

CHAPTER TWO

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE LIFESPAN: CURATING TRAVEL TO ENHANCE CREATIVITY IN THE AGING BRAIN

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Abstract

Repetitive behaviors and experiences over decades may impede creativity in the aging brain. Research indicates that stimulation from certain travel experiences could aid individuals in overcoming mindset and other barriers to creativity by inducing neuroplastic mechanisms. Neuroplasticity, the ability of our brain to modify and adapt neural pathways in the presence of new experiences and stimuli, is increased via sensory experiences. Therefore, it stands to reason that during travel experiences, where the brain is flooded with new sights, sounds, scents, and flavors, the brain is stimulated towards neuroplastic shifts. Travel influences on creativity are evident in the lifetime works of authors and artists like Ernest Hemingway, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, and Mary Cassatt. Research suggests travel is truly effective in supporting creativity when one immerses themselves in the experience to push neural boundaries, just as athletes build muscles by pushing against increasing resistance. Recognizing over-stimulation may also stifle creativity, this chapter aims to illuminate the potential of particular travel experiences to aid individuals in overcoming fixed mindsets to catalyze creativity in the aging brain.

Keywords: Creativity, aging brain, travel, neuroplasticity, neuroscience

Introduction

Navigating our dynamic world, with its ever-changing technologies and environments, or finding fulfillment and various ways to enjoy retirement, each require novel problem solving. Problem-solving, the ability to combine known elements in new ways, is a hallmark of, and one way we might examine, creativity (Zabelina et al., 2016; Zhu & Mehta, 2017).

Imagine this routine:

- morning coffee at the same café each day
- meals: you'll be having 'the usual'
- designated front-row parking where you work or play
- an evening of television in the home you've enjoyed for decades...

The previous points sound like features of a routine marking a successful, stable life. Yet, even when positive outcomes are experienced via

consistency, years of habitual behaviors and repeated patterns literally carve neural pathways in the brain (Chen et al., 2020). This type of patterning can lead to a functional fixedness, or cognitive bias, a mindset from which individuals cannot see other ways of approaching a task (Munoz-Rubke et al., 2018). A fixed mindset stifles creative output (Intasao & Hao, 2018). What does this mean for adults with decades of ingrained habits who desire to engage in creative endeavors? It might be time to take a vacation.

In this chapter, the authors outline how certain travel experiences hold the necessary stimuli to route or reroute neuropathways in support of creative output and problem-solving, while remaining cognizant that excessive stimulation—leading to sustained dopamine influx—could have the opposite effect (Chermahini & Hommel, 2010; Zabelina et al., 2016).

The Creative Process

Writer's block, lack of focus, or missing muse are not the only barriers to producing creative works. The brain requires a few 'ingredients' to whip up a best-seller or other creative piece, such as some foundational knowledge, time for mind-wandering, and a healthy hippocampus—to piece together what is known in new ways (Anand & Dhikav, 2012; Beaty, 2020). We also need the proper mindset (Dweck & Legget, 1988; Jung & Vartanian, 2018) and it helps to surround ourselves with sensory input to bring about the proper affect in support of creativity (Zhu & Mehta, 2017). Before delving into the potential of particular travel options to provide sensory experiences that support creativity, it is important to briefly review the creative process, or processes (Jung & Vartanian, 2018), as there are several mechanisms and circuits involved in catalyzing creativity (Jung & Vartanian, 2018). Below, we also remind readers of the capacity our brains hold to undergo neuroplastic changes throughout the lifetime, using exemplars of creatives whose works spanned decades, turning out renowned pieces in their later years.

What is Creativity?

Herein, the authors will use a concise synthesis of evidence-based definitions (Jung & Vartanian, 2018; Prochazkova et al., 2018; Yeh et al., 2022) to summarize *creativity* as a series of advanced exploratory cognitive processes resulting in a new idea or thing that reasonable people/stakeholders would generally agree is novel, valuable, and sensible for the world as it currently exists. Examples of creativity could include inventing eco-friendly, biodegradable fabrics to reduce waste; devising a new way of growing or delivering food; or developing unique ways of combining existing ingredients resulting in a new recipe, and so on. Though an abridged explanation of creativity and related processes overlooks the involvement of complex biological mechanisms and circuitry, the sub-types of creativity, and varied measurement tool options for assessing creativity (Zabelina et al., 2016), this writing focuses on the ability of the brain to adapt to new sensory experiences, how sensory stimuli catalyzes creativity, and how individuals of prominent age can use travel-related stimuli to foster their own creativity at any age.

Divergent Thinking

One way we measure creativity is by enumerating and evaluating divergent thoughts. Divergent thinking is used to describe the generation of new associations, as in ideas linking unique uses for a familiar concept, or new ways to solve an existing problem (Jung & Vartanian, 2018). Notably, divergent thoughts may not always meet our definition of creativity. For example, one might be familiar with using a shoelace to secure shoes to the feet or even to remove a tight wedding band from a swollen finger. A divergent thought could be using the shoelace as a seatbelt for a hamster riding in your vehicle. It might be possible and even novel to use a shoelace in this way, but is it really sensible or valuable? Therefore, divergent idea also requires some convergent evaluation.

