

POETRY/ORGANIZING CREATIVITY

Borgerson

THE RELATIONAL ART OF LEADERSHIP

Taylor and Karanian

AESTHETIC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Gran

EMBODIED AISTHESIS & AESTHETICS IN ORGANIZING/  
ORGANIZATIONS

Küpers

HAIKUGAMI

Kerle

ORGANIZATIONAL AESTHETICS

Chytry

SHANGHAI CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Shan

REVIEWS

THE ART OF MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE ISTANBUL

# Aesthesis

# Aesthesis:

*International Journal of Art and Aesthetics in Management and Organizational Life*

is published by

the **Aesthesis** project

The Aesthesis Project was founded in January 2007 and is a research project investigating art and aesthetics in management and organizational contexts. The project has its roots in the first Art of Management and Organization Conference in London in 2002, with successive conferences held in Paris, Krakow and The Banff Centre, Canada. From those events emerged an international network of academics, writers, artists, consultants and managers, all involved in exploring and experimenting with art in the context of management and organizational research. The Aesthesis Project will be developing extensive research and artistic projects internationally, with academic research fellows and associate creative practitioners, publications and consultancy.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/aesthesis/>

---

## EDITORS

Ian W. King, Essex Management Centre, University of Essex, Colchester, UK  
Jonathan Vickery, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK  
Ceri Watkins, Essex Management Centre, University of Essex, Colchester, UK

## EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

Jane Malabar  
[aesthesis@essex.ac.uk](mailto:aesthesis@essex.ac.uk)

## EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dawn Ades, University of Essex, UK  
Daved Barry, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal  
Jo Caust, University of South Australia, Editor, Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management  
Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, University of Stockholm, Sweden  
Laurie Heizler, Wright Hassall LLP, Leamington Spa, UK  
Stephen Linstead, University of York, UK  
Nick Nissley, The Banff Centre, Canada  
Antonio Strati, University of Trento and University of Siena, Italy  
Steve Taylor, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, USA

---

## DESIGN & ART DIRECTION

Jonathan Vickery

## DIGITAL ARTWORK

Integra Communications, Oxford, UK

**The views and assertions articulated in this publication do not necessarily represent the views or judgements of the editors or of The Aesthesis Project.**

ISSN 1751-9853

Aesthesis © 2008: The Aesthesis Project

# CONTENTS

Editorial // 2

*POETRY LESSONS: ON ORGANIZING CREATIVITY*  
Janet L. Borgerson // 4

*WORKING CONNECTION: THE RELATIONAL ART OF LEADERSHIP*  
Steven S. Taylor and Barbara A. Karanian // 15

*LOOK WHO'S TALKING!  
- AESTHETIC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION IN A DEDIFFERENTIATED  
SOCIETY*  
Anne-Britt Gran // 23

*THE SENSE-MAKING OF THE SENSES: MARKING THE SENSUAL  
AS MAKING SENSE - PERSPECTIVES ON EMBODIED AISTHESIS &  
AESTHETICS IN ORGANIZING/ORGANIZATIONS*  
Wendelin M. Küpers // 33

*HAIKUGAMI*  
Ralph Kerle // 54

*ORGANIZATIONAL AESTHETICS: THE ARTFUL FIRM AND THE AESTHETIC  
MOMENT IN ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT THEORY*  
Josef Chytry // 60

*SHANGHAI CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: THE EMERGENCE OF THE CREATIVE  
CLASS IN CHINA?*  
Linlin Shan // 73

*REVIEWS*  
Andrew Rowe // 85 Erica Pastore // 86

*THE ART OF MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION  
CONFERENCE ISTANBUL // 88*

# Working Connection: The Relational Art Of Leadership

Steven S. Taylor  
Barbara A. Karanian

Drawing upon ideas of relational leadership, leadership as an art, and organizational aesthetics, we conceptualize relational leadership as an art that works with *connection* as its medium. We illustrate the practice of working connection with an example of an entrepreneurial leader, which shows how he, sometimes distinctly and sometimes ambiguously, works with connection. We then discuss the implications of approaching leadership as an art that is enacted through working connection.

If we are to take seriously the idea that leadership is an art (Barnard 1938; DePree 1989), then we might ask – is it a visual art, is it an all encompassing sensory art, is it a literary art, is it an aural art? Which is also to ask, what is the medium of the art of leadership? At first blush, leadership uses the human body as a medium, much in the way that theater, dance, and storytelling do. That is to say, as has been said before, that leadership is a performing art (e.g. Grint 2001; Vaill 1989).

But to identify the human body as the medium of leadership is to take an individualist perspective on leadership, to place leadership as something that is done by and to individual humans. We start with the assumption that leadership is a relational phenomena – it occurs not within individuals, but between individuals (cf. Uhl-Bien 2006). Working from that position, leadership does not use the human body as a medium, it uses the space between people as its medium. Leadership is an art that works in the connection between humans.

