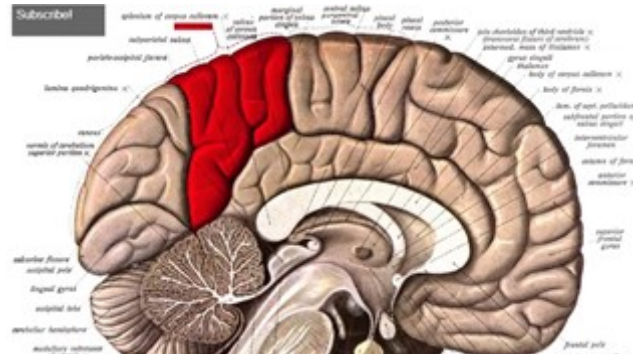


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The Artist's Brain: Explained by Science (reading – 4.12. - 10.12.)

by: **Dale Harris**

We've always known artists are a little different.

They think, talk, and work differently than the rest of us. Most of them even dress differently.

It should come as no surprise then that the most recent scientific studies show that artists' brains are distinctively different than the rest of the population.

Dr. Rebecca Chamberlain of KU Leuven University in Belgium had noticed that most visual artists described “seeing” their work in their heads before they ever put pen to paper or brush to canvas.

She suspected that there are fundamental differences in artists' brains. So she did what any self-respecting scientist would do: she led an experiment to find out.

In the study, researchers had 21 art students and 23 non-artists complete a number of tasks. During each task, they scanned their brains through a process called voxel-based morphometry.

Voxel-based morphometry is a neuroimaging technique that lets the scientists identify differences in brain structure between individuals.

And through these experiments, Dr. Chamberlain made a few important discoveries.

Changes in structure

The brain scans showed that artists' brains had some distinctive differences.

Most notably, they have more gray matter in the parietal lobe. Specifically in a structure called the precuneus.

The parietal lobe processes information from the senses. This region is responsible for our visual and spatial reasoning.

According to the study, individuals with more developed visual reasoning are better at creating pictures in their head.

This suggests that before a painter even dips their black velvet brushes into the paint, their painting already exists in the parietal lobe. This inner picture guides the artist in a way that nonartists can't emulate.

Nature or nurture?

These findings raise an important question. Are artists better at drawing because they have an enlarged precuneus? Or has their precuneus increased in size after years of training?

Certainly, our habits can change our brain structure over time. Just like with our muscles, our brain changes with exercise.

Dr. Chamberlain states, “It falls into line with evidence that focus of expertise really does change the brain. The brain is incredibly flexible in response to training and there are huge individual differences that we are only beginning to tap into.”

But could it be possible that artists have an enlarged parietal lobe before they even start honing their craft? Are certain people innately predisposed to be artists?

Determining this would require a much longer study with a larger sample size.

Scientists would need to study subjects before they even begin practicing their artistic skills. The study would then follow them through all of their training, comparing changes in their brain structure to non-

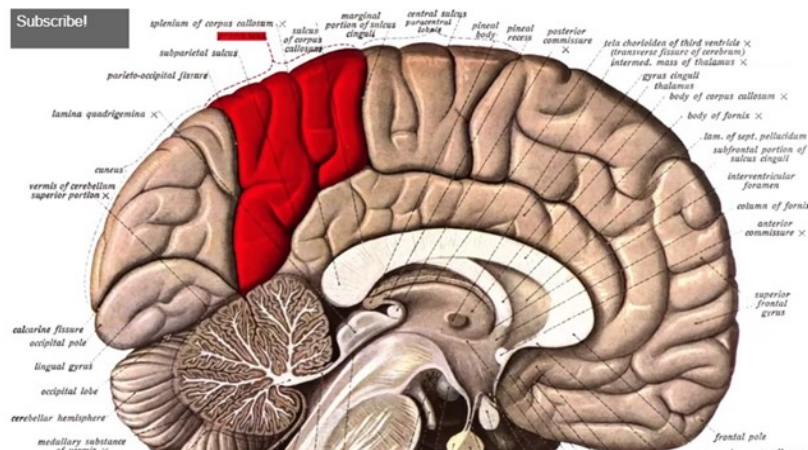
artists.

