

## Building a Creative Path

*"Be yourself, everyone else is taken" Oscar Wilde*

# INSPIRATION



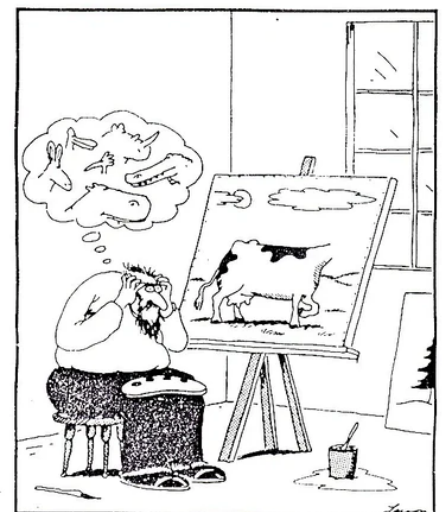
## Our bumpy creative path

When we get stuck in our creative work our internal dialogue can circle around such things as:

- Why is it so hard to create the art I want to?
- How do I find a sense of direction in my work?
- Why does my creativity come easily some of the time and then at other times not at all?
- Why does it seem that some artists are way more productive and successful than me?
- How can I develop and grow my creative work?

There are many positive things that can help us to re-engage and re-energise ourselves with our creative path. These things include:

- Knowing, understanding and feeding our own personal inspiration
- Giving ourselves permission to visualise, imagine and dream
- Having a dedicated creative space
- Developing a regular creative practice
- Learning to embrace risk taking, vulnerability, uncertainty and fear in the way we approach our creative work
- Examining our commitment to the value of authenticity
- Sharing ourselves, our work and supporting others within a like minded community



The curse of "artist's block"

## Nurturing our creative inspiration

Creative inspiration is very personal and will be unique to each individual. It stems from the things that we notice and attach value to and which take reference from our past, present and future life.

To feed our inspiration we first need to take a good hard reflective look and remind ourselves regularly of what it is that nurtures our creative spirit.

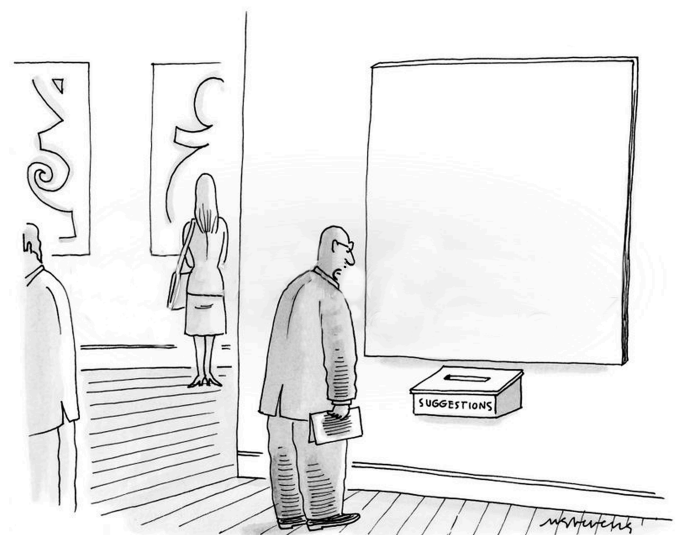
Our inspiration does not need to be viewed as a fixed object but instead something more mercurial. It can change, develop and be influenced as we move through our lives, but it is interesting how often core underlying values that we hold dear will remain constant and reveal themselves with consistency.

Being able to connect more purposefully with our source of inspiration allows us to develop as an artist as we begin to understand what it really is that informs and underpins our creative choices.

Creativity is a natural outcome of feeling alive and connected to things that bring excitement and enthusiasm so we can simply:

- Start paying attention to what feels joyful
- Make a list of the things that we are passionate about.
- Do more of these things.