Part of any art is the mastery, technique, or skill of working the medium. Whether it is

a painter's skill with brush, paint, and canvas, an actor's skill with voice, body and creating emotional reality (e.g. Hagen 1973; Stanislavski 1936), or a drummer's ability to play complex rhythms on their drum set, the craft is an important part of their art. Drummers spend years learning how to play the drums and perfecting their expertise. When a group of jazz drummers gather, very rapidly the discussion turns to types and brands of cymbals (Hatch et al. 2004). Similarly, painters are prone to talk about brushes, palette knives and mixing diverse mediums together to paint. This is because it is in the method through the medium of the art form that the art is enacted – it is in the details of working the medium that the rubber meets the road. The drummers' inner artistic sensibilities may lead them to want a livelier cymbal sound in a particular song, but that livelier symbol sound will be realized in the use of a specific brand and type of cymbal, struck with a particular drumstick or brush, with a specific technique.

Thus if we are to take seriously the idea that leadership is an art, we need to consider the medium of that art and how it is worked because that is where the art of leadership is enacted. One leader who works the connection between humans is a filmmaker — named Ramy — who says, “We never read the manual that said to separate the creative people from the technical people. In fact, our industry doesn't get it. They don't believe us or know what we do. They think it's impossible to artistically collaborate the way we do”, as he participated in a design methods seminar with graduate students. In order to lay the ground for looking at how Ramy works connection we start with a discussion of what we mean by relational leadership, why leadership should be considered an art, and the relationship between organizational aesthetics and connection, all of which brings us to a fuller and more nuanced conceptual understanding of what we mean by the art of relational leadership. We then turn to Ramy in more detail to illustrate the practice of how relational leaders work connection, closing with what this tells about the idea of leadership as art.

## THE ART OF RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In order to develop a more nuanced conception of the art of relational leadership, we will break down the phrase, discussing the parts of it in turn. We begin with the idea of relational leadership, drawing upon Mary Uhl-Bien's (2006) approach. She breaks down relational leadership into two theoretical approaches, an entity perspective and a relational perspective. Although both are concerned with leadership as a phenomenon that involves both leaders and followers, the entity perspective examines the relationship from the perspective of the individuals (the leader and followers). She identifies the entity perspective as being based in an ontology of objective truth and being concerned with how the individual perceives and influences the relationship with the other. In contrast, the relational perspective is based in an ontology of social construction and is concerned with the relationship itself, which it sees as being constantly constructed in processes.

We conceptualize relational leadership from Uhl-Bien's relational perspective. One key consequence of the relational approach is that it moves the focus from understanding leadership effectiveness to understanding the relational processes by which leadership is produced, which fits with our concern with the craft of the art of leadership. In artistic terms, we are not so much concerned with a judgment of the quality of the finished painting, but rather what techniques and methods have been used to produce the painting and how those methods affect the finished painting.

The idea that leadership is an art is certainly not new. Barnard told us, 'It is a matter of art rather than science, and is aesthetic rather than logical' (1938: 235). Just looking at our own bookshelf offers titles such as *The Art of Leadership* (Bothwell 1983), *The Art and Science of Leadership* (Nahavandi 1997), *The Art of the Leader* (Cohen, 1990), *The Arts of Leadership* (Grint 2001), and *The Three Faces of Leadership: Artist, Manager, Priest* (Hatch et al. 2004). There has been a gradual movement from using the idea of leadership as an art rather loosely, to more and more detailed use of specific aesthetic philosophy. As an example, Duke (1986) simply argued for four aesthetic properties of leadership. Twenty years later, Ladkin (2006) is gaining new insights into charismatic leadership by viewing it through Kant's idea of the sublime, and Samier and Bates (2006) are presenting a variety of specific philosophic stances on leadership and administration. Although this movement has offered deeper insights into leadership, it is important to recognize that it comes from a position of art criticism rather than art practice (Taylor and Carbone 2008). That is to say, it is based in an intellectual approach to art that tends to be taken by academics and critics rather than an embodied approach that is taken by teachers and artists. The intellectual approach is looking for clear analytic insight and conceptualization, while the practice approach is looking for examples of embodied knowing which are particular to the situation, but in that particularity may offer some useful insight. As many creative writing teachers will say, the more specific and concrete the detail, the more it generalizes for the reader. As we speak of relational leadership as working connection, we are speaking from an art practice perspective and our hope is to offer specific practices rather than an analytic conceptualization of the art of relational leadership.

When leadership is spoken of as an art, this is somehow different from an art such as painting, sculpture, or dance. The difference is that while every art is formative, that is the art is about forming something – the art of negotiation is about forming an agreement in the face of conflicting interests, the art of sculpture is about forming sculpture out of marble or some other material – the 'pure' arts are about formativeness for the sake of forming, while the applied arts have an instrumental purpose (Strati 1999). So what does this mean when applied to managerial action such as leadership?

