

# Creative Difference

Applied creativity in Personal,  
Academic and Professional Life

BURREN COLLEGE OF ART



# Creativity, Collaboration and the Burren

## Introduction

We live at a time when transformational change is inevitable. This is both exciting and challenging. This is a moment when what artists know about creative process and its application to real problems and opportunities has relevance far beyond the confines of the art studio. Familiarity with creative process is needed to infuse and transform education processes, organisational and corporate life and personal life.

As a hothouse for universal creativity we at Burren College of Art are dedicated to this transfer of creative process, sharing what artists know. For the last five years we have developed new immersive and

transformative short courses to educate non-artists in the principles and procedures of creative processes. These courses are adapted from the studio research methods of our MFA/PhD in Studio Art programme and they represent a significant development in knowledge transfer in creativity.

We have successfully taught these courses to masters and PhD students across the university curriculum, and to business leaders, academics, engineers, lawyers and biochemists. They are now available to further university disciplines and to executives and community organisers as well as to private individuals.



## Background: the idea of universal human creativity

When the artist Joseph Beuys said “everyone is an artist” he meant that all human beings have the potential to be creative in every walk of life, and that all human endeavour has the potential to rise to the level of art. Following his vision and leadership, Burren College of Art’s new courses transfer what artists know and do—creative process—to people who do not see themselves as artists. Almost everyone is an artist as a child, though few continue in adulthood as a result of the socialization process of schooling. Our courses bring the wisdom of childhood i.e. the spirit of enquiry, play and openness to possibility, to bear on your problems and unfulfilled potential.

There are no expectations that you or your students or your management team will have any artistic ability beyond that which you had at the age of 4 years.

If you don’t know how to be mischievous you cannot succeed at creative enterprise. Creativity is transgressive and transformative and includes strategies to succeed

with adventure, risk, change, chaos and chance because luck only favours the prepared. Education has often been based on traditional principles such as order, organisation, obedience, which is why so little education prepares students for the contemporary world. Businesses are often based on the same principles, which is why so many of them fail. Everyone can be lucky, but some never get to see their opportunities. The strategies that artists work with all the time can be transferred to you. Involving a great deal of laughter, these courses are an education in how to be lucky.

If you are interested in developing the creative aspects of your academic, personal, organizational or business life—then one of our courses may suit you, or we can develop a new course to fulfil your needs.

## Postgraduate Courses in Creative Difference

Professor Timothy Emlyn Jones, the Dean of Burren College of Art has developed the concept of Creative Difference as an alternative to the often vague or misleading phrase 'creativity and innovation'. Creative Difference is the core of our curriculum, both for artists and for the artist within everyone.

Creative Difference is developed through structured learning experiences comprising:

- Recognising the value of different modes of intelligence to different situations;
- Identifying your personal difference from others;
- Transforming your mental, emotional and behavioural habits into new creative strategies;
- Taking ownership of iterative creative processes to make a difference of significance to others
- Learning how collaboration works better than competition in addressing common interests.

### Experiential Learning

These courses are based on experiential learning—an immersive experience free from urban distraction in the stillness of the Burren landscape and the purpose-built studios of Burren College of Art. The unique learning environment of the Burren enables deep focus and immersive learning and is an indispensable element of all our courses. An immersive education cannot happen quickly if reflection and transformative learning are to take place, and our courses normally take place over a number of days involving at least one overnight stay in this focussed environment. Activities include both individual and group emphases with much sharing of experience in exploration and experiment with creative processes, making the course a most enjoyable experience with a powerful and rewarding group dynamic.



“Being different from myself has shown me how to be comfortable with myself and how to identify all the new opportunities that are out there waiting to be grabbed.”

### **Course Content**

These courses involve learning through doing and include practical and theoretical sessions that may include some or all of the following topics according to need:

- Changing states of mind
- Changing mental, emotional and behavioural habits
- Changing the terms of reference of apparent problems
- Recognising your own position in relation to your problems
- Recognising creative opportunities
- Working constructively with ambiguity, doubt and multiple kinds of intelligence
- Developing methods for promoting intuition
- Recognising the values of trust and collaboration
- Developing new strategies for success in your personal and work situations

- Engaging with aspects of theories of creative practice
- Transforming your ways of engaging with your self and the world about you
- Recommendations for integrating the learning in your personal and professional life beyond the end of the course

### **Activities**

- Centering exercises
- Scribble workshops
- Ideation sessions that include mindfulness walks and meditation in the Burren landscape
- No-skills-required drawing, painting and modelling workshops
- Roundtable discussions
- Group problem-solving
- Illustrated talks
- Personality-type seminars
- Work-based projects

Seeing things differently is the core of creative process and I am hoping that my new approach to being will help me to develop the creative side of my personality that I know does indeed exist..