Convergent Thoughts

Convergent thinking will be summarized herein as consensus by end users/stakeholders who evaluate and confirm that the novel, divergent idea can lead to something useful and sensible in the timeframe for which the idea is identified (Jung & Vartanian, 2018). For example, adding bacon to doughnuts was a relatively recent divergent thought. Not everyone would agree bacon on doughnuts is useful or sensible in this timeframe. For example, vegans, some dieticians, or oncologists and medical organizations who might each recommend you avoid ingesting the combination (Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, 2023; Underferth, 2016; World Health Organization, 2015). But, for the intended end users (stakeholders) of the novel pairing: omnivores who love salty, fatty, sweet food combinations; artisan bakers; or fast-food chain investors, as maple-bacon options became best-sellers driving business and sales (Shea, 2013; Valinsky, 2019); the novel idea to combine these existing ingredients in this new way could be declared useful, novel, and sensible. Consider a hundred years ago however, when the butchering and processing of animal flesh and the making of baked goods were much less automated, adding bacon to donuts to increase sales may not have been assessed as a sensible new idea for an end product.

Memory

While aged adults might recall life before pervasive automation, they need not worry that getting older definitively stifles creative output. It is not yet completely understood how novel thoughts or new language (metaphors, new non-literal ideas, poetry, et cetera) are created by the brain, nor how they're understood by others (Benedek et al., 2013). However, behavioral experiments indicate that older adults may even be at an advantage over the young for novel or creative language generation (Benedek et al., 2013). Consider storytelling à la Ernest Hemmingway, whom we will read more about below, versus a middle-schooler writing an essay. The advantage exists because the aged are able to draw upon greater lived experiences, which create episodic memories (Dickerson & Eichenbaum, 2010), and semantic memory—the

“mental thesaurus, organized knowledge a person possesses about words and other verbal symbols, their meaning, and referents, about relations among them, and about the rules, formulas, and algorithms for the manipulation of these symbols, concepts, and relations” (Tulving, 1972, p.386), to generate novel and sensible ideas (Benedek et al., 2013; Leon et al., 2014; Madore et al., 2016). The hippocampus, the small ‘C’ or ‘seahorse-shaped’ area in the temporal lobe is implicated in reframing episodic and semantic memories in new and creative ways (Anand & Dhikav, 2012; Beaty, 2020).

Positive Affect and Self-Belief

Have you ever felt as though there is a best-selling novel waiting inside of you? Now is the time to *believe* in yourself, to imagine you are a creative writer and to put pen to paper, or fingers to laptop keys. Just believing yourself to be capable of writing a bestseller or creating other masterpieces can prime the brain towards creative output (Dweck & Legget, 1988).

Positive affect and the desire to be creative are important when tackling creative endeavors (Dweck & Legget, 1988; Jung & Vartanian, 2018). Remember the opening statements? Doing routine behaviors leading to the same outputs each day might convince people that they are not capable of creative pursuits (Jung & Vartanian, 2018). When holding such a fixed mindset (Dweck & Legget, 1988), people may not be living life to its fullest—wanting to write a novel but believing “I’m not a writer”; wanting to paint or sculpt yet believing “I’m not an artist”; I’m not... [*fill in the blank*], just because they haven’t been creative or successful in those types of pursuits in the past. It’s time to release limiting thoughts. Not only are older adults able to continue engaging in various creative activities (Ross et al., 2023), but the brain can change neural connections throughout the lifespan (Kania et al., 2017; Monteiro et al., 2017). Research finds humans can literally train their brains to be creative (Jung & Vartanian, 2018; Sun et al., 2016). By shifting to a growth mindset and maintaining a positive affect (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Jung & Vartanian, 2018), as well as repeating the ‘new’ creative tasks (Sun et al., 2016) the brain can undergo changes in support of various types of creativity.

Neuroplasticity

When exposed to new sensory inputs, the brain undergoes neuroplastic shifts, or changes in function and structure (Kania et al., 2017; Voss et al., 2017). The brain is constantly integrating both external and internal sensory input (Azzalini et al., 2019) and adjusting according to perceived threats or reward (Vander Weele et al., 2019). For example, a shift in levels of various neurotransmitters can occur as one of many neuroplastic adaptations (Macedo-Lima & Remage-Healey, 2021; Volkow et al, 2011). Fundamentally, neuroplasticity is the brain’s ability to create new connections (synapses) between neurons or alter signaling to allow for adaptation, repair, or reorganizing of functions (Kania et al., 2017).

While we will not endeavor to outline the numerous communication pathways or complex circuitry of the brain, not to mention list each of the

bodily systems implicated in creativity—including the gustatory, visual, and movement systems (Jung & Vartanian, 2018), it is noteworthy to mention that dopamine is one of the neurotransmitters released when individuals enjoy certain sensory experiences (Volkow et al., 2011). Dopamine also happens to be vital to the creative processes, as it motivates us to engage in novel thought patterns or behaviors, allowing us to overcome fixed mindsets and other barriers to creativity (Zabelina et al., 2016). Dopamine is thought to keep humans, among other species, interested in engaging in a particular sensory experience or behavior again (Macedo-Lima & Remage-Healey, 2021; Vander Weele et al., 2019).

