

## DON'T PUT ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET – THE JOYS OF PORTFOLIO WORKING

When Charles Handy first suggested that portfolio working would become popular he did so against the background of a western society where many people stayed in the same field of employment – if not same job – for their entire working life. For many people in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century this is neither an expectation nor an aspiration. Most creative practitioners realise quite early in their careers that getting all of their income from their art or craft is highly unlikely. Like it or not then, portfolio working or developing a multi-income stream becomes a necessity.

The careers guidance market has been fairly swift to pick up on this new form of employment suggesting various activities which will sit happily along the work of creatives. You could, for example, teach or run workshops, curate or work in a museum or gallery supporting other artists or makers. What about organising festivals or getting a job with a grant funding body? Writing books or magazine articles? Coaching or Mentoring? Many choose to take a job totally unconnected with their creative work so that they can maintain a sort of buffer zone which aids clarity and independence of both thinking and practice.

## PAS DE LE RHONE QUE NOUS

Just in case you were in any doubt I don't speak French but this is one of the phrases Dr Dai (actually Dr Davies, my Psychology lecturer in University College, Cardiff) used to warn his scarcely bothered students of the dangers that lay on the roads of unauthentic creative activities. Say it out loud with English pronunciation and it equates to the edict 'paddle your own canoe'. There comes a point when those of us with multiple strands to our creative braid will feel hemmed in by the perceived wisdom that it is better to be master of one trade than a Jack of all. It takes an Augustinian leap of faith to decide that your work portfolio is going to expand to include some or all of your creative practices and that each of the activities which makes it into the portfolio will all be managed with

appropriate time, resources, attention – in fact, the criteria that I listed earlier which allowed me to differentiate between ‘strands of interest’ and ‘hobby interests’.

### WEAVING STRANDS INTO BRAID

It may be easy to discern or it may be nigh on impossible to identify but somewhere in amongst the activities which have made it into ‘strands of interest’, there lies a common thread. Finding it is crucial to being able to manage a work portfolio particularly if you intend to interact with the wider world. And if you’re wondering what my common thread is I have to take you back to my childhood in the 1960s when, on Saturday evenings, Max Bygraves would start his variety show with the words “I want to tell you a story...”