Goodsell suggests that management is 'an art in the ancient sense of that word, i.e. it embodies a specialized skill that is capable of creating results that are both usable and pleasing to behold. Specific objects are created and tasks performed, yet in ways and with consequences that establish in the minds of both creator and audience a sense of intrinsic satisfaction, above and beyond the utilitarian purpose at hand', but not necessarily unrelated to it (Goodsell 1992: 247). Kuhn says, 'the process

of 'managing' becomes art as those involved create meaning, construct form, recognize patterns, and place values on relationships with others. It is an art that exists only in process' (Kuhn 1996: 223). We suggest that the primary medium that leaders form and work with in order to accomplish the instrumental goals of the organization is the connections between people.

Although we have all seen or at least can imagine how a painter works within one medium with their paints, brushes, and canvas to create a painting, what it actually means to work connection is less clear. We cannot see, touch, taste, smell, or hear connection. But we can feel connection. What does it mean to feel connected to each other? To feel something implies a way of knowing that is intuitive and holistic (Beardsley 1982), a way of knowing that is unmediated by deductive or inductive reasoning (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson 1990), a way of knowing the 'felt meaning' (Courtney 1995) of an experience; all of which are also descriptions of aesthetic experience.

The most common conception of aesthetics within organizational aesthetics is as the study of sensible knowing that is apprehended directly by the five senses. As Ramirez puts it:

'Aesthetics is that branch of Western philosophy that deals with the forms of understanding, perception, conception, and experience which we qualify (often after the fact) with adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'ugly', 'elegant', or 'repulsive'. Aesthetic knowledge depends largely on sensing and feeling, on empathy and intuition, and on relating conception to perception'. (Ramirez 2005: 29)

However, there is another way of thinking about aesthetics that explicitly links connection and aesthetics. This conceptualization of aesthetic experience comes from Ramirez's (1991) concept of the beauty of social organization. Ramirez starts by developing a systems theory of organizational beauty. Being 'a part of' a system simultaneously means 'belonging to' and 'distinct from'. The aesthetic experience of beauty comes from the feeling of 'belonging to'. Or as Bateson said, 'By aesthetic, I mean responsive to the pattern that connects' mind and nature (quoted in Ramirez, 1991: 38). Sandelands (1998) expresses

this idea slightly differently. He suggests that people have a dual nature as an individual and as a member of a social group, much in the way that Ramirez speaks of the 'separate from' (individual) and 'belonging to' (part of a group) aspects of a system. Sandelands goes on to argue that feelings of being part of the group are expressed and made object through art. Thus where Bateson said that aesthetic experience was responsive to connection, Sandelands argues connection is the basis of aesthetic experience. Clair (1998) echoes Bateson's understanding of connection being central to aesthetics, tracing it back to a variety of indigenous cultures' concept of aesthetics. In particular, she discusses traditional Cherokee aesthetics as being from a circular (rather than linear) culture where connection is crucial and aesthetics permeates all aspects of life.

Although there is a common theme that aesthetics is somehow related to connection between people, there is no clear, agreed upon, theoretical understanding of what exactly the relationship between connection and aesthetics is. Following in that vein, we suggest that rather than connection being the basis of aesthetic experience (Ramirez 1991), or that aesthetic forms are the expression of connection (Sandelands 1998), instead connection is the medium of the art of relational leadership. By taking this conceptualization of the relationship between aesthetics and connection, we can conceptualize the practice of leaders and consider the craft of relational leadership, which we will do in the next section.

But first, let us illustrate what we mean by craft or technique with an example from the technique of painting with watercolors. In one technique, heavy weight paper is drenched in water and used as a foundation for wet paint that is applied for a not completely predictable outcome. Creating begins in the saturation of color applied to a surface appearing to move with the motion of water and ends in the surprise of a still outcome. A deep cadmium red blended with yellow ochre and a touch of rich, raw umber dries on the surface to provide shadow and depth perspective to urban buildings such as those pictured in figure 1. Ultra marine blue and alizarin crimson mix to create the illusion of lavender in a foggy expansive sky. The use of ink and bronze

powder are saturation modifications. More than a concept or intellectual theory of painting is being applied, but rather an embodied practice. We now turn to the embodied techniques of the art of relational leadership, as we see them in the practice of Ramy, the filmmaker.

## WORKING CONNECTION

When we speak of working connection, we are talking about the art and construction, the skills, and the techniques of relational leadership. It is similar to talking about how a watercolor painter may work with wet paint on a wet surface. It is similar to a trombone player talking about the technique of double tonguing. It is like a storyteller's art of making contact with the audience just long enough to communicate a thought to them (Snyder 1990).

