

EPISODE 6

Tricia: [00:00:00] Welcome to the sixth episode of *In 10 Years Time: How to Live a Creative Life*. Thank you so much for being here. I'm Tricia Duffy. I'm a songwriter, a media consultant, a singer and a podcaster. And I'm here with an aim to inspire you to live a creative [00:00:30] life. To find a balance of creativity that works for you and to encourage you to make that creative dream a reality. With a combination of small daily steps and the heady power of ten to help us, we will live a more satisfying life. I have spent the last two years trialling ways to live a more creative life and I'm distilling all I have learned in thousands of hours of podcast series so that you can embark on a similar journey. This is the last episode of the [00:01:00] current series, and I'll be back with another batch of podcasts very soon. But in the meantime, if anything you've heard in the last six episodes has struck a chord or provoked a question or comment, or you'd like to carry on this conversation, please find me on Instagram @intenyearstimeofficial. And on TikTok @intenyearstime, or you can leave me a comment or send me a message via my website intenyearstime.com. I would value your suggestions of topics you'd like me to research for the next series. [00:01:30] And just to remind you, there's a toolkit of free resources on the website. So please help yourself.

There's no catch, no step between you and the resources. You don't have to join a mailing list or trade your soul. And let me know if there's another template or worksheet you would find valuable. Okay. On with today's episode.

I want to delve into one of the possible reasons that people pivot and feel suddenly ready to embrace their creative self. [00:02:00] A significant life change such as grief or loss or trauma. It's a familiar story and it reminds me of a quote from Confucius that I've mentioned before. I saw it chalked on the ground in Trafalgar Square one day and it said, 'you only live twice. The second life begins the day you learn there's only one'. I'm sure this is a sentiment that resonates with many

of us. Grief, trauma, or big life changes are sensitive topics. So do be kind to [00:02:30] yourself as we start this conversation.

A creative life is not a magic wand that will make your pain go away. Grief doesn't go away, but it does change. And your creativity may offer you a way to alter your relationship with your pain. It may offer you a way to make sense of your circumstances. It may offer you a way to find purpose or some meaning when you're in your darkest hour.

Today, for the first time in the life of this podcast, I'm joined by a dear friend. [00:03:00] Richard Cranefield is a creative human being. He's a dad, a runner, a drummer, a photographer, a self confessed tech nerd, and a media technology consultant. We met when we were both working our first jobs in television. I was an edit assistant and he was a tape op. Now that probably needs some explaining because tape doesn't really exist anymore, which ages us both terribly, because in television in those days, it was made from physical tapes and between us, part of our job was to prepare, maintain and ensure the right tapes [00:03:30] travelled from one edit suite to another every day. We stayed vaguely in touch over the last couple of decades because we both worked our way up in the same industry, but our friendship really started just a couple of years ago when I wrote an article called 'In 10 Years Time', which I posted on LinkedIn asking the questions which I've started to unpack in this podcast about how to strike a balance and live a creative life, which led you to getting in touch, right?

Rich: Yeah, I was intrigued [00:04:00] and almost inspired, I think, by the fact that on LinkedIn you'd put 'songwriter' at the end of a hyphen, and that you weren't hiding your kind of creative outlets under a bushel and kind of pretending that they didn't exist in your professional life. So, yeah, that and the article was what got me to get in touch with you.

Tricia: Well, a very warm welcome Richard to *In 10 Years Time: How to Live a Creative Life*. I feel like there was a bit of a spoiler alert in my intro as this is a conversation about pivoting from significant change, [00:04:30] trauma, loss or grief into a creative life. And I should say right

now that this is a conversation that must be led by you. I want you to feel confident to share only what you feel comfortable with. And I want to say right now, how incredibly grateful I am to have you in my life. And that you so kindly agreed to be here to help me navigate this subject. So perhaps my first question should be, can you explain why I thought you might be a good person to have this conversation with?

