

# ART AS A METHOD TO REVIVE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE



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The success of a business or organisation is directly impacted by its culture. This means that the ways in which people work together, as well as the energy and the drive they bring into what they do on a daily basis, make a substantial difference to the life of an organisation and its bottom line.<sup>1</sup>

Yet only a few businesses treat culture as a strategic issue and enable it to reach its full potential. More businesses would follow, but they find culture hard to define and even harder to steer.

By tapping into what deeply motivates people and bringing these motivations to life, organisations can revive their culture and let it thrive in the long run. While each culture is unique, there is something that manifests itself in every successful organisation – people solve difficult problems together with a common purpose. We propose Art as a Method to achieve this.

## IDEA IN BRIEF

### THE CHALLENGE

To cultivate a culture that is motivating and meaningful is a difficult endeavour, particularly in times of change. At the same time, this is paramount to the success of any organisation, and needs to be a top priority for every business leader today.

### THE INSIGHT

To understand and work with the complexity of an organisational culture, we have identified four key drivers of culture that are strongly linked to individual and collective motivation:

- Purpose
- Belonging
- Autonomy
- Competence

### THE METHOD

To transition culture, we employ methods used by artists in their creative processes – because art is a catalyst for change, accessible to everyone. Art as a Method is applied on the four drivers of culture through these stages of transition:

- I. Initial reflections
- II. Re-wiring ways of working
- III. Achieving new outcomes

## INTRODUCTION

In this white paper, we describe Art as a Method to address challenges in organisational culture. We describe why art is an unparalleled method in understanding, transitioning and re-wiring culture. We start by exploring the current context to understand which external factors affect organisational culture today, and we move on to examine the inner workings of a culture to comprehend why the *right* culture is so powerful in driving business forward. Finally, we show how we use art in reviving and even transitioning culture to thrive to its full potential.

Alongside introducing Art as a Method in detail, we discuss what business leaders can learn from art and artists when steering their organisational cultures towards a shared, successful future. We do this by showcasing examples and uncovering practical implications.

Two illustrative quotes, one from an acknowledged author and one from a seasoned business leader, set the tone for our exploration:

*“Business is best at numerically-based methods for planning, measuring and managing. In the modern world, where the future is unknown and the environment is turbulent, nothing works according to the plan. The opportunity is here to explore more of the dimensionality of life – more of our emotions, more of our human spirits. Because humans have gone through periods of darkness and chaos before and we do not know how to fix it, but we need to know how to go through it. Is it possible for business leaders to realise that the dilemmas in questions they are facing cannot be solved by traditional management tools and behaviour? Leaders will need to be able to dwell in the deep domains of human experience that involve faith, courage, friendship, love, compassion, grief and loss. All these emotions that are expressed so vividly in the arts. I think there is a need for our whole Western culture to start to explore not only our emotional intelligence, but our full being as humans – and the only place I know where to find this is in the arts.”*<sup>2</sup>

— MARGARET WHEATLY, AUTHOR OF *LEADERSHIP AND THE NEW SCIENCE*

*“Arts offer such scrutiny of the human condition and of the emotional and practical challenges of bringing two cultures together, that we thought it would be an excellent way of exploring the issues around the merger. Art is an exploration of the human condition more than anything else – it’s insight into us, it is holding a mirror up to us – through the conversation and emotion that art provokes it invites us to examine our biases, prejudices and motivations – the more we do that as individuals the more effective we can be at understanding ourselves and understanding the other people around us.”*<sup>3</sup>

— JAMES HILL, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF UNILEVER’S LEVER FABERGÉ (NOWADAYS UNILEVER UK HOME AND PERSONAL CARE)

To understand the present and future realities, we begin by exploring the shifting operating environment of organisations.

## PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIETAL: THE THREE AREAS INTERWOVEN IN AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

In 2020, the spheres of personal, professional and societal are more closely interwoven than ever. As humans, we move between these three spheres as we bring our value systems, cultural backgrounds, and ways of reflecting and operating into our work. This means that businesses must take into account a more holistic human life experience when designing their strategies for growth – with organisational culture as a key area to consider.

The connections between the personal, the professional and the societal existed before, but are now being unmistakably amplified by the current context. Between the COVID-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty and the climate crisis, as well as rising political unrest and social-justice movements, 2020 has been a difficult year in the life of organisations.

The sudden surge of digital and remote work poses additional challenges to organisational cultures. Daily online meetings and interactions via a screen instead of in person create screen fatigue – subsequently, the mental distance between oneself, one’s colleagues and the organisation grows larger.

