



Punditry and the art of creating rifts

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As some commentators would have it, the well-meaning public sits on one side of a divide and art, artists and the “creative community” are perched on the other. This perceived “us and them” schism is animating some rather inane political rhetoric and downright uninformed ink. George Will’s [recent editorial](#) in *The Washington Post* (which was re-published under other titles in *The Charlotte Observer* and many other regional newspapers) was a shot across the bow for everybody who understands the significant role that art plays in our prosperity. All of us at [McColl Center for Visual Art](#) bristled at Will’s provocation and suggestion that today’s new political paradigm subsidizes the “untalented.” We fired off an [editorial of our own](#) to meet Will head on.

Will’s assertion that artists are “just another servile interest group seeking morsels from the federal banquet” is bunk. Being an artist is hard and often under-appreciated work. Many people do not fully understand the discipline, research, hard work, technical proficiency and significant resources required to pursue art-making at the highest level. Artists, like other professionals, struggle, experiment, fail and develop good and bad ideas, alike. Laying bare this process exposes artists in ways that can cause an agonizing sense of vulnerability among artists. But the rigors endured by accomplished artists have huge benefits for society. Some less-genuine artists enjoy and play upon the misplaced aura of mystical “genius” that many lay people have of artists. That kind of display accelerates the polarity promoted by George Will. In my opinion, focusing too much on stereotypes and too little on authentic unfolding of the creative process does a disservice to us all.

An invitation into a serious artist’s studio is a rare luxury. There is much to learn from such an experience — it enlightens and reveals the mundane and mysterious — demonstrating that the creative process demands hard work and dedication. Coming close to artists and talking with them about their process, intent and struggles makes them more human and their work more accessible, even when the ideas they are addressing are complex.

You can experience such a process unfold at www.creatingathread.blogspot.com – our resident artist [Daniel McCormick](#) is working with Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation, The Charlotte Nature Museum, Catawba Lands Conservancy and students from Queens University of Charlotte to create an environmental art installation that restores an eroded creek bed at Freedom Park.

It is our core belief that art and artists are catalysts for positive social change. Artists help us all discover our own creative voices and our community, region and nation are better for it, in spite of divisive voices that insist otherwise.

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