Rich: Yeah, we were talking about, I guess, [00:05:00] big things in life spurring on creativity. And I've always been creative. I've tried to make music and have found that just simply owning instruments isn't enough. So that wasn't really the right creative outlet, although I am now really getting into drumming. But anything tuneful clearly isn't up my street. I've always taken photographs. I studied art for A Level and Foundation a lot of that was based on photography and for all of the organisations I've worked with over the years, I've always taken [00:05:30] photographs while working. So photography has always been in the background of my life and a way of me viewing the world, but I guess to stick with the theme of the podcast, it's really this story of how creativity has helped me get through a difficult life period, starts kind of in early 2021. We'll all remember that kind of towards the end of lockdown we'd been living with COVID and isolation for some time.

For me at the end [00:06:00] of early 2021 my wife was diagnosed with colon cancer. And so through the spring and summer of 2021, as lockdowns were slowly opening up a little bit and things were easing she was going through treatment. And anyone that has been through a cancer treatment, or seen someone go through it knows that there's kind of ups and downs, mainly downs. Yeah, spring and summer were pretty rocky that year. But actually we'd had some good news, scans were looking quite good, and we [00:06:30] thought we were out the worst of it in sort of August of 2021. Until, sort of, one morning, one Friday morning in August, Friday the 13th as it happens. My wife woke up in more pain than usual. So we went to A&E and tests revealed that the pain had been caused by an infection and that they could treat it with antibiotics. But then some further tests they did revealed that

actually the infection was caused by a sudden and rapid spread of the cancer.

And to cut a long [00:07:00] story short, the following Friday she died. Which left me and my daughter. So we had a daughter together, who is now 14. But she'd have been 11 at the time. Obviously, this left a massive kind of hole in our lives. And even though she was going through cancer treatment, and there are times where you think the worst may happen, that's not where our heads were at the time. And in [00:07:30] a week of very rapid decline was just really, really shocking.

Tricia: When that's, I mean, thank you so much for sharing that so candidly with us. I'm feeling really emotional just hearing you talk about it, even though I know the story and we've talked about it before. So I'm very, very grateful to you for that. Can you talk us through how your relationship with your creative self changed after that absolutely horrific trauma and [00:08:00] shocking event?

Rich: I'd already been making a bit of work about the journey while we were going in and out of hospital. I'd take photos of mundane stuff in the car park while I waited outside, or when I was finally allowed in to be in hospital appointments with her, sort of take photos of what was going on there as a way of I guess documenting what we were going through. But it was very much done in the sense of: this is something that I think is important that we remember, but that we will both be looking back on this in years to come as a [00:08:30] kind of a near miss.

I was already using photography to document our journey. In our early careers in television, I'd spent a lot of time as a cameraman, as an editor. So making documentary stuff was really kind of part of my nature. But when she died, I was halfway through a master's degree in photography. And it had been something that she really championed me to do, loved seeing me do it. And it really expanded my view and ideas about what [00:09:00] photography was, and what it could be used for, and what it meant to photograph. And in the midst of trying to make funeral arrangements and figure out what my life looked like now,

carrying on with the master's degree seemed to be a massive luxury that I could ill afford. She died during the summer break, so I had a couple of weeks to decide what I should do. And I really considered stopping things for a year just so that I could get life back [00:09:30] together.

But I was just really torn because I had been really enjoying it. And I was worried that if I stopped it, I would never go back to it. That life wouldn't allow that. And I knew that she was really happy and really liked that I was doing it. And what I was learning from it and what I was becoming from doing the masters and the studying that I was doing. So I thought I'll start the next term and then if it's just too much I'll stop. But at the very least, I should start.

The next term started up [00:10:00] the Monday after her funeral, I'd got through the month of funeral preparations, and I got that out. And I was a little bit worried actually about emotionally crashing at that point because I then didn't have something to focus on. So yeah, so I started the next term of the MA and quite quickly realised that it was my...it was an escape. It was a little bit of joy. I loved the work. I loved seeing other people's work, being exposed to new [00:10:30] thinking and new ideas, and so quite quickly thought, 'actually, no, this is something I have to push through with because this is the thing that is going to keep me going.'

Tricia: I just wonder whether I can ask you something that probably will occur to other people, is how did you reconcile taking joy and succour, I guess, from your art when you were going through something so utterly traumatic?

