

Symphony



Nancy in front of the first mural Doug and Sharon Quarles painted in Tucumcari, New Mexico.



On our way home from Santa Fe this summer, we spent the night in Tucumcari, New Mexico, primarily because of a website I found for the Blue Swallow Motel, a renovated motor court complete with individual garages. Tucumcari is not very large (about 5,989 according to the 2000 census) so we were surprised to see so many wonderful murals in this small town, all created by the same people. They were everywhere—appearing on the sides of all kinds of businesses and buildings. Most were *Big Pictures*—realistically painted, well-designed, and witty collages of images that represented the town, the state, Route 66 (Tucumcari is on Historic Route 66), and the West.

I had *Big Pictures* on my mind at the time, as I was thinking about Daniel Pink's concept of Symphony found in his book, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*. Daniel Pink considers Symphony as one of six essential right-brain-directed senses or aptitudes that are needed for success in our contemporary world, a time he calls the Conceptual Age.

Pink describes Symphony as the ability to see the big picture, to sort out what really matters, to synthesize rather than to analyze, and to see and integrate relationships to invent something new. Pink calls this ability Symphony, comparing it to the relationship between the composer, the conductor, and the orchestra who work together to create "a whole whose magnificence exceeds the sum of its parts."

Doug and Sharon Quarles, the artists responsible for the Tucumcari murals, have certainly captured the Big Picture in this small town. Since moving to New Mexico from Louisiana in 2002, they have convinced so many people of the value of these big pictures that they have produced thirty-two complex, realistic murals in and around Tucumcari. (You can view many of them at www.quarlesart.com.)

I think Daniel Pink would be proud of the Quarles' efforts. Their murals are a synthesis of images that best represent different times, places, symbols, and relationships appropriate for the theme of each mural. By moving to Tucumcari and introducing the idea of murals to the town, they created something new for the townspeople to desire and value (a need they probably didn't realize they had!). We will definitely be stopping through Tucumcari again to find all the murals we did not see this past summer.

Please share with us the innovative ways you bring Symphony to your students. Our efforts are most powerful when we work together. 

Nancy Walkup

Nancy Walkup, Editor

"Sometimes the most powerful ideas come from simply combining two existing ideas nobody else ever thought to unite."

—Daniel Pink's Peanut Butter Cup Theory of Innovation

Pink's Suggestions for Exploring Symphony

- Listen carefully to the great symphonies.
- Read magazines you have never looked at before and look for connections to your own life.
- Learn how to draw (and teach students to draw).
- Write down metaphors (understanding one thing in terms of something else) you encounter.
- Follow the links (play six degrees of separation with websites).
- Look for solutions in search of problems (ask why and why not).
- Create an inspiration board (tack up inspirational images).