

Research Philosophy

Marc W. Vital II

Creativity is the ability to respond to your environment using a method that provides you with new solutions to a problem. Just as it applies to survival, it applies to the generation of art. When human art is produced, we are responding to our environment. We are solving a problem, whether that's survival, boredom, the desire to create, or the processing of strong emotions. Creativity can be cultivated from a seed of creative potential. A rock cannot be creative, it lacks desire. Human creativity requires conscious desire and kinesthetic action to produce corporeal experiences.

Creative products can take many forms. These forms are discovered through experimentation. Technique and craft are developed through continued experimentation over time. They enhance creative endeavors allowing the creator to build upon existing knowledge to explore new avenues of creativity. In this framework, creativity is transformative, taking what exists and distilling it into something new.

My creative research is about the gathering, distilling, and transforming of ethnographic material into costumes embodied by performers. The play script presents a narrative exploring the human condition. A costume designer responds to the script combining the clues and instructions in the script with the relevant ethnographic information about the play, its author, and the director. These are distilled by the designer into a unique temporal yet corporeal experience for the audience. As a costume designer, my research methods explore ethics, ethnography, and experimental craft.

People come first. It's the foundation of my creative research philosophy. My work is to tell a story about the human condition through a unique experience. How can I honor the human condition if I am treading on humans to produce the end product? To that end, I experiment to improve my production practices to promote the health and wellbeing of those involved, including the audience. I work to regulate the labor hours of my team, creating time for rest and rejuvenation. This keeps my team strong and engaged with the process. Accommodating different body types, I seek to redefine beauty standards and diversify the stories we tell. Endeavoring for my ethnographic research to be as accurate as possible, I seek to provide truthful representation of human experiences dismantling stereotypes and generating human empathy. Each theatrical production is different—from the script to the people who make up the production team, to the time, budget, and labor constraints. There is a learning curve around how best to collaborate, solve the problems presented by the play with technique and craft and how to resolve the unexpected circumstances that arise. The process of costume design is multifaceted requiring ingenuity and application of existing information and expertise to produce a new audience experience.

