

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Entrepreneurship for the Creative and Cultural Industries: Mastering Management in the Creative and Cultural Industries*

By Bonita M. Kolb

Reviewed by Sally Packard, Texas Christian University

*Entrepreneurship for the Creative and Cultural Industries* is an earnest attempt to assist artists who are interested in starting a business, offering a comprehensive layout of the nuts and bolts of the business planning process. The book is punctuated by business startup experiences in the form of artist entrepreneur testimonials and advice from creative industry professionals. Dr. Kolb ends each chapter with a summary, a list of “Tasks to Complete” and suggestions for visualization exercises. It is significant to note that *Entrepreneurship for the Creative and Cultural Industries* is unique, in that it targets artists (“creative”) and their particular business startup challenges.

However, from my point of view as a professional visual artist, there are some issues with Kolb’s book. She begins the first paragraph of the Introduction by alerting the reader that they may be surprised to find what awaits the aspiring artist after university graduation.

Many creative people have known that they are artists, musicians, writers, designers and performers from a young age. They may have spent years at a university, college, art school or conservatory being inspired, finding role models and perfecting techniques. During this exciting few years of their lives, not much may have been said about what awaits them after they graduate. (p. 1)

University faculty teaching in the arts today are well aware of the paucity of opportunities available to their artist students outside of the academy. While some arts faculty may choose not to advise their students to take business courses or engage in the activity of entrepreneurship, it is not due to a lack of awareness on their part of the economic realities facing aspiring artists.

Kolb’s use of the third person in this passage establishes a distance between writer and reader (art students?) that persists throughout the textbook. A characterization is set here wherein the artist is the subject (outside) of the conversation, not part of it. By indirectly addressing her artist audience, the book assumes a didactic tone. Admittedly, as an artist this reader is hypersensitive to being sidelined in a conversation about the arts.

In the first chapter, in the section “Art and People,” Kolb provides a brief rundown of her version of the history of art. The information is cobbled together from a variety of sources to support her premise that artists “must” understand business if they are to be successful. Not only is her presentation of what art “was and is now” awkward, it does not reflect the expertise already possessed by a student in the arts who might be reading this book for a class. This approach brings into question the end user of the textbook. Is Kolb speaking to artists or about them? Is *Entrepreneurship for the Creative and Cultural Industries* to be used by arts faculty teaching art students or is the information to be taught in the context of a business class to non-artists interested in the creative industries? The answers are unclear.

Over the past few years, Arts Entrepreneurship has been established in many university arts programs as an academic discipline. This new discipline has sparked critical conversations among university arts faculty as they work to develop curricula appropriate to their programs and their students’ needs. This has resulted in a rich array of approaches and curricular offerings in arts entrepreneurship. Simultaneously, a sub-industry has evolved around Arts Entrepreneurship,

generating books and articles by non-artists defining the artist's place in the "cultural and creative industries." *Entrepreneurship for the Creative and Cultural Industries* is one example of this phenomenon and demonstrates the recurring issue in some of this literature, wherein the non-artist instructs the artist on how to go about the business of art. The lack of acknowledgement by Kolb of the artist-generated entrepreneurial activity in and outside of academia is frustrating. Dr. Kolb must be aware of this activity as evidenced by the rise of Arts Entrepreneurship as a discipline, as well as the myriad professional, high profile, contemporary artist entrepreneurs currently working in the so-called "cultural industries."

This critique is not meant to imply that artists should not develop an understanding of business principles; they are useful. Artists have always known they must create their own opportunities, which requires a working knowledge of opportunity recognition and implementation. Old mythologies need to be replaced by the recognition that artists understand what they need to be successful. They do not exist on the cultural fringe but contribute to the whole of society. If the (academic) community truly wants to share its knowledge with the arts, there needs to be a shift in attitude by non-artists when addressing issues critical to the arts. It would be productive if the specialists – arts faculty teaching the next generation of artists -- were consulted for their expertise as part of this larger dialogue on the creative economy. Many arts faculty in higher education would welcome a conversation from their peers across campus to explore the ways in which their disciplines intersect. An understanding of the connections between these different areas is key to working together to ensure the success of all of our students.

The fact that *Entrepreneurship for the Creative and Cultural Industries* is the first textbook to address business practices as applied to the arts should be applauded. But it may also be the bellwether needed to stimulate a long-delayed inclusion of arts professionals in this conversation about art practice and entrepreneurship.