

Reviewing the art of crime – what, if anything, do criminals and artists/designers have in common?

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The “dark side of creativity” is a slippery concept to explore because the idea of “creativity” is subject to historically changing definitions. This paper will review some ideas about creativity and when discussing the art of crime as “the dark side of creativity” will try and avoid positioning “*Darkness*” as “*blindness, evil, lack, loss and as the underworld*” compared to “*Light*” as “*clarity, hope, goodness, rebirth and life*”. Such stark oppositions often contain quasi-religious meanings as exemplified by the *Star Wars* movies (“Yes, a Jedi’s strength flows from the force... But beware the desire of the dark side”). Instead we will discuss the dark side of creativity by:

(1) Reviewing definitions of creativity and examining dyslexia and what else artists, designers, criminals and entrepreneurs

have in common (Gamman, 2008a).

(2) Further explaining how and why ideas about the dark side of creativity are relevant to understanding the emergence of the Design Against Crime Research Centre (DACRC) located at the University of the Arts London. In particular, to understand approaches to design creativity defined as “thinking thief” (Ekblom, 1997) and also the “criminal gaze” (Gamman, 2008b).

(3) Finally, the paper will discuss how and why ideas about the “the art of crime”, as well as actual crime itself, has informed the discourse of transgression associated with art and design, informing a number of creative outputs that we review.

1. WHAT IS CREATIVITY AND WHAT DO ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS AND CRIMINALS HAVE IN COMMON?

‘Creativity is...imaginative processes that produce outcomes that are original (or useful)’ (Robinson 2001, p.116)

During the last decade the word “creativity” has been used in a very generic sense by management gurus such as Charles Handy and Robert Heller and government ministers, such as Andy Burnham, to make banal statements “*Our vision is of a Britain in 10 years time where the local economies in our biggest cities are driven by creativity.*”

Politicians such as Chris Smith (1998) the former culture secretary and also ‘Captains of Creativity’ such as Richard Florida (2002) regularly pay tribute to the idea of creativity. Creativity is heralded as a panacea to cure the economic decline of Western Europe and America, linked to the expanding market share of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries (O’Neill, 2003). The prediction that BRIC’s overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will eclipse Western nations by 2050, was made before the

present economic meltdown. Yet, the underlying point hasn't changed. The term "creativity" is often accompanied, with the allied concept of "innovation", and applied as a universal remedy by politicians to address current structural shortcomings of industrial production. Innovation is of course creative, but has been utilised as an essential interface between creativity and creative resources and the cooperative enterprise structures that exploit creativity to drive profit.

There are so many theories about innovation and creativity, which has an evolving history of ideas, now summarised on Wikipedia (2009a). This history demands that we make important distinctions and definitions from the outset i.e. "Creativity" is a feature of human behaviour and phenomena experienced by many individuals. Moreover, this concept has been examined through the lens of many disciplines, ranging from psychology to management studies, from art to science, and

nearly all discourses. Despite so much writing about it, as yet there is no established definition that can be characterised by a single feature. We know it operates across all aspects of human endeavour, often mulled through slow thinking (Claxton, 1977) or arrived at through instantaneous intuitive responses, or “eureka” moments. It is due to these polarities of creative thinking that make it difficult to define creativity.

So for the purposes of this paper we may be best suited to discuss creativity within the realm of art and design practice. From this perspective we describe creativity as the ability to conceive – often through unconventional, playful and sporadic approaches – conceptualise and visualise ideas into diverse cultural forms, in order to find or discover previously unexpected conceptions. We also point to the fact that there is an identified link between creativity and dyslexia. Thomas West (West, 1991) developed such a link when he described the ability of highly visual people

to conceptualise complex ideas, especially those that enabled them to integrate visual-spatial material. This link between visual-spatial thinking and a rejection of mechanical approaches to learning and adaptability in complex situations evidently allows dyslexics to solve problems in unusual ways, which employ unconventional methods. West claimed that the dyslexics may well be at forefront of dealing with technological developments, in utilising their ability to process complex ideas and creating "a whole new literacy" in the process.

Discussions about "innovation" are distinctively different from discussions about creativity. Innovation is the process that takes creative ideas to the market in the broad sense. Not all creative people are able to transform their creativity into innovation, unlike the most skilled criminals or business focussed individuals. Many creatives are also successful at innovation, although some artists, like Joseph Beuys, for example, despised the idea of

innovation and took a high moral approach against the commodification of art. This attitude is still present in some discourses today, although the majority of artists recognise the need to earn an income from their creativity, and consequently engage with the system.

