

# CURATING CREATIVITY

An insight into the curators of creative stories, *Curating Creativity* tells the stories of people that explore how and why creative people create, in various creative fields and mediums. Welcome to Episode One: join host **Rebecca Jourard** on a journey into the creative worlds of **Navida Nuraney**, curator of *The Next 20* at ArtStarts, **Amandah Wood**, founder and editor at *wayswework.io*, and **Andy Resto**, Music Director at CiTR.



## Navida Nuraney

*Executive Director of ArtStarts*

A Vancouverite and business graduate from UBC, Navida Nuraney has been serving as the executive director of BC's charitable organization, ArtStarts in Schools, which promotes the role of art and creativity in young people's lives. In celebration of ArtStarts' 20th anniversary Navida led a project, *The Next 20*, which curated 20 impactful stories from creative leaders across different sectors including those of singer-songwriter Dan Mangan and author Michael Harris. These stories delve into the relevance of art and creativity now and in the future.



## Amandah Wood

*Founder & Editor of Ways We Work*

Ontario based creative and entrepreneur, Amandah Wood founded *wayswework.io* two and half years ago to explore how creative and technical people do the work that is meaningful to them. A self-described wearer of many hats, Amandah has done everything from front-end web development for her site, marketing, and interviewing everyone from the director of global adaption at BuzzFeed, to the entire team of Facebook, to the product designer of Instagram.



## Andy Resto

*Music Director of CiTR*

Music enthusiast and radio personality, Andy Resto is the current music director of UBC's campus radio station, CiTR 101.9, receiving, processing, and curating all the music that enters UBC. A high-profile tastemaker in the community, he began his Vancouver musical journey as a student at UBC, playing in bands, sound-mixing shows, and volunteering at the station, until a little over a year ago when he became the head of the music department at CiTR.



## Rebecca Jourard

*Creativity Enthusiast & UBC Student*

Host of the podcast *Curating Creativity*, Rebecca Jourard is a creativity enthusiast, adventurer, and student of the human mind. Studying Media and Technology at UBC, she is passionate about creative projects and how they drive human innovation.

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Creativity. *"bright thought provoking music"*

Creativity – the art behind everything we create – is complex, and nuanced. Creativity is born out of a universe of ideas, twinkling lights that appear and disappear, get lost in each others' gravity, and surge through the ether of human innovation. Interestingly enough, there are individuals that live to connect these ideas – create constellations with their stories. These are the Curators of Creativity – the bright minds that take the ideas and works of creative people (whether they be musicians, entrepreneurs, designers, or community leaders) and bring an audience on a storytelling journey through the universe of creativity.

Welcome to Curating Creativity, the podcast that explores how and why we curate stories of creative people. I am Rebecca Jourard, a creativity enthusiast and media student at the beautiful University of British Columbia on Musqueam territory in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and it is November 2016, and I am going to guide you on a journey through constellations – telling the stories of the storytellers of creative people.

Curating Creativity revolves around one big question: how and why we tell the stories of creative people. Each episode, we will explore new constellations in this creative universe, and have a conversation with curators in different creative fields around the how and the why of what they do.

Today, for our very first episode, we'll be exploring 3 extraordinary curators, Amandah Wood, founder of [wayswework.io](http://wayswework.io) [hi], Navida Nuraney, executive director of ArtStarts [hello], and Andy Resto, music director at CTR [hi]. Don't worry, they'll each explain who they are and what those organizations are soon, and we'll delve deeper into their creative processes, their fields and projects, and their broader community.

We'll start to see that creative work isn't so easily definable – and this creative curation draws stories to attempt to create that definition. Welcome to the universe of Curating Creativity.

Let's go on a journey together, and explore creativity through the eyes of these curators of creative stories, starting with self-described "wearer-of-many-hats", Amandah Wood from Ontario, who founded a curatorial site that focuses on the creative process of creators in the tech and media field, [WaysWeWork.io](http://WaysWeWork.io).

My name's Amandah Wood, and two and a half years ago I founded the site, Ways We Work... Basically, it started as an interview series, and every week I would interview someone in a different role, usually working in some kind of creative or tech aspect, and just interview them about how they do the work that's meaningful to them, so what do they find the most challenging, what they find the most rewarding, everything down to the tools they use to do the job, how they manage their time.

