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Letters

Teaching creativity

The fact that some people seem to be more
explosively creative than others ("The Spark:
Personal Testimonies to Creativity," SN:
11/17/87, p.298) may have to do with cultural
training. Many people grow up with the idea,
assisted by concepts like "gifted," "talented,"
etc., that creativity is the inborn province of
the few. Those presumptions seem to set
limits to personal inventiveness.

That creativity is universally accessible is
the basic premise of art curricula, an empha-
sis not stressed in other academic areas. The
fact that it so often succeeds may point to the
effectiveness of classroom reliance on imag-
ination and on the framing of assignments
that prevent conceptual or linguistic barriers
that limit the field of conception. Art instruc-
tion may already provide the long-term data
on teaching creativity sought by Dr. Perkins.
As someone said, "Enlightenment strikes the

This Week

- 4 Muscular Dystrophy Protein Identified
- 4 New gene may solve the Y (and X) of sex
- 5 Supernova makes heavy elements
- 5 Very Large Telescope
- 6 More stress disorder for wounded Viet vets
- 6 Early HIV effects on nervous system found
- 7 Putting the radwaste eggs in one basket
- 7 Celestial sandpaper: Grit from the stars
- 7 Shuttle flight delayed
- 7 326 days in space

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Articles

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- 12 Shareware, Mathematics Style

Cover: This illustration of a torus knot is one example of how
computer graphics can be used to illuminate a geometrical
concept. The recently established Geometry Supercomputer
Project gives a diverse group of leading mathematicians and
computer scientists a chance to work together, sharing a
supercomputer to explore a number of significant geometrical
problems. (Image: Dobkin/Princeton)



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prepared mind." Creativity, in my experience,
seems to be a way of processing information
and possibilities inherent in our biological
selves and not something field-specific.

Allan Peterson
Chairman, Visual Arts Department
Pensacola Junior College
Pensacola, Fla.

Radon data 'misleading'

Some reports lately have described the
occurrence of radon from "natural" sources
in the United States ("Radiation exposure:
Safe, eye on radon," SN: 11/28/87, p.347). Some
of these sampling points could be misleading.

In the late '50s and early '60s I conducted
research on samples from many major U.S.
rivers. This included both water samples and
plankton samples that received fallout from
western bomb testing. Also, samples from the
Tennessee, Clinch and Savannah rivers were
commonly found to be highly contaminated

with both isotopes of uranium and their
daughter, radon, which was based on emis-
sion of alpha particles but not gamma radi-
ation. Many reports include alpha subatomic
particles as radiation. I do not include alphas
as radiation, but they are ionizing materials.
These ionizing materials were traced to
Atomic Energy Commission and Department
of Energy operations at the Oak Ridge (Tenn.)
National Laboratory and the AEC and DOE
Savannah River Project near Aikin, S.C.

Radon gas is a decay product of some
isotopes of uranium and radium and is of
concern because it emits alphas. Another
industrial source of radon gas was building
blocks in houses in the Tennessee Valley
Authority area that were made from waste
products of phosphate fertilizers, known to
emit radon gas.

Louis G. Williams
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