Art and design too has recently been linked to pragmatic strategies, that could help beat the economic downturn. Creatives are seen to be “often faster at responding to emerging needs resources and solutions” (Leadbeater et al, 2008). This account has become very significant in the current global economic recession. In fact there is an emerging recognition that the creative industries (especially those linked to communities and social enterprises) generate large amounts of fiscal and social capital as well as fast and flexible networks

Previously the financial arena generated by the creative

industries has been surprisingly under-recognized and unmapped. It is being vigorously reassessed by governments with a view to catalysing more activity and creating future more GNP. Consequently, a number of influential reports have been published that try to explain creativity and innovation. They include; Sir George Cox's (2005) *Review of Creativity in Business*, Prof. Mark Brown's (2000) *Report on Innovation* for Price Waterhouse Coopers. The Work Foundation's (2007) Report *Staying Ahead: the economic performance of the UK's creative industries* and Charlie Leadbeater's (2008) account of *Attacking the Recession*.

Amongst all these voices on the current state of "creativity" and "innovation", two groups are largely ignored. The first are the voices of artists and designers, although this is changing. For example, the account of the difference between "interpretative" and "analytical" innovation put forward by Lester and Piore

(2004) and the account of the way artists and fashion designers, are able to start different “conversations” that generate creativity and innovation (Oakley et al, 2008) go some way to addressing the gaps in understanding about how such creatives work. The second group is the criminal class, whose creativity is rarely acknowledged (with the exception of gangster and crime fictions that abound in popular culture) even though real criminals also generate innovation and income. Some criminal “projects” may also exhibit the “wow” factor common to creative breakthroughs and paradigm breaking audacity. But because criminal activity is often immoral (entirely parasitic as well as illegal) it is usually only in fiction that we find celebration. Even then, after focussing upon it at length, such fictions often try and reposition criminal innovation as linked to spiritual or moral “darkness”, to avoid charges of glamorisation.

So how are criminals and creatives similar? What is becoming a

little more understood, and easier to measure is that individuals within both creative and criminal classes share certain dispositions. For example, the number of those found to be “dyslexic” in art school and prison is similarly high i.e. ‘16% to 20% of Art & Design students are certified dyslexic’ (Raein, 2003). As many as 60% of Art and Design Students are argued to have problems linked to Visual Spatial Learning Styles (VLS), (East Mentoring Forum, 2007). The UK study shows that between 53% of the prison population were dyslexic . . . Morgan and Klein (2000) also point out that ‘Studies from England, the USA and Sweden suggest that between 30% and 52% of the prison population in all three countries may be dyslexic, depending on how narrowly dyslexia is defined.’ Perhaps it’s no surprise that Entrepreneurs are also found to be disproportionately dyslexic (East Mentoring Forum Ltd, 2007) given both criminals and creatives often have strong entrepreneurial qualities, Dyslexia has been defined as ‘...a complex neurological condition, which is

constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect ‘many areas of learning and function, and may include specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language, often accompanied by accelerated visual recognition skills’ (British Dyslexia Association (BDA)1995) as well as holistic thinking skills. But there is a negative aspect to measuring dyslexia within traditional quantitative frameworks. Dyslexic juvenile offenders have been found to demonstrate ‘a low ability in verbal expression accompanied by poor reading skills and writing skills that are measured to be well below average’ (BDA, 2004-05). The BDA also find that “untreated dyslexia” (a term some dyslexics object to, as it is a medical definition that has labelled dyslexia as an illness and strips it of its positive advantages), accompanied by poor levels of education, has been found to lead to ‘delinquent behaviour and to the subsequent development of an anti-social and/or criminal lifestyles’ (BDA, 2004 -05).

Crime challenges many societies to face the significant question; 'how do we deal with our fellow citizens who unacceptably step outside the boundaries of so called normal behaviour?' Dyslexia is a condition/ learning style, which may contribute to individuals being labelled inappropriately or even sent to prison.

Heather Symonds, who works with dyslexics at the London College of Communication, University of Arts, explains in an account elaborated via email communication with Gamman and Raein, 2007 how a dyslexic would certainly be perceived as a criminal suspect under questioning, not being able to easily answer what may be (to the police officers asking) apparently straightforward questions. She points out dyslexia may mean that the person being questioned is unable to describe events in a clear chronological sequence, or have a rapid recall of names and dates. She also suggests nervous mannerisms in attempting to recall facts, may communicate "guilt" or "criminal intentions",

whereas “information anxiety” may be more likely. Whilst we do not wish to reinforce the pathologisation of dyslexia as a “condition” rather than a learning style, in terms of discussions of creativity we feel more research is needed to enable us to better understand how precisely dyslexia is linked to forms of “transgression” that may lead to creative innovation.

