a director prepares

seven essays on art and theatre

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Embarrassment

The leap, not the step, is what makes the experience possible.

(Heiner Müller)

Every creative act involves a leap into the void. The leap has to occur at the right moment and yet the time for the leap is never prescribed. In the midst of a leap, there are no guarantees. To leap can often cause acute embarrassment. Embarrassment is a partner in the creative act – a key collaborator. If your work does not sufficiently embarrass you, then very likely no one will be touched by it.

A friend of mine, an actor, harboured a life-long fantasy to be a rock star. Fuelled by his devotion to Sting, Mick Jagger and Peter Gabriel, he assembled a band, practised in a basement studio and finally got a booking in a club in the East Village in New York City. He invited me to the performance. The club was noisy, his band mediocre, and my friend’s performance, unfortunately, was even worse.
Although he executed all the requisite rock star moves, the event had a remarkably false feel. He performed in front of three appropriately tough-looking back-up musicians and bombed.

At the end of the set, I turned to my companion, Annette Humpe, who actually was a rock star from Berlin, and asked her why the performance had been such a failure. She answered without hesitation: 'Er hat keine Scheu.' Roughly translated, 'Scheu' means shyness or embarrassment. 'He has no embarrassment.' I wanted to know more. 'He's an actor, not a singer,' she explained. 'He is performing a singer, but he's not really singing.'

In order to identify the characteristics of an authentic singer, Annette Humpe suggested that we stay on in the club to hear the next band. The following group featured a woman who simply stood in front of her band and sang. At first she seemed awkward and unsophisticated but very soon it became apparent that she was, in fact, a real singer. The act of singing, the intensity of the sound emanating from her body increased her vulnerability. Her own self-awareness disconcerted her and she appeared slightly embarrassed.

If one is not 'touched' by the brashness of what is expressed through you, then, as Gertrude Stein remarked about Oakland, California, 'there is no there there.' Perhaps Judy Garland raised her arms into what became the iconic Garland shape from her sense of embarrassment and self-awareness. From that moment onward, singers and drag queens imitated the exact movement of her arms in heedless adoration. But most of these performers also manage to avoid her original embarrassment. It is true that there are a few great drag queens who have appropriated Judy Garland’s shapes and managed to transcend the inherited stereotypes. A great 'repeater' uses the original pattern, not to imitate mindlessly, but rather to open new frontiers.

In the case of a mediocre performer who executes mindless imitation, the discomfiture of the original creative moment is missing. In search of authenticity, one cannot expect to find security and safety inside inherited forms, plays, songs or movements. What’s necessary is to rekindle the fire inside of repetition and be prepared for a personal exposure to its effects. Be prepared to be embarrassed.

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Acting is half shame, half glory. Shame at exhibiting yourself, glory when you can forget yourself.

(John Gielgud)

Usually we think of embarrassment as self-consciousness, shame or awkwardness. But the etymology of the word suggests other useful possibilities. It first appeared in 1672 and derives from the French embarrasser, which means to entangle, obstruct or trouble; to encumber; impede, to make difficult or intricate; to complicate. In Portuguese, barras is a bar or an obstruction. An embarrassment is an obstruction to navigation in a stream, caused by the lodging of driftwood.
or trunks of trees. Embarrassment, in this sense, means to hinder, complicate and impede.

I like to think of embarrassment as an obstruction we encounter that helps us clarify our mission. Can we welcome the entanglement of engagement? Can we allow our sense of authority to be challenged in the encounter? When you grapple with something that is just out of your reach, you find yourself entangled in something that you haven't yet mastered.

Embarrassment is a teacher. A good actor risks embarrassment in every moment. There is nothing more thrilling than to be in rehearsal with an actor who is willing to set foot into embarrassing territory. The uneasiness keeps the lines tight. If you try to avoid being embarrassed by what you do, nothing will happen because the territory remains safe and unexposed. Embarrassment engenders a glow and a presence and a dissolving of habit.

To avoid embarrassment is a natural human tendency. Feeling truly exposed to others is rarely a comforting sensation. But if what you do or make does not embarrass you sufficiently, then it is probably not personal or intimate enough. Revelation is necessary to warrant attention. The feeling of embarrassment is a good omen because it signifies that you are meeting the moment fully, with an openness to the new feelings it will engender.