Ways of working are indeed reconfigured, but will these new ways of working sustain the unique culture of an organisation? Significant investments are made towards new technologies to enable faster and more efficient collaboration, but the ways in which we use them in practice might create tensions between the present and ideal cultures. This is an urgent issue that most organisations face now.

Organisational culture shifts organically with change, regardless of whether it is actively supported and revitalised by leadership or not. In the current context, it is becoming increasingly important for leaders to cultivate a culture that is driven, energised, and focused on a common goal – yet it is now also more difficult than ever to do this.

## CULTURE HAS THE POWER TO DRIVE BUSINESS

Traditionally, power and business drive have been associated with top management. In reality, people at all levels of the organisation have the power to sustain or hinder the growth of a business – by choosing how they contribute to common goals, keep standards of quality, collaborate to solve problems together, and treat colleagues and customers. Company culture *is* power – and although it has been called *soft*, to rewire a culture that might not be functioning well is not a soft job, but rather one of the most demanding and difficult organisational tasks.

Cultures are different for each organisation. There is no one ideal culture, just as there is no single ideal brand. However, there is a *right* culture for each organi-

### DID YOU KNOW?

Only 28% of executives report that they understand their organisation’s culture, and only 12% believe their companies are driving the right culture.

— DELOITTE SURVEY, 2016

sation that will enable it to grow in a meaningful and sustainable way.

At its best, organisational culture is a space where open and honest dialogue can happen, where people are heard and seen for their capabilities, where failing is part of all success stories, and where learning is a constant habit. Daniel Coyle, author of “The Culture Code”

grasps what successful cultures bring about – they are not so much about being “happy and light-hearted places – they are energised and engaged but at their core their members are less orientated to achieving happiness than around solving hard problems together<sup>4</sup>.” In order to do so, people must have the space for open and truthful – sometimes tough – conversations when working together towards a common purpose.

At its worst, culture makes people feel chronically unmotivated, struggling to find meaning in their work, undervalued, negatively pressured or unsupported by leadership and the environment they operate in. In such conditions, chances are that business growth is stalling. In a culture that does not support people to bring their best to work, everybody suffers. The responsibility to turn this around lies with everyone, but it lies especially in the hands of the leaders.

Many organisations are somewhere in-between these two scenarios. In times of change, where the business faces pressures from the external ecosystem, the risk of increasing tensions in a culture heightens. In these situations, leaders must be proactive in steering the culture towards a more energised, collaborative, and desirable reality.

A common and misleading belief is that changing the people in an organisation will turn things around. The focus then shifts to recruiting those profiles that are more in line with *our way of doing things* – hoping that this alone will solve the matter and revitalise the culture. However, it is precisely *our way of doing things* that might be the problem, the true root cause of an unhealthy culture and where leaders should direct their actions first and foremost.

## TRANSITIONING CULTURE: TWO BUSINESS CASES

## 1 – WALT DISNEY ANIMATION

The first illustrative case of a culture transition is Disney. In 2006, Walt Disney Animation came to the realisation that “it had entered a decade-long creative wasteland” since the 1990s, “producing a series of films that were consistently flat and dull and, not coincidentally, unprofitable”<sup>5</sup> as Coyle recounts in his book “The Culture Code”. At that point, Disney purchased Pixar and put its leadership team in charge of “reviving the most storied brand in animation – and maybe in all entertainment.” Ed Catmull, the president and co-founder of Pixar summed up the task ahead this way: “We’re not going to turn Disney into a clone of Pixar. What we are going to do is build a studio on your talent and your passion.”<sup>6</sup>

Catmull achieved this through a series of organisational changes. For instance, directors were made directly responsible for coming up with their own ideas and pitching them to executives, instead of being assigned ideas by executives. Furthermore, the way in which creativity was brought to life was re-calibrated, through hosting candidly honest Brain Trust meetings (a habit at Pixar), where a team watched another team not involved in the project pick their movie apart and then do the hard work of rebuilding it. Catmull reflected on the culture change saying: “We put in some new systems, they learned new ways of interacting, and they changed their behaviour, and now they are a completely different group of people when they work together.”<sup>7</sup>

In 2010, Disney’s teams achieved a string of successes with *Tangled* (\$591 million in worldwide box office), *Wreck-it Ralph* (\$471 million), *Frozen* (\$1.2 billion), *Big Hero 6* (\$657 million), and *Zootopia* (\$931 million). The transition in culture and financial success happened with virtually no turnover in personnel. “The same people who made these films are the same people who were there when they were failing”<sup>8</sup>, said Catmull.