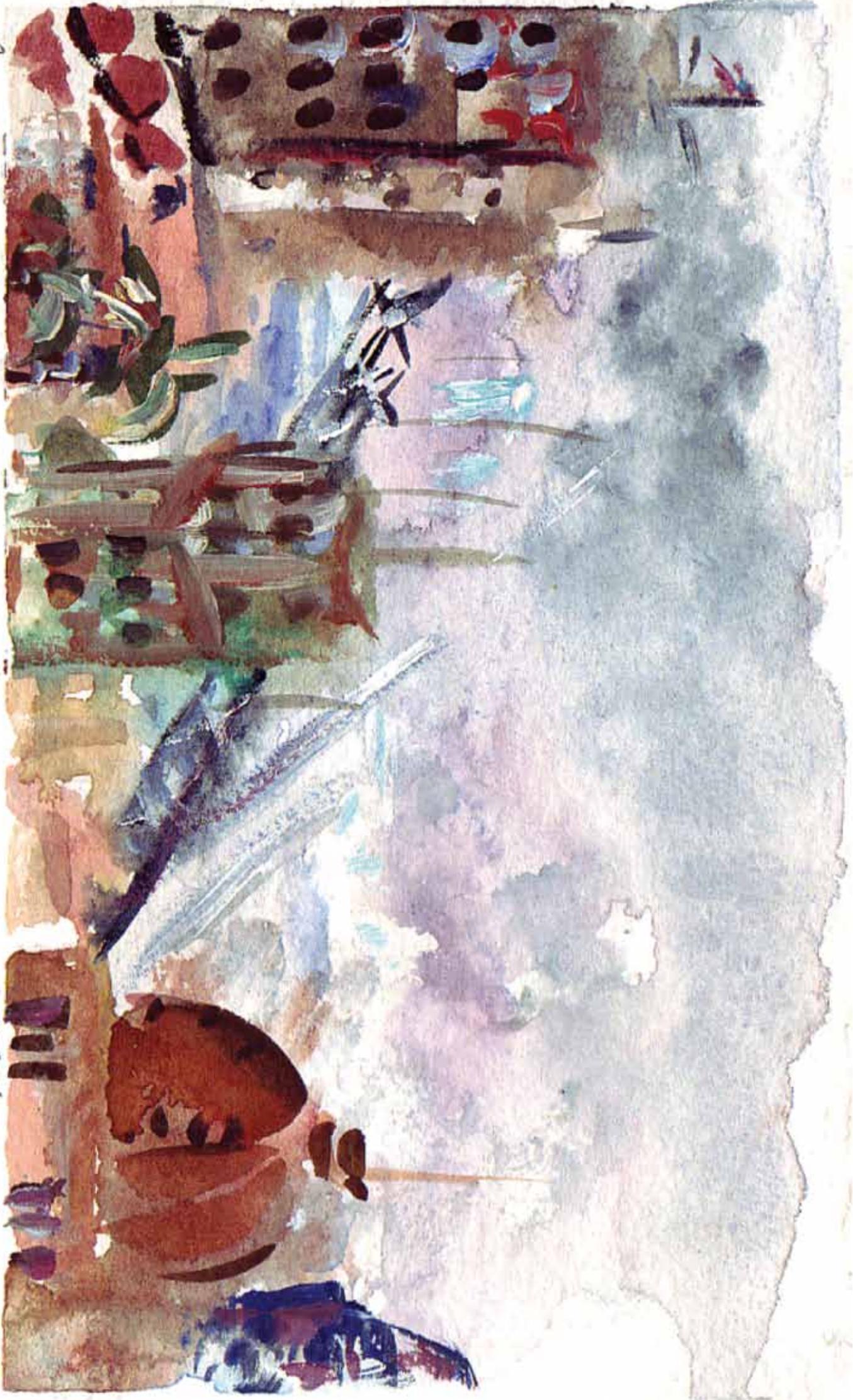
We draw upon the story of our filmmaker Ramy, that was created as part of a larger study of successful, entrepreneurial leaders (Karanian 2007) to illustrate ways that an artistic-relational-leader can work connection. We say illustrate in the sense that an image illustrates a story, not in the sense that an example illustrates a theory. We do not intend to suggest that the ways Ramy works connection are the only ways that connection is worked by relational artistic leaders, but rather that they are specific techniques that Ramy uses and that by looking at them in more detail we may get something of a feel of what it means to work connection. Much of the way in which he works connection is by creating the conditions for connections to flourish, although he does also directly work the relationships. These come together as he appreciates the moments of connection in relationship to the diverse group, and tells his truth.