### The Challenge Project

Participants are normally invited to bring with them a challenge that currently faces them in their personal or professional life. Typically this challenge may be an unfulfilled creative opportunity that the participant has identified; a problem to be resolved; or an issue to be explored. Participants will be asked to bring the course content to bear on their challenge within a set project structure over a period of weeks until the challenge is transformed or resolved.

### Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of a course in Creative Difference a participant will be able to:

- Describe key concepts in the theory of creative difference of personality, and Innovation
- Recognise his/her personality type and aptitude for creative difference
- Recognise some of the obstacles to innovation
- Manage the creative resolution of a selected problem, opportunity or issue
- Present a personal strategy for the creative resolution of a selected problem, opportunity or issue.

- Demonstrate a capacity for creative thinking and behaviour
- Develop an understanding of the characteristics of creative difference and change
- Critically assess his/her personal aptitude to make a creative difference
- Critique a range of creative strategies
- Apply creative processes in the workplace and/or personal life
- Formulate a creative strategy to make a significant difference to others in a selected situation

### **Possible course structures**

Course structures are designed around the iterative character of creative process to meet the needs of each cohort of participants. A typical course structure comprises two residential periods of two days each at Burren College of Art, separated by a month in which project work is undertaken, and followed by a further month of project work.

### **Academic Offerings**

BCA has delivered the creative difference module at various levels and duration in various departments of NUIGalway.

Below are some variations;

- 10 ECTS, with 48 hours contact teaching/studio activities at Burren College of Art and 200 hours learning time in total.
- 5 ECTS, with 24 hours contact teaching/studio activities at Burren College of Art and 100 hours learning time in total. Less than 5 ECTS when a creative input to an existing module is required. This is particularly well suited to contributions to induction and methodology modules
- Alternatively, courses may be designed without credit, possibly with less study time than that required by the ECTS standard.

### **Next Steps**

If you are an academic who would like to incorporate a Creative Difference module in your academic programme, or a university student who would like to take a Creative Difference module, please contact [creativedifference@burrencollege.ie](mailto:creativedifference@burrencollege.ie)

# Executive Courses in Creative Leadership

"Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them".

Albert Einstein

Our increasingly complex world demands more creative leaders; people with vision, curiosity, empathy – and the ability to lead others to make a positive difference together.

## Creative leaders:

- Imagine what does not already exist;
- Create solutions that are not obvious, or sometimes very obvious;
- Inspire others to co-create a shared vision.

At Burren College of Art we help organisations develop a culture of creative leadership. By providing time, space and inspiration in a setting that is very different to a conventional conference/ training environment, participants will open themselves up to more creative ways of thinking and acting. They will develop fresh eyes allowing them to see themselves, others and the organisations they inhabit differently. Using creative methods, they will learn new skills and ways of working that allow them envision and realise a sustainable future for themselves and their organisation.

"The underlying force of our work is the art and genius that lives within the simplicity of your being, something that is much overlooked in a seemingly complex world".

Hanne T. Fisker

## Leadership Programmes

- Burren Creativity Lab
- Workshops in Creative Processes & Methodologies
- Creative Leadership Programme

## Burren Creativity Lab

Time out for groups to explore an issue or opportunity using the Theory U framework (developed at MIT) that allows participants to travel a journey of profound innovation and change. Sample topics include:

- Strategy Creation – Blue Ocean
- Shared Vision
- Team Development
- Values Based Culture
- New Product Creation
- Organisational Change Exploration
- Problem Finding / Solving
- Organisation Repositioning / Reinvention
- New Market Development
- How to Create a Learning Organisation
- How to Get the Best from our People

Typically the duration of these workshops is two days. All workshops are customised specifically to meet client needs.

### **Workshops in Creative Processes & Methodologies**

Short courses (typically two days) with an experiential learning approach using a select number of processes and methodologies to accomplish a specified experience or outcome. Workshop titles include:

#### **FRESH EYES**

an opportunity for renewal, to return to source and emerge with fresh eyes to discover (or rediscover) your professional talents, passions, aspirations and next steps.

#### **CLARITY**

develop a roadmap for your own personal leadership.

#### **HOW TO BE CREATIVE**

at Work - Creative processes from art transferred to your professional interests, passions and problems.



What I learnt from this exercise is that there really are no boundaries to what is possible; only the obstacles that we create for ourselves.

## Creative Leadership Programme

(currently under development).

The Creative Leadership Programme (CLP) is a journey over 12 months. Participants attend three modules at BCA with tuition from world class faculty and exemplars of creative leadership in practice.. Participants work on a real project within their organisation; work in a team on a project for social benefit; provide each other with support and challenge through virtual peer groups; and get support from a BCA coach.