“We put in some new systems, they learned new ways of interacting, and they changed their behaviour, and now they are a completely different group of people when they work together... The same people who made these films are the same people who were there when they were failing.”

— ED CATMULL, FORMER PRESIDENT AT PIXAR AND DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIO

## 2 – UNILEVER

Even when a culture is thriving, shifts in business strategy can bring about new challenges. In the early 2000s, Unilever was well on their “path to growth” as they called it, following their recently renewed group strategy. One of the six key areas of this strategy was their people. Part of the new strategy was the decision to merge two companies that were part of Unilever group – Lever Brothers and Elida Fabergé – into one business. Both of these companies were successful, and they were also competing with each other.<sup>9</sup>

*“All the evidence about mergers suggested that there would be cultural issues associated with bringing together two such large organizations. Each had more than a billion dollars in revenue. These were big companies by European standards, employing thousands of people and making lots of profit. We decided against having the culture of unit A or unit B become dominant, because that would cause resentment from whichever was not chosen. We also realised that we could not simply hope that the merged organisation would bring about the best of both units. Instead, we chose to use art to facilitate bringing these two organizations together in a new and different culture. I think that the two companies went through that transition very successfully and the group has continued to prosper”<sup>10</sup>, said James Hill, former Chairman at Unilever’s Lever Fabergé (nowadays Unilever UK Home and Personal Care).*

The cultural change program that was based on arts as a way of bringing the two cultures together was called Catalyst. It was an extensive, multi-year program that not only supported the merger development to become a success story, but also brought new and fresh perspectives into the business.

Catalyst ran over 100 different arts-in-business actions across over 7 years of activity and it is probably the most all-encompassing program of its kind in a business context. Co-founders interviewed James Hill, who talks about what arts brought to their business. The video conversation that can be viewed [here](#).

We will briefly highlight some of the art methods used by Lever Fabergé to create a renewed, joint culture<sup>11</sup>:

- People at the company directly participated in selecting and buying a contemporary art collection that was placed in the office spaces. To understand the meaning behind the art works and to inform them on the techniques used in the creative process, they invited the artists for conversations during lunch or working hours. Interpretations made space for interactions

and for creating closer relationships between people coming from two different organisational cultures. As Hill phrased it, “art supports diversity of opinion and difference of view. Art is a neutral ground for stating opinions because it is not your own work that is on the line.”

- Theatre was used to explore the interactions between people. For example, the annual performance review was interpreted by actors doing role play on the characteristics and dynamics of the typical appraisal discussion – done well and done badly. This helped people to experiment with different ways of doing things, communicating, giving and receiving feedback in work conversations and in development meetings.
- Having a poet-in-residence was a method used to gain a different perspective on the business – a real-life poet was invited to join the company for some time and reflect on the life of the organisation. Hill mentions that some of the poet’s works and observations proved to be very insightful to the company: “The arts help open up a dialogue that you might never otherwise have had.”

Lever Fabergé’s story is just one illustrative example of how Art as a Method can help solve cultural challenges. For them, it took more than ‘business as usual’ to motivate people, bring them together and revive an entire organisational culture – a need that is ever more acute in business today.

Based on Unilever’s case, these steps are critical at the beginning of the process of reviving culture:

- clearly define the cultural issues at hand
- set specific objectives
- establish measurable outcomes
- make expectations visible

In doing so, the methods employed to solve organisational culture challenges will serve best in supporting the transition.

## WORKING WITH CULTURE, WORKING WITH CHAOS

The inner workings of an organisational culture are difficult to define. Culture is organic, chaotic, and it takes on a life of its own, following the diverse mix of people who participate in its creation.

*This is how Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, describes culture in his book Hit Refresh – The Quest to Rediscover Microsoft’s Soul and Imagining a Better Future: “Culture can be a vague and amorphous term. In his perspective book Culture, the literary theorist Terry Eagleton wrote that the idea of culture is multifaceted, ‘a kind of social unconscious’. With razor precision, he separates culture into four different meanings, but the most relevant for an organisation is the values, customs, beliefs and symbolic practices that people breathe each day. Culture is made up of acts that become habitual and accrue to something coherent and meaningful. I think of culture as a complex system made up of individual mindsets – the mindsets of those in front of me. Culture is how an organisation thinks and acts, but individuals shape it.”<sup>12</sup>*

The question then arises: how do we work with a seemingly chaotic entity driven by invisible signals and cues? The key is to deeply understand the dynamics that build motivation inside an organisation through its internal and external drivers.