We start with the physical conditions of his first studio/office. Images emerge immediately after the first few minutes of walking in to the multi-level stucco West Hollywood home converted into his futuristic oasis of video, film, and documentary making. There is a maze of cubby-holes and paths and stairways to everyone working — individually and connected together — by concrete and symbolic evidence of ongoing success. Presents sent in the form of coconuts, tequila, and monkeys indicate a playful and exhilarating promise for fun while people work hard. Original thoughts, clear, unwavering magnetic focus, an agile almost boundless bounce from one place to another are first impressions of Ramy. The land of Ramy, founder and C.E.O. along with his very talented group at Hollywood Digital, teems with the kind of energy that would motivate every entrepreneurial thinker to wake up early and run to work. Ramy explains this with the general description that it is important that everyone be comfortable, but we see that there is more at work here than simply being comfortable. He has created a space where he both physically and psychologically creates opportunities for connection. The importance of this space is shown in the following story:

"Comfort matters," he suggests. There is a paradox of comfort in teams that don't apparently belong together. Yet, Ramy has created ways at Hollywood Digital for connecting, collaborative, multi-branching teams that produce films for large unknown audiences. "People are comfortable here and stay and do all this work. If they are not comfortable, they know it and they just leave. No one has to ask them to leave."

"One example of discomfort occurred when my leading digital artist disappeared". Ramy explains. "He didn't say anything, he just left for days. He disappeared. I gave him some space, not worrying yet that he wouldn't follow-through, but finally talked to him about his concerns. And, of course, the concerns weren't technical. The digital effects artist was concerned that, with the move to the larger space, he would be lost in the big, impersonal machine of the huge movie house. He worried that he would no longer be motivated to be on the team, and that we would no longer be a team. So, I am working on that transition for everyone from our smaller space to the larger one. I am working on it. It's a day to day, real time thing".

The digital artist feels the importance of the physical and psychological space that Ramy has created. The digital effects artist's sense of team is the connection that has been created in the space that Ramy has worked. To keep that connection, Ramy knows he must pay close attention, participate and help facilitate the artist's adjustment to the new space.



San Francisco View III watercolor

Barbara August 2005  
Hawaiian

Ramy also works the conditions for connection as he selects diverse people to work together on his projects. Unexpected twists turn up everywhere. People, who under normal circumstances wouldn't be working together, design, construct, and modify everything in the production cycle of film making. "I pick the best", directs Ramy. The significance of this statement is illustrated by a company culture founded on the principle that people from backgrounds that are diverse, based on education, training, and past experience will collaborate exquisitely when innovation is the goal.

The culture created by Ramy is reminiscent of one found in many high-achieving, but never arrogant academic institutions. Getting the absolutely best individual for the work is the key. Creativity and best practices are so highly valued in the company that Ramy searches for and chooses the top performer with a goal toward seamless communication. And when Hollywood Digital enters the color phase of the project and the final attention to details of the story line, visual effects, saturation, etc. there is almost no finishing line on completion.

But it is not simply a case of selecting the best people and putting them together. Ramy is working connection in a more sophisticated way than that as he selects people to work on the pre and post production process for his films. He works the conditions for connection, organizing and creating cross-functional teams with the expectation that something wonderful will happen. A six-month Hollywood writer's strike provides an example. Corrosive to any productive team vibe, many in the television and movie industry used the strike as an opportunity for extreme cost-cutting lay-offs. Not Ramy. He pulled his team together and reiterated that it was because they all began together as a team that they would move forward together — even during this difficult stage — as a team. Then they used the strike conditions to offer something new, and the company thrived and completed award winning work.

An example of how he works the conditions for connection to foster the creation of interesting and important connections, consider how Ramy paints a picture of leadership that is brimming with awareness of participant and viewer. His goal is to work with female camera operators. "You rarely if ever see 'girls' behind the camera. But I remember being fascinated as I watched a woman filming on Hollywood Boulevard. Think about it," he said. "What happens when there is a guy behind the camera. What are people's perceptions? Think about it. That doesn't happen if it's a girl. I have a goal here — to get women as photographers." Ramy continued to discuss the ease and comfort of that particular solo woman photographer and how she connected persuasively as she carried her equipment and received responses naturally from passers-by.

Here he has seen the possibility for creating new and different connections between the public and the film crew that may translate into something new and different in the final product, simply by changing the gender of his camera person. He wonders about how the way it feels to be filmed by a woman or a man will create conditions for a natural response. He doesn't know exactly what, if anything will happen differently with a female behind the camera rather than a man, but he does sense the gendered aspect of the role and creates the possibility for new connections. Gender presents another variable for sustaining success in this male-dominated team. Enthusiastic about the value of other than male actions on a team, Ramy is exuberant about searching for females to join his team. "Where are all the women and why won't they stay in our industry?" are comments indicating his concerns and worry that he needs to find ways to do more.