Amandah has picked the minds of everyone from the Product Designer of Instagram, Alexander Mayes, the Director of Global Adaptation at BuzzFeed, Millie Tran, to entire teams at software giants Spotify and Facebook, revealing some of the world's most relevant creators' creative processes. Amandah, can you describe your personal creative process in your curatorial work?

It's very organic, there's not a lot of [thought?] or process to it. I'm always kind of keeping an eye out for people that I want to know more about. It usually starts on Twitter or Instagram, sometimes in person, but I'll just sort of watch someone for a little while, or you know, I'll see their role and it's a really interesting title or something that I've never heard of before, or I think their writing is really interesting or their Tweets are really interesting, and then I'll just reach out and ask if they'd be up for an interview, and from there, I'd usually ask a similar set of questions, but now, doing the interview in person, it's very flexible, it's more of just reading into what I'm naturally curious about as a person. I think that's what ended up being the success of the project, is that I just go with what I want to know, and let my curiosity take the reins.





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Let's take it back, across the country, to Vancouver-based community arts leader Navida Nurany, who embarked on a project, the Next 20, earlier this year, which curates creative people across every field from the Mayor of Victoria, to musician Dan Mangan, to author Michael Harris.

I am Navida Nurany, I am the executive director of an amazing organization called ArtStarts in schools... a charitable organization that works with schools all across the province of BC, all in the spirit of promoting the role of art in education... The Next 20 was in celebration of our organization turning 20 years old, and we really thought that this was a great stage in the life cycle of our organization to do some reflection, and to think about all of the things we've accomplished as an organization, with our network of amazing artists and our relationships with schools, and the impact [we have] with young people, to really then think about beyond what has already happened, and to now think about the future – what do the next 20 years look like for us..And so, we created this campaign called the next 20, and we thought a great place to start would be to interview interesting, successful individuals in the city [of Vancouver], that come from different sectors, and actually do a bit of investigation to find out how they understood the concept of creativity, how it showed up in their life, and their thoughts about the relevancy of this for young people, so we could get more of an informed understanding of the direction of how we might, as an organization, direct our future... So in that process of interviews, we, from our birthday, which was on March 28, 2016, for a period of 20 weeks, shared an interview with one of these interesting thought leaders, and tried to engage some conversation with our community to also think about these questions.



The curatorial work with The Next 20 involved a lot of interviewing and consolidating people's ideas. Can you describe your creative process during this?

My own creativity process has definitely been a journey, I'm quite introverted by nature, I spend a lot of time doing a lot of thinking and a lot reflecting and a lot of journal writing, wanting to have deep intense conversations with really important people in my life. My creative process has really had such a culminating opportunity here at ArtStarts, again knowing that this is a place where the whole spirit of creativity is celebrated and this space is created for this to thrive, and that's the point of this work... the whole purpose of what the arts teach is that there is no right or wrong, that's the whole point. Art shouldn't be a constrained thing that needs to look and feel a certain way, and we really do focus a lot in our programs and in our work that we engage young people in, it's really about a process, not about product... just sort of challenge expected norms and know that anything that you can do in addition to the expected with the confidence that there is sometimes no right or wrong, and that permission that you can give yourself is a liberating and satisfying opportunity with everything that you do.



Our third guest is Andy Resto, the music director at UBC's campus radio station, CiTR 101.9fm, who, through curating music at the station, helps to bring this open creative space to the UBC community and beyond.

My name's Andy Resto, I am the music director at CiTR, CiTR is the radio station here at UBC on 101.9. We also have a magazine called Discorder, which covers local music, local arts. I've been working here as the music director for about a year, just over a year before that I was working here in a smaller capacity, doing digital library and whatnot, it started as a creative outlet. I played in a couple of local bands myself, occasionally worked at local venues that put on underground music shows, and [did] sound there, it's all tied together in the local music scene.... So I started a radio program probably a little over two years ago, often on that I'll try to get different guests to come out on the show with me. And often, what I'll try to do is, rather than having typical interview scenarios, I like to invite them here on the air to have more of a casual chat. So when I bring them on, I like to have them choose the music we're about to play, or get them talking about what they're interested in, rather than me kind of guiding some sort of conversation. That's what I find interesting, is to try and get at not just their influences, but what it is about their influences that influences them, and why they are appealing to them.





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Andy, can you describe creative process, as a curator and tastemaker in your unique position at the radio station?