Not a One and Done

Just as an athlete must challenge their muscles for growth and engage in repetition of exercise for continued positive health outcomes (Krzysztofik et al., 2019), repeat exposure to learning from a sensory input—especially when occurring in a moderately challenging context—can strengthen changes in the brain, regardless of age (Kania et al., 2017; Pauwels et al., 2018). Immersing oneself in a new culture is an ideal way to ‘flex’, or display and put to use, the brain’s ability of neuroplasticity in support of creativity (Maddux et al., 2010). By engaging in repeated exposures to new sensory stimuli, such as the flavor combinations of a new-to-you culture, the connections become stronger in the brain (Kania et al., 2017). Want to cook creatively but are known for your burnt toast, at best? Take a new recipe home and practice cooking with your friends and family. Want to dance the Flamenco, but have two left feet? Sign up for a weekly class. Better still, do so in Spain. Immersion, while repeating the pursuit of your choice, whether preparing a style of cuisine or perfecting a physical movement with cultural influences, within a multicultural context facilitates multicultural adaptation, which in turn facilitates solving problems in new ways. In short, immersion helps individuals to overcome functional fixedness and provides additional benefits in support of creativity (Maddux et al., 2010; Pauwels et al., 2018).

While living abroad for a length of time may be an ideal way to provide context for creativity (Maddux et al., 2010), it is the challenge +(plus) repetition combo that is key to the development of new neuro pathways (Kania et al., 2017; Pauwels et al., 2018). It may also benefit travelers to strike up creative conversation with a group of locals. Though it may take some well-designed planning (Sun et al., 2016), neuroplastic changes and divergent thinking are enhanced by brainstorming new ways to use items, or engaging in problem solving, in social settings. What a beautiful way to share ideas and build upon existing cultural norms in the name of creative advancement.

Time to Rest/Disassociate

But, don’t forget to put your feet up and enjoy the scenery while you travel. As highlighted by Ghiselin (1985) decades ago, creative inspiration does not rely on continued focused seeking of sensory input; rather, creative ideas tend

to occur more frequently when disinhibition is present (Martindale, 2007). Allowing the brain to engage in mind wandering, as opposed to constant focused attention, allows for more efficiency in divergent thinking (Atchley et al., 2012). Lowered inhibition has been identified in travelers, even when heightened risks are present (Muehlenbein et al., 2021). Travel, which can increase relaxation and cloaks vacationers in a flood of sensory stimuli, may lead to reduced cognitive control, or reduced focused attention, lessening the filtering of stimuli that seeps into unconscious awareness (Atchley et al., 2012; Zabelina, 2015). Due to that reduced sensory gatekeeping, the vacationer is more likely to have enhanced their supply of ‘building blocks’, or those semantic memories mentioned above for divergent association, leading to novel ways of piecing components together (Zabelina, 2015). This is exciting news for travelers who want to be creative, as the creative process does not require perpetual effort.

Don't Over-do It

We've learned creativity is supported by placing yourself in the right type of stimulating environment. Does that mean wild roller coaster rides under colorful pulsating lights while sniffing aromatic spirits and blasting new-to-you music? Not quite. Sensory flooding and a release of excessive dopamine can impede creativity (Chermahini & Hommel, 2010; Zabelina et al., 2016). Dopamine supports creativity in a U-curve fashion, where too little or too much are not beneficial (Chermahini & Hommel, 2010). Therefore, while the authors are not recommending any specific business entity nor guarantee travel outcomes will be positive (thoughts of becoming trapped on a cruise ship or away from loved ones during an unexpected pandemic emerge here), nor do we promise your travels will result in creation of a valuable masterpiece, below we consider types of travel experiences in well-reviewed locations which are poised to offer a balance of sensory stimulation and relaxation in support of creativity, as a foundation for your own research.

Sensory Travel Experiences

Flavors (Gastronomic Travel)

The gut and brain are in constant bi-directional communication, yet exactly how our gastronomic system impacts cognition or creativity is not yet wholly clear (Azzalini et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). We recognize that creativity has played a major role in procuring food (Mattson, 2019), has long driven novel preparation methods and flavor combining (Albors-Garrigos et al., 2013), and, like all sensory stimulation (Wang et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2022), dining—with the inherent scents, flavors, textures, and visual components in foods and beverages, not to mention the associated hedonic pleasure one might feel when dining—has a strong association with changes in dopamine levels in the brain (Volkow et al., 2011) making eating—especially sweet tastes (Xu et al., 2022) a suspected catalyst for creativity (Wang et al., 2021). Though the evidence on taste or smell to directly and immediately impact

creativity is mixed or lacking, we do know that scents directly affect the hippocampus (Anand & Dhikav, 2012) and it is likely that olfactory and taste influences on creativity result from changes to affect (Zhu & Mehta, 2017). Positive affect is associated with creativity (Jung & Vartanian, 2018; Zhu & Mehta, 2017) and therefore, we assert that food-related travel experiences provide means for positive affect, dopamine changes, and the potential to enhance creativity (Xu et al., 2022; Zhu & Mehta, 2017).

Cooking Experiences with a Resident

With the above points in mind, it's time to get cooking. Whether journeying to a busy 'foodie' destination, such as Paris, Tokyo, or Mexico City, or soaking up the vibrant food scene in Bali, Marrakech, or Athens, you can immerse yourself in a little culture while enjoying social preparation of a 'local' meal with a vetted host (Traveling Spoon, 2023). Similarly, experiences such as market tours for fresh spices, cooking in a class setting, or even preparing meals in a castle, exist as shore excursion options from various cruiselines (Keck, 2019). As an added bonus, one might find creative ways to use budget-friendly ingredients: lentils, beans, and herbs which are staples in many cultures (Buettner, 2019). Learning culinary tricks to reduce food spending might even provide creative insights for shifting a fixed-budget—perhaps food savings could be reallocated to fund additional travel.