Ramy's working of connection is also manifested in how he creates (or doesn't create) formal organizational structures. Here is his view on formal meetings: "I didn't organize any formal meetings to communicate." He smiled when he explained, "I don't have to organize any formal meetings to communicate. The meetings occurred naturally, people just gather." And although he claims that the connections just occur naturally, again, there is more to it than that. Ramy works tirelessly and with painterly precision to make the communication and connection happen. Hours are spent on the phone. Sometimes six hours of nonstop conversations with more than one person representative of multiple working groups on different phone lines, Ramy says, will keep him away

from his staff. This presents a time that he is aware that he needs to connect clearly and authentically with those on the phone, yet demonstrate care and awareness for his staff's neediness. And as he states, "I confront and direct the related issues in the moment." Here we also see that he works connection, not only by creating the conditions for connection, but also working the relationships directly as he is ever present and in the moment as he communicates with staff.

Another way that Ramy works connection is through language. He often speaks in his own vernacular. Ramy has his own language — not L.A. street slang, but words and phrases that identify him and his work immediately. He says, "monkey" and "maverick" and "dislodge" and you know he means action. And so does his team — who he refers to as "warriors." New people he meets imitate. They use his words immediately in conversation. One example is a former New York stock broker who had a few minutes to discuss wishes for subsidizing an upcoming project with Ramy and was overheard using "Ramy language" in follow-up phone conversation meetings. Words and non-verbal cues illustrate his connected impact. He uses the word "monkey" as a playful and visual image of action and designing new movements forward toward project delivery at work. People imitate his language, not as an empty echo, but as artistic evidence of sensorial engagement to Ramy's related leadership style. The language allows people to connect through the ideas and special words and phrases that are Ramy's language.

Lest we give a romanticized and wrong impression, we note that not all of the ways that Ramy works connection are distinct or feel glorious or happy and cheerful. He also works connection ambiguously by telling his truth, and evokes negative emotions. The team and one-on-one examples illustrate this. When asked by a partnering academic team's graduate student who was prototyping a new design, "Ramy, does my work just suck...other's say they are not convinced?" Ramy responded to him in front of the group, "Well, it's possible that your work does suck. It's more likely however, that you are telling them too much of

the story. Never give the beginning, the middle and the end.” Silent at first, the student awkwardly recognized the truth in a later final presentation. This telling of his truth reminds us of an artist’s commitment to telling their truth in their work. It is not a truth that has to be everyone’s truth, but just as we look to the artist to unabashedly show us what they see (and that the rest of us may not see), Ramy’s people expect him to tell them his truth and that expectation is part of their connection with him.

It works both ways as Ramy also respects his people’s truths. For example, awkward silence occurred another time when Ramy volunteered one of his stars to demonstrate award winning, creative post-production processes. He gazed back at Ramy, almost stoic in response. Non-verbal cues and symbols in Ramy’s behaviors showed appreciation for his star staff member’s lack of response and somehow that worked. The energy of selfishly removed indifference was replaced with a playful and artistic vibe, and the demonstration was effective. Parallel to how Ramy recognizes the tension in the graduate student’s readiness for moving forward he patiently connects with the digital effects artist. In a face to face discussion with another colleague he delivers a clear personal statement, “You are always on the precipice of success, what’s taking you so long?” The simple question delivers Ramy’s truth as he sees it, but does not insist on that truth being the truth for his colleague.

So we see Ramy, managing the physical space, creating the psychological space, selecting the composition of his “warrior” teams, playing with gender, addressing relationships directly, using his own particular language, and telling his truth as ways that he works the connections between his people and himself, between his people and each other, and even between his people and the wider world. We have described these as techniques for working connection, but we do so with the realization that art is more than technique — painting is more than a mastery of color and brushstrokes — and this art of relational leadership is more than the techniques of working connection. Thus we now turn to the question of where does approaching leadership as a relational art that uses connection as its medium take us in a more philosophical and conceptual sense.

## LEADERSHIP AS AN ART

To come back to our starting point – that is to take seriously the idea that leadership is an art – we now look at some implications of approaching leadership as a relational art that uses connection as its medium. To do this, we draw upon Bourriaud’s (2002) *Relational Aesthetics* to supply some conceptual scaffolding. Bourriaud is concerned with theorizing the art scene of the 1990’s and making sense of the events/exhibitions/installations/happenings that defied traditional categorization and theorization. He starts from the idea that:

‘Artistic activity, for its part, strives to achieve modest connections, open up (one or two) obstructed passages, and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another.’ (Bourriaud 2002: 8)

We are struck by how well Bourriaud’s description of artistic activity fits Ramy’s leadership. As he brings together people who would otherwise have been unlikely to work together he is connecting different realities that are otherwise kept apart. This might well be typical of entrepreneurial leaders because there is such great opportunity for creative group genius (Sawyer 2007; Sawyer 2006) when disparate areas are brought together in surprising mixes of diverse teams. We take it as validation that Ramy’s leadership seems to fit Bourriaud’s conception of art, and now build on that conception to offer deeper insight into the art of leadership with the intention of understanding the experience of transformative team connections.

We start with Bourriaud’s analysis of the purpose of relational aesthetics. He sees art as being in response to and different from a world that has become more and more rationalized and commoditized, or in short more and more dominated by the ideas of mid-twentieth century managerial capitalism.