Rich: Yeah, that's a good question. I did wrestle, I wrestled [00:11:00] with it kind of on a number of fronts really. One was that, yes it might bring me joy, or some kind of pleasure and that this wasn't really a time of my life where I should be experiencing any kind of fun or joy or seeking enjoyment. Even though, If I'd asked anyone around me that loved me, they'd say 'yeah, absolutely you should be finding these little

glints of happiness,' or things that, even if it's not like ecstatic happiness, that it's something that lifts you a little bit [00:11:30] out of your grief, or your sadness, or your sorrow or whatever it is that's bringing a bit of darkness to your life.

But then there was also the kind of more practical aspects of this. It takes a lot of time to study well, as I like to do. I don't like to do anything by halves. You're really looking at investing 15-20 hours a week of time in reading, in writing, in research, in making work. And that's quite an [00:12:00] indulgence at any point in life. Particularly when you're also trying to work and earn money and now a lone parent to a teenager - or someone that's about to be a teenager - that has just lost their mum. So, yeah, I did spend a lot of time thinking about could I really afford this luxury? I really saw it at that time as a luxury.

And at the time I felt that the right thing to do was to at least start. And [00:12:30] see if I could fit it in. And see if I could make life give me the space for it. Rather than just assuming that it wouldn't. assume that it would be an indulgence or whatever.

Tricia: And when you embarked and made that decision then to continue with the MA and to continue pursuing your dreams, your creative dreams. Do you feel that the pursuit actually offered you any opportunity to transform your relationship with your grief?

Rich: Yeah, absolutely. I'd been making a lot of [00:13:00] work in collaboration with my daughter about the effect of lockdown and isolation on children and adolescents. And that was the major project that I was pushing through. But with everything that happened, with the loss of my wife. I felt that I couldn't make that work anymore because it would just be clouded by the grief that we were experiencing. You couldn't not bring that into the work.

So actually, for the first 12 weeks after going back to the MA after my wife had died I did something completely different. [00:13:30] I did some work with a team of elite acrobats and their choreographer. And

just documented their work and we made some collaborative portraits of them and how they were working. Working with acrobats wasn't a complete off-the-wall, out there thing for me. It was a team of people that I already knew. And actually, because of where I was emotionally, it was a safe place for me to work and experiment. And we created some really, I think, [00:14:00] awesome pieces of artwork. They enjoyed it. Yeah, it was a good escape, that project, from where I was emotionally.

Tricia: It sounds like you used it as a distraction. Is that fair to say?

Rich: I think so. Yeah. It gave me something else to think about. So it was a distraction but looming on the horizon was the final major project. And this is where you have to create in the space of six months, where you have to create and publish a new set of work. And so while I was making [00:14:30] this kind of relatively fluffy and joyous stuff about choreography and dance and acrobatics. I knew that come the January I was going to have to embark on this big project and I didn't quite know what I was going to do.

But over Christmas I decided that if I was going to do anything, it had to be about grief. Because that was where I was. It was all encompassing, but I hadn't figured out quite yet how I would do that. I'd been [00:15:00] making a lot of staged and constructed imagery that was full of kind of metaphor and symbolism and that kind of thing, so I didn't know if that's what I would do with grief. And actually, what I ended up doing and deciding to do, was a real step out of my comfort zone. I'd been making stage imagery because I like to plan stuff, and I like things to be predictable, and I like to have control over what's going on.

And what I decided to do for this project, for my final major project, in looking at [00:15:30] grief, was actually to ditch all of those comforts of technology and planning and to just go out and speak to other people that had been widowed at a relatively young age, and see whether by going on that journey and talking to other people about their grief, whether I could better understand my own, if that makes sense?

Tricia: What was the outcome of that? Did you feel that you learned more about yourself by learning about others?

Rich: I did. [00:16:00] Yeah. I developed a much better understanding of who I was, what was now possible with my life, and what I might need to do in order to come to terms with where I was. Yeah, it was a really good therapy, mainly from just talking to people, really. The act of photography and making portraits of them. Was almost just a [00:16:30] reason to be there. And that actually, the therapeutic aspect for me was just talking to people. One of the first people I spoke to had lost his wife like a couple of months after mine. So when the two of us were sitting down talking, we were both - as I look back on it - we were both very broken individuals. But it was good to talk to him about where he was. It validated what I was feeling. It validated the things that I was afraid of and the [00:17:00] choices I was making about how to just try and navigate life in the very short term. But then also I spoke to people who had lost their partners, eight nine or ten years before. It enabled me to see that there were ways out, that there was a future.