If journeying long distances is not possible or desired, a carbon-footprint-friendly virtual booking option exists for cooking with overseas chefs in their homes (Reimer, 2022). And don't forget dessert! In a 2022 study by Xu and colleagues, researchers found just a single candy or piece of dried fruit can influence creativity. More exciting still? The brain can be tricked into increased creative output by simply *imagining* the taste(s) of the food you might prepare and enjoy (Xie et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2022)! If exotic foods do not appeal to your palate, take note: well-known beverages can also affect creativity.

Studies on Tea Consumption (Picking Tours)

As Wang and peers describe (2021), several studies have found that consumption of tea can improve divergent and convergent thinking. It remains challenging to decipher whether taste, scent, preparation, or caffeine contributes to outcomes. In animal models, fresh new matcha tea, from ground *Camellia sinensis* (Kurauchi et al., 2023), injected directly into the body cavity is shown to increase dopamine release. While taste can be eliminated as a contributing factor in animal models, potential confounders, such as caffeine remain. Regardless of *how* tea holds potential to support creativity, tea tourism likely offers a beneficial boost.

Tea tours, from factory tastings, engaging in proper tea ceremonies right in the field, to tea leaf picking experiences are available in various combinations from tour companies in countries like China, India, Japan, and Sri Lanka (Dey, 2023; Japan National Tourism Organization, n.d.; Sri Lanka In Style, 2023; Xia et al., 2023). If the reader is a luxury traveler, they may ap-

preciate knowing that spa services, hot springs, rolling hillside plantation views, and champagne in attractive garden settings are mentioned as diverse offerings through various tea tourism companies (Dey, 2023; Japan National Tourism Organization, n.d.). If conservation and sustainability efforts are the reader's goal, tea destinations can tick this box, too (Xia et al., 2023).

Underground

As described, literature hints to the olfactory system's impact on creativity as likely stemming from contribution to positive affect. Scents directly infiltrate the hippocampus, the area of the brain implicated in memory, learning, and creativity, as well as emotional behavior, and even spatial navigation (Anand & Dhivak, 2020). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that touring unique and underground sites—rich with caverns, mazes, and 'earthy' scents would also support creativity, if enjoyed by the consumer.

Cave Tourism

Cave explorers with olfactory systems intact may pick up on scents associated with the remnants of bats and mycological or other species that exist around the world in mines and caves (Vanderwolf et al., 2012). If the reader has an affinity for the previously listed aromas, the authors are pleased to draw attention to the United States National Park Service webpage entitled "Cave Tours" (2023b) to jumpstart your travel planning. There, readers will find descriptions of a variety of cave tours listed, from wheelchair-accessible options to physically-demanding crawling tours, complete with schedules and ticketing information. Visitors can plan to spend the day trekking through excursions such as "Domes & Dripstones", the "Frozen Niagara", or the "Great Onyx Lantern Tour" (United States National Park Service, 2023b). Each are bound to spark fascination, inspiration, or at least admiration for the creativity displayed by early explorers and engineers.

Mushroom caves. If one's olfactory system is truly discerning, an even closer look into, or sniff of, mycological species should be on the itinerary. To note: while this writing will not investigate "magic mushroom" tours and though still inconclusive, research finds consuming small amounts (known as *microdosing*) of psilocybin—a psychedelic substance found in some varieties of mushrooms such as psychedelic truffles—has been shown to improve divergent and convergent thinking tasks (Prochazkova et al., 2018). Mushrooms, much like wines, contain chemical compounds that produce odors with underlying tones reminiscent of a wide-range of familiar scents from fruits, anise, and bubblegum to cucumbers, grape soda, and yes, the scent(s) of earth (Luther, 2009).

Fortunately for mycophiles, there is an underground mushroom farm open to tourists at Bourré, within the Loire Valley of France, called *Cave des Roches*. *Cave des Roches* offers the world's only fully underground mushroom cultivation cellar (Champignons Delalande, n.d.). The *Cave Champignonnière*, or mushroom cave, grows more than 100 tons of hand-harvested mycological varieties over seven floors, from blue foot and oyster to medici-

nal mushrooms. You can sample varieties in the traditional restaurant or pick a few out to take home from the shop.

Additionally, the former quarry site, or *Carrière de Tuffeau*, contains a 1500-square-meter (over 16,000 sq. ft) tufa stone carved underground village (Champignons Delalande, n.d.; Mance, 2013). The elaborate stonework is sure to delight the senses, spark awe, and perhaps serve as creative muse. Of course, one cannot discuss “underground”, “tours”, and “France” without also mentioning catacombs. With all due respect to the deceased, influences on creativity do not always stem from ‘butterflies and rainbows’.