“In a world governed by the division of labor and ultra-specialization, mechanisation and the law of profitability, it behooves the powers that human relations should be channeled towards accordingly planned outlets, and that they should be pursued on the basis of one or two simple principles, which can be both monitored and repeated” (Bourriaud 2002: 9)

It is here where we start to see the real possibility of leadership as an art and the difference between leadership as an art and the science of leadership. As an example of the science of leadership, think of the contingency theories of leadership developed at Ohio State and Michigan in the 1960’s and 1970’s. The research was aimed at reducing the complexity of the connections between leaders and followers and providing a specific set of guidelines for how a leader should behave based upon the circumstance. It was a prescribed paint-by-numbers approach – paint this color in this space and fill in this color in this space and you will have a delightful and completed picture of leadership. In contrast, Ramy shows us that an art of leadership is focused on working each connection for its own sake and enacting leadership that is never a formula, never the same picture twice. He appreciates the fine art of being present and giving in every unique moment. A science of leadership is driven to find repeatable, general solutions – Bourriaud’s ‘simple principles’. An art of leadership is driven by Adler’s ‘yearning for significance’. (2006: 492) An art of leadership seeks more, richer, and different connections that open up more and more possibilities of what it might mean to be human, while a science of leadership seeks to reduce those connections to a consistent, few, qualities that can be managed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the leadership process.

Beyond the difference between a science of leadership that serves the ongoing dominance of managerial capitalism and an art of leadership that seeks to increase the possibilities of what it is to be human, we also see a lesson for relational leadership in how Bourriaud contrasts relational art with previous forms of art.

‘The role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist.’ (Bourriaud 2002: 13)

That is to say relational art has moved beyond creating images of possibilities to enacting those possibilities. We see this also in Ramy’s relational leadership – he does

not create representations of new ways to lead and organize, but rather blurs industry boundaries and enacts new ways to lead and organize.

If we bring these two ideas together, we see a science of leadership that attempts to create a simplified representation of leadership and then control and limit human interaction and connection to conform to that representation. In a similar method, previous ideas of art created representations of utopian dreams much in the way that artful, charismatic leaders created visions of new ways of organizing and being together – for example, Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech paints a picture of a utopian society where black and white stand together as colorful equals. Although the form and use of the representation are different – in the extreme, science represents a desire to control, while art represents a desire to liberate and create new possibilities – representation is an essential part of the process of leadership. However, this new art of relational leadership moves directly to enacting a new model of organizing and being together. Ramy doesn’t spend his time putting forth a vision – he just does it. There is not a sense of creating a vision or a theory and then trying to realize it, but rather a sense of working connection and then seeing what new and interesting things happen as a result of having worked connection that way.

It is this fundamentally different conception of leadership that is the result of taking seriously the idea that leadership is an art. Leadership as an art takes us to that rare area of leadership that is not about accomplishing goals or providing a vision, but rather is about experiencing and working connections with the belief that something new and interesting will be created as a result. //

## REFERENCES

- Adler, N. J. (2006) ‘The arts & leadership: Now that we can do anything, what will we do?’ *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 5: 486-499.
- Barnard, C. I. (1938) *The Functions of the Executive*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Beardsley, M. (1982) ‘Some persistent issues in aesthetics’ in Wreen, M. J. and Callen, D. M. eds. *The Aesthetic Point of View*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bothwell, L. (1983) *The Art of Leadership: Skill-building techniques that produce results*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Bourriaud, N. (2002) *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon, les presses du reel.
- Clair, R. P. (1998) *Organizing silence: A world of possibilities*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Cohen, W. A. (1990) *The Art of the Leader*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Courtney, R. (1995) *Drama and Feeling: An Aesthetic Theory*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Robinson, R. (1990) *The Art of Seeing: An interpretation of the aesthetic*, Malibu, CA: Getty.
- DePree, M. (1989) *Leadership is an Art*, New York: Dell.
- Duke, D. L. (1986) ‘The aesthetics of leadership’, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 22: 7-27.
- Goodsell, C. T. (1992) ‘The public administrator as artisan’, *Public Administration Review*, 52: 246-53.
- Grint, K. (2001) *The Arts of Leadership*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hagen, U. (1973) *Respect for Acting*, New York: MacMillan.
- Hatch, M. J., Kostera, M. and Kozminski, A. K. (2004) *The Three Faces of Leadership: Manager, Artist, Priest*, London: Blackwell.
- Karanian, B. (2007) *Entrepreneurial Leadership: a balancing act in engineering and science*, ASEE June meeting, Honolulu, HI.
- Kuhn, J. W. (1996) ‘The misfit between organization theory and processional art: A comment on White and Strat’, *Organization*, 3: 219-24.
- Ladkin, D. (2006) ‘The enchantment of the charismatic leader: Charisma reconsidered as aesthetic encounter’, *Leadership*, 2: 165-179.
- Nahavandi, A. (1997) *The Art and Science of Leadership*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Ramirez, R. (1991) *The Beauty of Social Organization*, Munich: Accedo.
- Ramirez, R. (2005) ‘The aesthetics of cooperation’, *European Management Review*, 2: 28-35.
- Samier, E. A. and Bates, R. J. eds. (2006) *Aesthetic Dimensions of Educational and Administrative Leadership*, New York: Routledge.
- Sandelands, L. E. (1998) *Feeling and Form in Social Life*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sawyer, K. (2007) *Group Genius: The creative power of collaboration*, New York: Basic Books.
- Sawyer, R. K. (2006) *Explaining Creativity: The science of human innovation*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Snyder, E. (1990) *Persuasive Business Speaking*, New York: American Management Association.