The best way to avoid embarrassment is to treat the material at hand as a known entity rather than an unknown one. As a director I can choose to approach a play either with the attitude that it is a small controllable canvas or a huge canvas, brimming with untapped potential. If I choose to possess a superior attitude to the material, it will conform, remain safe and unthreatening. It will stay smaller than me. If I adopt the attitude that the project is an adventure larger than anything I might imagine, an entity that will challenge me to find an instinctual path through it, the project will be allowed its proper magnitude.

When cast in a particular role, an actor also faces a choice of attitude. If she or he chooses to consider the character as someone whose vistas are beyond their own limited experience, the results will be remarkably different from those of someone who decides to see their character as smaller than themselves. The first will undergo a greater, more personal adventure and, consequently, more necessary embarrassment. The actor who decides to consider the character smaller than him- or herself will rarely attempt anything not already familiar. In rehearsal she or he will inevitably utter the dreaded words: 'My character would never do that.' This small-minded attitude leads to a tight, controlled, and ultimately uninteresting performance. The attitude which allows for the character to be larger than one's own experience results in an adventure of unlimited possibility.

After acting in a play for an entire year, Vanessa Redgrave realized that there were parts of the production she just did not know how to do, so she decided to let her not-knowing show while she worked it out. She hoped that audiences would either look the other way so that she could figure it out, or, if they wanted to look, that would be OK too. As it turned out, these moments were absolutely
riveting. I imagine that the force of her not-knowing cut through the evening. I imagine that she felt more exposed, more vulnerable and, probably, more present and awake.

The enemy of art is assumption: the assumption that you know what you are doing, the assumption that you know how to walk and how to talk, the assumption that what you ‘mean’ will mean the same thing to those who receive it. The instant you make an assumption about who the audience is or what the moment is, that moment will be asleep. Assumptions can prevent you from entering new and embarrassing territory.

If you manage to question your assumptions, you will find yourself instantly, childlike, face to face with new sensations. Even the people around you, untamed by your assumptions, will suddenly seem fresh and full of potential. In the midst of this new territory you get inspired, you get defeated, you feel embarrassment.

In the process of studying the necessary distress of embarrassment, I found ten helpful notions to get through the tough moments.

1 You cannot hide; your growth as an artist is not separate from your growth as a human being: it is all visible

- The only possible spiritual development (for an artist) is in the sense of depth. The artistic tendency is not expansive, but a contraction. And art is the apotheosis of solitude.

   (Samuel Beckett)

As a young director, I was so thrilled when Meredith Monk, whom I admired tremendously, came to see a production I had directed. Anxious afterwards to know what she thought, I pursued her for a critique. She said that the play needed more interval, more space, more silence.

I jumped at this. Her criticism made sense and I wanted to do something about it. How can I get more interval in my work, I wondered? Finally, after much consideration, I realized that I couldn’t just impose more interval into my work; I had to have more interval, more space, more silence in me.

A director cannot hide from an audience because intentions are always visible, palpable. An audience senses your attitude towards them. They smell your fright or condescension. They know instinctively that you want only to impress or conquer. They sense your engagement or lack of it. These qualities live in your body and are visible in your work. You must have a reason to do what it is you do because these reasons are felt by anyone who comes in contact with your work. It matters how you treat people, how you take responsibility in a crisis, what values you develop, your politics, what you read, how you speak and even which words you choose. You cannot hide.

Neither can an actor hide from an audience. Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki once remarked: ‘There is no such thing as good or bad acting, only degrees of profundity of the actor’s reason for being on stage.’ This reason is manifest in your body and in your energy. First you have to have a reason to act and then, in order to articulate clearly, you
must be courageous in that act. The quality of any moment on the stage is determined by the vulnerability and modesty one feels in relation to that courageous, articulate, necessary act.

What you do in rehearsal is visible in the product. The quality of the time spent together is visible. The chief ingredient in rehearsal is real, personal interest. And interest is one of the few components in theatre that has absolutely nothing to do with artifice. You cannot fake interest. It must be genuine. Interest is your engine and it determines the lengths to which you will travel in the heat of engagement. It is also an ingredient that vacillates and changes in time. You have to be sensitive to its vicissitudes.