In the March of that year, I exhibited it with a charity called *Widowed and Young*. It was still very much a work in progress but we exhibited a lot of the portraits at the Bullring in Birmingham. And what was really [00:17:30] interesting was the conversations that then happened around that. And people that came to see the exhibition would talk to me about how different aspects of other people's stories resonated with them.

Tricia: I think that's such an important point. For those listening, I will put a link to Richard's project in the show notes. It's absolutely fascinating. I highly recommend you have a look. I also feel that having looked at that project that almost enabled those individuals to pay tribute to their partners for the peace of themselves that [00:18:00] were missing. And actually I just wondered whether you'd like to just briefly introduce us to your beautiful wife, because you used to refer to her as 'your wife' for this episode so far, but she does have a name!

Rich: Yeah, she does have a name. Yeah, her name was Salma. She also worked in TV. She worked in front of the camera. So she was a journalist and a TV presenter. But she had stopped doing all that in order to to raise our daughter. Because she loved being a mum more than anything else.

But actually it was quite interesting, I mean, she, of the [00:18:30] two of us, she was you know, being a presenter, was much more extrovert than I am. I'm, as you described me at the beginning, quite nerdy, I like my technology, and I'll admit that I'd ordinarily hide behind technology in order to make photographic work, rather than to do a project like this and kind of lay myself bare.

I would get in touch with people through certain Facebook groups, and have a quick chat with them, probably on WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger, and then arrange to meet up, [00:19:00] and it would either be in their house, or at a location that was relevant to them and their partner. And we would talk for about an hour. About their experience and then I would make a portrait of them and try somehow to incorporate their story or what they had told me, into that portrait. So there was a real sense of having to think on my feet and make the best I could of the environment we were in to tell their story. [00:19:30]

And after I'd done a couple of these, I was driving home from one of the shoots and it suddenly occurred to me that I seemed to have gone well out of my way to create a way of telling people's stories that was exactly like how my wife worked. She was a journalist. She would get into the newsroom every day. She'd be told what the story was she was working on. She would have to research that story. It might not be something she knew much about. She'd have to go and interview people and then would have to [00:20:00] tell their story live on air or as part of a news package. And so I didn't...I thought a psychologist would have a field day with what I'm doing here, that I've created this project that as a construct is forcing me to go out and engage with the world in the way that *she* would have done. Rather than the way that I would have done.

Tricia: That's really fascinating. It's not an unfamiliar story actually. I'm just thinking about some other creatives who've had a similar experience to [00:20:30] you where they almost talk about they feel like their partner is being channelled through them, almost. I'm thinking of a particular songwriter: Tracy Richardson. Again, I'll put a link to her Instagram in the show notes for anyone who's interested, who sadly lost her husband as well. But she has a very strong feeling. I think she wouldn't mind me saying, that he's with her all the time and helping to guide her on her career as a songwriter.

Rich: Yeah, I have a sense of really trying to be as much of her in the world as I [00:21:00] can. And really spot things where I do something or I engage with someone in a way that really probably isn't, or I wouldn't think of, as being me. That it's more like being her. Because yeah, her impact on the world is missing. So I need to do...and actually everyone that knew her, needs to be a little bit of her in some way.

Tricia: It's beautiful that art of any kind allows you to create artefacts, whether they be [00:21:30] paintings, pottery, dances. The wonderful thing about living a creative life is that you create artefacts, you create things, you create songs, you create photographs, you be an artefact yourself in some instances, if you're a dancer. And so it does give you a very tangible way to hold on to somebody once they're no longer in your life.