Such a study would take decades and is unlikely to attract much interest in the way of funding.

The myth of the Right side

For a long time, the common understanding of brain structure was that the left hemisphere is more analytical and the right side is more creative. Therefore, more creative people have a more dominant right hemisphere.

However, according to this study, artists have increased gray matter on both sides of their brain. This is a significant blow to the myth of right-brain dominance.



Climb If You Dare: 5 Most Dangerous Mountains on Earth (reading – 11.12. - 17.12.)

by: **Dale Harris**

Mountaineering is a fun outdoor activity, but not something that all people can attempt. However, if you're a true climber, nothing is fulfilling as reaching the summit of the highest mountains.

Unfortunately, fun isn't something that you'll get all the time.

It's a risky affair. There are some dangerous mountains in the world that even the most experienced climbers fear.

This post will cover some of the deadliest mountains that are known for their high fatality rates and accidents.

1. Mont Blanc Massif

This is the tallest mountain in the Alpine range, measuring about 15,782 ft (4 810 m). Climbers die on this mountain every year due to rock slides and high altitude. This makes it the mountain with the highest number of fatalities.

Mont Black causes about 100 deaths every year. Over 6,000 climbers have died on it. The first successful climb was in 1786. However, the mountain is also popular because President Theodore Roosevelt reached its top in 1886.

2. Annapurna

Boasting a height of 26,246 feet (8 091 m), Nepal's Annapurna has one of the tallest peaks that attracts climbers from everywhere. About 191 people have successfully climbed this mountain since 1950.

60 people have already died in an effort to reach the summit of Annapurna. Of all the mountains with 8,000-meter peaks, Annapurna is regarded as the most dangerous with a fatality rate of 41 percent.

3. K2

K2 is the second-highest mountain in the world. It's easy to climb Kilimanjaro, but that's not the case with K2 as climbers consider it one of the most difficult. Even on the easier routes, climbers encounter ice pillars that prone to collapse, steep areas of rock, and complicated glaciers.

This mountain is found on the border of China and Pakistan. It measures 28,251 feet (8 611 m). K2 has a nasty reputation with female climbers — to the point that it's thought to have a curse against women.

Wanda Rutkiewicz, a Polish climber, was the first woman to reach K2's summit in 1986.

All the five women that attempted to climb it again since that year died. It wasn't until 2004 when Spanish mountaineer Edurne Pasaban successfully reached the summit.

4. Nanga Parbat

This mountain is popularly known as the Man Eater and has a height of 26,657 ft (8 126 m). Nanga Parbat is located in Pakistan. It features an enormous ridge of ice and rock. It's the ninth highest mountain in the world and has the tallest mountain face.

It was popular with the German climbers because K2 was difficult to climb and only the Britons had access to Everest. Several deaths occurred on this mountain before the first successful attempt in 1953.

By 1953, Nanga Parbat had already claimed the lives of 31 climbers.

5. Kangchenjunga

Positioned on the border of India and Nepal, Kangchenjunga has a height of 28,169 ft (8 586 m). It's a beautiful mountain, but looks can be deceiving. Extreme cold levels and avalanches have made Kangchenjunga one of the most dangerous mountains.

The first attempt was in 1853, but the climbers descended after determining the summit was unsafe. Over the years, this mountain has claimed the lives of 53 climbers.

Dangerous Mountains – The Bottom Line

To pull a mountain climbing expedition, it's important to prepare for it adequately to minimize the possibility of accidents.

Experienced climbers understand that there are risks. However, when the conditions are favorable and safety measures are taken, hitting the summit is the only task at hand.

These cases should not scare you. There are different easy mountains, such as Mount Fuji, Pikes Peak, Mount Hood, and Island Peak, you can try if you are new to mountain climbing.





How to Celebrate Advent (reading – 18.12. - 24.12.)

by: **Shirley Solis**

Advent is the special season that comes just before Christmas. After celebrating Christmas in the same tradition of our parents, with food, fun and shopping, we realized we had missed so much when we found out about Advent a few years ago.