Creatives and criminals may have disproportionate numbers experiencing dyslexia, and engaging in transgression, but it is not our intention to use the terms ‘creative’ and ‘dyslexic’ interchangeably. Rather we wish to explore how criminal behaviour might be connected to creative activity. Dyslexia is part of that account and needs to be researched further to understand if it informs, or generates creative approaches and minds.

The ability to scan, spot and exploit a situation is a characteristic, which is consistent amongst some criminals but it is also a

characteristic that is shared by many creatives. As Anthony Julius (2002) has observed; Artists and criminals share certain characteristics. The Artist is as resourceful and amoral in his pursuit of the project as the Criminal. The likeness of the artist to the criminal was celebrated by Degas, and is a familiar trope in art writing. 'A painting calls for as much cunning, roguishness and wickedness as the committing of a crime', Degas commented and advised the neophyte artist to be "devious".

Artists and designers may draw upon risky strategies associated with crime, either literally or metaphorically, Julius summarises such strategies as 'crimes committed by or against art'. From the Surrealists, to the Situationists many artistic movements employ anarchic, transgressive and even criminal strategies as a valid way of making social comment. Such ideas about the role of artistic transgression as a way of challenging the status quo has influenced so many generations. However, professional burglars

and shoplifters, do not aim to make creative statements even if the way they intuitively review design weaknesses or problems primarily to outwit security systems has a lot in common with creative thinking. Clearly criminals aim to steal objects or services primarily to transform them into profit (cash tender which is difficult to trace by the authorities). Garwood (2009) identifies that “There is preliminary evidence for seeing the world differently if you have been an offender... because to those with an offender’s eye, opportunity is everywhere they go ...”.

Our work with artists and designers from Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design (CSM), University of Arts London, has enabled us to observe characteristics that seem to have links with what this book is calling “the dark side of creativity”. To be more specific; artists and designers are different types of creatives, and should be differentiated as such. Designers are required to directly engage with the idea of a “user” or “consumer”, because

their work has a commercial or social application. Whereas artists can make different choices about the types of expression they engage with, and whilst they may have a sense of audience are not required to address anyone unless they chose to do so. All the best creatives, however, put themselves on the line to generate their own projects (rather than work for commissions) and tend, like criminals, to be risk inclined in the hope that what they produce can deliver outcomes from which they will derive benefit. The difference is that the best artists and designers appear to have a collective account about the function of their work, and are often socially empathetic rather than simply being motivated by profit or selfish logic. But even this is not always the case. Many creatives are also individualistic in the extreme, and have well developed egos and find different ways of transforming complex feelings about identity via their practice.

In 1966, the British artist John Latham used books — intact,

painted, cut-up, burned — in his work, (as materials) to invoke meaning. He set up a 1960s “Happening”, an event called "Still and Chew." Students turned up to watch Latham chew up pages of the art critic, Clement Greenberg’s *Art and Culture* (1971), taken from the school library. Latham’s point was that critics are often parasites, they take few risks and eat artists, and give little back. So the happening spat out Greenberg’s influential essays into a flask, where the reconstituted text was mixed with sulphuric acid, baking soda and yeast. Latham let the jar ferment, and was later fired for the crime of destroying college property. The documentation of his experiment, from the letter of his dismissal to the Greenberg grappa, is now enshrined in the permanent collection at MoMA, New York. Latham’s “dark” approach to creativity led him to innovate new ways of making social comment and artistic meanings as well as to generate symbolic capital from his work (Eskin, 2006). The point we are making is that not all criminal events like kicking in a bus shelter window,

or simply destroying what has been made by another, constitute creative innovation delivered by criminals. Innovation in the strict sense of “taking ideas to market” and making money is very different from criminal damage. Professional criminals know this. One drug dealer explained he couldn’t understand the kids that go around tagging the streets, as he could see no financial reward in it for them. So clearly we need to qualify again the precise definitions we are working with. When we say we observe “creativity” or “innovative capacity” in the behaviour of criminals, we are primarily referring to what Ekblom & Tilley (2000) call “resourceful offenders”, i.e. the behaviour of shoplifters, bank robbers, confidence tricksters, identity fraud crews, burglars who make money and/or meaning from their activities and ideas. Yet, this group can be differentiated further. Ekblom & Tilley (2000) further discuss the difference between “expressive crimes”, where individuals show off, and engage with performativity (even violence and other destructive behaviour), in order to carve out

identities for themselves. Compared to “instrumental crimes” that may allow individuals, to pursue excitement and thrills, as part of their creative criminal work/identities and significantly, also deliver profit. In this paper when we discuss criminals as creative, we are certainly not talking about maladjusted vandals (and we would not define taggers or street artists in this way), who are so frustrated they wreck our communities. Nor are we talking about criminals whose activities are linked to violence and murder. Lynn’s (1971) research, though limited, is useful to draw upon. Lynn differentiates criminal behaviours as:

Aggressive[s], who cannot control their impulses and are, eventually caught and incarcerated;

Inadequate[s], who just drift along playing petty confidence tricks for small profits; and

Creative[s], many of whom manage to avoid being caught in their law breaking due to their cunningness or talent and so prosper from it.