Rich: We talk about creating art and particularly in this discussion, we're talking about it as creating art around something that's big, that's happened in your life. I [00:22:00] don't think it necessarily needs to be this big to create art. But what it gives you, I think, and you know, obviously photography is my thing, but it could be anything, is, it's giving yourself time to acknowledge how you're thinking or feeling that comes in the making of the work. So I guess for you, it's sitting down on your own writing a song or collaborating with someone. But then, in putting the work out there, however good or bad you think it may be, I think there is a [00:22:30] need to publish it because you can then have discussions around that work. What I found when I was exhibiting the

work for the first time and talking to other widows that had come to see it...so as I'd been making the work, I would I'd post the portrait on Instagram, and then a little description of that particular person's story, and what my takeaway was from it, what I had learnt about it.

And what I found a lot of [00:23:00] people said to me was that they liked seeing the stories because, certainly within grief, and I think it's the same with a lot of experiences in life. Sometimes you feel things, whether they're good or bad, and you can't quite describe it to other people. But then in hearing someone else's story, in hearing the telling of someone else's story, quite often that gives language to that feeling or that sensation. And once you have that, you can then describe it to yourself and you feel a [00:23:30] bit more alright about it, because it now has words. But also you can describe it to other people.

And so you can, and I know that some people have talked about some of the difficulties that younger widows have of talking to friends and family about how their kids are behaving or how they're dealing with their depression or other kind of things like meeting new partners, that kind of thing.

And I know of at least one person that mentioned that they'd used my project [00:24:00] as a way of talking about those issues in the third person. To other people, saying, 'oh there's this project I've seen on Instagram, and this guy interviewed this widow the other day, and the problem that she was having was this.'

Tricia: Yeah.

Rich: And it allowed them to kind of then test the water and see what people's reactions were to it without saying, 'actually this is how I feel, and this is what I'm worried about.' So I think the discussions that happen around creative endeavour that you've made, whether it's a photograph or [00:24:30] a pot or a painting or a song, are really important in helping other people that are in similar situations.

Tricia: There's a truism, isn't there, about creativity, which is the more specific and niche almost your art is, somehow the more relatable it is to other people, which just seems so counterintuitive.

Rich: Yeah, absolutely. Which I think means that, because you're not being, vague, or too general, there's lots of people that it won't hit. It won't resonate with in [00:25:00] any way, but that the people that are affected by the work are strongly affected by it and really take something from it.

Tricia: That's the thing with all art, isn't it? It's the haters gonna hate and the lovers gonna to love! And then that's always the case. But actually I think that goes to your point about sharing and to your point about why we do this. Anyone listening, I would say, it should give you massive confidence to carry on and push through with the thing that you want to make. Be your own audience and don't worry about trying to please everybody because actually the more [00:25:30] divided, probably the better you're doing.

Rich: Yeah, I think the first thing is always about making art feel for yourself and not worrying about who the audience might be or what they might think of it. Because the prime reason for me doing this was to understand where I was and try and make sense of where I was through having discussions with other people. But I could have, if I had been maybe more drawn to landscape photography then maybe I would [00:26:00] have found making landscape photography and just the act of going out and taking time to be on my own and look at the landscape as being a way of consolidating my thoughts and giving myself time away from the day-to-day stuff that had to be done, and maybe that would have been the therapy but this was the thing that worked for me.

Tricia: You're talking about process, aren't you? Versus outcome.. And I know it's a topic that you and I discuss regularly and I have done a previous entire episode on this topic. But can [00:26:30] you just talk a little bit more about why the process is so important?

Rich: Yeah, and the process being the inspiration is something that I talk a lot about. So I've done some mentoring and guest lecturing. And one of the things I talk to students a lot about is: just start making work. Don't worry about what the outcome might be, as you say. Don't stop making it because you think it's going to look rubbish when you post it on Instagram. Don't worry about that. Take some photographs and assume that at the end of the day you're [00:27:00] going to delete the memory card. And that it may not matter. So not everything has to be for public consumption, or for sharing. But it is in the process of making stuff.

There's a book by a typography house called *House Industries*, is what they call themselves. And they wrote a book about all of the work they've done over the decades. And the title of the book is, *The process is the inspiration* and it's really interesting to look at how whenever they've gone into projects [00:27:30] with particular clients, they've never really had an idea necessarily of what the outcome might be, but just the doing of it sounded interesting. And even if they do have a sense of what the ambition is at the beginning of the project, most of the time what actually comes out at the end is completely different. But it's being actively engaged in that process of creation, and listening to what other ideas are coming at you in, in making the work.

