

INVITING INTUITION

CREATIVITY THRIVES ON TWO THINGS — PASSION AND INTUITION.

Passion provides the fuel, the power. What we care about, what pours with loving force from the deepest heart—it's easiest to be creative about such things. At the same time, where's the guidance, the inspiration? What direction should we take? Here's where intuition takes center stage. Or it should, anyway, if we can get it to accept the role. Because often it's shy, and doesn't want to work in the glare of our conscious spotlight. We need ways of coaxing it sometimes.

Whenever you're facing a project—always sketch it somehow first, rough it out. I'm using "sketch" metaphorically here, because it might be just some phrases on paper (if you're writing or planning), or a clumsy cardboard prototype (for a balsa airplane), or an actual drawing. Your goal in the "sketch" is to get a quick, loose, very possibly out-of-order look at the whole of what you've got to work with.

Polish and attention to detail are actually your enemies here. Intuition serves up rich, raw, partly formed elements. Perfectionists—take heed! Don't scare it away by demanding that all the pieces emerge perfectly formed. They cannot do that. In things that are perfectly formed, the creative process is already long over. At this point, find some way to stay very open, loose, and accepting.

Sometimes, for many of us, this is not easy. One approach that works for me is to simply put a time limit on myself and say: "get everything in your mind on this topic down in



some form in half an hour (or whatever)." This keeps me from getting tangled up in whether or not I said (or drew, or thought) this or that well enough. There have been times when I shut myself down completely in writing by demanding that a first paragraph be worthy of Shakespeare.

Here's an analogy that might help. You want to draw your father, say with his hand over his heart. So you get very fussy at the very start and really get his hand absolutely perfect—only to find, with a hand that size, Dad's head would be off the top of the paper. Stay loose as the whole emerges and the parts will come into proportion. Then you can perfect, not just some hand, but the perfect hand for this picture.

Now once you've done this rough work—and this second step is just as important—sleep on it. Put it away at least overnight. Intuition works best actually behind the stage in the subconscious. You've given it a goal and now let it do its magic. Come back to it after a while and you will find all sorts of work has

been done for you. Suddenly you just know--this fits here really. Oh, and that's how to do that. In many cases, you can go through this "rough-it/rest-it" pattern several times and get more each time. There are countless tales of solutions to problems appearing, in dreams, for instance. The invention of the sewing machine, or the discovery of the benzene ring come to mind.

Once again, some people have difficulty with the "rest-it" phase. The issue here is usually a lack of self-trust. Bestselling author Elizabeth Gilbert, has a profound, funny, ultimately deeply moving twenty minute video talk on creativity at http://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_on_genius.html

She points out that, until the Renaissance, we did not say of someone "he is a genius." Rather, we said, "he has a genius," and meant a kind of attendant spirit whose job it was to inspire greater truths or beauty. She describes some wonderful attitudes that help keep your ego fears (I can't... I'M not creative...) from blocking that attendant spirit.

It's not YOUR intuition, in this view. Your job is to show up for the human work. Your genius's job is to feed you the good stuff that needs manifesting. Stay loose at first, and then give that attendant genius consciousness some downtime to percolate into you. Do these things, and it will generally do quite well. And relax--the level of success, one way or the other, is not so much about you. It's an upwelling from the deeper, unified consciousness of humanity. ▲