Creatives and resourceful criminals also seem to share a capacity for what Hudson (1967) termed “divergent thinking”. This is the creative elaboration of ideas *prompted by a stimulus or stimuli*.

When analyzing intelligence measurements scales, Hudson found that divergent thinking is harder to assess than convergent thinking in which the person (who is good at it) is able to produce the "correct" answer. This is because convergent thinking is linked to issues about reliability and consistency, and is consequently easier to document, and assess. Convergent thinking is particularly appropriate in science, maths and technology, and whilst may help to solve many problems, it may not always encourage the individual to think “outside the box” or to consider whether the problem defined is the right one (i.e. to consider whether or not the “problem” is in fact the problem).

Successful criminals draw upon both convergent and divergent types of thinking, though they may not be able to explain or articulate their process (what a designer or artist may be able to achieve through a reflective form of methodology). Some criminals may reflect, but what criminals share with creatives is the idea of “*practice*”, that they need to get up and “do” something (including running complex projects) to make money even if they do not draw upon formal methodologies to aid them to do so.

Opportunism and Risk taking

Kees Dorst (2003) in his account of how designers operate in the world explains the way artists and designers spend time constantly looking for *opportunities*. An opportunity for innovation or change presents the creative with a possibility to interact with an idea, materials, technology or a social situation and bring about change often linked to taking risks. In this sense

a creative is an agent for change (both positive or negative) at a strategic or conceptual level. Linked to opportunities, some creatives also display various forms of ego driven belief (conviction) that they are able “to do tasks better” than others or feel they are able to see things differently and make a unique contribution. They may assume they are “luckier” than others too. Professor Richard Wiseman (2003) in his research into *the Luck Factor* has pointed out that many people, including some creatives, attribute luck to what is really just a kind of positive thinking. They may be opportunistic in their endeavours, and are open to the possibility of the accidental and fortuitous incidents that will allow them to exploit an occasion/incident. Such convictions appears to help creatives (and criminals who believe they can “pull off” the crime) to go forward and try to succeed at their self-appointed task. De Graves (1995) discusses the behaviour of women confidence tricksters, in this way too, but goes on to say how they uniquely create their own scripts when

engaging in forms of insincere or dishonest behaviour in order to make a living. Their approach is clearly not the same as design thinking but this trope has much in common to the opportunism we are describing, and so demands further exploration.

The sociologist Howard Becker (1963) has written extensively, as have other writers, about the “outsider” phenomenon. The experience of “estrangement” that appears to enable creatives (artists and designers as well as criminals) to locate themselves as “different” outside the everyday and thus create new opportunities for artistic or design interventions. Processes of “defamiliarization” or “making strange” (Schklovsky, 1917) help such self defined outsiders perceive everyday reality with fresh eyes. This experience is sometimes common to all of us, particularly when travelling. The main difference is that creatives and criminals, compared to the rest of us, may engage with processes of estrangement as matter of course and this may

contribute to innovative path finding behaviour.

Breaking the Paradigm

Seeing the shortcomings of a situation, and/or thinking like someone from “outside” (thinking like a thief for example) allows creatives to observe the limitations in the thinking (or circumstance) that once understood can help resolve and change things. This approach to critical subjectivity is not unusual, or even confined to artists, designers, entrepreneurs and criminals. For example, Einstein was a visual spatial thinker and among other insights pointed out that, ‘We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them’. His account may help us better understand the sort of “criticality” that operates within the minds of most creative individuals and invites questions not just about “deviance” or “abnormality” but perhaps about a deficiency of thinking in others in a given situation. Moreover, this behavioural manifestation may also act

as a driver for competitive behaviour, which expresses itself in many creative individuals, linked to an entrepreneurial approach involving 'critical inquiry that may lead a practitioner to reflective insight' (Friedman, 2002). This reflective approach has enabled many designers, as Donald Schön (1983) has identified, to describe the previously tacit understanding that ideas operate in fluid and fast moving landscapes. The ability to operate fluently in such landscapes is very much dependent on the ability to manoeuvre and deal with complexity. To join up ideas, situations, events – perhaps via what Sangiori, Hemment and Buscher et al (2008) have called “strange connectors” i.e. the linking of things that one would not expect to be linked. Maintaining a faculty for sense making and adaptation has been observed by Mika Aaltonen and Theodor Barth (2005), to be useful as a form of reflection-in-action that can 'create contexts that affect an organisation's ability to learn, adapt and innovate.'