Tricia: Yeah, I think that's really valuable. I'll put [00:28:00] a link to that book in the show notes. You've talked so articulately and eloquently about how you used your art and your photography in the moment as a tool for healing. But the title of this podcast is *In 10 years Time*. So I wonder whether I can ask you to talk a little bit about the future.

Rich: Yeah, it's a really interesting point actually, but for people that are going through grief, although that sounds quite general, I can only really speak to [00:28:30] my own experience. Certainly early on in my grief, I didn't see much of a future at all. It was, my mindset was very much a case of, how long do I need to hang on for to get my daughter into adulthood, and be relatively self sufficient before I can just give up.

And I don't mean dramatically give up, I just mean stop working, stop caring about stuff.

Tricia: Stop showering

Rich: Drink a lot.

Tricia: Have a beard down to your navel. I can picture it. [00:29:00]

Rich: Retreat from society. So I didn't have much of a long term view on anything. It was really about, can I get through today? And then after a while, it's, can I get to the end of the week? And I didn't really plan for anything. It was just survival from day to day. It was really actually when the Queen died. That I had a bit of a kick up the arse when they kept talking about how old she was and how long her reign was. And I think I was like, pulling [00:29:30] the washing out of the washing machine and the radio was on and they were again talking about how old she was and I suddenly had this dawning realisation I thought, like shit! What if I live that long? What if with the combination of good health and good luck I live that long? And I then thought, Christ! I need to sort myself out if because I might only be halfway through my working life. And so [00:30:00] yeah, so I do have a 10 year plan and it draws on, really my kind of background in business and some of the consultancy work I do. So what I think is important is that you have some kind of long-term goal that you know where you're heading. And this is true of organisations. And I think it's true of us as people and where our lives are going. And then not really worry quite so much about the route that you're going to take to get there.[00:30:30]

And so the way that I've laid out my 10 year plan, and this is where our discussion when we first got back together as friends started, was this kind of having this multi hyphenated LinkedIn title. It's like in 10 years time, what do you want that to be? And so yeah, so I've distilled it down to that. So yeah, looking forward at the long term goals, I have three things I'm aiming at. One is to work as a photographer. I like to get [00:31:00] paid to make photographic work as well as doing it for my

own artistic interest. The second is to work as an educator. So I studied a lot last year to learn how to teach in higher education. And then I guess thirdly, and not really part of career goals, but just more of a life goal, is to be a good parent, to be a good father to my daughter and help her become an awesome adult as she emerges into the world.

So it's those three things that are the kind of the [00:31:30] guiding lights for that, are leading me on my kind of ten year plan, so that as I see, as opportunities come my way, I can decide whether those things, that opportunity, helps me towards one of those, one or *more* of those goals, actually. Or whether something I'm going to do is actually going to hinder it and take me away from achieving one or more of these goals.

Tricia: You're beautifully describing exactly the philosophy of *In 10 Years Time*, which is to have a sense of direction, a sort of a north star [00:32:00] to head to in those three goals you've articulated. And then you couple that with the daily steps, because you can! Because you know where you're heading, you know what the future looks like, and so then making your decisions each day. To align with that is more simple and you become more satisfied along the way, as well because each of those decisions that you make daily are helping you do the thing that you really enjoy.

Rich: Yeah, you can see the progress you're making towards something. And it's important to look up and check that you are heading towards something that you still want to be heading towards. [00:32:30] But, yeah, so when I look at freelance opportunities that come my way, or jobs that I might apply for. It's always in a sense of: is that going to help me? And it might be that it helps from the experience, helps me learn more about the thing that I'm aiming at. It might be that, it's just that I need some money. And I'm accepting that I'm going to take this job. It doesn't really help me get towards my goals from an emotional or a learning perspective, but I need to eat. And so doing this work will [00:33:00] help us eat. And therefore, therefore, I'm a good father because I've fed my child.

Tricia: And also, I think it's worth pointing out that you get to change your mind about your 10 year plan anytime. It's not like a contract that we're like signing and that's it. That's what I'm going to be doing in 10 years time. You can change your mind on the journey. Because as you've described the process sometimes evolves.

