

# **“THE CREATIVE SPACES IN BETWEEN”**

**- BEING CONSCIOUSLY CREATIVE IN EVERYDAY LIFE**



**MARIE ELISABETH A. FRANCK MORTENSEN**

***CreativeSpaces-fm.com***

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**STORY BY:**

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*CreativeSpaces-fm.com*

*“The Creative Spaces in Between”:  
Being Consciously Creative in Everyday Life.*

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mosaic decoration assignments or mosaic courses, gallery, and more,  
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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to dedicate this book to my deeply cherished son, Nicolaj, who more than anyone else has been a vivid role model for me, living out the principles of seizing the day and following your flow and your passion.

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# FOREWORD

For many years, as an artist, I have made a wide range of assignments with mosaic decorations, and I have cracked and broken thousands upon thousands of tiles in an ongoing immersion in the endless possibilities which are found in creating new structures, new “Creative Spaces In Between”. The vast experience gained from the creative world, I have coupled with the art of creating everyday life, and in this book I invite you on a journey into a different universe of thinking. Here you will learn how to shift your attention away from your spouse; your colleague; your boss; or product, and towards “The Creative Spaces In Between”, where all change, development and innovation takes place.

Creativity became the key element in my life and to my personal development; as the only stable thing I found in work situations, as well as in times of sorrow or happiness, and as a governing force which will never die.

This book tells you why it is so vital to have the courage to follow your flow and pursue your passion in life, even in times marked by sickness and death.

This book stems from a deeply felt wish to be of benefit to other people as much as possible and to pass on knowledge of creativity and a positive philosophy of life.

Professionally, the book offers you four different methods of working with creativity, which you can use as an inspiration in your own life:

- 1) You can create new structure from something old
- 2) Creativity legalizes embracing the Whole Human Being
- 3) How to make use of the conscious creative force
- 4) “The Magical Ten Minutes”

It is my intention to try to simplify the comprehension of art and creativity, in this way turning it into something useful and easily applicable in your everyday life, including the important task of creating a family.

The book is filled with small but relevant anecdotes from my own life, illustrating how I myself have worked with creating a home; a job; a relationship; products; coping with crisis situations, and so on.

The book has been a long time coming, and it is my wish that it can give you inspiration and ideas when going about your daily chores, and more so that it gives you a consciousness about and comprehension of “The Creative Spaces In Between”, which is the place where all changes happen and development and innovative thinking occur.

I have included a number of illustrations, which exemplify and support my experiences from working with the concept of “The Creative Spaces In Between”.

The act of creating is not a right reserved for artists.

We all create art in our own lives.

Keep in mind that you are not only the artist but also the paint brush, the colors, the canvas, and the painting which you are creating.

No matter where you are or what you are dealing with.

# CHAPTER 8: EVERYTHING BEYOND

## FOUR METHODS FOR WORKING WITH CREATIVITY

In this chapter I will try to expand on the distinction between working with “The Creative Spaces In Between” and working with your own, inner creative space.

In my view, there are four methods for working with creativity. The first three methods, which I have already described in earlier chapters, entail:

**1)** You can create new structure from something old. The founding principle of all innovative thinking is that by breaking up something old and something that already exists; by putting the pieces together in a new way, then you create new spaces in between and new structures. You can also add new elements or new materials. In this way you can keep exploring the edges interminably, transforming what already exists.

**2)** Creativity legalizes embracing the Whole Human Being. Your thoughts, body, and feelings – positive as well as negative – are resources which can be transformed constructively in the creative process. *All* your emotions and experiences are “fuel” or energy. There is no distinction between your various emotions, your thoughts or how your body feels; everything is equally resourceful which can be used when working with creativity.

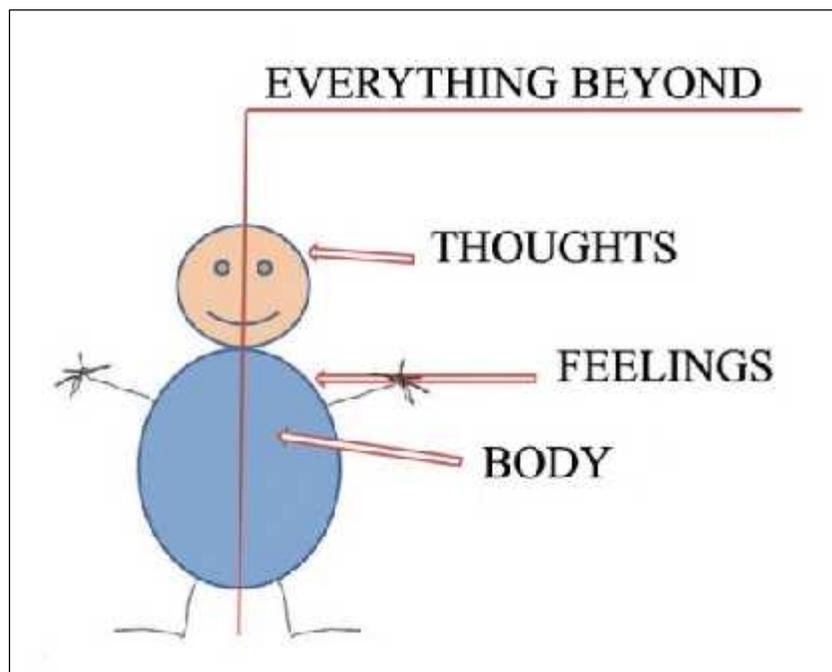
**3)** By making use of the conscious creative force you can prepare yourself for receiving the things you want the most. Wish for something in life – change, improvement, or something concrete. Look deep within yourself, and feel how the thing you wish for *feels*. Then put action behind your wish and behave *as if* you have already reached your goal, consequently your wish will come true. You are able to master the art of creating life.