According to the well-established theory of self-determination, people are motivated to work, grow and develop, when their needs for competence, connection and autonomy are fulfilled. This theory was developed by two psychologists – Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, who initially introduced their ideas in their 1985 book *Self-Determination and Intrinsic Motivation in Human Behaviour*.

In the context of organisations, the theory implies that motivation and, by extension, culture is shaped by the interplay between **external factors** – reinforced by leadership and working community, and **intrinsic**

**factors** – shaped by personal motives related to one’s own interests, passions, beliefs and values.

In addition to these factors, the purpose of a company’s existence – the *why* of the business – sets everyone in motion towards the same, desired direction, and helps people envision a *shared future*, as well as find meaning in their work every day. Purpose is paramount to the success of any organisation, but it takes time to build it and bring it into practice. As Coyle phrases it, “high-purpose environments are filled with small, vivid signals to create a link between the present moment and a future ideal.”<sup>13</sup>

## THE FOUR DRIVERS THAT INFLUENCE MOTIVATION AND SHAPE CULTURE

We propose four key drivers that shape both collective and individual motivation in an organisation:

### 1. PURPOSE

The reason an organisation exists, beyond bringing shareholder value and profits. Purpose is like a two-sided mirror: it encompasses both the meaning and value of a business to the wider society as well as to its own people. Because it is future oriented and aspirational in its essence, a strong purpose will set everyone in motion towards the same direction. Within organisational culture, purpose manifests itself as an answer to the question: *Why do I come to work every day?*

### 2. BELONGING

The feeling of security and support that stems from people having a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity in a working group. It is the fundamental basis in order to form and maintain lasting, positive, and significant relationships with colleagues, leaders, the organisation as a whole, and the work itself.

### 3. AUTONOMY

The extent to which a job allows freedom: independence to schedule work, make decisions and select the best methods to perform tasks. According to research<sup>14</sup>, having the permission to work in an

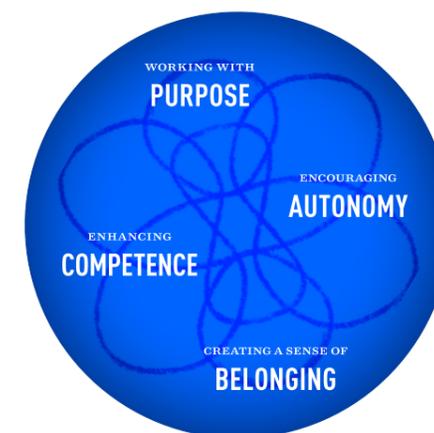
autonomous manner has positive effects on both job performance and job satisfaction, as well as on fostering an increased intrinsic motivation for work. It also denotes a high level of trust across the organisation, particularly on the part of the leadership.

### 4. COMPETENCE

The specific knowledge, skills and abilities required to do a job. People who perceive themselves as highly competent in their area of expertise will also demonstrate higher levels of effort and persistence. Competence is at its best in an organisation in which people have a good balance between being challenged and feeling proud of their capabilities.

The interplay between these four dimensions nourishes culture on a daily basis and influences how well the culture sustains (or hinders) the meaningful life of an organisation. By taking into consideration all four drivers, we are able to gain a holistic understanding of the specifics of a culture.

## WHAT DRIVES ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE



Art as a Method is based on the way in which artists do their work, on their actual methods and processes, which we captured in these three main stages: **Reflections** (more intuitive or more conscious choice of the theme), **Ways of Working** (which involves the actual technique) and **New Outcomes** (the work of art in itself). Through these stages, we look closer at the four key drivers of culture, re-wire them where needed, and **revive the overall culture of the organisation**.

## WHAT DOES ART BRING INTO THIS MIX?

*“For a long time throughout history, passion for work was very much the privilege of artists and artisans. People did not talk of passion when they worked the land, and certainly not when they went to the factory. It really speaks of the aspiration of meaning that work has received. Never have we expected more from work as we do today. People leave [an organisation] for management reasons, relationship reasons, when they are not promoted enough, seen enough, acknowledged.”<sup>15</sup>*

— ESTHER PEREL, WORLD-RENOWNED THERAPIST, AUTHOR AND SPEAKER, HOST OF THE PODCAST *HOW’S WORK?*

Indeed, we are expecting more from work today than ever before, as Perel so well phrases it. Moreover, there is something unique that we can learn from artists who have the privilege – and the hardship, we might add – of working with what they are innately passionate about, what gives them meaning and what is an expression of who they are as human beings and the way they see life around them.