Stanislavski, C. (1936) *An Actor Prepares*, New York: Routledge.  
Strati, A. (1999) *Organization and Aesthetics*, London: Sage.  
Taylor, S. S. & Carbone I. (2008) 'Technique & Practices from the Arts: Expressive Verbs, Feelings, and Action' in Barry, D. and Hanson, H. eds. *New and Emerging Approaches to Management and Organization*, London: Sage: 220-228.  
Uhl-Bien, M. (2006) 'Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing', *Leadership Quarterly*, 17: 654-676.  
Vaill, P. B. (1989) *Managing as a Performing Art*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Steven S. Taylor**

Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
Department of Management  
100 Institute Road  
Worcester, MA 01609  
USA

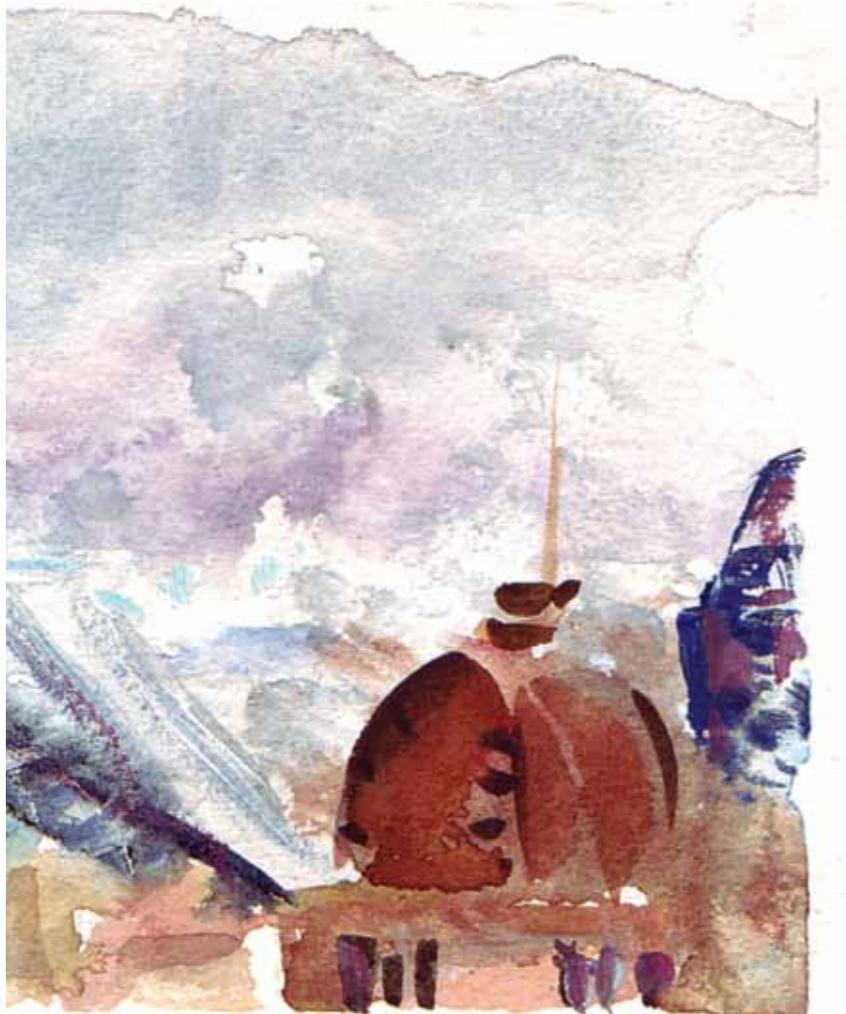
sst@wpi.edu

**Barbara A. Karanian**

Wentworth Institute of Technology  
Humanities, Social Sciences and Management  
Boston, MA, 02115  
USA

[karanianb@wit.edu](mailto:karanianb@wit.edu)  
[karanian@stanford.edu](mailto:karanian@stanford.edu)

Barbara A. Karanian is at Stanford University as a Visiting Professor in Residence 2008/2009.



Detail: Fig. 1