The fourth and final method for working with creativity I call “The Magical Ten Minutes”. The essence of this method lies in being able to focusing on everything beyond, and in this way you get in contact with your own, inner creative space.

## EVERYTHING BEYOND

Crudely put, human beings are composed of three main areas which strongly affect and govern everything we do.

These three areas are body, thoughts and feelings.



Some people are only conscious about the first three areas and act from them entirely. In addition to these three elements, an inner, creative space exists, which lies beyond the other areas. This is the space you get in contact with if for a short while you let go of the flow of thoughts of everyday life, step aside and make room. It is from this inner, creative space, where everything already exists, that new ideas emerge, develop and come forward.

As listed in method 2 above, your thoughts, feelings and body can be transformed constructively in a creative process because everything holds energy. If you are only governed by your thoughts, and if all your ideas develop from here, then you limit yourself considerably. Some people have filled their heads to bursting point with hundreds of thoughts, plans, schedules, agendas, to-do-lists, etc. There is a major risk of these stressful and often conflicting flows of thoughts overpowering everything else.

They fill up so massively that there is room for nothing else, and definitely no room for new ideas to come through. In these situations *not thinking* for a minute thereby creating inner peace, can be extremely difficult, leaning towards the art of the impossible.

The same thing applies to feelings and emotions. In some period of your life, you can experience that your feelings or emotions overwhelm you. They can suddenly take control of your actions and your body. You can easily get caught up in the whirlwind of emotions within you, and everything you do will be affected by the way you feel.

You can have feelings in your relationships to colleagues, family members, neighbors, or even to various problems which in one way or another can switch on negative feelings or emotions in you. You can choose to ignore these negative feelings or you can try to escape them. But it is possible to work with feelings and emotions, and you should preferably reach a point where you realize that you are *not entirely* your feelings, but your feelings are *a part* of you and can be used constructively instead. You have the choice of embracing your feelings and emotions, learning from them, and discovering what you can improve at and where you can reform.

Your body works in the exact same way, because it tells on you and reveals all your secrets. Thoughts release feelings and emotions which in turn are reflected in your body by settling somewhere as tensions. Mostly, you will see that a crisis in a person's life creates development. In the same way as crisis in a company gives rise to chance, innovation and development.

If for a longer period we have not been sufficiently in contact with ourselves but allow "the clatter of thoughts" or "emotional noise" to overpower us, then we will often experience that we are brought down by outside circumstances such as illness, deaths in the family, unemployment etc and we are forced to "hibernate" for a while. This can be conceived as a strong message from your inner, creative space that now is the time to pause, to rediscover inner peace, and find your way back to who you really are. Often we experience that people, who have been put on standby because of a crisis, subsequently rediscover their meaning of life; make a shift in their attitude towards various things or situations; obtain a clear apprehension of where they are going in life now, or become aware of what they want to occupy their time or life with prospectively. This happens because while being put on standby you are forced to give greater priority to inner peace and attention, and simultaneously you make room and space for innovative ideas to emerge and new behavioral patterns to develop.

The ups and downs in life supply us with plenty of experiences – negative as well as positive ones. Through this gathering of experiences we also develop emotionally as human beings. We foster an ability to observe what is going on around us, and therefore we are constantly able to alter the

emotional structures we carry within us. Automatically, a development will take place. The conscious change or shift opens up an entirely new, inner world to us.

## ”THE TEN MAGICAL MINUTES”

The world-famous Danish designer, author and architect Poul Henningsen, often referred to as PH, created the concept of the famed PH lamp, after years of perfecting the utilization of the breakings of light. Poul Henningsen wanted to produce lamps which were not only economic but featured shades which made the full use of the power from the light source without blinding. His work methods while developing the lamps included hundreds of drawings, complicated mathematical calculations, countless geometric studies and experiments. For a long time, PH made experiments on how the light from a light bulb situated under a lamp shade would spread onto the surroundings. Often he spent months and sometimes years identifying the proper design.

In 1925 Poul Henningsen was given the assignment of designing the lamps for the lighting of a giant exhibition center, later known as *The Forum* in Copenhagen. Predominantly, PH had a quantitative approach to working with his lamp designs, this being characterized by lengthy and innumerable endeavors and tests, but for the assignment at *The Forum*, PH was suddenly severely pressed for time. Due to the pressure of deadlines and various limitations something wonderful happened.

In the December 1941 issue of *LP Nyt* (a monthly magazine published by the Danish lighting company, Louis Poulsen), Poul Henningsen writes the following about the construction process: “The first PH lamp was made by Lauritz Henriksen, and it was of the large type....Six months after my return in the fall of 25 a major assignment came up, and we had eight days to design and produce a lamp for *The Giant Hall*, now known as *The Forum*. The assignment involved lamps using 500 watt light bulbs, and so it came about that I constructed the PH lamp in one night with the exact same shade curves as are used today.”<sup>3</sup>

PH himself has had a hand in it somehow with regards to the interpretation and extensive myths which afterwards arose around the creative process taking place while designing the famed three-shaded PH5 lamp. A lamp on which PH based all his later designs for shades and lamps. The saying goes that Poul Henningsen only spent ten minutes sketching the draft for his most famous lamp.

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<sup>3</sup> My translation of a Danish text. From *Tænd! PH lampens historie*. Editorial team: Tina Jørstian and Poul Erik Munk Nielsen, Gyldendal, 1994. Page 122.