Here, as a music director, I think it's interesting, what the job is. All the musical submissions that come to the radio station, whether it be CDs or whatever, we're trying to process it, and decide what goes on here, and what people should [listen to]... The interesting thing, is that I guess we're in this role to maintain a certain sort of detachment, and what I mean by that is not letting my personal taste dictate what we're allowing to come in here, because it's meant to be an open space for anyone and anything, and particularly things that aren't heard elsewhere, and that don't have an outlet that you're not going to find on a commercial radio station. I think it's really important to have this space for either volunteers or whoever wants to come in, to be able to have their tastes represented as well, so it's not just mine. If it's just mine, it would kind of be a dull place... it is based on creativity which is something quite subject, and personal, and potentially quite alienating. And everyone who's making music or writing is personally attached to that.



Music, radio, work, creative process, interviews, community outreach. All very intriguing creative work, all with a very unique approach to the work that you do. From WaysWeWork to The Next 20 to CiTR, these curatorial projects seem to be focusing on creative constellations of ideas and people, working to connect certain stars to tell a story, but all achieve that in a creative and unique way.

There seems to be, with creativity, a certain conflict of choice, with an infinite amount of stories to tell, an infinite amount of people and ideas, and an infinite amount of ways or mediums to express yourself in. With this ubiquity of choice, especially in this new era of technological possibility with new media, how do you choose your medium, your projects, which creative stories to tell?

Andy, why did you join CiTR? Why radio?

[It's] maybe not as interesting, but [joining CiTR just] kind of happened. CiTR is an organization, so first and foremost, we're a radio station, but what really comes out of that, and the reason why many people stick around and do things continuously with us, and get involved, is that community spirit that it engenders. I think a big focus of ours is making people feel welcome here regardless of backgrounds or whatever, and it's a place where there's very little pressure for entry, as far as you don't need experience... Moving here to Vancouver, when I was going to school at UBC, coming to a place like here, it allowed me to expand my view of the city and what was going on in the city, creatively. And music in general has always been something I've been interested in growing up, in a certain sense, it keeps you going I guess, it's very uplifting. To be able to work here and have that be something I can come to, is very fortunate I think.



As the music director at CiTR, how do you choose from the hundreds of songs and artists and radio shows that enter CiTR? How do you go about that curatorial process when there is so much diversity and volume in the music community in the greater Vancouver area?

That's difficult, I think it ends up in a natural way, kind of going into a certain sound or mode. The people that are working around here often, or the people that come in, end up kind of defining the taste a little bit. Like I said before it's important to kind of detach myself from the role, it's better to open up for other people, but at the same time you kind of have to slowly show your [music tastes]. What ends up happening is I think that nobody has a grasp on everything that's happening, so I think it's always worth doing, including more diversity.



There seems to be a bit of serendipity in creative projects. Coming across creative work happens almost at happenstance, which we'll see more of the inception of Ways We Work. Amandah?

Originally the idea for Ways We Work came when I was working my first job out of school and I think I was sort of put into a slashie role.

Slashie is another term for a "wearer-of-many-hats", or a doer of many roles. It refers to the slashes in someone's social media biography, as they describe themselves as a "writer/editor/web developer/creative".





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I was figuring out how to work in sort of a career aspect instead of a student frame of mind... [and was in roles] that should have been two roles, or maybe three, figuring out how to manage my time amongst all the different things I needed to do and how to mentally focus on enough of them to do them justice was really difficult. So when I started, it was [figuring out] how to talk to people who were already doing this kind of stuff, and learn from them and maybe get mentors. I couldn't really find anyone to talk to locally, I'm from a bit of a small town, so I started making a list of questions that if I ever got the chance to talk to someone I would ask them, and then I decided to just send those questions to people over email. The responses were so good, I ended up starting a blog out of it, and it just took off from there. Where Ways We Work came from and why I chose that was like curiosity; I just wanted answers, I wanted mentorship. I went about it in a bit of a weird way, it ended up working out.

So then how do you choose, with the endless amount of interesting and creativity people to highlight, who you interview?

It comes back to letting my curiosity guide the way. I've talked to so many people now, and I think it grows stronger and stronger. I think I'll know right off the bat whether an interview is going to be good, you can just gauge a lot by the things that people write online, the way they portray themselves. Follow your gut – if you think someone's title sounds really interesting but you know that you personally don't have any interest in what they do, I know that the interview's not going to be good. If I don't have a natural curiosity, and a natural interest, then there's going to be something missing.

How intuitive. It's amazing that you were able to connect your experiences into a curatorial journalistic creation like Way We Work.