Rich: Yeah, it evolves, you change, the world around us changes. So my 10 year plan 10 years [00:33:30] ago wouldn't have been this, 10 years ago. I, God, what was I doing? I think I was working as a solutions architect. I really wanted to get higher up as a leader in the company I was working for. I was quite introverted and really struggled to present anything. And so I really wanted to be better at that. I wanted to be better at presenting stuff. I wanted to be one of, you know, when you watch TED lectures and you see these people that are like really great [00:34:00] orators but they've also somehow found the time to run or cycle or do triathlons or that kind of stuff. They're just like, just annoyingly successful. That was my 10 year plan. I wanted to be annoyingly successful. And so I started running, which I hated, but I now love. I run at least 30 kilometres a week. I did courses in public speaking and speech writing because that's where I wanted to get

Tricia: Yeah. Well, you're a beautiful orator now, I have to say.

Rich: It's right to change your mind. You [00:34:30] have an idea of where you want to go. You do things to try and get there, but then, it's always good to look up and check whether you're on the right journey.

Tricia: I think it's just really interesting just hearing you talk about that as well because I feel that I've got a similar frame of reference and it's very it's quite socially informed, isn't it? To desire a successful life that compares yourself to great leaders, ultra athletes, etc. There's a lot of societal pressure and comparison feeding into that. And one of the things that I talked about, and again, in an earlier episode of this [00:35:00] series was, how we frame success and what does success really mean? And I don't know whether you have a sort of version of that, but for me, I've changed my life as you know, dramatically in terms

of, I used to be somebody who wanted more than anything, a Mulberry handbag. And I saw that as a sign that I would have got where I got and I could strut around the BBC when I was working there as the Head of Transformation with my posh handbag. And now, I [00:35:30] couldn't imagine desiring anything less. For me, my time and how I spend my time in my creativity is so much more valuable to me.

Rich: I was watching TED lectures and I wanted to be as annoyingly successful as the people that were on there. I think for me it wasn't so much that I wanted what they had monetarily, or even from a status point of view, I was interested in what the experience would be to get there, and what the journey might be like. How could, [00:36:00] would it be possible for me to turn myself into someone that did that? Still stay authentic to me, but then it's also I think sometimes easy for us, now to say, okay we've taken a pay cut to indulge our creative endeavours and that not everyone's able to do that necessarily. And I think it shouldn't be seen as something that is exclusive to people that are able to afford to make [00:36:30] work. And to be creative.

Tricia: Again, another thing that I've tried to cover in an earlier episode is the fact that you can live a creative life and a balance that's right for you. So whether that's 10 minutes at your lunch break or whether it's making a more wholesale change, it's about finding that right place with your own appetite for security and your own resources that you have available to you.

Rich: Yeah, I think, we've talked here about a pretty dramatic life event that I've gone through, and the work that I've made around that, [00:37:00] but I don't think it should take that level of drama for people to make work and to use the creation of creative work to understand and communicate where they are in life. I think it can be all too easy to look at other artists and think, 'Oh if only I was them, if only I was in their environment, then I would make that work'. There's a photographer called Sebastian Salgado who makes amazingly dramatic black and white images around the world. But not [00:37:30] everyone can go out to the Middle East, or to go to these wild places and

photograph stuff as if they were working for the National Geographic. But if you look around you at where you are and make work about that, that's equally meaningful. In fact, more meaningful, really.

Tricia: I am just reminded of something that you did, I think maybe a year or so ago, when you took a load of photographs of some weeds in your garden. Am I remembering that rightly?

Rich: yeah, there were some succulents that were out on a table, and I think it had been a particularly frosty night, and [00:38:00] they had cobwebs on them, and so I was like, Oh, that's quite pretty, that's quite beautiful. I'm interested in seeing what that might look like photographed.

Tricia: Yeah and it was a beautiful piece of art. And again for those listening, I will put a link to Richard's Instagram feed, which I highly recommend. Listen, thank you so, so much for coming and joining me and helping me navigate this topic because it's something I really wanted to talk about and I felt really ill equipped to do it on my own.

