Organizations as Works of Art

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About the Work:

This poem was created as an exercise in an annual faculty advance to kick off the academic year. I invited faculty and staff to identify what comes to mind when they think about organizations as a form of art. Some of the examples come from that exercise.

About the Author:

Larry Lad is a faculty member in the Lacy School of Business at Butler University where he teaches undergrad and graduate courses in Strategy and Leadership. Historically, his research focused on business government relations and industry self-regulation. More recently, he is exploring the “maker space” movement in arts and economic development. In addition to using experiential and arts-based facilitation as a consultant, Larry is a practicing visual artist and poet, and an active volunteer on hunger relief and food rescue.
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In the turbulent disturbance of everyday news
Wondering what tweet will delete the joy of a good night’s sleep
Or what media story of an organization’s scandal will have us climb back under the covers
A value in taking pause
To notice the awe in organizations making a difference in people’s lives.

Goodwill Industries providing a job
Second Helpings rescuing food and training chefs
Patagonia advocating for the environment and equipping those that feed their soul in the Outdoors
The Humane Society looking out for animal welfare
Amnesty International fighting for social justice anywhere in the world
A safe daycare that teaches kids to sing
A refugee center in Germany, the Netherlands or Spain that offers hope
A prosecutors’ office in Virginia going after a money launderer and tax evader
A university in the Midwest that launches students as entrepreneurs and global citizens
Unique venues – stadiums, malls, concert halls, airports and train stations
Newfields, the art museum that plants a sensory garden of aromas and textures to provide an experience for the blind
A standardized pallet that simplifies material handling
A shipping container that enables large scale international trade – from boat to train to truck that when stacked look like a metal matrix at the port

It’s time to see organizations as works of art
Mankind’s greatest invention
Unconventional perspective intentionally taken on.

Experiencing art starts with observation – 3rd person
Eyes wide open, ears attuned
Being subsumed in a movie theater, chills down the spine,
Noticing something different in a painting in a museum
Listening to a symphony or music group in a unique venue
Smelling and tasting a meal in a 5-star restaurant or a busy diner
Observation, sensed deeply.

Yet, we know an arts perspective lives in the 1st person,
In the experience,
The doing,
The conscious act of being in awe,
Senses engaged, actually making something that moves people...

Consider, for example, for the record, for the money
A well-made product that has you go WOW
An app that helps you find Thai food in Amsterdam
A risk management service that makes a business or family whole after a flood or fire
A wealth management company that sets the stage for financial freedom in retirement years
An office tower that redefines a skyline for a city
Logistics and supply chain management as choreography
Product development as design
Packaging as a fashion statement
Corporate social responsibility as advocacy
Corporate headquarters as *sculpture*
Conversations at the conference table as *theater*, an employee feedback session as *improv*
A full-page ad in the New York Times about TRUTH, or the #metoomovement
Annual reports as *spin*
Elegance in a financial statement that tells a *story*
The morning latte as a well wrapped gift
Shopping as a *gallery tour*...
Office space is a *studio*, a *theater*, a *stage* ...

Inquire
What’s our role as scholars, educators, executives, performers, and makers
In the composing this *musical*,
Drawing the *storyboard*
Stepping out in the *dance*
**Rapping** on “this moment, this once in a lifetime”
Might organizations behave better when they see their work as artful expressions
Rather than transactions,
As problem solving
Rather than aggravations,
And as expressions of beauty and joy

Go out and be makers, channel your inner Picasso and Twyla Tharp, compose yourself,
Conceive other makers, catalyze creative conversations, provoke those comfortable with the
**Status quo**
And play on...