

# CREATIVE LIFE. IT'S A SERIOUS BUSINESS

by Alex Thornton

Jan 2026



**Creative pursuits are part of MYA's culture, not as a perk, but as a practical advantage.**

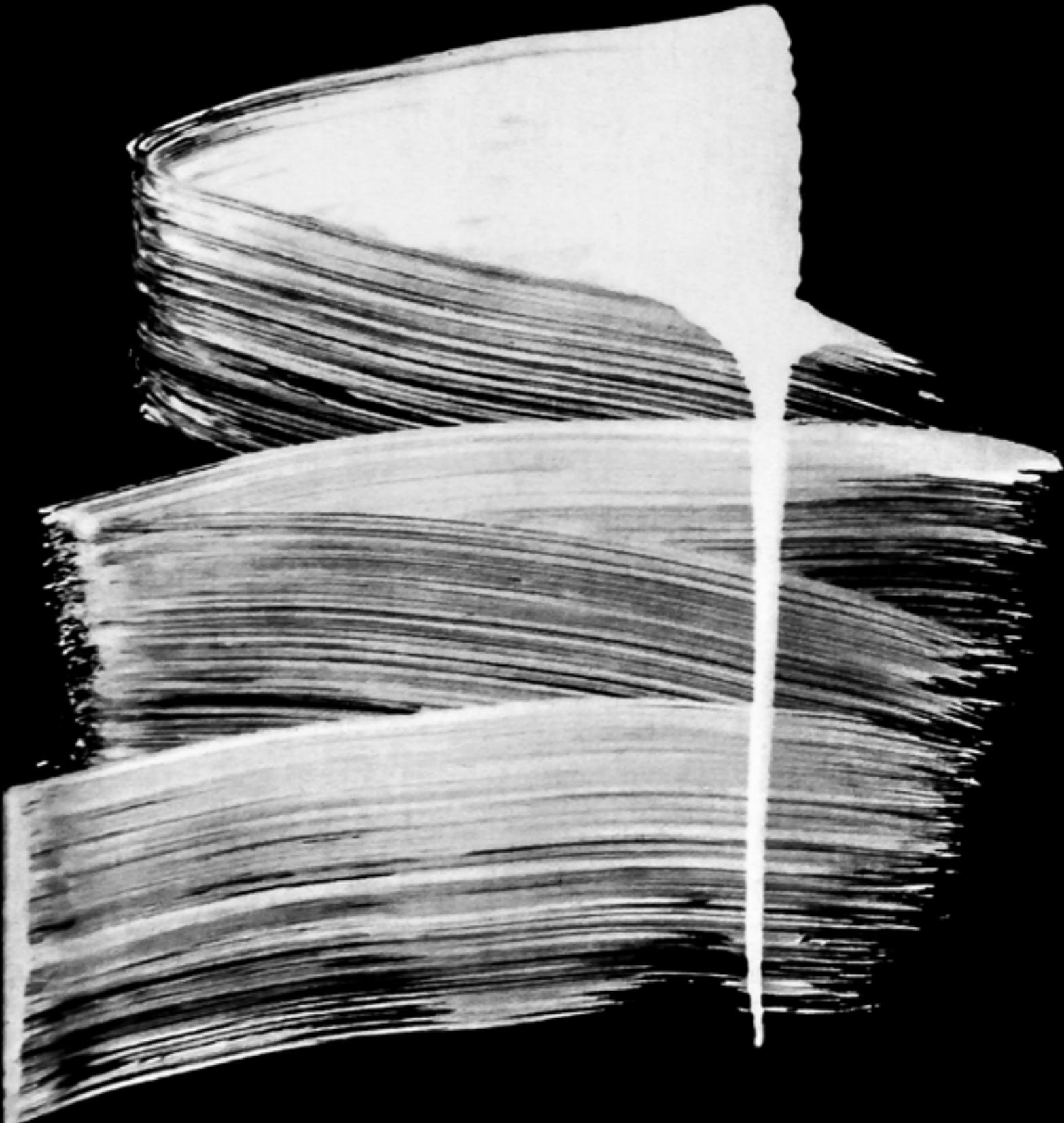
Hospitality, catering and FM consultancy lives on judgement calls: reading a space, anticipating behaviour, spotting what's missing, and finding a route through constraints without pretending they aren't there. That kind of thinking doesn't switch on at 9 and switch off at 5. It's trained, quietly, over time, by the habits you keep when nobody's paying you.

**Creativity outside work isn't "cute", it's actually useful.**

A 2014 peer-reviewed study looking at 341 employees found a clear relationship between creative activity outside work and performance outcomes at work, including creative problem-solving and helping colleagues. The mechanism matters: it wasn't simply that people felt better. The study linked creative hobbies with recovery experiences such as mastery, control and relaxation, which in turn produce better workplace outcomes.

There's also a cautionary note baked into that research: creative activity works best when it stays intrinsically motivated. In other words, the minute an employer starts "managing" your weekend pottery like it's a KPI, it stops being restorative and becomes admin.





## **So no, we don't tell our team to go home and be creative.**

We're not running a compulsory watercolour regime. What we do is make space for the fact that people already have inner lives and that those lives feed their work in ways that are hard to spreadsheet, but easy to recognise.

### **What we do in practice**

- Our walls include work made by our team, because the office should reflect the people in it, not just the brand guidelines.
- We make room for conversation about side projects, drawing, writing, making, building, cooking, whatever people are into, with curiosity rather than performance pressure.
- We value individuality and self-expression because they're not distractions from good consultancy, they're often where the best thinking starts.

