreographed trance ritual space

In his lecture 'The Creative Act'  
the artist Marcel Duchamp  
refers to the artist as a medium:

To all appearances, the artist acts like a mediumistic  
being who, from the labyrinth beyond time and space,  
seeks his way out to a clearing.

Duchamp expands on his notion of the creative act:

In the creative act, the artist goes from intention to

realization through a chain of totally subjective reactions. His struggle toward the realization is a series of efforts, pains, satisfaction, refusals, decisions, which also cannot and must not be fully self-conscious, at least on the esthetic plane.

The result of this struggle is a difference between the intention and its realization, a difference which the artist is not aware of.

The artist-as-living-medium is not aware of this difference between intention and realization since they are performing their always-live remixes via unconsciously triggered states of intuition

Duchamp writes that

the artistic execution of the work rests with pure intuition and cannot be translated into a self-analysis, spoken or written, or even thought out.

Biologically speaking  
what does it mean to intuitively  
generate an aesthetic experience  
and how would this creative act  
get translated as the ultimate turn-on?

Put differently: what is the unconscious  
readiness potential that triggers

Creativity as the principle of *novelty*?

Is it related to feeling a sexual urge?

When asked in an interview 'What is creativity?'

Russian dancer Rudolf Nureyev gave the following answer:

It is something born from within you. It's as though you felt a need to do something, to say something, to utter, and you cannot live without uttering this sentence or writing this piece of music. It just begs to manifest itself. It is a need to express yourself first, and then to rationalize this expression. It is irrational first, rational after. I am sure Einstein had an inkling about something unknown and then came to his theory of light. And I am sure everybody has had this impulse, very much akin to sex, sexual drive, or sexual appetite, if you wish.

Intuitively acting on this impulse

the fidgeting digits of the digital nomad

transfigured in trance narrative space

execute their high performance keyboard gestures

while generating what the poet Allen Ginsberg terms

'prophetic illuminations' running parallel to

physiological currents subtly manipulating

psychosomatic flow

Artists caught in the heat of ecstatic release



can relate to this ongoing creative process  
triggering the continuous launch of  
neuro-aesthetic forms of expression  
finding their way in and out of the body  
as it shape-shifts *while playing*

Vilém Flusser has a different take on  
this Duchampian 'creative act'  
referring to it as *The Gesture of Writing*  
but for Ginsberg this ecstatic expression  
catalyzes into spontaneous transmissions  
emitting from a body experiencing 'physiological  
spasms'  
in a heightened state of emerging-agency

The State of Emerging-Agency is not very different  
from an endless State of Creative Emergency  
(Emergency being a heightened state of emerging-  
agency  
where the 'always live' artist-medium gives itself  
extensive powers to develop an integrated  
open source lifestyle practice that customizes responses  
to  
these hyperimprovisational projections from the  
creative unconscious  
that seemingly come out of nowhere and require

one's immediate remixological attention)

If you are practicing spontaneous transmission  
(Ginsberg lectures all wannabe bards)  
and by this he means to say  
'transmission of your thought'  
'how do you choose then what thoughts  
you need to put down' while in trance?

The answer (he says—playing Guru)  
'is that you don't get a chance to choose  
because everything's going so fast.'

'It's like driving on a road  
you just have to follow the road;  
And take turns, "eyeball it"  
as a carpenter would say.  
You don't have any scientific  
measuring rod, except your own mind.

I don't know of any scientific measuring rod  
that's usable. So you have to chance  
whatever you can and pick whatever you can.  
So there's also a process of automatic selection.  
Whatever you can draw in your net is it,

is what you got.'

Remixology forms as a process of  
natural selection

intuitive netting of the source material

which then can be mutated into  
the physiological form of ecstasy  
during your ongoing postproduction sets

(a beautiful experience?

autoerotic musing?

this interiorized postproduction process  
turns the pure mobility of ones durée  
into the ongoing satisfaction of becoming  
more source material / experiential data  
and during a heightened state of emerging-agency  
can lead to what Alfred North Whitehead  
refers to as *Higher Phases of Experience*)

Creativity as a form of novel advance  
becomes an 'always live' performance art movement  
especially when embodied by the postproduction

medium  
whose spontaneous transmission  
is transcribed into *more source material*

more hard code

that then gets mashed up further  
into a remixological composition style  
that transfigures the measuring rod  
into a conceptual DJ tool  
whose job it is to **intervene**

(William Carlos Williams:  
'The measure intervenes,  
to measure is all we know.')

This measuring rod is the instrument  
used in the principle of natural selection  
'so you have to be a little athletic about that'  
says Ginsberg

(If the species *remixologist*  
is about anything at all  
it's about aesthetic fitness  
i.e. the ability to transmit

an embodied sense of measure  
as an intense [beautiful?] experience  
so as to attract those whom might appreciate  
such transmissions as indicative of  
an energy-medium seeking sexual satisfaction)

The measuring rod vibrates  
as a *sense of measure*  
physiologically rooted  
in the digital gesture transcribed  
while writing (playing-performing-remixing)  
and inhabits a transliminal space  
where everything is biochemically  
bleeding into everything else it connects with  
and is subject to electro or alchemical  
manipulation during its state of emerging-agency

This biochemically charged state of emerging-agency  
can now be felt in the networked space of social flows  
or what pre-Internet Ginsberg referred to as a 'mind  
bank network'  
in whose neurosis we tell the story of Remixology  
where the act of transmitting ones Creativity  
takes place via continuous improvisation and revision

As Robert Creeley wrote in relation to Whitman

'[his] constant habit of revisions and additions would concur, I think, with this notion of his process, in that there is not 'one thing' to be said and, that done, then "another." Rather the process permits the material ('myself' in the world) to extend until literal death intercedes.'