### Modules include:

- Lead yourself first (a roadmap for the creative leader)
- Creativity from source
- Leadership (3 modules)
- Organisational change
- Innovation Process
- The Creative Learner
- Creative teaming
- Real life creative challenge
- Social benefit challenge

In addition to CLP it is intended to develop short courses in creative leadership as well as blended learning (face-to-face sessions with online learning opportunities).

## Outcomes from our programmes

### A Creative Team:

of reflective, independent learners with the ability to enhance deep understanding of their organization within and across functions; and to promote critical and creative thinking.

### Collaborative Problem Identifiers & Solvers:

Participants share innovative practices and build strategies to identify and solve the challenges they face within and outside their organisation.

### Captured Insights:

Participants harvest key lessons from the cutting-edge methodologies and the practical experiences gained from them.

### Usable Knowledge:

Participants explore and learn methods and models that can be adapted to suit a variety of organisational contexts.

### Creative Leadership Capacities:

Seven Essential Capacities for Creative Leadership – imagination, ideation, holding the space of listening, observing and sensing, self awareness, personal leadership, creative collaboration and execution skills.

### Practical Impact:

Participants support one another in making real advances in the challenges they face in their organisation.



I would like to say that this process has helped me mentally and physically and it has given me a sense of freedom from the negative aspects of daily life that I have sometimes previously dwelt on.

### **Next Steps**

If you are an executive who would like to incorporate a Creative Leadership offering in your professional development programme, or if you work in an organisation or are self-employed and would like to take part in a Creative Leadership event, please contact [creativedifference@burrencollege.ie](mailto:creativedifference@burrencollege.ie)

# Facilitating Audacious Conversations

## The Challenge of Our Time

We live at a time when the potential for break-down and break-through are finely balanced. Man's tenure on the planet is delicately poised and the challenge is how to address in new ways what might be possible. There may be systemic forces underlying these diverse challenges, and they call for novel and creative approaches. "Audacious Conversations" is a new mode of immersive engagement with "make or break" issues. Burren College of Art is an ideal location for these discussions providing an inspiring landscape and a creative environment free from distraction.

"Audacious Conversations" is an invitation to engage creatively with the questions that matter most at our moment in human history.

An Audacious Conversation may address global questions, such as:

- finding a new narrative for climate change
- peace in our time of conflict
- spirituality in the workplace
- the future we will leave our children.

Equally, An Audacious Conversation may address local questions, such as:

- fostering community resilience in the face of economic adversity
- the role of creativity in the education system
- renewing Ireland through language revival
- a holistic role for tourism in the world.

The Burren as an inspiring backdrop and the artistic resources of the Burren College of Art as the host environment, combine with expert facilitation and creative methodologies from the Art of Hosting to facilitate new insights into major challenges. The first conversations both global and local have already proven the transformative power of this place and its creative processes.

If you, your organisation or movement have an audacious conversation that calls for attention contact us to explore how we can help to arrange:

- The logistics of your gathering - accommodation, transport etc.
- The creative processes to match the ambition of your conversation
- The facilitator(s) to make breakthroughs happen.

### **Next Steps**

If you or your organisation wants to partner in the hosting of a conversation that you feel calls for this level of engagement, please contact **[creativedifference@burrencollege.ie](mailto:creativedifference@burrencollege.ie)**

Visit: **[www.burrencall.org](http://www.burrencall.org)**

I have understood that meditating and dreaming are things that I need to do in order to get things done. Inevitably, I have to stop doing, to do.



## The Course Team

**Martin Hawkes** is an entrepreneur with a deep commitment to education, creativity, and leadership. He is a founding trustee of the Burren College of Art, chairman of Burrenbeo Trust and co-founder of A Burren Call. His current preoccupations include fostering creativity, seeking to raise general consciousness of climate change and exploring the role of the Irish language in renewing the country. [www.burrencall.org](http://www.burrencall.org)

**Professor Timothy Emlyn Jones** is an artist who has exhibited internationally and is represented in public art collections in a number of countries. Having exhibited and worked with Joseph Beuys amongst others, he has taught at some of the leading art schools in the world, and has been Dean of Burren College of Art since 2003. [www.timothyemlynjones.com](http://www.timothyemlynjones.com)

**Barry Walsh** is an independent consultant, coach and facilitator with over 15 years experience. He specialises in strategy and leadership and has a passion for helping others to lead themselves and others from the inside out. He is experienced in many creative methodologies. Barry holds a Fellowship in Management from Cranfield University. [www.barrywalsh.ie](http://www.barrywalsh.ie)





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