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REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

PUTTING ART TO WORK

Using Art as a Tool to Support the Development of Individuals, Groups and Organizations

Helene Chirgwin and Keith Chirgwin

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BOOK REVIEW

This debut how-to offers a colorful palette of ideas for creative innovation at work, school, and elsewhere.

Keith Chirgwin has a background as an art teacher, and Helene Chirgwin has expertise in human resources consulting. Together, they present a solid, conversational case for using art to enhance the professional development of individuals and groups. Part I lays out a well-referenced apologia of the importance of art in health and well-being; for example, the authors cite an Oslo and Akershus University College study in which elderly participants' blood pressure went down after just talking about art. Working with art, say the Chirgwins, teaches people new ways of looking at things, which can, of course, be beneficial in the workplace. Part II, which is by far the most enjoyable part of the guide, contains detailed, easy-to-understand instructions for 31 hands-on art workshops, which may be altered to fit large or small groups of adults or school-age kids. Each description includes a list of necessary materials and preparations, the approximate group size, the time it will take to complete the session, discussion questions, and workshop objectives. Some of the often lighthearted activities offer memorable icebreakers, such as when group members must draw Picasso-style drawings of one another without looking at their papers. In another team-building workshop, participants are asked to team up to paint a group picture. Regardless of theme, the Chirgwins' user-friendly workshops always promote creative thinking; for instance, one encourages attendees to decorate masks to reflect their leadership styles. Many of the art supplies—such as note cards, paints, and colored pens—are relatively affordable, and facilitators need not be teachers or artists themselves. This manual offers a different way of looking at creativity in the workplace, eschewing worn-out business clichés, such as “thinking outside of the box.” Vivid, full-color photos, sketches, and striking images of paintings—such as Raphael's early-16th-century work *The School of Athens*—decorate the smooth-flowing text. Overall, this energetic compilation is both creative and practical, and these simple, thought-provoking exercises may help improve teamwork and productivity in a range of organizations.

A smartly written, informative delight for group leaders.