In rehearsal, a director cannot hide from an actor. Again, intentions are visible and palpable. An actor can sense the quality of interest and attentiveness the director brings into the room. It is real and it is tangible. If intentions are cheap, the actor knows this. The line between the director and the actor is undeniable and it can be either tense or slack. A director should attend to that line with interest and listening.

In art, the truth is always manifest in the experience of it. The audience will finally have the most direct experience of the breadth or lack of your interest. They will feel the truth about your intentions and about who you are, who you have become. They will instinctively know what you are up to. It is all visible.

2 Every creative act includes a leap

Art serves us best precisely at that point where it can shift our sense of what is possible, when we know more than we knew before, when we feel we have – by some manner of a leap – encountered the truth. That, by the logic of art, is always worth the pain.

(T.S. Eliot)

In rehearsal and in performance, a leap is required at every juncture. Every time an actor walks on to the stage, she or he must be prepared to leap unexpectedly. Without that willingness, the stage will remain a tame and conventional place. Be prepared to leap at the appropriate moment and you will never know when the moment will be appropriate. The door opens and you must go through it with no consideration for the consequences. You leap. But you must also accept that the leap itself does not guarantee anything. And it does not mitigate the embarrassment; rather, it heightens it.

According to Rollo May in his book The Courage to Create, artists and scientists throughout history agree that, at their best, they feel as though they are being spoken through. They have somehow managed to get out of their own way. Some say that God speaks through them. Others maintain, in a more pedestrian fashion, that in order to get out of their own way and bypass the frontal lobe of the brain, they go for a walk in the forest or take a nap. They have to get their mind off what they are trying to do in order to make the most inspired connections. The mind is always
out to ambush the process. The discoveries and breakthroughs happen when you successfully manage to get out of your own way.

I spend many hours in libraries and with research materials for every play I direct. At one time I thought that the aimless meandering around the libraries and the little naps that I took while doing research were pure laziness. I wandered and slept. I assumed guiltily that I was avoiding the necessary rigour of study. But, it turns out that this wandering served to get me out of my own way and make space for necessary fuzzy logic conceptual leaps.

In preparation for a production of Georg Büchner's *Danton's Death*, I studied the French Revolution to get a sense of the energy behind the play's genesis. I was also looking for an arena it might inhabit and a way to channel that fierce energy. In the library I sporadically meandered away from the books on the French Revolution, took naps, wandered through the stacks and flipped through magazines. One afternoon, in a kind of a daze, I found myself leafing through a new book on clubs in downtown New York City by Michael Musto, a writer for the *Village Voice*. At that time, in the mid-1980s, a big, vibrant club movement swept the downtown scene. These clubs sometimes set up special environments on a particular theme. An array of young people who called themselves 'celebutants' dressed wildly, danced, partied and took drugs in these themed clubs. One club, Area, spent an entire month on a French Revolution theme. The celebutants dressed and behaved accordingly.

Suddenly, the arena for *Danton's Death* jumped out of the pages of Michael Musto's book. I made a big conceptual leap. During the bloodiest part of the French Revolution, around 1795, the mad energy of violence and change engendered a movement of vigilantes called 'the Gilded Youth'. Some were released prisoners, some were draft-dodgers, many were clerks and petty bureaucrats, and all were looking for trouble. Affecting extravagant clothes and hairstyles, they danced and partied, making it their business to harass, disrupt and break up public occasions.

I took a conceptual leap. What would happen, I wondered, if we staged the entire play in the context of a club. The parallel of the celebutants and the 'Gilded Youth' might channel the necessary energy needed to give the play resonance. What would happen if the actors played modern-day celebutants who became 'Gilded Youth' to spin out the wild rollercoaster ride of the play with all its big political speeches, scheming and bloodshed?

This leap provided and 'in' for me and for the actors and designers. It gave us a place to start. This leap became the trampoline upon which we could enter the play and a context in which the actors could meet one another through the fiction of the characters and situations. I think the audience enjoyed the ride.
3 You cannot create results; you can only create the conditions in which something might happen

It is not the director's responsibility to produce results but, rather, to create the circumstances in which something might happen. The results come about by themselves. With one hand firmly on the specifics and one hand reaching to the unknown, you start to work.

I know that at certain key moments I have to keep out of the actors' way. Not infrequently when an actor is working on the most difficult moments in a play, I know that I should concentrate on other things. I should give space so that they might to do their own work.