There is a lot to learn from artists’ attitude and energy towards their work. What is most valuable is the reflection process that art brings to an organisation, the analogies it awakens within a business context, and the power to bring people together, as well as the methods and processes artists employ to achieve great works of art. All of these aspects are highly beneficial to any organisation, regardless of their area of expertise and the markets they operate in.

We illustrate a glimpse of the connection between art and business with four quotes from entirely different contexts:

*“Drawing is a constant correcting of errors. Maybe a great deal of creation is actually that. There’s not really a point where you’re suddenly aware that there’s nothing more to correct and if you were aware of that it would probably be very bad.”<sup>16</sup>*

— JOHN BERGER, ARTIST, CRITIC, HOST OF THE 1970’S BBC SERIES *WAYS OF SEEING*

*“This building was a mistake. The reason it’s a mistake is that it doesn’t create the kind of interactions we need to create. We made some mistakes with this building and now we know that, and we are slightly better because we know that.”*<sup>17</sup>

— ED CATMULL, FORMER PRESIDENT AT PIXAR AND DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIO

*“Why do we need art? It feeds our soul, right? Art has been with us since the beginning of time. It tells stories and narratives and creates memories and it fuels that side of us. It lives in each one of us. And so why wouldn’t it be a part of our tech and our research culture? It has to be. It’s a part of that dance that we have to have with that other side of ourselves so that we can ask these questions like, “Well, how does this impact our society? How does this impact the individual? How does this technology impact our privacy?” And art has this way of just shoving it in our faces and really asking the hard questions.”*<sup>18</sup>

— ASTA ROSEWAY, PRINCIPAL RESEARCH DESIGNER, MICROSOFT

*“Art is the most efficient way of creating novel associations, enriching connections and new openings. Art creates suggestions for fresh and surprising ways of defining the world we live in. There is another form of courage, the courage to think for yourself. This is what artists and entrepreneurs do, without being sure whether the response you get will be positive, and not knowing where having a voice of your own will lead you. Creativity takes courage, as Henri Matisse said. Fostering creativity is a genuine goal for absolutely everyone in the post-industrial society. A creative economy needs individuals with the courage and capacity to think, learn and live imaginatively. We need people who can conceive ideas and who can realise them. We must redefine the role of art in society. Art too often stands apart from everyday life. It is too often a pastime and an indulgence. In the very near future, art may not mean something we contemplate from a distance, but an approach to life and an experience we possess.”*<sup>19</sup>

— ESKO KILPI, WRITER, CRITIC

The process of artists and the way they work is insightful for the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of today’s leaders – approaching failure as an opportunity, admitting that making mistakes serves a purpose because it leads to better outcomes, having the courage to question the status quo and the creativity to constantly invent new things.

## HOW ART AS A METHOD HELPS TRANSITION CULTURE

Our ways of employing Art as a Method to solve challenges in organisational cultures are guided by the four main drivers that feed motivation and shape culture by directing *the way we do things around here: purpose, belonging, autonomy and competence.*

To illustrate this process, let us imagine an organisation x and assume that the main problems in its culture lay with the sense of *belonging*. Consider this hypothetical situation that many of us might have encountered in one form or another in organisational life: *People in the organisation feel disconnected, they do not work together to solve difficult problems but try to tackle them alone, often competing with each other in an unconstructive manner. This dynamic ends up diminishing the overall quality of the work. So, the outcomes – instead of being the results of brilliant minds co-creating solutions together – are a collection of separate ideas that don’t really work in sync. We have very talented and capable people who are committed to our purpose and the work that we do, but they don’t seem to want or be able to work together effectively.*

Our methodology unfolds on three main stages, bringing art as the primary method to address the challenge at hand:

### I. REFLECTIONS

Art is a neutral ground for discussion and makes space for in-depth reflection. It is also extremely rich in its exploration of different themes that have to do with humanity and the life around us. Art offers commentary and different viewpoints on the

**“People in the organisation feel disconnected, they do not work together to solve difficult problems but try to tackle them alone, often competing with each other in an unconstructive manner. This dynamic ends up diminishing the overall quality of the work.”**

things that trouble us or excite us. There is plenty to reflect on regarding belonging – identity, inclusion, emotions and dynamics in groups and communities, fears of disconnection and being left out, solitude in difficult situations, and the list goes on.