These so-called "ten minutes" taken from a long life became the most important minutes in PH's entire time designing lamps. To me, these ten minutes are by far the most interesting issue to address, whether you are an artist or you are right in the middle of developing a new product.

The reason being that it is during these "Ten Magical Minutes" that you just like Poul Henningsen did, can manage to go beyond everything and get in close contact with your inner, creative space and make room for genuine ideas to emerge.

When we are working with innovative thinking, creating new structures or new products; when we interminably explore the edges, then it is unavoidable that the focal point sometimes lands on quantity. But inevitably, some elements of quality will also come out of all your endeavors and incessant attempts.

By working thoroughly with your subject, by overhauling your project, over and over again, you establish a great work process. But to me, the "Ten Magical Minutes" are still a hundred times more interesting. That brief interval of ten minutes when PH sat down, created space in between his thoughts, and made room for the original draft for the PH lamp to emerge and come forward. In my view, the "Ten Magical Minutes" is an overlooked dimension when discussing creativity. It is a creative space which we all have deep within, because this is where everything exists and the spaces from where we can "extract" everything.

Try to be conscious about when the door to your own inner, creative space opens for a brief moment.

## **"THE FORMLESS WORLD"**

All through my life I have transformed an abundance of positive and negative thoughts, feelings and experiences into an equal abundance of artworks. When working with the paintings or the mosaic as an artist, and when I am in the middle of the process of letting new ideas come through, then I am fully aware that as a human being I hold inside me another dimension containing infinite amounts of creativity and possibilities. You are so much more besides all your thoughts, feelings and your body. In fact, you are capable of finding your way to your own, personal "Ten Magical Minutes" where you will get in contact with everything that lies beyond.

But *when* does the situation arise where you manage to get beyond everything and you reach your personal, creative space?  
It happens exactly when you create spaces in between your thoughts; when you make room.

**THE CREATIVE SPACES IN BETWEEN**  
**CHAPTER 8: EVERYTHING BEYOND**

As an artist, I would say that you have entered “The Formless World” where everything exists. When we get in touch with our inner, creative spaces, we step into the never-ending source of creativity which is present within every human being. This is where everything is present; where everything exists. There is nothing which does not already exist. This may sound weird, but everything is already present in “The Formless World”, until humankind “conceives of” or “dreams up” the concept of something new; steps aside; gives shape to the idea and makes it visible as a tangible thing in the physical world. It is all about how we as human beings can make use of our bodies, our actions, our thoughts and our feelings as tools in the process of making things visible to this world. The major feat is mastering the art of stepping aside. The wheel always existed in “The Formless World”. What it took was for one man to step adequately aside that the wheel got the chance to “roll out” into the physical world.

We all use the expression that “something is taking shape”; this could apply to an idea, a project, a book and so on – and it is a very adequate way of describing the stage which something is in on its way from “The Formless World” until it manifests itself in its physical form – all done and complete. An idea emerges, takes form, slowly develops and begins to be visible, until it appears clearly and distinctly as a complete product.



***I have made two figures which I am trying to illustrate the concept of “something taking form”, the stage of being in between “The Formless World” and the physical world.***



*This is a close-up of the right figure on the picture above*

You will probably be able to recognize these situations where you can experience being in close contact with your inner, creative space: Imagine yourself standing in the shower in your bathroom. The lovely, hot water flows down on you. You relax, loosen up and feel the stream of water softly hitting your head, gently enveloping your body, and you enjoy it immensely. In this state of pure well-being it might happen that you let go for just a second, and **this** is where the ideas come to you.

Or try remembering how it feels to lie in your bed. The covers keep you warm, and you close your eyes and feel safe, comfortable and relaxed. In these moments when you are bordering on falling asleep, in that state between being awake and asleep, *that* might be the point where you sense getting in contact with your inner, creative space. In this brief moment, you have one foot in “The Formless World” while you are still fully conscious. Exactly here you let go of everything for a second, you create space in between your thoughts, and suddenly the ideas come flowing to you.

You have probably experienced situations at work where you have spent days on end wondering about one specific thing or tried figuring out the solution to a particularly difficult question. Then, in that short period of time just before you fall asleep; when you let go; when you are no longer governed by thoughts, feelings or your body; this is where the ideas come to you effortlessly and

without struggling. In this situation you are in close contact with your inner, creative space and “The Formless World” at the same time as being consciously awake. It feels like a flood, and the ideas come pouring in. A lot of creative people keep a pad and a pen on their bedside table for quick notes, because they are aware that the good ideas most likely come to them right before sleeping. It is like a having a moment of enlightenment or experiencing an uncontrollable stream of ideas.

The American novelist and Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature, Saul Bellow, once said: “You never have to change anything you got up in the middle of the night to write.”<sup>4</sup>

If I am in the middle of painting, it is possible for me along the way to paint very consciously, but another method I use when I have to make specific or difficult strokes is to unwind mentally, in an effort to look at myself as a piece of tool guided by something larger than me. In these cases I work with complete faith in whatever may appear on the canvas. It is essential to be humble in connection with the creative process, and you have to have faith in receiving exactly the thing you need right here in this particular part of the work process. It is a natural thing for human beings to feel the need to control, manage and be in power over whatever we are dealing with. But, it is equally important to be able to *and* have the courage to let go of the three governing and limiting elements – our body, thoughts and feelings, and instead make use of the fourth and probably greatest creative tool which we have at our disposal, namely, the “Ten Magical Minutes”.

I have always claimed that we as artists have access to the most amazing gift which is having the possibility to work with the intelligence which spans from the elbow and downwards. We tend to be more emotional, and we sense and feel as well as have moments where we experience being in contact with everything beyond.

