ONLINE CREATIVE CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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Introduction. This article uses the term 'creativity' in the meaning proposed by David Gauntlett: Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something which is novel in that context, and is a process which evokes a feeling of joy. The word 'art' in the context of the article applies to every act of creative selfexpression shared online, as the idea of art itself has been redefined and broadened by participants and audience of the Web 2.0 platforms. Today, the audience 2.0 rejects the notion of art as a sacred practice available only to those few who has dedicated their entire life to it. In the world of

virtually infinite creative opportunities, art and media production is not necessarily a career choice. More likely, it has become a form of literacy, not unlike writing. Modern online audience gladly embraces the amateur culture, and does not discriminate its artistic qualities against the conventional art and media produced by professionals.

Virtual art school. Tapping into the participatory culture, young artists receive not only encouragement and the conceptual freedom to create, but also a practical help of their peers. Sometimes an envisioned creative project is too big and too complex for one person to implement, or the author may lack a few technical skills or resources required for the task. In this case a number of people can share the project. They would bring their unique skills and specialties to the table of creative collaboration, contributing towards a greater artwork, while building social ties as they work together. For example, a group of geographically dispersed teenagers can meet online and distribute their roles in a video production: a screenwriter, a director, an actor, an editor. Then they can invite another member of their creative network to write a song for the video, or to share an existing one. Thus, in the participatory communities all the skills are valued and appreciated, and the 'gaps' in the creative education of one are not by any means a flaw, but the opportunity to contribute for another. In many online creative online communities the door for newcomers is wide open. Old and experienced participants assist the novices in crossing the line between a passive consumer to an active producer of art and media. For example, they help the beginners to overcome their fear of creative self-expression and get started by setting simple, but enjoyable tasks. Abundance of tools, styles, visions, techniques, mediums and potential mentors allow a creative learner to build their own learning path through the possibilities of digital media, and pick only the practices that reflect their personality. It makes the media they will produce in future 'primarily inspired by private interests', more experimental, diverse and personalised, and therefore infinite in its creative expressions.

New folk culture. Modern fans of mass media reject both 'the idea of a definitive version' and the role of a passive consumer who has no say. They want to reconstruct the media in the original way in order to get new insights and reveal new meanings. They leave themselves the right to actively interact with the media, creatively rework it and 'make their own'. Using a number of creative techniques, from video montage to collaging to fan fiction writing, they recreate and modify the original stories and pass them further, for others to evaluate, get inspired and 'reflexively assemble [their] own particular versions or […] reality'. For creative fans, an object of mass media is only a fragment ready to be manipulated, not the entire picture. Self-made photo and a screen capture of a favourite movie are equal in their role of a resource for a digital amateur artist. Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes and self-imagined characters sometimes peacefully coexist in the universe imagined by a fiction writer. Jenkins sees this practice of freely reusing and redefining commercial media as a trend towards returning from mass media production (i.e. one-side consumption) to the folk art. In the folk culture, which was participatory and collaborative by its nature, the 'media' (such as ornaments, songs, myths, stories) was owned by people in general, or by everyone and no-one. Since there was no concept of the 'original' content and no 'keepers' of its originality (such as copyright owners today), nothing could restrict the free interpretation of existing cultural expressions. After a century of the privatized popular culture, new storytellers of today try to recreate that old atmosphere of co-constructing culture and owing it, instead of just passively consuming the cultural forms forced from above by transmedia corporations.

Creativity as social currency. Co-creation of new 'folk art' around popular culture, subcultures and creative forms online, together with the practices of content creation, sharing and appreciation, bind people emotionally. Therefore, content-sharing platforms often serve not only as virtual spaces for public self-expression, but also as social networks, where people connect and build relationships. Participants often see their preferred creative collaborative site as 'their' place and express the sense of ownership. Together with involvement of members, which is key to participatory culture, this feeling of belonging cultivates a practice of cultural citizenship. Membership in such communities expands beyond national boundaries and connects people globally. Considering that the content serves as social glue, cultural citizens of creative collaborative communities are expected and encouraged to contribute creatively. Passive participation (such as just watching or commenting) may be not enough to gain high 'social status' within those networks. To enact the cultural citizenship within the creative online culture, it is crucial to actively participate in the life of community and share the 'digital goods' with peers. By creating and sharing new expressive works, participants increase their engagement and connection with their networks. This view of creativity as a new currency provides additional motivation for new media consumers to start producing their own content and actively interact with the works of other. If the traditional media required only passive participation, here the trend is reversed: a consumer is only valued when he acts as

a co-creator. Either in a form of a long and productive feedback or in a form of a creative response, he is expected to engage with an artwork.

Conclusion. To sum up, an average computer user now has access to more means of cultural production than established art masters in pre-digital age. In addition to it, Web 2.0 provides a perfect outlet for art distribution, which guarantees that the individual creative talent will be recognised and appreciated by similar-minded media consumers. Alternative, experimental, non-conventional and thematic art will most likely find its niche, because online audience prefers highly personalised media consumption to 'one-size-fits-all' mass media. These developments, together with the opportunities of informal learning online, overcome most of the previously known limits to a creative expression of an individual. There is no reason not to be creative anymore. This explosion of creativity changes the way how the 'people formerly known as the audience interact with media artefacts on a daily basis: they creatively rethink and rebuild what they consume and produce media to document their experiences, helping to write the 'folktales' of the 21 century.

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