~~Remixology challenges yet merges with the life sciences by performing a creative misappropriation of impenetrable scientific discourses loaded with hegemonic ideology resituating the aesthetics junky as an 'always becoming' biopolitical animal instinctively looking for its next systemic hack~~

'Do I contradict myself?  
Very well, then I contradict myself.  
I am large, I contain multitudes'

In this regard  
as we watch our(so-called)selves  
randomly morph into any number of  
remixiologically reconfigured conceptual personae  
we cannot help but ask

'What does it mean to become an artistic energy / living medium?'

or:

'What do we do with the surplus energy that fills our bodies as they crave more aesthetic sexual / 'connectual' satisfaction?'

In its many iterations of *becoming Philosophy*  
Remixology envisions the artist as a postproduction  
Medium  
who becomes instrument while performing  
radical experiments in unconsciously projected  
Creativity

Performing in a shared headspace of  
hyperimprovisational co-creation or co-production  
one that feels like it takes place  
in asynchronous realtime

opens up the creative process to external influence  
but an external influence that is being parallel  
processed

internally by all of the other players  
intersubjectively jamming in the co-poietic mix

Think of it as simultaneous and continuous experiential  
tagging  
in a massively modular remixological network

Or how about 'call-and-response' *metamediumystic*  
performance art networking that happens so fast  
you end up in a parallel universe that looks and feels  
like this world you know all too well but that also  
now reveals an unconsciously generated underworld  
full of prophetic bioluminescence?

The dancing pulsations of literary bodies  
socializing the network while mirroring neurons?

Imagine transforming individual talent  
into an ongoing remixological potential where  
the artist as postproduction-medium triggers  
socially constructed forms of novel togetherness  
by mirroring neurons while aesthetically manipulating  
the environmental data our conceptual personae  
perform in

Immersed in the depths of this remix underworld



co-poietically unfolding in the 'mind bank network'  
the living remix creature would become  
more networked source material  
that can be sampled from at will  
suggesting that for artist-mediums  
who intentionally build mosaics of meaning  
out of renewable forms of energy [source material]  
there is no longer an inspirational source  
to turn to for enlightened expression  
rather it's more of a co-conspiratorial practice  
fed by a reservoir of living datum  
that one *hacks into* and *samples from*  
to create novel forms of aesthetic intensity  
that may lead to . . . sexual experiences?

To perform this interventionist measure *on* measure  
remixological hackers must attune their bodies  
to the neural resonance of their relationships  
with other creatures in their social network  
as well as the accompanying neural resonance  
they may have with all of the artworks they encounter  
when engaging with activist reality hackers  
whose aesthetic agenda includes designing  
the distribution channels that these tactically  
administered  
artworks continuously pass through

What would an applied remixologist  
intersubjectively jamming with their ludic crew  
distributed in the networked space of flows  
have to contribute to the collective unconscious  
especially in the name of deep research  
into the forever-remixed ('living') creative act?

Ginsberg deliberate in his prose  
tells us that we have to stretch things  
as far as we can take them  
'-- you go so far out you don't know  
what you're doing, you lose touch  
with what's been done before by anyone,  
you wind up creating a new poetry-universe.'

The bottom line is that

to remix Miles Davis who once said

Sometimes you have to play a long time to be able to  
play like yourself

sometimes it takes a long time  
to become a postproduction medium

a novel entity

a rhythm scientist

### **ADDENDUM:**

This introduction cannot end here. There is always more. There is always an excess.

### **Natural Rhythms, Embodied (After Henri Lefebvre)**

A rhythm invests in places, but is itself not a place: it is not a thing, nor an aggregation of things, nor yet a simple flow. It embodies its own law, its own regularity, which it derives from space -- from its own space -- and from a relationship between space and time.

What we live are rhythms -- rhythms experienced intersubjectively.

Every rhythm expresses the body's inventiveness and when ported through an illuminative sense of measure can trigger higher phases of experience.

The body reveals these rhythms as varying forms of

aesthetic fitness.

Rhythms in all their multiplicity interpenetrate one another compositing the 'nature' one is becoming while in auto-remix mode.

This auto-remix mode feels natural and the rhythms that layer and multiply the experience of *feeling natural* (while living) have to do with needs, with feelings, with urges, with tendencies toward some creative action that may be filtered into more metamediumsytic becomings.

These metamediumsytic becomings ('prophetic illuminations' sometimes experienced as 'physiological spasms') are triggered by the unconscious readiness potential of the living remixologist who appropriates the rhythms of the body engaged in its ongoing spatial practice.

Fortunately for the forms of Creativity advancing into novel states of emerging-agency, the end is never the end, because Creativity simultaneously and continuously infects the all of the bodies that remix it, and in doing so, survives.

# Articles

Cheryl A. Kerfeld

When Art, Science, and Culture Commingle

David P. Barash

Biology Lurks Beneath: Bioliterary Explorations of the Individual versus Society

Liane Gabora

The Beer Can Theory of Creativity

Elena Daprati, Marco Iosa, Patrick Haggard

A Dance to the Music of Time: Aesthetically-Relevant Changes in Body Posture in Performing Art

Marco Iacoboni, Istvan Molnar-Szakacs, Vittorio Gallese, Giovanni Buccino, John C. Mazziotta, Giacomo Rizzolatti

Grasping the Intentions of Others with One's Own Mirror Neuron System

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Copying and Evolution of Neuronal Topology

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**Aesthetic fitness: How Sexual Selection Shaped Artistic  
Virtuosity as a Fitness Indicator and Aesthetic  
Preferences as Mate Choice Criteria**

**Julie Copeland**

**The Creative Urge: Elizabeth Grosz**

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