Even though this may sound a little grotesque, now that I *am* an artist and a painter, I am actually conscious about the fact that my conscious drawing is neither that good or particularly pretty. But when I feel in contact with my inner, creative space beyond, then I am capable of drawing anything, and afterwards I truly marvel at where it all came from.

As humans we are diverse, and which tools you choose to use when opening the door to your inner, creative space is totally up to you – whether it may be sports, breathing exercises, meditation, walks in nature, or just sitting down with a cup of coffee and staring out the window. Just make use of the tool which works for you.

You can easily practice improving on getting in contact with your inner, creative space *when* you want it, and not be dependent on getting in contact only when you shower or have gone to bed.

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<sup>4</sup> Ref: [Good Reads on Saul Bellow's quotes](#)

Try this little exercise and see if you can open the door to your inner, creative space. Start by taking a long walk in nature. Cleanse your mind for unnecessary flows of thoughts. Then sit down somewhere nice and calm, keep your focus on your breathing. Put a large sheet of white paper in front of you. Pick a color for drawing. Stay in your seat until you spontaneously rise and make a few strokes on the paper. It does not have to resemble anything. Keep going until your natural flow stops. Sit down again and lean back in your chair. Try narrowing your eyes, so that your vision gets a bit out of focus and blurred. Then look at what you actually have drawn on the paper. You will be surprised, over and over again!

## MORNING MIST

One morning I had a very special experience which made me associate on how “The Formless World” might look like.

I went for a walk, passing the old mill and the pasture where the sheep graze, and finally climbing the heather-clad hills. You might be familiar with these unique mornings, a few hours after the break of dawn but still the day had not really begun. It was one of those mornings where the sun just barely peeped through in a few places, and you can see things without being able to clearly distinguish what they are. The mist envelops everything, blurring all shapes, forms and contours. Things are there without *really* being there. To me, it felt like looking into “The Formless World”. You know that the hills, the trees, the path you walk on, the horizon and the sun are all there, but everything is just barely discernible. The outside world mirrors your inner world. The outside world is always one hundred percent part of you.

On a quiet morning like this, the outer, formless reality opens the door to your own inner, creative, formless world.

All you have to do is to be quiet and be present in it.

I know from experience that when I am in the middle of painting a picture, then the determining factor for whether I will succeed or not depends on my having complete faith in receiving the things that I want to paint, *when* I need them.

The same thing applies to the situation where I am to give a talk. I have to have complete faith in receiving the thoughts I want to say to my listeners; that the thoughts come forward so that I can receive them and pass them on.

Naturally, this does not mean that as a painter I have not learned a great deal about color and shapes; or that as a speaker I have not contemplated which subjects or issues are relevant to the group of people I am dealing with. No, what it means is that I have the courage to be present, to live in the moment at the exact time and place where life unfolds.

I have been working with paintings and art since I was ten or eleven years old.



***An example of one of my many paintings.***

***"The Woman in the Elephant". 2011. Oil on canvas. 200 cm x 200 cm.***

Today, a lot of people have an easel and a canvas at their disposal into which feelings, thoughts and experiences can be transformed. Most people get so deeply absorbed while painting that they lose track of time and place. They surrender to the creative process. They transfer tensions from their bodies on to the canvas. They relieve themselves of their burdens and become happy.

Does this mean that everybody who has an easel standing in their living room is a famed artist-to-be?

No, but it means that we as humans draw attention to and get familiar with a range of unknown sides within ourselves.

We get things out in the open, and we become conscious of them.

That is the essence of creative innovation. A vast amount of people possess knowledge, and knowledge is absolutely indispensable. But it is something entirely different to be a consciously creative human being. Being able to expand or raise your consciousness in order to hold vast, complex emotional and mental structures is the pivot of creative innovation. Thus, when we expand, subsequently our consciousness raises.

## **CHILDREN AND CREATIVITY**

It will be of the utmost importance to the innovative society of the future, that the present-day society not only focuses on knowledge and know-how, because these things alone will not generate development. It is vital that we equally build up the awareness in our children for being consciously creative human beings. The creative process and development should preferably begin to be cultivated already when the children are small, and not be postponed until later when they are about to start “performing” as fully-trained grownups.

In my opinion, the creative development should begin at the age of three to five. The perfect scenario would be if children already in kindergarten could be stimulated in to being more attentive and encouraged to be open to new opportunities and seek new goals. Having the capacity to shift your attention and your focal point when encountering limitations or barriers, gives you an unerring eye for discovering new, creative possibilities and solutions. Attentiveness is another cornerstone in creative innovation.

Children can learn to sharpen their attention by spending time in nature, because nothing in nature is predictable – not even the weather. Similarly, children use the whole range of their senses when smells, sounds, creepy-crawlies and climbing trees are being explored while playing. While in nature, children not only improve their strength and physical awareness, but they also encounter peace, balance and rhythm which in turn enhance their ability to focus and center. From various studies we have learned that children who attend nature kindergartens or forest kindergartens improve their learning abilities and are quicker to learn when starting school than children who have attended conventional kindergartens. This is due to the fact that to these children discovering new opportunities and being attentive comes natural.

In the last few years, the policy in Danish kindergartens and schools has been to put a tremendous amount of attention on healthy diets and exercising. Sports, physical education, playing, and motor co-ordination are paramount elements, and naturally, it is wonderful that children from a very early age learn to take good care of their bodies, their most important instrument. Health and exercise in this way becomes an integrated part of the children’s personality, and they will maintain this as a natural ingredient in their future everyday life.

In my view, there is a risk, though, that this massive attention on physical activity will be at the expense of creativity which sadly is being seriously downgraded. There is no question about the fact that the predominant part of the children of today, who later are going to perform in the society of the future will be making a living by being creative and innovatively thinking human beings.

