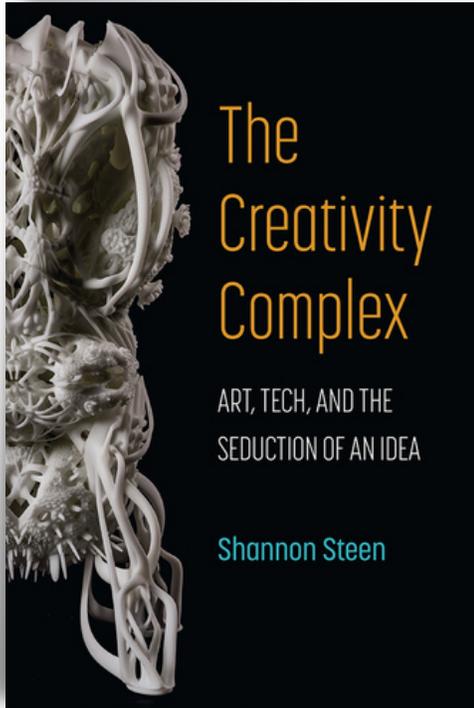




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THE CREATIVITY COMPLEX

Art, Tech, and the Seduction of an Idea

Shannon Steen

“Creativity” is a word that excites and dazzles us. It promises brilliance and achievement; it is a shield against conformity, a channel for innovation across the arts, sciences, technology, and education, and a mechanism for economic revival and personal success. But it has not always evoked these ideas. Once a term reserved for the ultimate power of the divine, and later associated primarily with the work of the artist, creativity has become attached to ideas about economics, politics, and the self in particular ways. *The Creativity Complex* traces the history of how creativity has come to mean the things it now does, and explores the ethical implications of how we use this term today for both the arts and for the social world more broadly.

Richly researched, the book explores how creativity has been invoked in arenas as varied as Enlightenment debates over the nature of the cognition, Victorian-era intelligence research, the Cold War technology race, contemporary K-12 education, and even modern electoral politics. Along the way, the book turns to a set of art works—from mobile steampunk sculptures to bicentennial adaptations of *Frankenstein* to a musical about the 2016 US Presidential election—that ask how our ideas about creativity are bound up with those of self-fulfillment, responsibility, and the individual, and how these might seduce us into joining a worldview and even a set of social imperatives that we might otherwise find troubling.

Shannon Steen is Associate Professor of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies and American Studies, and Associate Dean for Programs and Planning in the College of Letters and Science at UC Berkeley.

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