**If you prefer your culture with numbers attached, the workplace environment itself has measurable effects.**

University of Exeter research found “enriched” office environments (for example, bringing in elements like plants rather than stripping spaces back to “lean” minimalism) can increase productivity by around 15%

**Earlier work also found productivity could rise by as much as 32%**

when employees had control over the design and layout of their workspace, including the ability to personalise it. The point isn’t that everyone should become an interior designer. It’s that agency matters, and sterile environments tend to communicate:

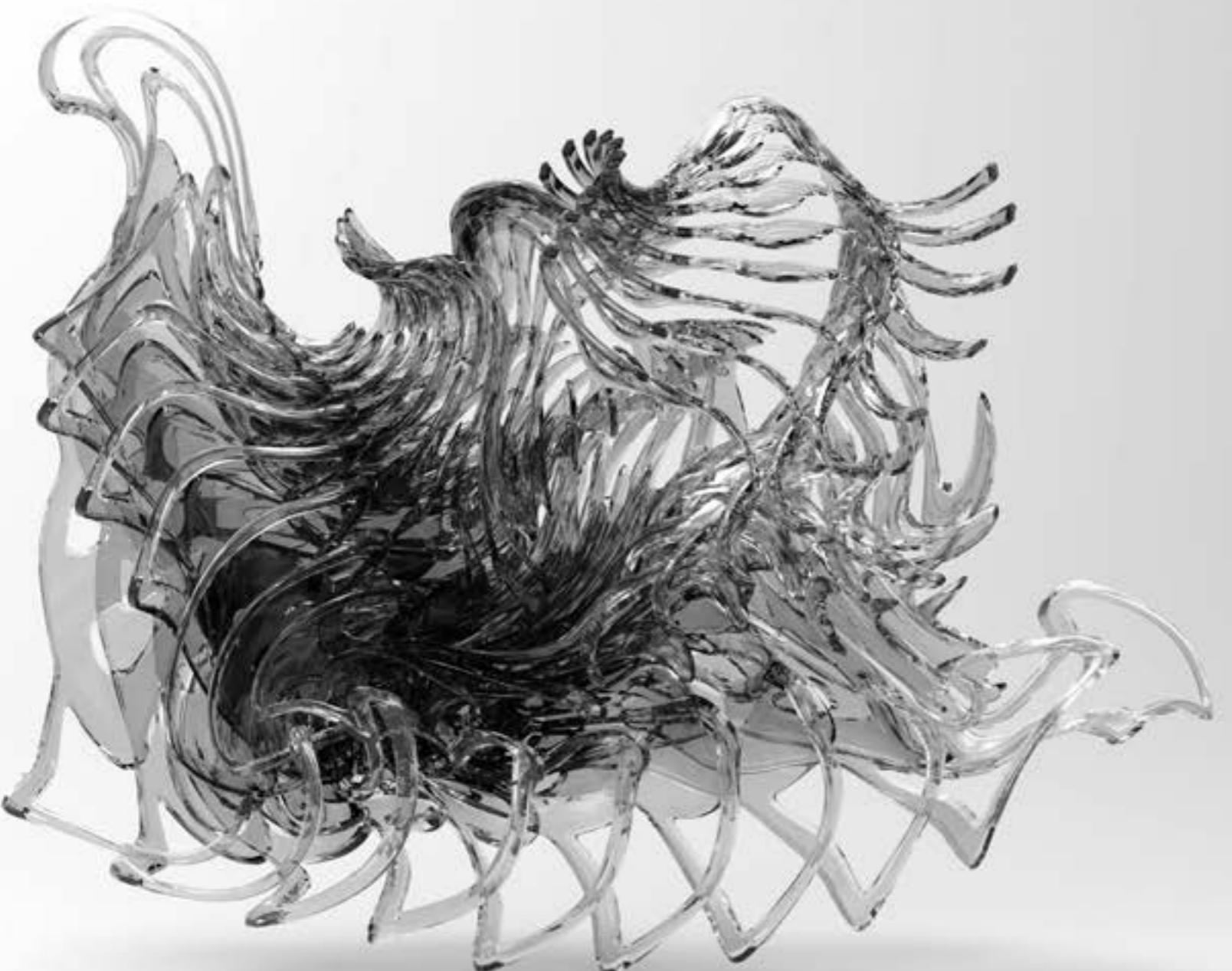
“Don’t touch anything. Don’t be anything.”

Other research reported respondents associated workplace art with reduced stress, increased creativity, and a stronger sense of wellbeing. Survey data isn’t the same as a controlled experiment, but it’s a useful signal, especially when it aligns with what most people already know from lived experience:

**spaces  
shape  
behaviour.**



# Art is data too.



Art isn't the opposite of information, it's information with teeth. Even in a flow state, you're making choices about what to reveal, what to conceal, what to emphasise, and what you're willing to let remain ambiguous. The viewer decodes that, sometimes accurately, sometimes creatively, sometimes wildly wrong. That variability isn't a flaw, it's a lesson in human perception.

And here's the transferable skill: keeping the essence of what you mean intact while it passes through other people's interpretations. That's not just an artist's problem. It's a business problem too, particularly in our world where we're constantly translating intent between clients, architects, operators, frontline teams and the public. Creativity trains the ability to hold meaning steady in messy conditions, without pretending the mess will politely leave the room.

## If you're interested here are some links to studies and further reading

- Peer-reviewed paper on creative activity outside work and performance outcomes (2014). [BPS Psych Hub+1](#)
- Summary of the same findings (creative hobbies linked with workplace creativity and helping colleagues). [Association for Psychological Science](#)
- Workplace art survey (800+ employees / 32 organisations) reporting perceived impacts. [Fine Art Photography+2One Workplace+2](#)