

Failures as Portals of Creative Discovery



Hsieh-Yi-Lin, Creative Commons Licence
Left: James Joyce 1882-1941
Right: Samuel Beckett 1906-1989

blogs www.ipostcard.blogspot.com

The Irish writer and artist James Joyce, best known for his landmark novel *Ulysses*, discovered the virtues of failure during the early years of his career as a writer. It started in 1904 with an essay about his own development as an artist and writer called *Portrait of an artist*. He submitted it publication but it was **rejected** again and again. After this initial disappointment he started on a new novel. After writing 900 pages he decided that it was too conventional and destroyed most of the manuscript. He started all over again and spent ten years writing a novel which he finally called *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. When he published the complete version in 1916, he was hailed as one of the most promising new writers in the English language. Joyce expresses the lessons he learned in a marvellous way with his quotation 'A man's errors are his portals of discovery'. And it was not by chance that Joyce's friend, fellow-writer and poet Samuel Beckett described just another wonderful self-learned lesson on failure: 'To be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail... Try again. Fail again. Fail better.'

These lessons of life from **early 20th century** creative professionals seem to be universal and very topical in our turbulent times. Our global connected world and its new technologies make creative expression accessible for hundreds of

millions of people. There are more than 100 million **blogs** today, with 120,000 new ones being created every 24 hours. With low-cost cameras, editing software and websites like YouTube, Facebook and E-bay, everyone can create, buzz, market and sell their creations. More people than ever can participate, share, collaborate and create. On the one hand, our global connectedness makes it easier to explore uncommon ground and find new inspiration for our creative expressions. But on the other hand, it might take some extra effort to really stand out from the crowd and create something new and meaningful. If it's your ambition to go beyond the conventional, you might need to experiment more, take more creative risks and make more failures than ever.

The Institute of Brilliant Failures wants to bring about a shift in the way we view failure. It promotes a positive view of failure, as a portal of discoveries, through the use of stories, film, interactive workshops and roadshows. It is our tribute to inventors and those who had the courage to try something different, and our way of laying down a challenge to the rest of us. The Institute is a brainchild of Dialogues, an initiative of ABN AMRO. Dialogues' mission is to stimulate entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour (in the broadest sense of the word) by encouraging people to develop new

ideas and enabling innovators to turn ideas into reality. However, these efforts could be wasted in a culture where failure is considered unacceptable and few are prepared to take the necessary risk. The Institute of Brilliant Failures aims to change this culture.

www.brilliantfailures.com

Bas Ruysenaars

What is a brilliant failure?

A brilliant failure meets the following four criteria:

- Your goal is founded in good intentions (i.e. not at the expense of others or society at large).
- You do all you can to avoid unnecessary errors: failure through poor preparation or silly mistakes is not a brilliant failure!
- You do not achieve your original goal; if the actual result was not intended, but has value for the individual or society, then we can officially classify it as a brilliant failure!
- You learnt something from your failure; even if you didn't learn what you intended, you learnt what not to do; above all, your experiences, courage and perseverance can serve to inspire others.