Navida, can you elaborate with how you personally deal with immensity of artistic choice when faced with all of your experiences?

I think it comes with a bit of understanding that when there is infinite possibility then the goal isn't to find the best choice, the goal is to start with one choice and see where that might take you. It is quite overwhelming sometimes when you need to make a decision and there are just so many things to choose from, and that's definitely a relevant challenge that we all face in this more technological era of choice. I guess my understanding of how to navigate through that is to at some point decide that you've passed that point of no return where you can entertain all the ideas and all the possibilities, and you kind of say now it's about picking one, and no matter which one, as long as you pick one that there's some instinct that you're drawn to, and that you trust that instinct, and then you make the choice that you've made out of all the possibilities – you make that choice be the best choice that it can be, and you really explore that. You suspend your tendency to maybe want to make it something that you originally intended, holding back. There's this concept called "Delayed Closure" that one of the artists that we work with introduced to us, and that's been something that I've always thought about, is to challenge assumptions and be comfortable delaying closure and being open to possibilities within your decisions, because at almost every layer, even more infinite possibilities come up, even when you start to narrow things down, possibilities actually keep continuing.

Thus far, our curators have talked about their creative processes and this conflict of choice within their creative fields.

After you have decided from this infinite constellation what stories you will tell artistically, once you have created your curation, a large challenge of today's media landscape is making a participatory audience engaged, providing a form of interactivity for an information saturated millennial audience.

How do you connect your audience to your work? Amandah?

It's interesting, because there's a bit of a divide, between the experience I have talking to the person over skype, because that's how we did the interview, and what readers see written on the site... So for me, I always make sure when we're writing the intros for the interview, I always put in why I was interested in that person, why I reached out to them in the first place, and what I found to be the most interesting personally out of the interview. I think it just kind of ties in a personal aspect to it and readers seem to appreciate that... we're always making sure people know where to find [us] on the internet and connecting people in that way.





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The creative stories themselves don't seem to be enough for an audience, but rather how accessible they are to interact with.

Andy, it seems you have a particularly interesting medium to deal with when it comes to maintaining a connection with your audience. How do you connect your listeners to your community and your curated music-scape?

It's a particularly interesting question I feel, because sometimes, when people hear radio, they see it as irrelevant nowadays, which only in certain ways is it true. What it is we're presenting still, is still an outlet for people who don't really have another space. For example, some of the collectives that we've started here, like the indigenous collective, that really don't have space in other media outlets, it's very important. And also, outside of what happens on the air for us, it's just us trying to be involved in the community, whether that be the music community or otherwise.... also just making that connection to people who are involved here or who are naturally involved in the music scene... try to maintain a diversity. The opening of these places, this alternative viewpoint in a way that makes it clear that that doesn't mean, just because that's not what we see all the time, is it's more accessible, what normal people are doing every day. We're trying to show that everybody can do something with us.



Navida, your series, posted on artstarts.com, generated a lot of buzz in the greater Vancouver community when it was released throughout 2016. You connected an audience to a very valuable creative project, what are your thoughts on this audience interactivity?

I do feel that in my exploration and understanding of the world, it feels that everything that is presented as we go about our days, is available for interactivity, it's a choice that you have, that the things that you see, the things that you hear – and it could be the minute, mundane things it could be the really profound big things – and everything in that spectrum I feel is an opportunity to have engagement. So when it comes to new media, you're designing or curating an experience for people online or through media forms that are maybe allowing to have greater reach. Trying to create lots of different entry points for people, to connect with the content, because you don't have an understanding of who your audience is in this case, and you just know that there is a wide spectrum out there, and that different people are going to resonate with different things. With The Next 20, we tried to interview diverse individuals in the hopes that multiple people find their entry point to connect with the ideas, and with that connection, take a more introspective look as to what that means for them, and kind of question that for themselves what role creativity plays in their life. And I think that's the benefit of new media in many cases – not knowing where this message could go creates a pretty exciting opportunity when you put something out there.



How you do your curating of creativity, how you choose when confronted with the abounding potential of creativity, how you brings ideas to a real world audience – it's all very uniquely and creatively you. You curating by drawing these constellations in a creative universe of ideas, and you three are extremely passionate and involved constellation storytellers. Before we take our final step at answering how and why you curate stories of creative people, I want to take a constellation detour, and ask you all how you define creativity.

Navida, how do you define creativity?