One way of bringing these viewpoints for reflection in the life of your organisation is by selecting a wide array of artworks that deal with the larger theme of belonging from different angles. Based on this collection of works, put together in a digital format, we facilitate a discussion with your people to unpack what belonging means to them. This is a safe space to open a dialogue, because the analogies with art are less invasive and make for a more fruitful way to welcome insight and invite both the rational, as well

as the emotional arguments into the conversation.

We will discover the underlying issues that hinder the sense of belonging within your culture and understand how to approach these issues with more depth, instead of creating superficial fixes with short-term results.

This stage will also prove to be eye-opening to all of your people, not only to team leaders and the top management team. The kinds of shifts in behaviour this reflection will bring about is unknown beforehand, but it will most likely affect both the individual and collective spirit. As James Hill also brought up during our interview, sharing the exploration and criticism of art that does not directly involve their work allows people to see the humanity of the other person in a different light. Even if this does not solve issues, it is a good path towards finding common ground, together.

### II. WAYS OF WORKING

From the reflective process and active dialogue, we enter into the more practical level – the effort and tools that are used in the making of great works of art.

Consider these thoughts from Ben Hartley, Executive Director of the National Arts Club in New York: *“Artists by their nature are failing more than they are succeeding. They are starting from a blank canvas. What business starts every day from a blank canvas? To create something that is going to be viewed by thousands or tens of thousands or maybe just three people – but to create every single day and to take a chance every single day, that’s brave, that’s courageous! And I think that’s something that we as business leaders need to embrace also.”*<sup>20</sup>

In this second stage, we dive into the actual working methods that artists use to arrive at their creative outcomes. Hearing, seeing and experiencing artists’ ways of working draws insightful cross-references. By exploring this theme in practice together with artists, we examine ways of working that give more flexibility and freedom to our own ways of behaving and doing things in a business context. We facilitate this by hosting talks, practical workshops such as transition arenas and other exercises with artists and your people.

For instance, actors use character relationship maps to gain in-depth understanding of their character's feelings and behaviours towards other characters in the story. This is part of an actor's toolbox to enable them to interpret a role as truthfully and as realistically as possible. This mapping explores the relationship of a character with their mother, spouse, boss or children – as the behaviour and attitude towards each of them is different. Actors analyse this dynamic without judgement and with empathy for their character.

By using the character mapping method in the context of an organisation, we can better understand the relationships between departments, teams and individuals. This sheds light on the ways of working dictated by roles (explicit or implicit), behaviours, values, conflicts and misalignments. Thus, belonging becomes a less ambiguous concept and is brought to surface within the reality of the culture by exploring these relationships. The relationships between departments, teams and individual professionals are not often discussed in organisations. Yet, it is precisely these relationships that drive so much of the underlying ways of working, in both the good and the bad. Delving into understanding these relationships will enable you to rewire and recalibrate those types of relationships that are harmful to the overall culture and to celebrate and replicate the fruitful ones.

Belonging, viewed through the lens of an artist's work, might sometimes seem paradoxical. The image of the artist as a solitary, creative genius struck by grand moments of inspiration is still fairly vivid in the way we perceive artists today. However, this is only a myth. Artists learn and develop continuously, both from what has been done before them and from their frequent interactions with other artists. Throughout history, artists have gathered in cafés, ateliers and studios to exchange thoughts and expose their creations to the critical eyes of their peers. For many, this was an excruciatingly painful but much needed experience, because receiving criticism from one's peers hits harder than from other audiences, but it pushes one to do better work. Sound familiar?

Belonging is also linked with co-creation. Even if a vision is initially set in motion by one artist, they often realise that they do not have the ability or know-how to execute it alone. They therefore invite other artists to join, form collectives and find inspiration in each other's work – all while maintaining their autonomy, name and signature style with the individual works they showcase.

