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Creativity: a new skill (?) needed in science and technology [1]

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Creativity: a new skill (?) needed in science and technology

By: Natasha DeLeon-Rodriguez, PhD

“The greatest scientists are artists as well” (Albert Einstein)

In previous decades, science, technology, and art used to hang out hand by hand. Artists like Leonardo Da Vinci were also inventors. Scientists like Einstein knew the importance of creativity to move science forward. But in our current time frame, we notice a clear division between scientists and artists. We see how society moves towards promoting science and technology but downgrades arts.

Fortunately, universities are getting aware of the importance of including arts into science and technology majors. Some medical schools notice that exposing students to courses related to drama, dance, and literature helped them develop a set of skills that make them better health professionals. For example, Melissa Bailey [3] wrote about an initiative at Harvard University that implemented a program in their medical school to teach students appreciation of art. These

classes showed the students empathy and taught them how to better identify their diagnostics.

Tom Perault, Chief People Officer of Rally Health, a consumer-centric digital health company, explained to the Harvard Business Review [4] that liberal art students are taught four important skills that are not taught to students pursuing technical degrees.

“Creativity, Empathy, Listening, Vision”

These four skills are learned through the exposure to courses in creative writing, arts, literature, and music. Those skills were similar to the ones observed by Harvard University and other medical schools, but Perault suggested that these skills are also needed in tech companies. As you can see, different fields in science and technology started to see the importance of the integration of arts to improve their ecosystems.

In Puerto Rico, The Department for Economic Development and Commerce (DDEC) [5] understands the importance of integrating arts and technology. For that reason, the DDEC sponsored the project “Ruta del Arte”, directed by Sylvia Villafañe [6]. This project aims to promote and internationalize young artists by exposing their art in different public areas where it can have an impact. The Puerto Rico Science, Technology, and Research Trust [7] is the host of three paintings of one artist, Carlos Santiago, original from Ponce, Puerto Rico. Carlos started studying art at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico, then he got a scholarship to continue his studies in Paris, France.



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Carlos Santiago and Sylvia Villafañe. (photo by Jose R. Madera)

This project and its presence at the Trust is based on the idea that creativity is one of the new skills needed in technology, health, and sciences industries. Here at the Trust, we host many tech companies in our Innovation Center [8] that will benefit with the presence of these art pieces. The paintings “Universo Urbano 1, 2, and 3” will not only beautify our building and surroundings but will also open the minds of our tenants and expose our visitors to local artists. Last week, the artist Carlos Santiago offered a tour to explain the inspiration behind the three paints. It is incredible how he captured three concepts that are key to our mission.

“Community, Time, Science/Technology”

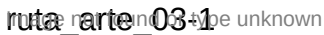
During the inauguration of the “Ruta del Arte” at the Trust, we also had Dr. Carlos Garcia, a clinical physiologist, artist, and musician, talk to our peers about art and community. First, he broke the ice with a fun activity. In groups, we created a painting/drawing. Each person added a piece to the painting that could either complement or change the concept. This activity got everyone’s mood to be happier and more engaged, but most important we got to work together as a community. Shortly after, he explained the importance of art among our communities, and how art is a tool for social transformation, a way to disrupt classical parameters. Dr. Garcia also explained how this project aims to give back the art to the communities.



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I have written before about music and science, now I am writing about how we should include more arts to science… I hope you are seeing the pattern and importance of this merge. Art and music are not classes that should be taken for granted, that should be removed from the curriculum at our schools. Science and technology need to have a spark of art in their route. Without imagination, we can't bring to life one of your favorite sci-fi gadget.

So, we invite everyone to stop by the Trust, enjoy the art, get lost in the paints. And don't forget, ¡Qué viva la ciencia!



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Members of the Trust with Carlos Santiago. (photo by Jose R. Madera)

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