Therefore, besides encouraging children to keeping a health body, I strongly urge for feeding children with creativity as much as possible from kindergarten and nursery all the way through their years in school. Knowledge, thinking and know-how is no doubt important, but these are mostly skills that can be acquired later on by reading and studying, but creativity and creative activities are abilities which have to be strengthened in the children as early as possible because these are key elements in a modern, innovative society. Children have to have unlimited access to working creatively with all the art subjects, guided and supported by competent adults.

They are to be fed with creativity in the form of pictures, theater and music turning life in kindergarten into more than just caretaking; it has to include a conscious development of the children's sense of creativity from a very early age. Fortunately, a lot of children and young people are already well under way in this respect, and they *have* been creatively stimulated, but we have to ensure that all children are included in this process and not just the small, fortunate group of children who have conscious, resourceful parents who supply them with creative input. All children of the coming generations should be given the best conditions for creative development.

In this way, in twenty-five to thirty years' time we will have an invaluable resource at our disposal which could improve the welfare society of the future, not just materially but both mentally and spiritually.

## **INNOVATIVE BUSINESSES**

For many businesses, creative innovation represents the element of innovative thinking which will increase paybacks and turnovers. These two things are important issues when it comes to business because money equals energy, and energy equals opportunities. Money, though, cannot be the only objective or goal, but instead a means for constantly maintaining drive and progress; a means for incessantly searching for new opportunities and new goals.

It is *not* about the companies competing with each other in order to create growth. On the contrary, the key to increasing growth is learning how to be consciously creative in our way of thinking.

I believe that the creative innovation which will "stay in business" in the long run, so to say, is not based on the selfish human being who only cares about making money; but instead based on the Whole Human Being who makes the full use of himself and is capable of thinking in entities. The innovation which will survive is not developed *at the expense of* other people but instead in *collaboration with* other people. Earlier, there used to be a tendency to everyone keenly keeping their own specific knowledge to themselves, but in the future the focal point will be on knowledge sharing and cross-functional team-work.

It will increasingly be about how you develop a product in the best way possible, or how to make us aware of ourselves in the best way, so that the product or that the individual can bring about the maximum benefit for mankind.

If we keep in mind to always create and give, then we will be able to lift each other up.

Today there are a great amount of companies who are on the forefront with regards to working with innovative thinking, and they are thereby contributing to creating an enterprising and innovative society. The basic principles are that quantity creates quality and subsequent innovative thinking which is true to a certain extent.

If we look back at the old tile from the sixties which I broke into pieces, gave some new spaces in between and supplied with a new color, then the possibilities are endless. In this way we can interminably keep exploring new edges, new combinations, new variations, and so on. This is due to the fact that we will always be able to create new structures from an existing material and use old materials in new combinations and contexts.

The possibilities are endless.

## **INTIMACY AND PRESENCE**

When we were facing the challenges of starting our own firm, *CreativeSpaces-fm.com*, I have to be totally honest that it was a much taller order than previously thought. I have often read about people who in midlife decide to take the plunge, change their career direction, and start at something entirely new. These exciting stories have always fascinated me, been an inspiration to me, and definitely whetted my appetite for more. But in the midst of the process, what looked relatively easy to some, turned out to be a major challenge for me. Plucking up the courage to say goodbye to a steady income and stability and then venturing into the unknown was a frightening thing for me to do but at the same time it has been a wild and fabulous experience.

I soon realized, though, that along the way I was forced to take a look at myself and the emotional reaction I had, which was marked by the fear for stepping out; the fear concerning how I was going to manage financially; and so on. I was very conscious about the need for me to face all those feelings of fear, which were tied up inside me, hindering my creative process, and then transforming them into feelings of courage and strength.

Even if the energy stems from feelings of fear and anxiety, it is a resource which can be used constructively and be expressed in a positive way.

My partner and I had been on an inspirational trip to Thailand in the middle of our creative process of writing this book.

**THE CREATIVE SPACES IN BETWEEN**  
**CHAPTER 8: EVERYTHING BEYOND**

In Thailand I had fallen head over heels in love with a twenty-three feet long, beautiful and powerful dragon figure, which posed as an extravagant decoration at a pagoda at a Buddhist temple we visited. After returning home, I could not let go of the experience with the dragon, so when I suddenly found myself in the situation where I had to relate to my own feelings of fear. So what I did was to run out and buy 265 lbs. of fiber-reinforced concrete, a type of material I had never worked with before, and then I started to produce a dragon of my own. The result was not a true copy of the dragon I had seen in Thailand, but instead it became a dragon into which I transformed all the feelings of fear and anxiety which I held inside me. I released the feelings into every movement and into every little part of the process of modeling the fiber-reinforced concrete. In this way the dragon turned into everything but what I had had in mind when I first started, but along the creational process the figure took over and sort of assumed a life of its own.

I cast a couple of objects, which I inherited from my late parents, into the nostrils of the dragon, symbolizing the force of life. My parents had in a way “breathed life into me”, and now I had the task of staying invigorated and passing on this “breath of life” to my firm and to the next generations.

Therefore the dragon now poses in our driveway as a symbol of strength, courage and economical growth in our little firm.



***The Thai-inspired dragon posing in our driveway  
symbolizes strength, courage and growth in our firm***

The dragon, though, represents a lot more to me than just a symbol. I made it shortly after a turbulent and emotional period in my life which culminated in the death of both my parents.

The process of creating the dragon triggered a lot of things within me, because it made me reflect on what was the essence of the things, patterns and values that my parents had given me in life.