Creativity is applied imagination. So if creativity is applied imagination that means that imagination is this innate thing that we all have, that we all have these ideas in our mind, and that transition from just having that idea in your head to actually taking action to make it have some form, that's where the expression of creativity comes.



Andy, how do you define creativity?

I think the thing I'm most attracted to [in creativity] is a very intensely personal output...[like] when you listen to [music] or experience it, it kind of changes your mindset, that there's a different way of seeing the world, and that could come across as an indie pop song, the genre isn't important, but there's just that genuine touch there that the people or the person who's making it, it came out that that's the only way they could translate [their thoughts].





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Amandah?

I think, to me, everyone is creative. I think it's honestly a natural human instinct and ability, it's how much people allow themselves to grow that and build that, or how people around you foster that creativity. I define creativity as anyone who thinks of an elegant solution to a problem, and it doesn't matter how small that problem is or how large it is. If you have an idea and it solves something for you or other people, and you make that idea come to life, that is creativity to me.



The beauty about your varying definitions of creativity echoes your varying approaches to HOW and WHY you curate the stories of creative people in your field. Creativity is born out of a universe of ideas, and each of you have a creative approach to drawing constellations. So let's get at the heart of your passion: why do you tell the stories of creative people?

Andy?

One thing that I realized, is how small this world is that we're in, like this music circle. There are times when I'm working here or just doing anything else, that my life seems kind of tied up in it, so you can kind of forget that a lot of this isn't recognized by most people, so you kind of take it for granted, that these people play in a band. When you kind of step outside of it, that isn't something that most people are connected with, you start to come back and realize that it's sort of unique and special, that not most people are expressing themselves in this way, and kind of putting themselves out there, in a position, and doing something not because it is like creating any sort of legitimate social status... That's what I feel is the space I'm trying to give someone, is these people who kind of feel out of place and are doing strange things, but not strange because they're like naturally strange, but strange because it's not what is commonly produced at scale, so it's really made people kind of detached from whatever it might be. It's a community of people that have insecurities, that have problems that they're working on through music or whatever... And even though CiTR's never going to be some sort of huge organization, there are always people, always isolated individuals, there are always people like you who feel a need to do something. It's important that that's a helpful [outlet].



Amandah?

Personally, it's super fulfilling. I get to talk to people that I admire all the time about things you rarely get to ask someone if you just ran into them at a party. It's just kind of weird to ask these kinds of questions to people in a social space. It really allows me to open up with people, and they get to open up and me, and get the kind of answers you don't really get in any other setting, which is a really unique opportunity, and I make sure that I never take that for granted. And the reason I share it, is from the moment I shared the first interview, there was just this overwhelming amount of realising I wasn't the only one interested in this kind of stuff. People love reading the interviews, right from the very beginning, and as soon as I saw people connecting to them, it just becomes so important, like this is something that people want so why wouldn't we share it, there's no point in keeping it to ourselves.



How about you Navida?

When you think about the world, you kind of imagine that there are other people out there that think and feel similarly to how you do. In the way that I know that I'm introverted and like to think a lot, I like to process information, I like to have deep conversations, I like being inspired by things, I take those things that I am inspired by and I collect them, and then I try to find connections that apply them. I would imagine that there are others out there that feel similarly. Knowing that I have gained a lot from that work of others, hearing the stories of others, I think it's a bit of the spirit of paying it forward, and being a contributor, and not just a consumer of ideas and information, but somebody who can be a contributor and pass that on. When information is curated and packaged in a certain way, it's sometimes more accessible for others to know how to receive it, so I am motivated to do that through stories and campaigns like The Next 20 to spread a message that we as an organization believe in, a message that I am personally invested in and aligned with. I'm hoping there is a world in the future where the role of art and the role of creativity is normalized and celebrated and essential and viewed as something that has so much power; and knowing that it is contagious and it is perishable, and that we have a role to play in making these creative ideas mean something, because they have a lot of power to change everything.



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How and Why do we curate the stories of creative people? These curators connect the constellations of a universe of ideas, each with a creatively-unique process, with a creatively-unique project, to a creatively-unique audience. Everyone looks up and sees the starry sky a little bit differently, and as we draw our own constellations between the ideas of the world, we can share a journey of stories in a way that only we can. This art behind creative curation is - Creativity.

Thank you Navida Nuraney, Amandah Wood, and Andy Resto for sharing your constellations. I am Rebecca Jourard, and this has been Curating Creativity. Never stop creating.

Creativity.