*"An unexamined life is not worth living."  
Socrates*



It is often helpful to reflect more deeply about our personal connection to our default creative choices and be open to where this might lead us. Here are some simple activities to try

## Interview your creative work

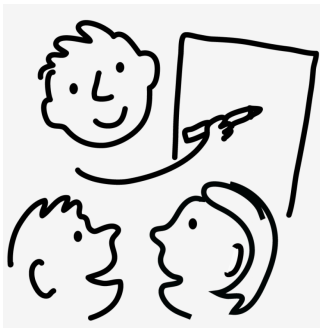
Both our conscious and subconscious selves are busy in our creative work and use our chosen medium as their voice. It can be fun to explore what they might be saying.

Choose a piece of creative work and play trying to give the elements in your art their own voice. Be open and curious about what your art is trying to say.

Try this on your own or with a partner and take turns to "Interview" each other's work as if it is a person.

Come up with your own questions and answers or use the following prompts:

Also try being the voice for someone else's work while the artist poses the questions or listens in. There might be some surprises to hear what others think that a piece of work is expressing.



My name is....

I am.....

I want to...

I wonder.....

I hear.....

I see.....

I would like....



## Create an inspiration board

Design and fill a page with the things that you love and are drawn to.

Be as creative as you like as to how this is presented: paint, draw, write, collage.... anything goes.

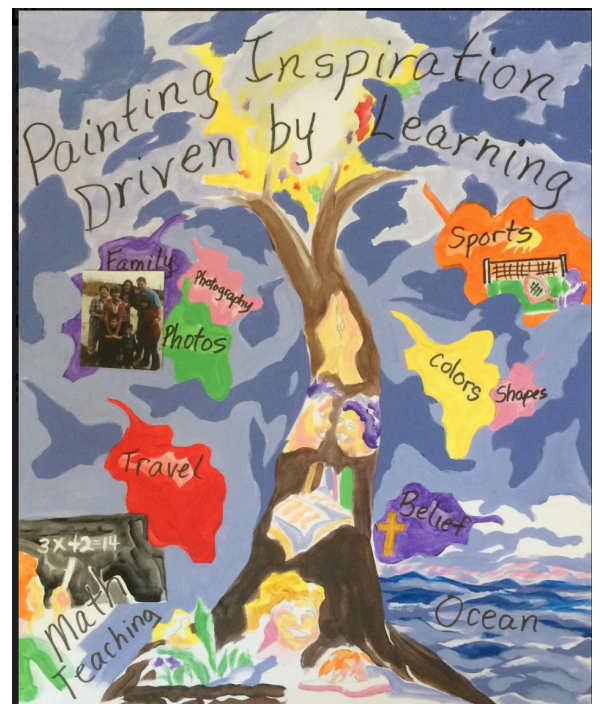
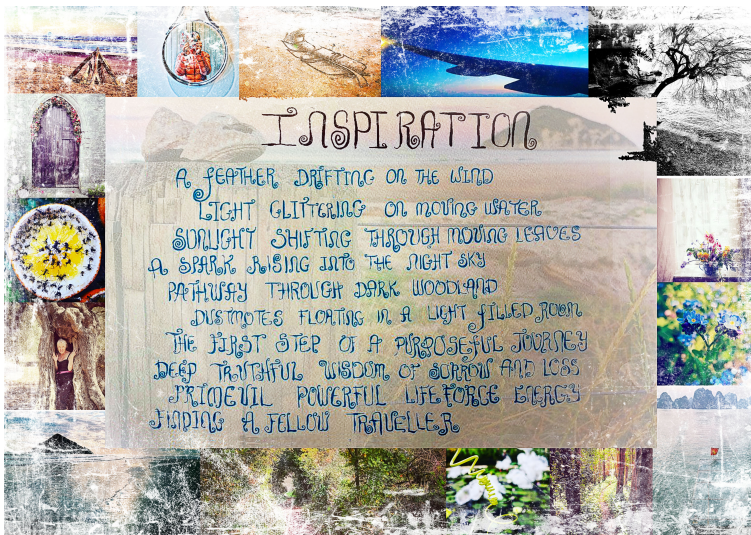
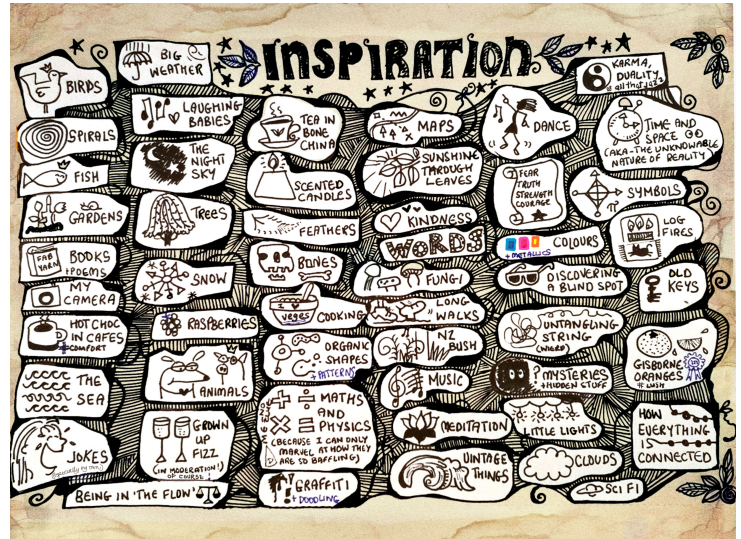
Pin your inspiration board up in your creative space and revisit it regularly.