My mother and father died within three months of each other, eighty-six and eighty-nine years old respectively. So there was nothing unnatural to that. They had had a very long and happy life together, and they had kissed, held hand, and loved each other till the very end. We, their children, knew that we had been really privileged having them both for so long. Our parents had always been there for us, supporting us in everything.

Our extended family, at that time, counted thirty-eight members, but when my parents died, I suddenly felt alone and vulnerable. My parents were no longer with us. Something fundamental had vanished. Their home, which had been the global hub for all of us through the years, was also gone. What was the essence which had made my parents and our home feel so unique? What had my parents “breathed into” me and my siblings?

Standing next to my dragon, looking at the small, inherited things cast into its nostrils, I reflected on what the essence was that I had to “breathe into” or pass on to the next generation? What did I have to give? Was it the recollections of the numerous family dinners or lovely Christmas parties? Was it the unconditional love that our parents gave us? Was it the values we learned while growing up in the countryside, or fundamental principles about what constitutes a good life?

With my parents no longer around, everything became clear to me. The greatest gift my parents had given me was the very same things I had spent years looking for through my work with creativity, art and breaking tiles. It was something which I had not realized the existence of as a child or even while my parents were still alive, but something I had to venture out into the world to discover for myself. When I returned home – both physically and mentally – I discovered that what, I had been searching for, had been there all along, right under my nose, namely “The Creative Spaces In Between”.

I realized that every human being has to leave home and make his or her own experiences. Through the gathering of experiences you expand your consciousness; you grow wiser. In the process you learn to shift and focus your attention; you begin to recognize and realize things; your awareness grows; and you change your attitude. At some point you will be able to find your way home – physically as well as mentally and spiritually.

Along my journey I realized that the principles behind the concept of “The Creative Spaces In Between” also existed at home at the farm with my parents.

The farm we lived on was a standard, medium-sized farm for that time, but out of all the farms in the area our farm was the one that felt most alive. We always had merchants and traders visiting; people often stopped by for a cup of coffee to discuss the weather, the crops and the yield, or life in general. Even when my parents were past their prime, could no longer run the farm and had to move to a

small and cozy town-house, it did not take long before their tiny new place also became a magnet to people. This continued even after my parents grew old and their state of health deteriorated. I realized then that it was not the physical place, the titles, or the amount of money they had in the bank which made the intimacy of my parents so unique. Instead it was their ability to create amazing spaces *in between* themselves and the people around them.

My parents' abilities for creating some wonderful "Creative Spaces In Between", especially with regards to their grand children, became apparent to everyone in connection with a certain experience which happened to our family some years back. All thirty-eight family members had been united at the annual Christmas lunch. It was a special day of the year which we all looked forward to with joy and anticipation. My extended family consisted of my parents, myself, my two brothers and my sister, our spouses, children and grand children.

My sister had four sons. They were all living healthy, active lives, and my sister took good care of them and gave them the best conditions imaginable. But around that particular Christmas time, one of the boys was feeling poorly and had a cold. He also complained of stiffness to his neck. This indisposition of his went on till after New Years. The boy was then taken to see the doctor who quickly arranged for an emergency admission at the hospital. Sadly, it turned out that my sister's boy had leukemia. At the time he was only twelve or thirteen years old. It became a very long and hard struggle against the cancer, including numerous admissions at the hospital and several chemotherapy treatments.

At the hospitals, there are schools for the hospitalized children where the teachers try to provide the children with a normal life in between treatments. They also help the children regain academic progress during their periods of hospitalization, in order for the children to be prepared for attending their regular schools when they, hopefully, are cured and well again. Tragically, my nephew got more and more sick, and when he turned fourteen, deep down he knew that he might not turn fifteen. At the hospital school, though, they firmly believed that he would make a full recovery. Therefore, at one point he was given the assignment to write an essay on the best experience he had ever had, describing what had meant the most to him in his entire life. All of us were convinced that the subject he would pick had to be his highly cherished blue, four-wheeler ATV, on which he loved to race across fields and meadows at the farm where he lived with his family. Another possible subject could also be his PlayStation and the games he spent so many hours playing.

We were all mistaken, though. What my sister's son chose to write about in his essay was a description of an early morning which he had spent at his grand parents' farm. He loved staying at Grandma's and Grandpa's because he was allowed to help out in the barn, working with the cows, mucking out, and so on. It was an established tradition after the morning routines that everyone at

the farm gathered around the dinner table for a luxurious breakfast featuring, among other things, bread rolls, cold meat and soft-boiled eggs. My nephew loved soft-boiled eggs and his Grandpa, my father, had taught him a very special trick: Sporting a knife in one hand and a soft-boiled egg in the other, then, viola, with one quick cut he would be able to flick open the egg with the knife and with the other hand catch the top of the egg *without* spilling one single drop of the treasured egg yolk. Naturally, it came as a surprise to all of us, his extended family, that this was the story he had picked as the subject for his essay. This was the best experience he had ever had and it was something which had really made an impression on him.

Looking back, though, I find this to be the most wonderful example of the ability my father had, more than any of us, to step into the space which lie *in between* himself and his grandson. This is a space for special bonding and sharing; where you lose track of time and space; here you find an intense sense of presence and being, along with the feelings of comfort, trust and happiness. It is in this space existing between two people that the little and simple things in life become large and invaluable; where all change happen; and where we grow as human beings. In “The Creative Spaces In Between”.

This experience suddenly made things very simple and straightforward to me. And when standing next to the dragon in my driveway today, touching its nostrils, I know that my task is to communicate my knowledge about “The Creative Spaces In Between” to the world. It is my job to create an awareness and understanding of the fact that all changes take place in these spaces *in between* everything. Perfectly illustrated by how my father mastered the art of stepping into this invaluable space between himself and his grandson, letting him in on the secret of flicking open an egg without wasting the yolk.