I directed Elmer Rice's big expressionist play The Adding Machine at Actors Theater of Louisville. The character Zero, played by Bill McNulty, has a huge monologue in a courtroom where he ensnares himself in front of a jury. His five-page monologue constitutes the entire scene and it is very tricky to navigate. I knew that Bill needed room to roam, to explore, to find the necessary channels of self-revelation that the play asked for. He needed room to follow a scent. And he didn't need me to add to the pressure that already existed for him in the scene. And so, in rehearsal, I concentrated on everything on the stage except him. I kept the scene moving but used the time to refine the positioning of the jury and take care of spacing issues. I let him do his work. If I had put all my concentration directly on him at that time in rehearsal, I know that he would probably have got shut down by my desire for him to find his way in the scene. My intention was for Bill to find his way, but I got at that intention by concentrating on other things. For someone watching the rehearsal it probably would have looked like I had no interest in the character Zero. But in fact the opposite was true. Sometimes, you have to go through the back door to get to the front.

Rehearsal is not about forcing things to happen; rather, rehearsal is about listening. The director listens to the actors. The actors listen to one another. You listen collectively to the text. You listen for clues. You keep things moving. You probe. You do not gloss over moments as if they were understood. Nothing is understood. You bring your attention to the situation as it evolves. I think of rehearsal like playing the Ouija board, where you collectively put your hands on a question and then follow the movement as it starts to unfold. You follow it until the scene reveals its secret.

By taking care of the circumstances in which you are working, things start, inevitably, to happen. Quantum physics suggests that nothing is at rest. Nothing stops. Ever. There is always movement. Ours is an observer-created reality. The act of observing something changes it. The Taoists advise: 'To do the not to do.' The active not doing. Be awake and ride the events as they occur. The effort to force something to happen makes listening impossible.

To arrive at a place where something sufficiently embarrassing can happen, I place my attention on the circumstances of the rehearsal. I attend to the quality of the room,
including punctuality, lack of clutter and cleanliness. As we start to rehearse, I concentrate on details. Often it doesn't matter which details, but my act of concentration helps to concentrate everything and everybody else. I try to be present as fully as possible, listen with my whole body and then respond instinctively to what happens. The creative process happens by itself.

4 To enter paradise you usually have to go through the back door

One of the greatest essays about the theatre, entitled 'About a Marionette Theater', written by Heinrich von Kleist in 1812, addresses the issues of affectation, self-consciousness and embarrassment in the theatre. Kleist meets his friend, a ballet master, who takes him through a process of thinking about how the affected behaviour we encounter on the stage emerges from the actor's hyper-awareness of him- or herself in action. The lack of naturalness arises out of self-consciousness. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, concludes the essay, since the origin of self-consciousness, we cannot enter paradise through the front gate. We have to go around to the back of the world.

What does Kleist mean? Is he referring to the self-consciousness of embarrassment? Does he mean that we cannot be natural on stage just by trying to be natural on stage? I reread this essay regularly because of its common sense and insight into one of the major problems we face every time we try to do something on the stage.

Haven't we all experienced genuine moments of inspiration where natural genius seems to flow naturally through us? But then, how quickly does that state of grace pass! How do we repeat the discoveries without affectation? How do we create the conditions for God to speak through us on a regular basis? Most of the time self-consciousness gets in our way. As soon as you start to stretch the boundaries of habit or work on the outer edges of your capabilities, an acute self-consciousness immediately sets in which can feel completely disconcerting and unproductive. This obstacle, this self-consciousness lives with us in almost everything that we do.

Julian Jaynes in his book The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Man, places the beginning of self-consciousness in Western civilization at around 1400 BC, during the Minoan period in Greece. He maintains that the human brain split into a right and left hemisphere as part of the biological necessity to maintain hegemony in a world growing more and more complex. This notion of the left and right hemispheres of the brain can be equated with the Fall of Adam and Eve and the birth of the obstacle self-consciousness. After eating from the tree of knowledge, Adam and Eve, suddenly conscious of their nakedness, felt modest and covered themselves. Suddenly they were embarrassed.

The part of the brain that can easily divert you from your path is commonly known as the frontal lobe. It generates the constant buzzing in your head that wants to censure you and is out to ambush your every move. In order to find a
creative flow you have to give the frontal lobe something else to do so that it will stay out of your way. You have to engage that part of the brain with busywork so that it will be otherwise engaged. Only then, once you have found your way around the obstacle of the pervasive buzzing, can you start to follow an aesthetic scent or a creative whim. Only then can you begin to trust in your instincts. Then, once you are free to be spontaneous, intuition can be your guide.