Problem Solving

The skills we have described so far may be familiar and useful to creatives everywhere, especially if they are essentially highly pragmatic people. Creatives will solve problems in order to gain access to a state of mind that will deliver their desires, and/or an income. But a mindset that is creative in its approach also needs to be understood in its cultural context, to make sense of how innovation that follows from creativity may be advanced.

Ronald "Buster" Edwards, who took part in the Great Train Robbery in the UK in 1963, was an ex-British Army Paratrooper then boxer come nightclub owner, who turned to crime because he wanted to access cash quick to live what he perceived as the "good life" (that is, in order to access the income and status denied him). He was persuaded to turn to train robbery (a security train that was delivering cash), a daring crime, innovative in the way it was organised at the time. As Piers Paul

Read (1979) explains after committing the crime, Buster Edwards found most of the cash he stole went on trying to avoid being captured by the police. Reid goes on to point out Edwards certainly would have earned more, in the long term, as a window cleaner or tradesman, than as a criminal and life on the run (outside his criminal milieu) was not much “fun”. Edwards did not stay a free man for long and was sentenced to 15 years for his crime in 1966. Subsequent to his release from prison in 1975 he went on to run a flower stall outside Waterloo station. When a television journalist interviewed him working on his flower stall, he was asked if he missed his former life, to which he replied, “Of course I do, it was exciting and this is boring.”

The idea that creativity and criminality is commonly linked to the need to BE different from or outside the “norm”, to divergent rather than convergent thought-processes has been made by numerous writers, including Malcolm Gladwell (2008). Creativity

is often also equated with non-conformity, in as much as successful creatives, and criminals, are seen as risk-taking, non-conformists, often with different “norms” and drivers to the majority of the population.

Johnson’s (1983) account of non-conformity describes high-level creativity as so called “abnormality” or worse “deviance”. Our experience in working in an art school is the reverse; it is hard to be deviant in an environment where everyone prides themselves on their difference. The reason we have introduced the account of dyslexia to this discussion is to identify the environments (art school, prison and business) where dyslexia has been measured and found to be a significant indicator or descriptor. Also to investigate the evidence about this correlation and to make the case about the different types of thought processes that may be shared by diverse groups.

Art and design strategies embrace both positive and negative ends of the creative spectrum, including the employment of destructive elements. These are drawn upon, if the artist or designer feels it is called for in order to attribute meaning, or create new artistic values or ways of seeing. Here we need to precisely understand the cultural contexts, that may have produced such strategies, and how they work. Notions about “deviance”, (rather than “difference” or “transgression”) may compromise this account, even if such ideas give allure to ideas about, for example, “outsider” art. (Wikipedia, 2009b)

Arguments about deviant biology (and about “brain wiring”) that also explain links between criminality and creativity are compelling. The literature on deviance, is packed full of competing accounts that the disposition to conform or deviate is located in the brain and central nervous system, rather than culture and socialization. Paul McLean (Holden, 1979) for

example has argued that nonconformity is caused by a defect in the central core of the brain, and consequently appears to define creative thinkers as “brain damaged”. Holden (1979) concurs and suggests, using Darwinian rationale, that such genetic defects ‘have social value and a certain amount of non-conformity actually helps the human species to perpetuate itself’. Certainly some brain injuries have been associated with the onset of artistic skills in those that had not previously exhibited them. Whereas many psychologists suggest all conformist and creatives tendencies and tastes are linked to processes of cultural socialization and politics rather than genetic brain formation.

Stephen Dollinger (2007) cites psychological studies that identify that people with conservative tendencies tend to favour simple representational paintings over more ambiguous or abstract arts. He points out ‘Conservatives could be less creative than liberals because of greater threat-induced anxiety (e.g. finding the

ambiguity of creative tasks threatening), their greater inclination to follow convention, and/or their devaluing of imagination.'