## **FIRM, FREE TIME AND FUN**

In our own firm, [CreativeSpaces-fm.com](http://CreativeSpaces-fm.com), we have taken many steps to creating spaces in between the work-related doings. In the process of writing this book we have spent a vast amount of hours by the computer, and therefore we have also needed to create vacant spaces in between our thoughts during an otherwise tightly structured work week.

When working with creative processes in my studio, I have been used to the element of centering myself being a natural part of working.

So I picked up the gauntlet, now that my partner and I were going to cooperate on starting a firm and writing a book, and we basically had to try to combine the academic world with the creative universe. We start our day with a vitamin drink consisting of freshly squeezed beetroot/carrot/apple/ginger

juice and muesli for breakfast, and then we mount the exercise bike for half an hour in order to raise our pulse and kick start the brain activity.

Undoubtedly, many work places would experience a notably higher level of activity and quality if they let their employees start their work day with half an hour of exercise. We learned numerous times that if we got a late start to the day and consequently skipped the exercise, the level of efficiency and creativity would dwindle down considerably faster compared to the days when we did exercise. On the other hand if we made sure to create a good energy level within our bodies before starting to work, then the feeling of flow and creativity was far higher and not dependant on when the workday began.

All over the world there are large offices where the employees meet at eight in the morning; sit in their tiny cubicles; and they are expected to be sharp and clear-headed, all ready for what the workday might bring. It would be a great idea to let the employees work out or exercise for half an hour before attacking their assignments, provided that they are ready at their computers by nine and are being served a large glass of freshly squeezed morning juice which boosts both the brain and the body.

In our little firm we have experienced only positive effects and results, especially during the long and cold winter where there is a shortage of natural light and the energy levels are extra low.

A day at the office in [CreativeSpaces-fm.com](http://CreativeSpaces-fm.com) could be played out as follows:

I always keep a watchful eye on the weather forecast during the week. If on a Sunday I spot that the forecast for the following Thursday looks promising and sunny, then I make sure that the car is ready Wednesday evening - meaning packed with kayaks on the roof; paddles; various equipment; coffee and lunch bags. So when we turn up for work Thursday morning we are dressed in our wet suits, drive to the nearby river, put the kayaks in the water and row to the far end of the large lake close by. Here we go ashore and spread out a blanket on the lakeside. Then we get out our cell phones and the small laptop, and “the office” is open until five o’clock. Every single time I am surprised about how much we accomplish during working hours compared to the amount time we had at hand– including a nice siesta relaxing in the sun and three hours of rowing. Your body feels great; your brain works at an optimum; creativity flows; and being in nature gives you a sense of presence and attentiveness which is easy and unhindered.

This is what we call “a day at the office”. And after a day like that you return home filled with energy and bursting with new ideas, which in turn affects the following workday.

As much as possible, we try to live by the motto: “Firm, free time and fun” because by combining these three things we attempt to establish a fertile ground and the most optimal conditions for a constant creative flow, well-being and growth in our firm.

It is possible for almost all work places to add a little bit of variation to their routines by altering or adjusting some of the work processes or procedures and in this way increasing the flow of energy, well-being and idea-development.

I often overhear very competent people complaining about how hard it sometimes is to be creative, when they are stuck at work in an office. In this situation I have one good advice to give: Try at least once a week to move the office outdoors. The technology of today allows us to work or stay almost anywhere because you can find a connection to the Internet, Skype etc. everywhere. A traditional company could also build a pavilion or a small cabin on the premises, neat and simple, built from rustic logs and sporting a small stove. It could work in such a way that the employees had the opportunity to book the cabin for a couple of hours, just like booking any other boardroom. The idea of shifting the work place physically, thus not sitting across from or together with the same colleagues, day in and day out, creates new spaces in between the employees and simultaneously creates new openings for innovation and creativity.

You may recognize the classic situation where people, newly appointed, are starting at their new work place. The first thing they do is to build up “a wall” around their work area or desk. This “wall” consists of pictures of their spouse, children or pets; postcards on strings; flowers; coffee mugs with or without pens and pencils; books; honorary awards; various bric-a-brac and memorabilia etc. In this way they sort of “fence themselves in”, naturally with the intention of creating a safe haven, but it is also a method of saying: “This is where I live. This is my area.” But at the same time the “walls” also pose as a hurdle between the employees, hindering the flow of creative interaction and communication.

Today with the primary work tools being the computer and cell phone, every employee could have a desk on wheels, which every morning they would roll out into the open-plan office, the intention being that they would be sitting somewhere new every day, seeing new faces, constantly getting new inputs and new sparring partners. You might think that this is not realistic, but I would argue that keeping the employees locked physically in permanent or fixed patterns is equivalent to locking up and suffocating creativity.

Try instead to offer or create a small physical change of setting once a week.

Break open the physical surroundings; create new spaces in between the employees; try for instance to make a small “creative island” in the middle of the open-plan office, sporting cozy chairs, toys and games, green plants and a coffee machine. In this way you create new openings for creative development and change.

Everywhere today, you see a lot of wonderful and imaginative initiatives, introducing different ways of creating new structures and outer settings.

Residential areas are constructed with the intention of combining housing; work places; spare time activities; schools and child care within the same area, so that people do not waste a lot of time commuting. It is also becoming more common that companies install a climbing wall in the middle of the office, because the act of climbing gives the employees an opportunity to get beyond their flow of thoughts for a second, enhancing their sense of presence and ability to concentrate, and simultaneously, their work performance.