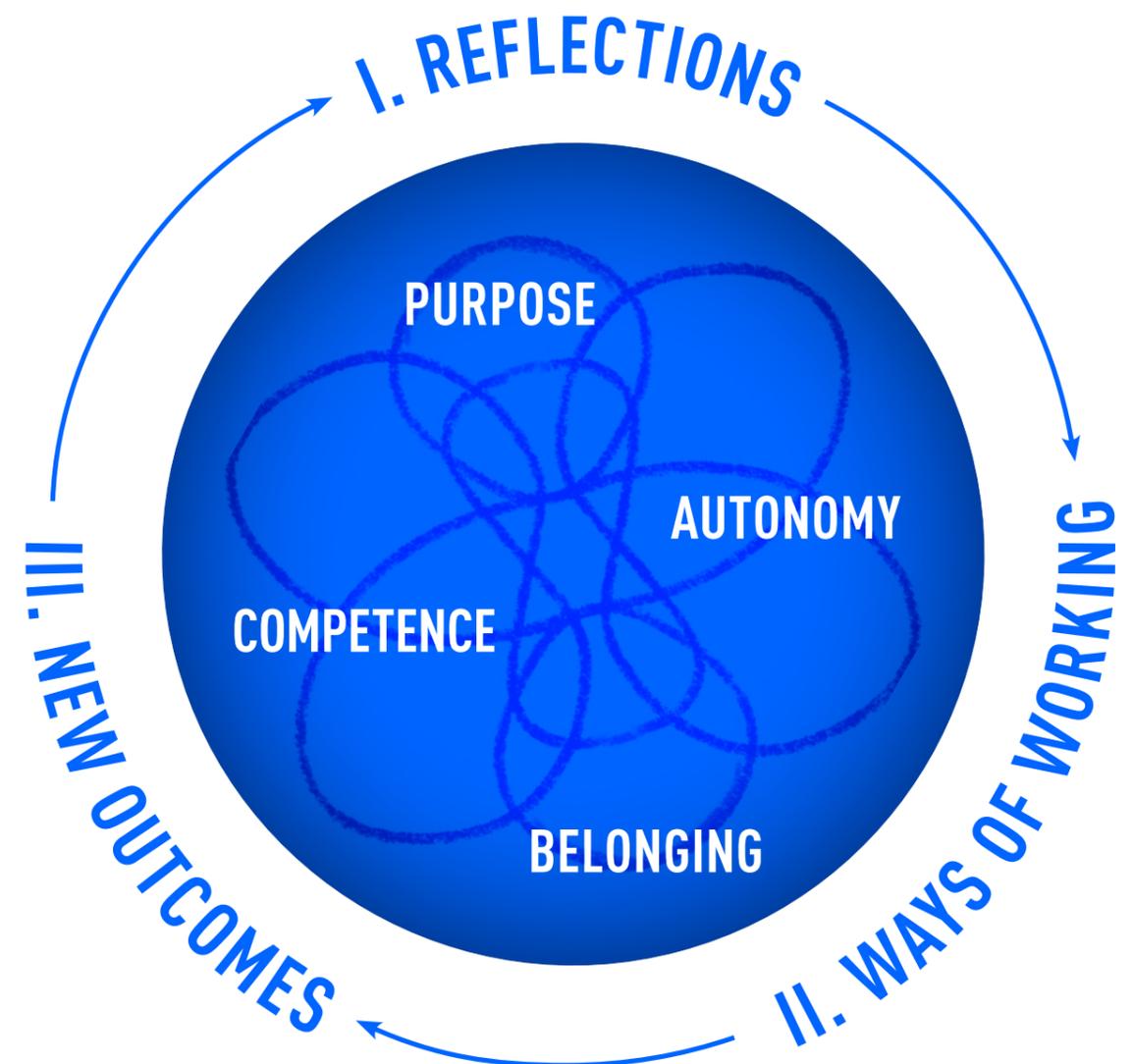
### III. NEW OUTCOMES

In this stage, we dive into how belonging feels when creating something together. For example, this can be done in an artistic way that is different from 'business-as-usual' work – teams work together towards a new and engaging creative outcome. A creative outcome can employ any form of art such as music, theatre, visual art or interactive installation. The format can be digital or analogue. This is the time of serious play as we like to call it. To make something creative happen – by really doing and rolling up our sleeves, new tangible dimensions of belonging to our working community will emerge. Because this creative outcome does not directly involve people's daily tasks, responsibilities and roles within the organisation, there is more freedom in the process.

One specific example is to create a musical composition that reflects the values shared across the organisation in order to strengthen and feel a sense of belonging and togetherness. The piece is created by the people, in collaboration with sound artists or music composers. Music is a universal language for emotions. When values are lived through as something more than a set of statements on a company website, they can inspire real feelings. It means something to be part of an organisation, when shared values are communicated in a way that brings people closer to each other. This is particularly true today, when we feel less connected to the organisation and our peers, despite the digital tools that allow us to e-meet all the time, any time.