Though you may not have heard of the Advent, most liturgical churches celebrate it in order to focus on the profound meaning of the coming of Christ.

The celebration of Advent is much deeper than the popular Advent calendar with its 25 cute little windows to open! Advent is a rich and meaningful time-making Christmas very, very special!

- WHAT IS ADVENT? -

The word Advent comes to us from the Latin word "adventus" which means "coming." Advent is a beautiful and worshipful way of preparing our hearts and minds for the celebration of the first coming or birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and a time of preparation as we look forward to His Second Coming.

Celebrating Advent helps our family focus on Christ's coming and not on material gifts. We gather every evening to read from our chosen devotional book for the season. Then we move to the dining room where our Advent wreath adorns our table.

- ADVENT WREATH AND CANDLES -

The lighting of the candles on the Advent wreath begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

The Advent wreath is traditionally used to celebrate this wonderful season. Though traditions may differ regarding candle colors and order of lighting them, often a new purple candle is lit during the first three weeks of Advent, and on the fourth week, the pink candle is lit. The white candle is lit on Christmas Eve.

We adorn our wreath with greens and Brazilian pepper (which is the only thing that is red and green in Florida at this time of the year!) It may also be left unadorned, but will still be lovely.

Though you can purchase Advent wreaths, it is very simple to make your own. Simply place four candles in a circle and put one candle in the center of the circle. Some families use tapers, others use votive candles.

You can use the traditional candle colors of purple, pink, and white, or you can create a family tradition in the way the Holy Spirit leads you! One family I know of uses four white candles, symbolizing purity, set around a large red and white striped candle, symbolizing the blood of Jesus and His stripes for our healing.

About The Author

Shirley Solis is an expert author in the area of family, child training, and homeschooling issues.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/expert/Shirley_Solis/150645





The Norwegian Christmas Tree in London (reading – 25.12. - 31.12.)

by: **D K Mukherjee**

A time-honoured London tradition has been the lighting of the Norwegian Christmas Tree in the heart of the famous Trafalgar Square during the Christmas season each year. The beautifully lit Christmas tree and the air filled with the lilting voices of carol singers in the evenings at Trafalgar Square signal the countdown to Christmas for most Londoners.

The tree certainly has a fascinating history ...

Since 1947, a Christmas tree has been presented by the people of Norway to the people of London as a mark of gratitude for Britain's support for Norway during World War II. The tree is a continuing symbol of peace and of friendship between the two countries.

The Trafalgar Square Christmas tree is usually a Norwegian spruce, towering well over 20 metres in height and is usually 50-60 years old. The tree is chosen specially from the forests surrounding Oslo, often months, and even years, in advance. The tree that finally makes its way to London for Christmas has been described by the Norwegian foresters as the 'the queen of the forest'.

Sometime in November, the tree selected as the Christmas tree is felled in a solemn ceremony in Oslo, attended by the Lord Mayor of Westminster, the British ambassador to Norway and the Mayor of Oslo. It is then brought to the UK by sea, completing the final leg of its long journey by road. A specialist rigging team then erects the 20-25 metres tall tree in Trafalgar Square employing a hydraulic crane.

At the base of the tree stands a plaque, bearing the words: 'This tree is given by the city of Oslo as a token of Norwegian gratitude to the people of London for their assistance during the years 1940-45.'

The Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree is decorated in traditional Norwegian style with hundreds of individual white lights - energy-efficient bulbs - running vertically on all sides. The twinkling 20 - 25 metres tall tree has today become an iconic London Christmas image.

The tree is lit during a short ceremony in Trafalgar Square on the first Thursday in December (close to Advent Sunday). The Lord Mayor of Westminster, accompanied by a band and a choir, performs the honours of lighting the tree with the flick of a switch, and formally announces its arrival in London from the forests surrounding Oslo. The ceremony is a much-awaited one and is attended by thousands of people gathered around the Square.

The Norwegian Christmas Tree in Trafalgar Square provides an arresting background to the traditional Christmas carolling groups. From Advent Sunday till Christmas Day, groups of carol singers perform daily next to the tree in the evenings, helping to raise money for various charities.

About The Author

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/expert/D_K_Mukherjee/463924