Add to it as your sources of inspiration change and develop. Notice what stays the same.

Use the examples on the next page to get you started.

*Often the hands will solve a mystery that the intellect has struggled with in vain."*

*C.G. Jung*

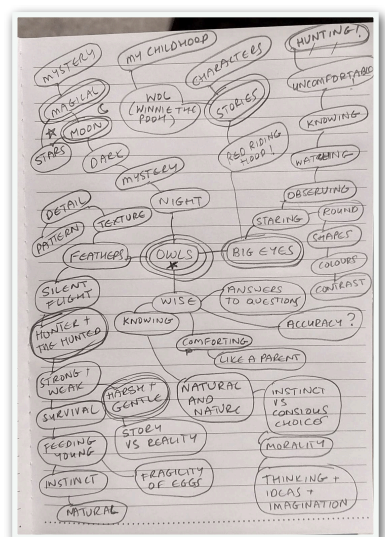
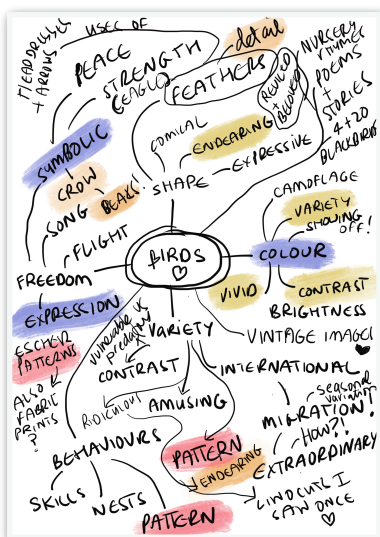


## Do the Deep Dive

We can easily dismiss what we deem to be our inspiration as just a passing fancy. For example we may default to just saying "I like trees." and feel just that can suffice. However this statement is superficial and we choose our favourite subjects for a reason. To dismiss this lightly does not do justice to what is really taking place below the surface. It is like a singer delivering a song without any true understanding of what the lyrics actually mean. The audience can certainly tell the difference if this is happening. Singers often go deeply into the meaning behind lyrics and the more they learn about it the more their delivery is deepened and enhanced with authenticity. This is the same for any artist regardless of their chosen medium.

It is worth diving more deeply into your favourite creative subject and seeing how far down you can go. Although it might seem a simple activity, once you have done this sort of thinking it cannot be undone. Next time you approach your favourite subject you will be more consciously informed about your underlying motivation and cannot fail to be influenced by this enhanced awareness. So what is it about trees exactly? Use a flow chart format to see how deep you can dive.