Catacombs

Exploring catacombs, whether under the streets of Paris, Rome, Lima, or other parts of the world, is bound to leave a lasting impression on the traveler and any companions, while also creating episodic memories. The olfactory system’s influence on creativity could be at play in the catacombs too. Historians, visitors, and this author (DS) shares from personal experience: catacombs and tombs do emit several aromas (Ward, 2022). While perhaps not ranked as a ‘pleasant’ scent by some, there are isolated tombs which are sealed so well that odors are said not to leak (Marranca, 2022). Furthermore, a trip to underground tombs or catacombs might bring about feelings of anxiety or fear which are common when exposed to death (Cui et al., 2020). Feelings like fear and anxiety, as you may have guessed, can also impact components of creativity.

Fear and Anxiety. When it comes to evaluation creativity, a practice we might consider part of convergent assessment of the novelty and meaningfulness or value of creativity, discrete emotions—especially fear—may play an enhancing role (Benoit & Miller, 2022). For instance, researchers explored the ability of fear to enhance creative perception. Over seven studies, Benoit and Miller (2022) found fear activates attention to the immediate environment, leading subjects who viewed a creative advertisement while fearful to be more likely to connect divergent components within the ad, enhancing their subjective appreciation of its creative appeal. If the reader would like to persuade a marketing team, stakeholders, or even friends and family to approve and/or financially support their creative product, a trip to the caves or catacombs while pitching it may be in store to manipulate emotions favorably (Benoit & Miller, 2022). Aging adults who are seeking meaning of life might also be interested to learn that anxiety around death, which might surface while exploring catacombs, can be mitigated by engaging in creative acts which have benevolent intentions, such as coming up with divergent problem-solving solutions for non-profits (Cui et al., 2020). Catacombs just might spark a creative idea for solving problems related to land use for burial or other needs.

Visual Delights

If one is looking for a little livelier destination (pun intended), bodies of water—literally swimming with life—should be considered. Color experiments find ‘blue’ is associated with increases in creative task performance (Mehta &

Zhu, 2009). Looking out over the balcony of an ocean cruise liner, visiting islands, or marveling over 7,700-year-old Crater Lake—the deepest lake in America (National Park Service, 2023a) which lies in a sleeping volcano in Oregon—are each sure to inspire awe. The “deep blue waters [of Crater Lake] that fill the caldera of the sunken volcano Mount Mazama” (Locker, 2023) draw artists, photographers, and other visitors to the Cascade Mountain Range annually (National Park Service, 2023, a). Also known for its beautiful blue waters, readers might also consider spending time in the Caribbean, where this chapter’s co-author (GY) has created fond travel memories. *Travel & Leisure* magazine recently named Palm Island in the Grenadines the ‘Maldives of the Caribbean’ for its lush greenery, white sand, and beautiful waters that range from “glowing Powerade to denim [blue]” (Sherman, 2023).

The Downtime

The need to relax and let the mind wander after learning a task also bodes well for vacation options such as spa getaways and yoga or meditation retreats. Ideally, the reader would book outdoor yoga or walking meditations through ‘zen gardens’, as time spent in nature supports creativity via a number of mechanisms (Atchley et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2018). Additionally, activities that are movement-based, especially walking, are known to improve creative thinking with lingering benefits, even post-walk (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014). With this knowledge in mind, it is reasonable to assert that walking art tours, hiking behind waterfalls, and even joining gardening groups might also be expected to support creativity, though determinate research is required.

“The Proof is in the Pudding” Or, Perhaps in the Paintings and the Prose

Inspiration catalyzes actualization of creative ideas (Thrash et al., 2010). Artists, and even governments (McFarlane, 2022), have long-used travel/tourism and cultural exchange as muse for creative projects. Readers might find encouragement by reviewing examples of travel influences on creative works by artists of senecitude. Below, we highlight several individuals who found ways to incorporate perspectives, language, style, and techniques gained during time spent in cultures outside of their own into creative works.

Mary Cassatt

Mary Cassatt was an American painter known for her involvement with the Impressionist movement in France during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Her travels to Europe greatly influenced her artistic style and subject matter (Schwabsky, 2013). Cassatt first traveled to Europe in 1865 with her family. She studied art in Paris and later settled there, becoming friends with Edgar Degas and other prominent Impressionists (Schwabsky, 2013).

Impressionism was a revolutionary art movement that emerged in France in the late 19th century. It was characterized by its rejection of traditional techniques, placing emphasis on capturing the sensory experience of

the world. Impressionists captured the fleeting effects of light and color that they observed in nature by experimenting with new techniques, such as plein air painting (painting outdoors), and using complementary colors to create optical effects. Impressionists used loose brushstrokes and vibrant colors to create works that were more about sensation than representation.

Another way that Impressionism changed the art world was through its rejection of traditional subject matter. Prior to Impressionism, art was often concerned with depicting idealized or realistic representations of people, landscapes, and objects. The Impressionists were interested in depicting everyday life and contemporary society, rather than historical or mythological themes (Schwabsky, 2013). The movement had a profound impact on the art world, changing the way artists approached their work and influenced subsequent developments in modern art.

Cassatt's exposure to Impressionism greatly impacted her work, as she began to incorporate new techniques and subjects into her paintings (Schwabsky, 2013). One of Cassatt's notable works is *The Child's Bath* [Painting] which depicts a mother washing her child in a basin. This painting reflects Cassatt's fascination with the daily lives of women and children, which she observed during her travels throughout Europe (Weinberg, 2004). Another example is *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* [Painting], which shows a woman seated in a theater box wearing a fashionable gown and jewelry. This painting reflects Cassatt's interest in the social scene of Parisian high society, which she experienced firsthand through her travels (Schwabsky, 2013). Cassatt was also able to develop a unique artistic style that was different from other artists of her time. Her use of pastel colors and emphasis on the relationships between women and children set her apart from other Impressionist painters.