More recent research is delivering new insights and new information about how our brains really work (Frank, 2009; Coyle, 2009). For example, current accounts of the human capacity for empathy, particularly feelings of group or social allegiance (Goleman, 2006), may be useful to understanding some of the issues raised here. Certainly very creative individuals, unlike criminals and/or psychopaths, often exhibit concern for community values rather than profit. Issues raised by social empathy are now being actively investigated in globally located centres equipped with high tech machinery and new imaging technologies (PET, MRI, SPECT). Many researchers are looking at brain activity to understand how the brain structures choice and creativity. In Los Angeles, for example, Antonio Damasio is heading up the "Brain and Creativity Institute", located at the

University of Southern California. Frank (2009) estimates that there are about 60 further centres around the world and that neuro biological science is on the threshold of a revolution. Consequently, such research is continually changing our views about conditions such as Alzheimers. Debates about Autism are also being revolutionised by findings that suggests that damage to mirror neurons might be the reason why some children refuse to look at others or make eye contact, or experience empathy.

Whilst we do not want to link accounts of dyslexia or creativity to biological determinism, given the development of the brain and nervous system is also now more than ever linked to social interaction and experience (Goleman, 2006), we are aware that there are studies underway that may in future do so. But for the purposes of delivering this paper, we choose instead to draw upon Johnson's (1983) suggestion that the relationship between creativity and criminality should best be examined in social terms

by looking at specific social groups, not least because it is more manageable in terms of our research investigation.

Johnson originally suggested that connections between creativity and criminality can be best measured by looking at:

(a) The creative potential of incarcerated criminals or identified delinquents;

(b) The correlation between criminal and creative tendencies in “normals”; and

(c) Criminal or psychopathic behaviour in creative person's.

Although we have issues with some of Johnson's definitions of “normality” in the next section of this article, we continue to interrogate (a) and (b), as stated above, primarily to introduce case studies that help us explore further links between creativity and criminality.

2. THE DARK SIDE OF CREATIVITY – CASE STUDIES FROM THE DESIGN AGAINST CRIME RESEARCH CENTRE (DACRC)

The DACRC at CSM has endeavoured to tap into the potential of adapting creativity into a positive tool for social change, DAC has been linked to several government and independent social design initiatives as well as the successful delivery of design resources and design outputs, some of which have won awards for innovation.

See Fig. 1 & 2

As a practice led research centre, it engages with how design can enable individuals to channel experiences and their private frustrations about crime into creativity aimed at public expression via positive design against crime interventions. The

“think thief” approach (Ekblom, 1997), the account of the criminal gaze (Gamman, 2008b) and the explanation of the design against crime process and methodology (Gamman and Thorpe, 2009) that the Centre has produced from delivering practice, has enabled many designers working with DAC to generate design investigations that operate differently to market-led design. A normal starting point for any form of market design intervention is to receive a brief (a document or verbal expression outlining the client’s needs) and to reinterpret it linked to the client’s needs. The alternative approach taken by DAC has been to consider how the issue addressed originated, or how the perpetrators, i.e. the creators of the design problem, and the abusers of products, systems and services, could be “blocked” or their behaviour redirected, reduced or designed “out”. This latter design focus is linked to user and abuser centred design. It began for DACRC when Professor Lorraine Gamman, who set up the initiative in 1999, became frustrated with market-led design

projects. Coincidentally, around this period she had been finalising the life story of the shoplifter Shirley Pitts, as an oral history that formed part of her PhD (delivered in 1999) when it occurred to her to focus on crime in terms of creating briefs for design students she taught. Gamman says she was astonished in design terms (and inspired) by Pitt's account of defeating millions of pounds worth of security tags and CCTV systems, simply with a carrier bag lined with foil. Evidently, when closed a foil lined carrier bag (Fig 3.) stops the tags connecting with the alarms allowing Shirley, and many other thieves, to get out of the shops without being caught. For Gamman this raised two questions; the first was what was wrong with the design of retail environments, if it was so easy for professional thieves to get away using such simple solutions? The second was how did Shirley do it, what prompted her to come up with a design that could outwit millions of pounds worth of security and how could she encourage designers to draw on such thinking and be more ingenious than

thieves?

See Fig. 3.

The need to reduce costs of staffing and to find ways to inspire or tempt the public to buy things, involves troublesome tradeoffs for the retail trade, as well as problems linked to store layout. Many in-store promotions really do work by giving the public easy access to goods so they are tempted to buy things. However, such strategies also make it easy for thieves, and whilst such environments and promotions create considerable profits, they also deliver many unanticipated crime vulnerabilities.

Criminologists such as Ron Clarke (1995), Paul Ekblom (1997) and Ken Pease (2001) have pointed out that poor design causes crime (not just criminals). Gamman (2008a) has also argued that:

1. The design of retail environments, is often complicit with

criminal intention, and needs review.