During his life, Stanislavsky found systems to engage the frontal lobe of the actor's brain. He too must have understood that in order to enter paradise you have to go through the back door. He invented useful mechanisms of distraction (the back door) to get yourself out of your own way in order to attain spontaneity and naturalness (paradise) on the stage. He gave these useful diversions names like 'given circumstances', 'motivation', 'justification', 'the Magic If', 'objectives and super-objectives', etc.

How do you get out of your own way? First, accept the paradox that theatre is artifice yet our search is for authenticity – art, as Picasso said, is the lie that tells the truth. Despite the artifice we search for spontaneity and freedom. But to enter that paradise, you cannot enter through the front gates; you must go around to the back door.

An actor knows that in order to muster a genuinely unaffected moment on the stage, she or he cannot simply try to be genuine. It's never as simple as that. No more than we could, say, play the violin genuinely without struggling with craft. The actor grapples with this issue on a daily basis by learning to handle the artifice through training and practice. Good actors know intuitively that they are half marionette and the rest is real inspiration, intuitive intelligence and listening. They concentrate on negotiating the artifice – the size of the stage, the blocking, the text, the costumes, the lights – to the point where the conscious mind – that is out to ambush us and make us small – is occupied with something else so that the spontaneity and naturalness can arrive unimpeded.

To find a way to approach Danton's Death, I had to find the back door – the celebutants in a club – to find a conduit to the authentic original energy of the play. You cannot look directly at the sun because it will injure your eyes, so you look to the side with the intention of experiencing the sun. Something unaffected might happen when we concentrate not on the thing itself, but on a thing to the side.

A working artist is in a constant struggle with the brain's attempts to ambush their work through diversion. Do not be seduced by the buzz. In all the work with artifice, while going through the back door, keep your inner eye secretly on paradise. Stay true to a deeper pursuit.

5 Allow yourself to go off balance

Most people become highly creative in the midst of an emergency. In the instant of imbalance and pressure, quick and decent solutions to big immediate problems must be found. It is in these moments of crisis that native intelligence and intuitive imagination kicks in: the woman who lifts a car
because her child is trapped beneath, an inspired strategic choice in the crisis of battle, the quick decisions in the heat of a final rehearsal before a first night audience. I have found that, creatively, imbalance is more fruitful than stability.

Art begins in the struggle for equilibrium. One cannot create from a balanced state. Being off balance produces a predicament that is always interesting on stage. In the moment of imbalance, our animal instincts prompt us to struggle towards equilibrium and this struggle is endlessly engaging and fruitful. When you welcome imbalance into your work, you will find yourself instantly face to face with your own inclination towards habit. Habit is an artist’s opponent. In art, the unconscious repetition of familiar territory is never vital or exciting. We must try to remain awake and alive in the face of our inclinations towards habit. Finding yourself off balance provides you with an invitation to disorientation and difficulty. It is not a comfortable prospect. You are suddenly out of your element and out of control. And it is here the adventure begins. When you welcome imbalance, you will instantly enter new and uncharted territory in which you feel small and inadequate in relation to the task at hand. But the fruits of this engagement abound.

6 Insecurity is OK

I am mortified to be on the stage, but then again, it’s the only place where I’m happy.

(Bob Dylan)

A director’s job is not to supply answers but rather to provide interest. You need to find the right questions and discern when and how to ask them. If you already have the answers, then what is the point of being in rehearsal? But you certainly need to know what you are looking for.

Interest is the artist’s primary tool and it occupies the territory of personal insecurity – you do not have the answers and you are provoked by the questions. You will occasionally be embarrassed by the search in the dark because of what you bump into. The engine for interest is curiosity. A director asks simple and meaningful questions propelled by curiosity. Curiosity cannot be faked. In the exquisite moments of curiosity and interest, we live in between, we travel outward with inquiry. Interest is a feeling directed outward to an object or a person or a subject, a theme, or a play. In travelling outward, in pursuing an interest, we experience insecurity. Insecurity is not only OK, it is a necessary ingredient.