As travel can create new neural connections in the brain and enhance cognitive flexibility (Citation). Cassatt's travels allowed her to experiment with new artistic techniques, such as Japanese woodblock printing. She collected Japanese prints during her trips to Europe and incorporated their flat compositions and bold colors into her own work (Weinberg, 2004). This influence can be seen in *The Letter* [Painting] which features a woman reading a letter with a Japanese screen in the background. Mary Cassatt's exposure to Japanese art had a significant impact on her artistic style and subject matter. During the 1860s and 1870s, Japanese art and culture became popular in Europe, and many artists, including Cassatt, were influenced by its aesthetic (Weinberg, 2004). She was immediately drawn to their simplicity, bold use of color, and asymmetrical compositions. Cassatt admired the way Japanese prints depicted everyday life and ordinary people, rather than grand historical or mythological subjects. Cassatt began to incorporate elements of Japanese art into her own work. She experimented with flattened space, asymmetrical compositions, and decorative patterns (Weinberg, 2004). She also began to focus on intimate, domestic scenes that depicted women and children, much like the themes found in Japanese prints.

Her exposure to Renaissance and Dutch painters played a role in Mary Cassatt's growth as an artist. Cassatt was heavily influenced by the Old Masters, particularly those of the Renaissance period and their use of light

and shadow (Weinberg, 2004). Cassatt admired the way that artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Caravaggio used chiaroscuro to create depth and drama in paintings (Weinberg, 2004). Cassatt incorporated this technique into her own work, using it to highlight the contours of her subjects' faces and bodies. Cassatt used this knowledge to create new compositions, placing her subjects in carefully arranged poses that conveyed a sense of balance and harmony as influenced by Old Masters such as Raphael and Michelangelo (Weinberg, 2004). The Old Masters also influenced Cassatt's use of color. She was particularly drawn to the warm, rich colors used by artists such as Titian and Rubens (Weinberg, 2004).

Cassatt's travels to Spain and Morocco also had a significant impact on her art. In Spain, she was inspired by the vibrant colors and patterns of traditional Spanish clothing and textiles, which she incorporated into her paintings (Weinberg, 2004). In Morocco, she was fascinated by the ornate decorative motifs and the exotic atmosphere of the local markets, which she depicted in her prints (Weinberg, 2004). Overall, Cassatt's travels provided her with a wealth of inspiration and subject matter. She was able to observe and study the art and culture of different regions and incorporate these elements into her own work, resulting in a unique and distinctive style that blended elements of Impressionism with her own artistic vision.

In addition to influencing her art, travel also provided Cassatt with opportunities to exhibit her work internationally. She participated in several exhibitions throughout Europe, including the Salon de Paris and the Royal Academy of Arts in London (Schwabsky, 2013). These exhibitions helped to establish Cassatt as a prominent artist in both Europe and America.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Christo and Jeanne-Claude were a collaborative duo known for their large-scale environmental installations that often involved wrapping buildings, landscapes, and even entire islands (Art Story, n.d.). Their works were often temporary and required extensive planning, logistics coordination, and travel to execute. They traveled throughout their careers to find suitable sites for their projects, negotiated with local authorities and landowners, and took charge of the installation process. Their installations were sometimes located in remote or challenging locations, such as the *Wrapped Coast* [Installation] in Australia. This required them to work closely with local communities and organizations to obtain the necessary permissions and resources.

One of Christo's earliest travels was to Prague in 1957, where he saw the Baroque architecture of the city and was inspired to create his first wrapped objects (Art Story, n.d.). This trip sparked his interest in wrapping and covering objects and buildings, which became a recurring theme in his later works. In 1964, Christo, a Bulgarian-born artist, traveled to the United States for the first time and was struck by the vastness of the American landscape. He began creating works that interacted with nature, such as *Valley Curtain* [Installation] (1972) which involved hanging a giant orange curtain across a Colorado valley (Art Story, n.d.). Christo's travels also led him to collaborate with his wife Jeanne-Claude, whom he met in Paris in 1958. Together, they created some of their most famous works such as *The Gates*

[Installation] (2005), a project that involved installing fabric panels in New York City's Central Park. The installation consisted of 7,503 saffron-colored fabric panels that were placed along 23 miles of pedestrian paths in Central Park. The project took over 26 years to come to fruition and involved extensive negotiations with city officials, environmental studies, fundraising efforts, and the production of thousands of fabric panels (Ricci, n.d.).