2. That designers and criminals have a lot in common, and a lot to contribute, certainly in terms of understanding how environments might work to be less complicit with crime.

All writers mentioned suggest that there is a need to understand the mindset of those that steal. Shirley Pitts, who is the subject of the biography *Gone Shopping, Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves* (1996) is found to be very creative person, one that was successful at crime, even if the audacity of some of her scams – like standing in Harrods shop window to escape security guards pretending to model a mink coat – didn't employ all her substantial energy or make her happy. Gamman (2008c) has argued 'Shirley's foil lined carrier bag in its simplicity may on reflection be far more creative – even if that's an account of the dark side of creativity – than the retro fitted security systems it

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subverted' (Fig 3.) She also suggests Shirley Pitts could have used her creativity to be anything she wanted, but her circumstances, providing for her family by thieving from the age of seven, prevented this happening. In-between scams, Gamman observes that Pitts frequently drew clothing, faces and shapes. Also in order to sell the goods she stole, she even redesigned some of the clothing with her own accessories. Apparently, Pitts who many regarded as stylish, believed some of the expensive designer clothes she stole, worth many thousands of pounds, didn't look "right" and so she changed them, to suit her customers who she "dressed" like a fashion stylist.

DACRC works within design education and industry, and visualises criminal perpetrator techniques and ways of seeing, to encourage designers to "think thief". This process may be defined as a form of "Alterity" (or "Otherness") linked to the philosophical principle of exchanging one's own perspective for that of the

"other". Many of us engage with such "oppositional" rather than "preferred" perspectives and readings of films/media during our everyday life e.g. a man reading a magazine aimed at women, may receive the information he engages with, in a different way from its original intention. The idea of "thinking thief" is aimed at trying to understand the criminal gaze at objects and environments that anticipates opportunity through abuse. In regards to how to think like a shoplifter, Martin Gill (2007) has put such theory into practice and taken shop thieves back to the scene of their offences, and concluded there are six key decision points that are critical to shoplifting. He suggests there is the potential for designers to influence offender's decisions. To stay one step ahead the list of six questions that designers should consider from the POV of the thief including:

Why do I choose that store to steal from?

On entering the store, does this look easy?

On searching for goods to steal, can I avoid attracting attention?

On stealing the goods, can I avoid being seen?

On getting away, can I be sure no one is following me and no one will apprehend me?

On selling the goods, will I get money and avoid being traced?

DACRC's strategy of familiarising designers with criminal thinking, while also locating designers within a crime prevention discourse, does not necessarily deliver 'problem solving', rather it directs designers to intervene as agents for change. DACRC's methodology also acknowledges that not all problems can be solved and that it is also important to understand how social disorder and social disorganisation have a role to play in our lives and can be a source of illicit pleasure. For example, the word "graffiti" describes many different types of mark making and

creative strategies, than the words “vandalism” and “criminal damage” convey. As a consequence of such criminal definitions, enormous public funds are spent cleaning up graffiti linked to zero tolerance campaigns, but nothing really changes. Each side perceives the problem in criminal terms – one side view marking the walls as a crime, and the other perceive erasing their art as criminal. Such polarisation certainly does not lead to the resolution of the problem or creative social innovation strategies that could accommodate the compulsions and communication that underlies graffiti.

Tony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2001) in their book *Design Noir* review the human capacity to enjoy misuse and abuse, and the pleasures of illegal activities like hacking (rather than graffiti). They discuss the “noir” edge of human subjectivity in design terms, specifically the potential of human beings to establish unpredicted or dark relationships with things, specifically

electronic objects. Complex emotions, desires and needs are clearly played out through engagement with objects and environments, which have potential for more than one type of behaviour or pleasure. This potential manifests in vastly different ways, from expected types of uses (many of which could be termed “creative”) and also from the way individuals subvert such usages, and preferred readings. Dunne and Raby cite extreme examples of what they mean from the man who “married” his television, to the teenagers who use new mobile phone technologies to bully and intimate each other; the experience of a 15 year old girl who was driven to suicide after receiving up to 20 silent calls in half an hour is documented. Evidently, she left her suicide note as a text message on her phone.

Like the Dutch design group Droog, whose work questions what design is, or could be, Dunne and Raby play with dark emotions in

their own work. For example, the desk that makes it possible for the overwhelmed to simply hide inside it. They argue that 'our environments have room for danger, adventure and transgression. We don't think that design can fully articulate the richness of this unofficial world and neither should it. But it can draw inspiration from it and develop new design approaches'.