7 Use accidents

Things always go ‘wrong’. Things happen that you haven’t planned for. Sigmund Freud suggested that there is no such thing as an accident. Might an accident be a sign? Might it be asking for attention? An accident contains energy – the energy of uncontrolled shapes.

Normally when things start to fall apart we pull back. We want to reassess. Can this impulse be reversed? Can we welcome the energy of an accidental occurrence? In the
momen: that things start to fall apart can we enter into the event rather than shy away from it?

In rehearsal for a production of *Moby Dick*, the extraordinary actor George Kahn got so frustrated that he literally ran up a wall. The director Ric Zank instructed Kahn to ‘keep it’. Many directors would have taken the frustration and the running up the wall as a cue to sit down and discuss the incident: and the problem. Instead, Zank incorporated into the production what many would have considered inappropriate. And it worked for the play. It was such a difficult physical act that every time Kahn had to run up the wall in that particular moment in performance, he was forced to summon all of his strength and capability to accomplish it. If there is no such thing as an accident and everything is fodder and happens for a reason, then accidents can be channelled into the shape of a production. And these shapes contain energy, memory and necessary ambiguity.

I know a designer who loves it when someone bumps accidentally into the model for his scenic design because it always allows him to look at the elements he has been working with in an entirely new way.

8 Walk the tightrope between control and chaos

If your work is too controlled, it has no life. If it is too chaotic, no one can see or hear it.

In rehearsal, you have to set something, agree upon something. If you predetermine everything, if too much is agreed upon, there will be nothing left to the inspiration of

the moment in performance. Some aspects of the process need to be left entirely alone. Controlling too much usually means that there is not enough trust of the actor’s spontaneity and the audience’s ability to contribute to the event.

W. C. Fields said ‘never work with children or animals’. What he meant is that both children and animals are entirely uncontrollable entities and thus are almost always more interesting to watch than whatever planned moments are happening in conjunction with them. But the most exciting work has both: the carefully set moments and then something else that is entirely uncontrollable and full of potential.

9 Do your homework and know when to stop doing your homework

In every creative process there comes the moment where you have to stop worrying about whether or not you know enough about the subject you’ve been studying. A rehearsal is not about proving that what you have worked out before is the right solution for the play. The research eventually gets in your way. If you don’t get beyond the homework, the outcome will become academic. Academic art simply validates the research. It does not challenge it.

In rehearsal you must be vigilant. You must listen with your whole being. In these heated moments, you cannot afford to think things through. You must be available and attentive to the doors that open unexpectedly. You must leap at the appropriate moment. You cannot wait. The doors close fast.
Study, analyse, free associate, conceptualize, prepare 150 ideas for every scene, write everything down and then be ready to throw it all away. It is important to prepare and it is important to know when to stop preparing. You will never be ready and you must always be ready for this step. Your preparation gets you to the first step. And then something else takes over.

A Russian director once said to me, 'The most difficult part of the rehearsal process is the moment the actors must get up from the table where all the enchanting research and discussions have taken place, and begin to implement it on the stage. No one wants to move away from the comfort of the table, but,' he said, 'I will show you a trick, a director's trick that will ensure that the actors will want to act.' He then demonstrated the trick. We were, at that moment, sitting together at a table. 'Imagine that we are at a table with a group of actors, studying a play,' he said and then picked up his chair where he and I had been seated together and moved it away from me to a certain distance. Then he placed the chair down and started to look at me intently. I felt exposed. 'No actors actually want to perform their scene sitting around a table.' By moving away he created a stage and with his gaze he suggested the exquisite pressure of an audience's attention. Suddenly the comfort of gathering around discussing ideas was replaced with the rapt attention of a man who looks at you and says 'show me'.

10 Concentrate on detail

When in doubt, when you are lost, don't stop. Instead, concentrate on detail. Look around, find a detail to concentrate on and do that. Forget the big picture for a while. Just put your energy into the details of what is already there. The big picture will eventually open up and reveal itself if you can stay out of the way for a while. It won't open up if you stop. You have to stay involved but you don't always have to stay involved with the big picture.

While paying attention to the details and welcoming insecurity, while walking the tightrope between control and chaos and using accidents, while allowing yourself to go off balance and going through the back door, while creating the circumstances in which something might happen and being ready for the leap, while not hiding and being ready to stop doing homework, something is bound to happen. And it will probably be appropriately embarrassing.