The couple's travels influenced their artistic vision. They were inspired by the landscapes, cultures, and people they encountered on their journeys, which informed the aesthetic of their installations (Christojeanneclaude, n.d.). For example, their 1983 project *Surrounded Islands* [Installation] involved wrapping 11 islands in Biscayne Bay, Florida with fabric. The islands were surrounded by 6.5 million square feet of floating pink polypropylene fabric, a project which took over two years to plan and execute. The purpose of the artwork was to transform the natural environment into a work of art, and to encourage people to see the beauty in their surroundings. The pink color of the fabric was chosen to contrast with the blue-green waters of Biscayne Bay, and to create a visual spectacle that could be seen from miles away. The artwork was met with both praise and criticism. Some people saw it as a beautiful and thought-provoking creation, while others saw it as a waste of resources and an intrusion on the natural environment. Some fears of the project's environmental impact were addressed by protective steps taken, which included round-the-clock surveillance of the project to make sure no wildlife was accidentally caught up in the materials (Christojeanneclaude, n.d.). Despite the controversy, *Surrounded Islands* remains one of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's most famous works. In addition to its artistic value, *Surrounded Islands* also had an impact in raising environmental awareness and how people have an impact on the natural world. The fabric used in the project was later recycled into carpeting. Before the installation, the islands themselves were used as a landfill site for more than 30 years. In the early 20th century, the area was used for farming and fishing, but later it became a dumping ground for construction debris and other waste materials. In the 1960s, the City of Miami began using the site as a municipal landfill, which continued until the early 1980s. However, the islands were cleaned of debris in preparing the site for the art installation, and at project's end were replanted with native vegetation.

Travel presented logistical and personal challenges for Christo and Jeanne-Claude. They often had to leave their home in New York City for extended periods of time to work on projects. This meant being away from family and friends, as well as navigating cultural differences and language barriers in foreign countries (Christojeanneclaude, n.d.). Despite these challenges, travel was an essential component of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's creative process. It allowed them to explore new ideas, collaborate with diverse communities, and bring their ambitious projects to life. The amount of work involved behind the scenes for these projects varied depending on the scope and scale of each project. However, it is safe to say that each project required an enormous amount of effort, time, and resources. A notable project by Christo and Jeanne-Claude was *Wrapped Reichstag* [Installation] which was completed in 1995. The project involved wrapping the entire German Reichstag building in silver fabric, which required over 100 workers to sew

together 100,000 square meters of fabric (Grimes, 2020). The project took over two weeks to complete and required permits from the German government and extensive safety measures.

Despite the great effort and amount of time needed to see projects to fruition, Christo and Jeanne-Claude always intended their projects to have a finite period of existence. The concept of impermanence played a significant role in their artistic vision and approach (Grimes, 2020). They believed that everything in life is temporary and fleeting, including art (Grimes, 2020). They embraced this idea and incorporated it into their work by creating installations that were meant to be experienced for a limited time before being dismantled and removed. For example, *The Gates* [Installation], in New York City's Central Park (2005), was on display for only 16 days before it was dismantled, leaving no physical trace behind (Art Story, n.d.). *Wrapped Reichstag*, created in Berlin in 1995, remained on display for two weeks before being removed (Art Story, n.d.). Christo's approach to impermanence was influenced by his upbringing in communist Bulgaria, where the government controlled all aspects of life, including art. Therefore, the installations were deliberate in order to challenge the notion of control and to create art that was free from political or ideological constraints (Ricci, n.d.).

Christo and Jeanne-Claude worked closely with a team of engineers, fabricators, and other professionals to design and execute their installations. This involved careful planning and attention to detail to ensure that installations were safe, environmentally responsible, and aesthetically pleasing (Grimes, 2020). Throughout each process, Christo and Jeanne-Claude were known for their persistence and determination in overcoming obstacles and pushing the boundaries of what was possible with their art. They often faced opposition and criticism from those who were skeptical or resistant to their installations, but they remained committed to their vision and worked tirelessly to bring it to life. To get their installations approved, they had to go through a rigorous and creative process of planning, negotiation, and collaboration with various stakeholders. First, they would identify a location or object that they wanted to wrap or cover, and then they would conduct extensive research on the legal and logistical requirements for their proposed installation (Grimes, 2020). They would typically need to obtain permits from local authorities and secure funding for the project.

They also would engage with the local community and other stakeholders to build support for their installation. This involved holding public meetings, giving presentations, and engaging in extensive outreach efforts to explain the artistic vision and benefits of their project.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude often rented or purchased the land adjacent to their art installations in order to prevent commercial development or other undesirable activities from taking place nearby (Ricci, n.d.). This was particularly important for their large-scale installations that involved wrapping or covering natural or man-made landmarks, as they wanted to preserve the integrity and visual impact of the installation. For example, when they created *The Gates* installation in New York City's Central Park, they rented the adjacent properties to ensure that they would remain vacant during the installation and that no commercial activities would take place nearby (Ricci, n.d.). Similarly, when they wrapped the Reichstag building in Berlin, they

purchased a large plot of land adjacent to the building in order to prevent commercial development from encroaching on the site (Ricci, n.d.).

By managing the entire area around their installations, they were able to create a cohesive and immersive experience for viewers while also controlling access to the site to ensure the safety of visitors. Installations were generally free and open to the public (Grimes, 2020). They believed that art should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay (Ricci, n.d.). In fact, one of the defining characteristics of their art, in addition to its temporary nature, was public accessibility. By creating large-scale installations in public spaces, they were able to engage with a wide audience and bring art into everyday life. The duo worked into their advanced years with Christo continuing the couple's mission alone after Jeanne-Claude died in 2009 (Christojeanneclaude, n.d.). He saw their visions continually come to fruition until his own death in 2020, at which time his team finished works in progress.