Similarly, seeing a foosball table as a fixture at the office or in a conference room is no rare sight, giving the employees a chance to unwind for a moment and get rid of tensions or aggressions. Employees at numerous companies also have access to fitness rooms, massage, reflexology, and so on.

Several financial institutions have altered the outer perception of what visiting the bank means by introducing interiors in bright colors; coffee bars; easy chairs; cozy, little oases for quiet contemplation; "Information islands" where you can find answers to some of your banking questions; and an unpretentious atmosphere.

All these initiatives are a move in the right direction, but changing the outside settings is not sufficient.

In order to include the Whole Human Being in this alteration process, the people sitting in the innovative offices and the people who move into the new residential areas have to be ready to change their own old habits; deeply rooted patterns of the way they act; fundamental emotional structures and ingrained patterns of thinking.

What is important today is not only being able to create production but rather productive experiences with a holistic approach which appeals to the Whole Human Being.

The companies have to be ready to change their routines and procedures but always with consideration for including the Whole Human Being.

To me, the innovative business of the future is not only a business which is composed by a wide range of competent individuals and personalities who draw on a variety of different intelligences, but it is also a company which is open and willing to include highly sensitive people and artists on a freelance basis. People who due to their sensibility will enable the company and its groups of employees to open their eyes to their own, under-used resources, and who in relation to developing products can add in new and abstract dimensions and holistic experiences.

## **HIGHLY SENSITIVE PERSONS**

A certain percentage of the population worldwide has an innate sensitivity which makes them extraordinarily susceptible or sensitive to various kinds of stimuli. This means that their nervous

system is more sensitive to subtleties and is affected much easier and much more deeply. Therefore they also risk being over-stimulated or over-aroused, causing them to react physically or mentally. Highly sensitive persons tend to have a special fondness for contemplation, thoughtfulness, wisdom etc. This is why a large number of these people are engaged in areas related to the “soft values”, where they thrive well and can make use of their abilities, skills and talents – this could include areas such as design; fashion, art; communication; teaching; spirituality or religion.

A lot of highly sensitive persons find it very difficult to live up to the norms and demands present at the job market and in society, and this may result in the majority of these people feeling that something is wrong with them. Many have problems coping with lengthy and fixed timetables which to them can seem overwhelming and will place unbearable stress on their nervous system. That is why there is a tendency going towards highly sensitive persons becoming self-employed, because in this way they have the opportunity to schedule their work week and workload themselves, always taking into account how the day is progressing. This approach maintains a better balance within them and they can avoid over-stimulating their nervous system.

I believe that by giving this question more attention, we could prevent a vast majority of the highly sensitive people from ending up in a situation where they feel that their only option is to claim incapacity benefits or rehabilitation benefits, or from being fired from their job because they cannot manage a forty hour work week.

If terms and conditions of employment became more flexible then it would be possible to create a work environment which is especially tailored to fit the needs of the highly sensitive persons, and they would then be able to thrive in and take a more active role in the work force, which in turn will also benefit society.

There are gigantic resources hidden in being highly sensitive because these people have a different approach to things, a special sensibility and openness towards the subtle nuances, a finer intuition and a more lively imagination.

A lot of these people could be a definite advantage to businesses, being employed on a freelance basis, because they would offer an approach to the creative process and to working with creativity in general which is absolutely unique and indispensable.

Today, products, in the same way as art, have to be not only *seen* but also felt, smelled, sensed or tasted. All senses have to be stimulated. The Whole Human Being has to be stimulated. In these situations, the highly sensitive persons – who are often artists as well – are well seasoned in making use of the “Ten Magical Minutes” and possess the ability of stepping into the space beyond, getting in contact with the ideas in “The Formless World”.

It was not until late in life that I became aware of the existence of this innate trait in the human personality, and after studying the concept more carefully, I suddenly felt that a lot of things and

experiences from my own life fell into place. There was a reason why I had constantly been knocked about at the job market; why I had to take refuge in my creative studio over and over again; and I have realized that I have a sensibility which shares many common features with highly sensitive people. That is also why I thrive so perfectly with being self-employed, running our small firm, *CreativeSpaces-fm.com*, after years of never being able to settle down in the conventional job market. It is vital that you do what you do best, following the terms and conditions which suit you best.

This is also reflected in our firm where we combine our experiences I, being highly sensitive, have gathered from working with art and creativity with the academic knowledge and administrative abilities which my spouse possesses. This mixture of the best of our abilities gives us the possibility of gaining the most from our respective sets of skills, and thus we achieve a better result on the whole.

More companies could benefit greatly and probably also improve their turnovers from mixing talents, abilities, skills and knowledge in the various types of employees, at the same time showing consideration for special needs or demands from the individual employee in relation to job satisfaction.

If you mix various trade groups and create a cross-functional teamwork, just as if you mix different style or genres – for example mixing a portion of Mozart with a bit of rap or pop, then suddenly a completely new and exciting field arises from where new ideas and innovative thinking can emerge.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Marie Elisabeth A. Franck Mortensen** (born in 1959) lives in Gl. Rye, a small village in Denmark. Author, speaker, mosaic-artist, creative consultant and expert on *“The Creative Spaces in Between”*. She has a broad creative and artistic background and has had numerous tile mosaic decoration assignments. She has created a sculptural learning environment in her garden, where, through the years, she has given presentations on creativity to a wide variety of groups. She has taught on the topics of creativity and mosaic and has given talks to companies, schools and associations on *“The Creative Spaces in Between”- Being consciously creative in everyday life*. She is the founder of the company [CreativeSpaces-fm.com](http://CreativeSpaces-fm.com).

# ABOUT THE GHOSTWRITER

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