So I'm incredibly grateful to you for coming along and helping me with this. I've created this little [00:38:30] format at the end of the podcast where I like to make a recommendation and pose a question and a challenge to the listeners. And I thought it would be a nice idea if I allowed you to make the recommendation and pose the question and the challenge today. So over to you!

Rich: I've already spoken about one book that really drives me, the House Industries *The Process Is the Inspiration*. That's just really worth reading, even if you're not a typography nerd like I am. One of the books through, through making my work and doing the MA, [00:39:00] I built up quite a large library about grief as part of my research, but I think while some of those books are quite specific, one that was, that's certainly worth reading is *Bittersweet* by Susan Cain.

And whilst it was relevant to my work, it has a kind of broader relevance in how we're kind of attracted to our artwork, whether it's music or painting or photography or whatever, that has within it some element of melancholy and why that might [00:39:30] be and why and how we can use sadness and melancholy and longing as a creative inspiration that isn't necessarily dull and dark. It actually can be quite uplifting. So *Bittersweet* by Susan Cain is a really good book that I would recommend.

Tricia: I've actually got a copy of that book myself. And for musicians, I think it is a really useful resource for the reasons you articulate.

Rich: For the question, this was really difficult, but I think I think the question that I would get [00:40:00] people to ask themselves is what do they want to do? And this really gets to the nub of making space and time for creative work and exploring your own creative endeavours. We all know what we should do and we all know what work expects of us and we know what life expects of us as far as doing work in offices or whatever we do, or making sure all the laundry's done. Those are all things that we *should* do, that we feel that we have to do. But I think we should give time over [00:40:30] to look at what do we *want* to do for ourselves, for the joy of ourselves and finding joy in, in that creative endeavor, whatever that might be, and making space for it.

Tricia: That's a beautiful question. I love that. And that's something that people could journal about or meditate about, um, or even use their art as a way to process it.

Rich: Yeah, yeah, just start doing something, start making it. And then I guess the challenge would be that even if you don't think [00:41:00] you're an artist, that you can't make stuff, or you can't sing or you don't know how to work your camera, I think the challenge would be, go and expose yourself to other people's art.

As a starting point go to an exhibition, go and see a film, go and see a band. But go in a kind of mindful way. Go on your own so that you're

not worried about someone else or you're discussing the artwork with someone else. If you go on your [00:41:30] own, you're really able to just sit and take it in and figure out what you think about it, how it moves you, rather than having that experience validated by someone else being there. And it might just be going to see a film and sit there in a cinema and watch a film on your own without kids around you, without a friend that you then discuss with as you leave the cinema what did you think of the film. To really just absorb art and be aware of how it makes you think and feel.

Tricia: It [00:42:00] reminds me of Julia Cameron's Artist's Date where she says a similar kind of thing. Go on your own and experience some art. I think that's a beautiful recommendation. Thank you. Thank you so much for that. I'm going to add one more recommendation, which I've mentioned already but Richard's Project *The one I chose*, the one who chose me is a profoundly intoxicatingly beautiful piece of work and I really recommend everyone listening to this goes and checks that out. And I hope it gives you something regardless of your own [00:42:30] given circumstances.

Richard, thank you so much for joining me. It's been such a pleasure. It's exceeded all my expectations of my very first interview podcast. So I'm incredibly grateful to you. Thank you so much for joining me.

I need to do some more thank yous because this is the last episode of the series. I want to thank my producer, Rachel Balmer. Thank you so much for your support and your expertise. I literally could not have done this without you. I also want to thank Tad Cox for the [00:43:00] beautiful design work that's brought all the visual aspects with this podcast to life. And to Richard obviously for being my first guest and of course to all of you, for being with me the last six episodes.

I've enjoyed creating this content more than I can possibly describe. The research has been absolutely fascinating and the process has been illuminating. Like all creative endeavours there's moments of huge self doubt, moments when giving up was very tempting and [00:43:30]

extremely easy, but I've taken my own advice. I've used my 10 year plan, my desire to live this life and the joy and healing that I get myself from living a creative life, a life with meaning. And I will speak to you all again very soon. In the meantime, let your creative self breathe and I cannot wait to see what you all come up with. Peace and love, my friends.

Go forth and create.