Ernest Hemingway

Ernest Hemingway was a renowned American novelist, short story writer, and journalist who traveled extensively throughout his life seeking out new experiences and inspiration for his writing (Yigitce, 2016). He drew heavily upon his experiences in foreign countries, using them as settings for many of his novels and short stories (Putnam, 2006). For example, his time in Spain inspired his novel *The Sun Also Rises* while his travels in Africa influenced *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* and *Green Hills of Africa* (Yigitce, 2016). It becomes evident that Hemingway's travels had a significant impact on his world views and writing style (Richardson, 2017). Because of his travels, Hemingway gained an understanding of the complexities of political and social issues, which informed his writing (Young, 2023). Through his experiences in different cultures, his interest in capturing the essence of a moment or place, and his exposure to political and social issues, Hemingway developed a unique perspective that informed his writing and made him one of the most important writers of his time (Sanders, 1960).

Hemingway developed a love for adventure and risk-taking during his travels, which is reflected in many of his characters' personalities. His experiences abroad also exposed him to different cultures and ways of life, which broadened his perspective and helped him develop a more nuanced understanding of the world. Hemingway's love for adventure and exploration is evident in many of his works, making travel an essential part of both his personal and professional identity.

Hemingway spent a considerable amount of time in Spain throughout his life. The influence of Spain on his life was clear in his works. He first visited Spain in 1923 and returning many times. His frequent visits allowed him to become familiar with the country's culture and people. He was particularly drawn to fishing in Spain, which inspired his novel *The Old Man and the Sea* in 1951 (Putnam, 2006). *The Old Man and the Sea* is considered one of Hemingway's best works and won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 (Putnam, 2006). The novel is written in Hemingway's characteristic sparse style, with short sentences and simple language. This style was heavily influenced by

Spanish writers such as Federico García Lorca and Miguel de Cervantes (Richardson, 2017). Federico Garcia Lorca is known for his poetic and surrealist writing style, characterized by its vivid imagery, use of metaphors, and musicality. Miguel de Cervantes, best known for his novel *Don Quixote*, blended realism, humor, and satire in works often reflecting the social and political issues of his time.

Hemingway's time in Spain had a significant impact on his political views (Richardson, 2017). He witnessed firsthand the Spanish Civil War— a major conflict that took place in Spain from 1936 to 1939— and became involved in it as a journalist (Yigitce, 2016). The Spanish Civil War ultimately ended in victory for the Nationalists, who established a dictatorship under General Francisco Franco that lasted until his death in 1975. The war had far-reaching consequences for Spain and Europe as a whole, contributing to the outbreak of World War II and shaping political developments throughout the postwar period.

Hemingway supported the Republican cause during the war and wrote about it in his novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Richardson, 2017). His experiences during the war shaped his political beliefs and influenced his later works. Published in 1940, the story is set during the Spanish Civil War and follows Robert Jordan, an American volunteer who is fighting for the Republicans. Jordan is tasked with blowing up a bridge to prevent Franco's forces from crossing it, and the novel follows his experiences during this mission. The novel is known for its themes of love, death, sacrifice, and the futility of war. Hemingway's writing style is characterized by its simplicity and directness, and he uses this style to great effect in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The novel has been praised for its vivid descriptions of the Spanish countryside and its portrayal of the Spanish people. One of the key themes is the idea that all human beings are connected to each other. Throughout the novel, Jordan comes to realize that his fate is intertwined with those around him, and that his actions will have consequences for others. Another important theme in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is the idea of sacrifice. Jordan knows that his mission is likely to result in his death, but he believes that it is worth it if it means helping others. This idea of selflessness and sacrifice is contrasted with the selfishness and brutality of war.

The above examples of Hemingway's works offer readers a clear picture of the manner in which travel influenced the development of his particular writing style and thematic content (Sanders, 1960).

Conclusion

Exposure to new and varied experiences, such as those that each of the featured artists encountered during their travels, including new cultures, landscapes, and people, can spark new ideas and insights for the reader of this chapter, too. Creative thinking has been shown to decrease prejudice and increase tolerance for others (Groyecka-Bernard et al., 2021) and reduced prejudice increases creativity (Vezzali et al., 2016). Win-win. If one maintains an openness to engaging in multicultural experiences (Maddux et al., 2010), a willingness to view problems from a different perspective, and the belief that

they can be creative, research finds there is a strong foundation for facilitating creativity.

Implementation

Steps to catalyze neuroplasticity and prime the brain for creativity while waiting for your next travel experience:

- Take new on-foot or mobility device and driving routes to your destinations
- Seek a variety of social interactions (E.g., pickleball teams, water aerobics groups, philosophy clubs...)
- Shift neural connections: rearrange furniture or kitchen contents regularly (E.g., swap storage location of plates with glassware, move cutlery to a different drawer)
- Seek out new cafés which offer variations of sights, sounds, smells, flavors, and perhaps even menus or conversations in a ‘different’ language than those with which you are currently comfortable
- Prepare a new recipe each week from a country you would like to visit, taking time to admire the sensory input of each ingredient (scent, color, crunch, taste, ...). Learn how to pronounce the name of the meal with proper articulation
- Imagine eating the meal in that country. Would you be seated on the ground? What would your view or surroundings include? Then, book that dream vacation. Indulge the senses. Meditate. Create.

Repeat.

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