3. THE DARK SIDE OF CREATIVITY – MORE CASE STUDIES FROM ART AND DESIGN

Artists and designers have certainly drawn upon the dark, the strange and the criminal in their attempts to make meanings in the world: the fashion industry, for example, has not only generated dark imagery (from heroin chic to road kills shots) but also encouraged designers to play with transgression, like artists.

Consequently some have used mould and other abject materials to make fashion statements. Such actions are rarely intended to inflict harm on others, but instead make us think by removing us from the realm of the familiar, secure or routine. Whilst some criminal activities may do something similar i.e. transgress upon routine understandings, the difference is that real criminal acts often harm and traumatise us, whereas crimes of the imagination are uncommitted in reality and rarely do similar harm. Artists and criminals, for this reason, may in different ways enjoy revealing or interrogating power structures at work, which takes both ingenuity and often courage. Certainly some artists, when they have seen a need, resort to transgressive behaviour in order to make statements, often provoking public outrage. From Serrano's *Piss Christ* (1987) to Judy Chicago's image of a vagina and bloody tampon (1971), rule breaking, taboo busting art has become the norm even if some of it – like Marcus Harvey's *Myra* (1995) from the *Sensation* exhibition, does not really offer much in the way of

meaningful social comment about crime.

Some artists go further and engage with real crime to make their point, sometimes bringing into question their moral sanity.

Robert Mapplethorpe abused a model he kidnapped and photographed and was taken to court. Sophie Calle (born in 1953) took to stalking in order to expose the vulnerability of individuals being watched or looked at. Andrew Savage allegedly shoplifted and photographed white goods and displayed them in a gallery space, to make social comment about issues of ownership. There are more we could add, including those artists who are more ambiguous about how they approach crime. The photographer Alan Lodge, known as "Tash" (<http://tash.gn.apc.org>), for example engaged with the mechanisms of crime prevention, and utilised CCTV as a form of public theatre. He presented a number of short plays and performances to London's Oxford Street surveillance cameras, in order reject the passivity imposed by

CCTV and to retrieve power. The Dutch artist Jan de Groot (2007) also chose to challenge issues about naming and identity, by faking his own death after a rather brutal rejection by his gallery who informed him that he was dead as an artist. A press release, described in dramatic terms how de Groot jumped to his death from the window of his parents home. It also went on to claim that his parents were found beheaded in their beds. Subsequently, the police found de Groot and parents alive and well.

Anthony-Noel Kelly (1997) stole anatomical specimens from the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) to make gilded plaster casts from them as sculptures. He subsequently caused controversy and outrage, when some of the faces were recognised by horrified relatives. His conviction for theft overturned hundreds of years of legal precedent that had said the body was not property and so could not be owned or stolen. His actions were obviously “criminal” although his credibility as an artist was brought into

question, not just for the theft of body parts, but for his use of plaster, regarded as an inferior and cheap material, and not worthy of artistic presentation (Wildgoose, 2002).

Conclusion

We hope the foregoing discussion will have demonstrated that the account of “creativity” has been linked to a history of competing definitions. So in this paper we have primarily focussed on the ways creativity leads to innovation and income generation. We have also looked at some of the traits creatives and criminals have in common and suggested “dyslexia” as an area needs further research. We have also suggested that artists, designers, entrepreneurs and criminals share divergent thought processes, and occasionally similar creative strategies in their work. Opportunism, and understanding of risk, is a common link. Both groups are known for seizing the opportunity and their handiwork is everywhere linked to social good or ill. The main

difference as we have identified between groups, is whilst they both make a living out of their creativity and ingenuity, criminals exhibit less capacity for social empathy and appear more pessimistic and parasitic using their creativity for selfish ends. Some artists and designers also demonstrate these qualities, but the majority appear to have more capacity for group orientated comment, or even empathetic behaviour i.e. a creating shared social outcomes and meanings than criminals, perhaps because artists often seek to conquer taboos and social prejudices through art, which they believe, can emancipate us. Most of the creatives from the world of art and design appear optimistic enough to believe their skills can be put to use to change the world for the better, usually but not always within the confines of the law. The task now must be to figure out how to encourage those who force the law's boundaries and whose activities lead to social harm to move "into the light" (to follow the *Star Wars* metaphor through to its conclusion) and understand why their approach is negative

(rather than “evil”). The challenge must be to find alternative and better outlets for creative energy, than crime presently serves. It is our contention that from Buster Edwards to Shirley Pitts, from graffiti taggers to happy slappers, different lives may be possible – indeed different worlds may be possible – if viable alternatives for creative energy can be found without simply containing or sanitising passion.

7393 words

Fig 1 Chair

Fig 2 Bike

Fig 3 Foil lined carrier bag