# EUREKA! POCKET GUIDE TO CREATIVITY

## Martin Engler

In *Eureka! Pocket guide to creativity*, Mike Jelinek – an artist, teacher, and researcher – offers an insightful exploration of creativity through multiple lenses. At first glance, this combination of professions may seem unusual, but as history has demonstrated, the union of art, teaching, and science has always been an effective formula for advancing human knowledge. Think of the Renaissance masters, who were often artists, educators, and scientists in their own right. Jelinek follows in their footsteps, bridging these disciplines to provide a comprehensive guide to creativity that is particularly relevant for concept artists and designers, including those in the digital games industry.

The book delves into the elusive process of creativity, particularly how to generate fresh ideas, refine them, and bring them to life in tangible forms. In the world of concept art, which is a "core ingredient" of industries like film and digital games, this ideation process is essential. Jelinek tackles the challenge of idea generation, which he describes as abstract and often fleeting, requiring constant practice and a deep understanding of both the mind and the creative process. His goal is to demystify creativity and make it more accessible to those struggling with it, who are mostly young creatives and aspiring professionals.

The strength of *Eureka* is its approachability. Jelinek combines casual language with in-depth knowledge, making the book both informative and enjoyable to read. The book seems to be structured around three core perspectives: artist/designer, teacher, and researcher and Jelinek seamlessly blends them through playful metaphors (artist), descriptive teaching methods (teacher), and grounded scientific inquiry (researcher). By doing so, he illustrates the multifaceted nature of creativity and offers readers practical advice grounded in both theory and real-world examples. This book can help us learn about talent, inspiration and creativity, help us with creative blocks, to understand basic and more advanced frameworks, navigate our own creativity, understand the process and act of ideation, show different ways of thinking, or give us examples and provide some possibilities.

Though *Eureka* is a general guide to creativity, it has particular relevance for digital game designers and concept artists. In game development, ideation is crucial during the pre-production phase, where the foundation for a game's world, characters, and mechanics is laid. The book's exploration of divergent and convergent thinking – a key concept in the creative process – is especially applicable to the interdisciplinary nature of game design. Designers must constantly switch between these modes of thinking to both generate innovative ideas and refine them into workable solutions for gameplay.

Jelinek's insights into how the brain forms mental images, connects them to sensory input, and links them to the imagination are particularly relevant for game designers, who must anticipate player reactions and experiences. This connection between creativity and cognitive science is a recurring theme in the book, and Jelinek uses neuroscience to provide a deeper understanding of how ideation works, offering practical tools that can be applied to digital games.

Whether your focus is games or anything else in particular, one of the book's most valuable aspects is its focus on the general ideation process. It is a critical, but often overlooked phase in creative fields in the matter of representation to the broader audience (not only for the eyes of the creator). Jelinek provides not just theoretical frameworks but also practical examples, such as his own sketches and ideation process. This is a rare and important contribution to creative literature, as many creators are reluctant to share their raw, unfinished ideas. By exposing these early stages of creation, Jelinek gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at how ideas evolve into final products – a process particularly relevant for aspiring game developers who often struggle to understand how to move from initial inspiration to a fully realized game concept.

However, the book's brevity is both its strength and its limitation. On the one hand, it offers a fresh and concise overview of creativity, making it accessible to a broad audience. On the other hand, some readers, particularly those looking for an exhaustive exploration of creative techniques, may find themselves wanting more depth in certain areas. Additionally, Jelinek touches on creativity's role in overcoming challenges such as creative blocks and artistic frustration, which are important parts of the creative process, however people's experiences may vary regarding their nature. The book provides a framework, but it is ultimately up to the reader to navigate their own creative journey.

With this in mind, one can further search for other connections usable in our field of study – digital games. The importance of ideation in game development cannot be overstated. Digital games are a complex medium, requiring the integration of narrative, visual design, gameplay mechanics, and player experience. Jelinek's exploration of ideation through sketches and cognitive mapping can be directly applied to the conceptual phase of game design. In game development, a solid idea – whether it is a character, a world, or a gameplay mechanic – can make or break the final product. A well-executed but poorly conceived idea is still a bad idea, as Jelinek points out, a concept that resonates strongly with game developers.

Moreover, Jelinek touches on the growing role of technology, particularly virtual reality, in the creative process. He highlights how VR can serve as a powerful tool for visualizing and refining abstract ideas, which is increasingly relevant as the gaming industry pushes the boundaries of immersive storytelling and interactive design. His focus on the evolving relationship between creativity and technology offers valuable insights for designers looking to harness new tools to bring their visions to life. Particularly interesting is his connection between ideation and body movement, which has direct application and an enhanced effect through such tools as VR headset.

For researchers in game studies and creative professionals in the gaming industry, *Eureka* offers a framework for understanding and enhancing creativity. The book opens up avenues for further research into how creative processes can be better integrated into game design and development. For instance, Jelinek's exploration of cognitive science and creativity could inspire new studies on how players engage with creative problem-solving in games.

In terms of practical application, game developers could use the book's techniques to refine their own ideation processes, whether in pre-production or during the iterative stages of game design. The book's insights into divergent and convergent thinking are particularly useful for game designers who need to balance creative exploration with practical constraints, such as technical limitations and originality.

In conclusion, *Eureka! Pocket guide to creativity* is a valuable resource for anyone looking to deepen their understanding of creativity, especially those in the field of concept art and digital games. Jelinek's multidisciplinary approach offers readers a fresh perspective on how creativity can be nurtured and harnessed, whether in concept art, game

design, or other creative fields. While the book may leave some readers wanting more detailed guidance on specific techniques, it serves as an excellent starting point for those looking to explore and enhance their creative potential.

For aspiring concept artists, game designers, and creatives looking to break into the digital games industry, *Eureka* provides both inspiration and practical advice. It demystifies the creative process while acknowledging that the journey toward mastery is one each individual must undertake themselves, applying valuable knowledge to their own thinking process. As the title suggests, the book is a guide – a helpful companion for those embarking on the creative path.

## Author of the review

**Mgr. art. Martin Engler, PhD.**
*University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava*
*Faculty of Mass Media Communication*
*Nám. J. Herdu 2*
*917 01 Trnava*
*SLOVAK REPUBLIC*
*martin.engler@ucm.sk*