Beyond any artistic and creative dimension, what is most important in this stage is that the new outcome is something we can take back into our work. Not only in the form of the actual creative production or object (which naturally can be utilised further in

## ART AS A METHOD IS BASED ON THREE STAGES OF ARTISTS' CREATIVE PROCESS



The stages feed into each other. The cycle continues to build new ways and outcomes around the four key culture drivers.

internal or external communications), but also in the form of new behaviours, new attitudes and dynamics that people experience and learn when creating something completely different together.

In the example presented above, new perspectives might arise from these questions: How is belonging experienced at an individual and collective level

when creating a piece of music inspired by our shared values? What can we bring back into our everyday work from this experience? What feels easier and what feels difficult in our work dynamics? What changed after being exposed to and part of this process?

This creative process thus inspires new, innovative outcomes we strive for and need to achieve in our work. This is what Art as a Method is all about: cultivating change and culture transitions for organisations to reach new realities and grow together.

To walk you through *Art as a Method*, we opted to apply it on the hypothetical case of an organisation lacking a sense of belonging, as this is a more comprehensive way to bring the method to life, rather than to describe it in purely theoretical terms. This said, we gave only a short outline of what the work might entail, because the process is always customised for each specific case. It might also be that all of the four drivers are stalling culture from thriving, undermining growth. Or it might be that two of these drivers are not aligned, or they are conflicting with each other. Every time we work on a case, we start by anchoring ourselves in the reality of the organisation in order to determine how we will use Art as a Method to address and solve the challenges at hand.

Art as a Method can be used to solve challenges regarding one of the culture drivers, such as *belonging*, or it can be used to target all four drivers at the same time.

In business as in life, we, as humans, never stop changing, adapting, adjusting, reinventing and creating anew. Art as a Method facilitates and supports

#### DID YOU KNOW?

69% of employees don't believe in the cultural goals set by their leaders, 87% don't understand them, and 90% don't behave in ways that align with them.  
— GARTNER SURVEY, 2019,  
HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW,  
JULY-AUGUST

this process. Through its three stages – Reflections, Ways of Working and New Outcomes – Art as a Method is an innovative way to address culture challenges, holding potential to propagate change further in the organisation, comparable to a positive snowball effect. At the same time, the methodology is scalable and modular, according to the reality of each organisational culture.

At Co-founders, we fuse together our knowledge of business, psychology, sociology and anthropology in employing Art as a Method to solve challenges in organisational cultures. While art is at the core of our methodology, we use our multi-disciplinary knowledge and cutting-edge insights as a team of seasoned business professionals and academic scholars.

We know that cultures are different for each company. Whilst there is no one ideal culture for all, each organisation can cultivate the right culture for itself, that will enable it to grow life-centric, in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Art as a Method is, in all aspects, an unconventional way to tackle organisational culture issues. But if we believed in the conventional, nothing would ever be reinvented. In this sense, we wholeheartedly follow Ben Hartley's words of advice: *"I think in the business world we are scared of trying things because it has never been done before. That's not good enough. You've got to be able to challenge yourself."*<sup>21</sup>

Our creative, yet rigorous methods help businesses expand their horizons and capacity for action, as well as transition successfully in times of unprecedented change. Together, we transition your organisational culture towards new, desired realities.

In business as in life, we, as humans, never stop changing, adapting, adjusting, reinventing and creating anew. Art as a Method facilitates and supports this process. Through its three stages – **Reflections, Ways of Working and New Outcomes** – Art as a Method is an innovative way to address culture challenges, holding potential to propagate change further in the organisation, comparable to a positive snowball effect.

- 1 According to a 2019 *Harvard Business Review* study, if people feel like they belong, companies reap substantial bottom-line benefits. High belonging was linked to a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% drop in turnover risk, and a 75% reduction in sick days. For a 10,000-person company, this would result in annual savings of more than \$52M. <https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work>
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We are big enough  
to maneuver grand  
projects, but small  
enough to care.

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We are a strategy consultancy helping  
organisations grow Life-centric<sup>®</sup>.

**We co-create meaningful growth together with our clients.** Whether improving a brand, an organisational culture, or ecosystem relations, we listen, research, reflect, strategise, inspire, and help you make the right decisions.

**Our work is based as much on emotional intelligence as it is on scientific insight.**  
We creatively combine a range of methods aligned with the Life-centric<sup>®</sup> approach.

**We have been in your shoes.** We have been part of the company management teams, executive boards and consultancies alike. We've seen successes and failures. We have succeeded and failed as individuals.

**We are a compact team of multi-disciplinary experts.** We are big enough to maneuver grand projects but small enough to care.