

Z is for...

Este MacLeod

Zones and Zen

'The comfort zone is the great enemy to creativity; moving beyond it necessitates intuition, which in turn configures new perspectives and conquers fears.' -- Dan Stevens

We have reached the end of Creative Leap. Over the last month, you have completed a program of mini art projects to make you rethink how you engage with small challenges. You've stretched your creativity, done unusual problem solving exercises and at times really pushed you out of your comfort zone. The intention was for the familiarity of your own handwriting and related marks to create anchor points and connections from which you could explore more. The Creative Leap projects are there to be expanded upon over time and to be used to inspire new directions.

'If you put yourself in a position where you have to stretch outside of your comfort zone, then you are forced to expand your consciousness.' -- Les Brown

Today's project is about reflecting back, and to see what you have already learned from doing Projects A to Y . Once you have completed them all, take time to view the outcomes. The process of Project Y is to create a visual reminder on a single sheet, containing little snippets to use for future reference.



Creative Process

Materials needed: One medium sheet of watercolour paper, High Flow black paint, a toilet roll + the materials used for Creative Leap *Projects A to Y*.

On the paper sheet, create twenty six circles in rows: use the loo role and diluted black High Flow to create round prints. Once dried fill the circles with visual reminders of the Creative Leap projects.

Starting with A, create a section of *asemic drawings* to fit the circle. It is a good idea to create a stencil template to cover the areas around the circle so you can draw and write beyond the edges, but keep to the round uniform shape. For *Project B* pick your favourite letters and write them in rows to fit into the circle. *Project C* for cactus, make a thumbnail drawing and notes on what you learned or want to expand on. *Project D*, draw a favourite design created from the letter shapes. How can you use this process in future projects? Consider the options and make notes. Use this sheet to plan and reflect on the other projects. If there were projects that you did not enjoy as much as others, make notes of this as well. What can you learn from this process? For each of you this reflection will be different: take your time to do it after completion of all the mini projects.

Outcome

The purpose of this course is to let you look at your creativity from a different angle. By making a sheet with visual reminders to use as a reference will help to refresh you memory, and prompt you to use the processes in your own creative development whether that be regular doodling or bigger art projects.

Lastly, I have created a list of notes on being an artist that might be useful to you.

A to Z: On Being an Artist

- **Adventure and Authenticity.** The difference between an adventure and an ordeal is attitude. Being an artist is a sort of adventure, a journey with difficult bits as well. Authenticity: have the courage to be yourself artistically.
- **Be Brave** in your decisions in order to develop as an artist.
- **Curiosity and Consistency.** Curiosity is central to happiness, be curious about everything. This is how you will discover new things. Striving to have work of a high consistent standard should be the norm.
- **Dream** and then DO!
- **Ethic and Evolve.** Don't stagnate, as an artist you are on a creative path and you will become a better artist if you allow for change. Evaluate you work regularly to maintain standard and work ethic.
- **Friends and Family.** Surround yourself with supportive people who can give you honest feedback (note, family members are not always the best for constructive feedback). Find other creatives and tribes in social media groups and clubs.
- **Give** more. Go the extra distance to better your work. Consider ways to always improve.

- **Hope and Happiness.** Doing creative pursuits add more to the feeling of happiness than material things. Hope: never lose it.
- **Inspiration vs Imitation and Integrity.** Be inspired by everyone and everything and let it allow you to develop as an artist. Be careful though of imitation. Never copy another artist's work or style directly. The key is to be inspired by many things and to create something fresh in response. Artistic integrity is vital.
- **Joy, Judgment and Journey.** Joy is very important in order to create good art. Do not allow judgment to rob you of your sense of joy. You are on a creative journey, continuously developing your art practice.
- **Knowledge.** Deepening knowledge and continuous learning are important aspects to becoming a more accomplished artist.
- **Love** yourself, and others. Love yourself enough to value the time you need to be an artist, at any stage of your development.
- **Mindful.** Use art to expand the state of mindfulness. Creative Leap's projects can be incorporated as meditative tool and used in ways to become more mindful. Use the projects regularly as doodles and anchor points to ponder.
- **Negativity.** All artists will feel negative emotions about their work at points during the creating process of making art. Use it wisely and to your advantage. If you feel too comfortable with what you are doing you are probably not extending yourself far enough, balance is important.
- **Open, Optimism and Originality.** Stay open to new things coming your way. New ideas, new people, new techniques, materials, books, experiences etc. Originality is over emphasised, but it is an important consideration regarding making art. Optimism is important to make your load lighter, develop this sense.
- **Passion and Playfulness.** Passion is the ultimate key to being a successful artist. Without passions athletes don't break records, musicians don't give magical performances and artists don't make outstanding work. Make time to be playful with your art; this will lead to new discoveries and happy accidents.
- **Quality vs Quantity.** Productivity is important, the more you make art, the more productive you will become since you are developing your skill as an artist. Remember however to keep the balance between quality and quantity. Churning out work that are near duplicates of each other means quantity has become the focus, with method more important than content, this is not a good thing.
- **Resourceful.** Work with what you have and do the best with it. Find ways to diversify if an aspect of art making is not working out for you. Explore materials, themes, and techniques to solve problems.
- **Skill and Success.** It takes time to develop skill. A musician does not expect to be able to master an instrument in a flash, neither should artists. Give yourself time to develop your skill. Success means different things to different people. What does this mean to you? Consider the aspects of what being a successful artist can be.
- **Techniques and Thoughts.** Art techniques and materials can often mean the difference between a mediocre painting and something extraordinary. Develop techniques and explore materials to give you the edge. Practice, practice, practice. Beware not to copy another artist's techniques to create work similar to their subject or style. This will be detrimental to your own art. If

you like a technique by an artist, also research similar processes used by other artists for different applications. Thoughts: take time to think and ponder and dream. Then do something creative with those thoughts.

- **Uniqueness and Understanding.** Remember, you are unique. Regardless of how many millions of artists there are, you are still unique. Originality in art is over emphasised: other artists, trends and styles influence us all, but it is important to keep work authentic to your way of working, it is about intent, never copy. Having an understanding of the stronger side of your art practice, and the aspects in need of development is important for growth.
- **Vision and Variety.** Hold the vision trust the process. The artist you will be in a future is different from the one you are today, regardless of where you are in your career. Evolving and developing is always part of the process of being an artist. Make space for variety in your art.
- **Wonder and World.** Never lose your sense of wonder! There is a world filled with inspiration around us. So much to see and inspire us.
- **Xeno, Explore, Expand.** Looking beyond the familiar is important for artistic growth. Go somewhere different, travel if you can, look at how other people live. If you cannot get there in person read books or go to exhibitions and museums. Explore other cultures: look at their art, customs and food. Being interested in how other people live helps to make the world a more harmonious place and will expand your own horizon and artistic vocabulary.
- **You.** Do what makes you happy. Make art that you enjoy; people will respond positively to this.
- **Zones and Zen.** Make space in your every day to do art. Find a creative zone where you can lose yourself and spend time doing art. If you don't have a studio, use a kitchen table, if this is not workable keep a sketchbook by your handbag so you can steal bits of time here and there. Keep another sketchbook by your bed and find time to draw in it, every day.

Zen is a state of harmony and happiness. For me, art intrinsically binds them together. Thank you very much for being part of this Creative Leap journey.

Namaste

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Este MacLeod'. The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Este' written in a slightly larger, more prominent hand than the last name 'MacLeod'.