- Start by writing one of your favourite subjects for creative work in a circle in the middle of a piece of paper.
- Next draw out at least four radial lines and write down four things that begin to expand on why that subject is important to you. Add to these lines as required.
- Now expand each rationale further and draw out more lines of thought. See how far you can take those lines of enquiry. Allow your thinking to go wherever it wants to and accept all the random things that may arise. Doodle and enjoy the process.
- When your ideas begin to slow down take another colour and underline or circle anything you feel is interesting or important.
- Notice any themes or contrasts that emerge or seem to be repeated.
- Be open to exploring some of these concepts more within your creative work.

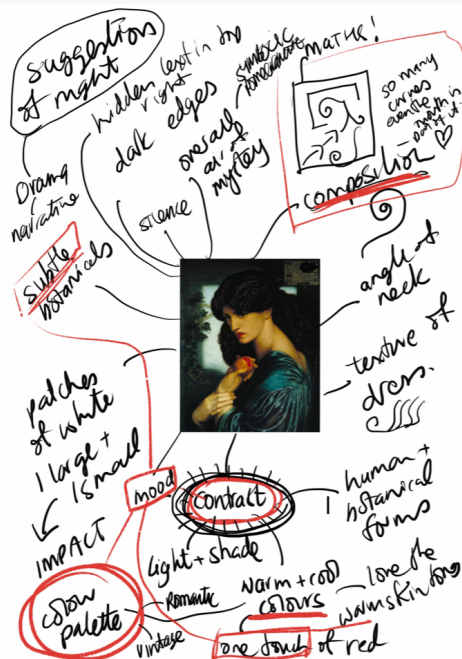


## Painting Puzzler



Choose a favourite painting and create a page of thoughts and observations about why it is that you are drawn to the image.

- Use the "interview" prompts to help you.
- See if you can create a list of key points - keep it simple.
- Make a rough copy of the work first without looking at the page
- Then make another rough copy while looking
- Label your key observations.
- Be curious about your level of engagement with these things
- Let this information settle by itself
- After a while you may discover that you now begin to be more observant of how you might use these elements in your work



MYSTERY / MOOD

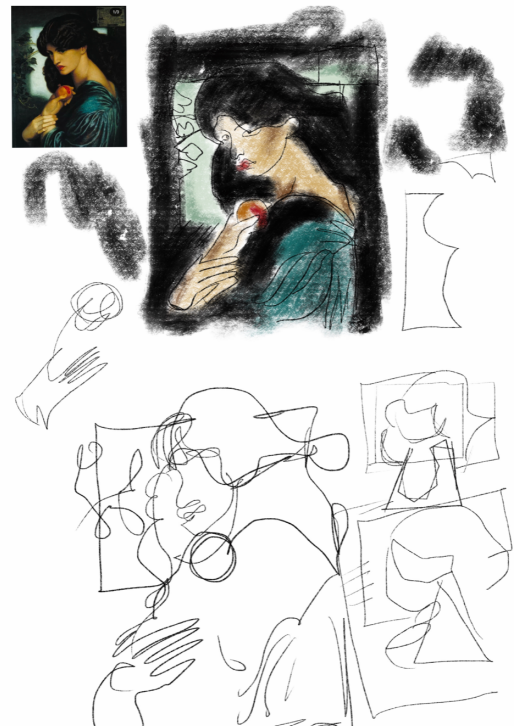
CONTRAST

DARKNESS / TEXTURES / RICHNESS

BOTANICAL ELEMENTS

SYMBOLISM

COLOUR PALETTE



Curves / angle of composition / colour palette / suggestions of things  
Dark & light

## Some books on Creativity, Process and Art Making

"Art and Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking" by David Bayles and Ted Orland

This book explores the way art gets made, the reasons it often doesn't get made, and the nature of the difficulties that cause so many artists to give up along the way.

"Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative" by Austin Kleon

A great little book that inspires us to look to everything as a source for our creativity. Nothing is original...so embrace influence and you'll find your originality has always been there.

"Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear" by Elizabeth Gilbert

Big Magic will resonate with writers and artists who find the process of producing work to be particularly painful. Through anecdotes about her creative failures and resourcefulness, as well as those other artists, Gilbert encourages readers to pursue a creative life 'that is driven more strongly by curiosity than by fear.

"Fearless Creating" by Eric Maisel

With an understanding that could only be gained through years of experience in counselling artists, writers, and performers, Eric Maisel, Ph.D. discusses each stage of creation--wishing, choosing, starting, working, completing, selling--and the anxieties particular to each. He then shows how these inhibiting tensions can be turned to artistic advantages, how truth and beauty arrive in the work of art precisely because, and only when, anxiety has been understood, embraced, and resolved.

"The War of Art: Break Through the Block and Win Your Inner Creative Battles" by Steven Pressfield

The War of Art emphasises the resolve needed to recognise and overcome the obstacles of ambition and then effectively shows how to reach the highest level of creative discipline. Think of it as tough love . . . for yourself. Whether an artist, writer or business person, this simple, personal, and no-nonsense book will inspire you to seize the potential of your life.

"Making Art a Practice: 30 Ways to Paint a Pipe (How to be the Artist You Are)" by Cat Bennett

Helping artists catapult into further action, this guide is a treasury of insight and inspiration. Rather than focus on art techniques that build skills or overcome creative blocks through playful activities or writing, this guide walks the artist through exercises designed to develop the personal qualities critical to being an artist in the world, such as courage, the ability to look and see, and connection to the true creative self.

"Trust the Process: An Artist's Guide to Letting Go" by Shaun McNiff

Whether in painting, poetry, performance, music, dance, or life, there is an intelligence working in every situation. This force is the primary carrier of creation.

"An Absorbing Errand: How Artists and Craftsmen Make Their Way to Mastery" by Janna Malamud Smith

An Absorbing Errand uses stories of artists' lives, personal anecdotes, and insights from the author's work as a psychotherapist to examine the psychological obstacles that prevent people from staying with, and relishing, the process of art-making. Each chapter is devoted to a problem intrinsic to the creative process and illustrates how these very obstacles, once understood, can become prime sources of the energy that actually fuels the mastery of art-making.

"Creative Block: Get Unstuck, Discover New Ideas. Advice & Projects from 50 Successful Artists" by Danielle Krysa

Creative block presents the most crippling-and unfortunately universal-challenge for artists. No longer! This chunky blockbuster of a book is chock-full of solutions for overcoming all manner of artistic impediment. The blogger behind The Jealous Curator interviews 50 successful international artists working in different mediums and mines their insights on how to conquer self-doubt, stay motivated, and get new ideas to flow. Each artist offers a tried-and-true exercise-from road trips to 30-day challenges to cataloging the medicine cabinet- that will kick start the creative process. Abundantly visual with more than 300 images showcasing these artists' resulting work, Creative Block is a vital ally to students, artists, and creative professionals.

"The Confident Creative: Drawing to Free the Hand and Mind" by Cat Bennet

Using simple methods and yogic theory, this unique guide focuses on the art of drawing as a way to unblock creativity and create artistic confidence. Both practicing and beginning artists will learn to develop drawing skills, overcome creative blocks, and enter the meditative state in order to find creative connections and confidence.

"The Creative Habit: Learn it and Use it For Life" by Twyla Tharp

All it takes to make creativity a part of your life is the willingness to make it a habit.

"Creative Authenticity: 16 Principles to Clarify and Deepen Your Artistic Vision" by Ian Roberts

Articulate and beautifully written, Creative Authenticity is a must read for artists. This book provides the aspiring or accomplished artist with useful guidance for finding and expressing your artistic voice and defining your path in the art world. This is not a "how-to" book. Ian offers thoughtful insight and practical advice for resolving many of the "problems" that plague artists, such as: overcoming procrastination, developing subject matter and style, when to seek an appreciative audience for your work, and finding your own truth.



Today you are You  
that is truer than true.  
There is no one alive  
that is youer than You.  
-Dr. Seuss