



CO-CREATIVE
WORKS

Unglued

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Ungluing Your Creative Process

It's not often that I stare at a blank sheet of paper or canvas and wonder what to create. Whether it's words or images I'm after, I am seldom at a loss for ideas. But it does happen occasionally, as it did this week. Here's what I do to get my creative process back in gear.

1. **Consider past successes.** We've all successfully solved problems. What worked in the past, even if it was a completely different kind of problem, may provide clues for your current creative challenge. For example, when I'm working on a series of paintings, I'll often brainstorm ideas for the series (a list of words/descriptions). Then, I'll do a series of thumbnail sketches that can be explored further in each painting. Having this resource is a great comfort when I'm heading to my studio. It's like a security blanket; with sketches and ideas in hand, my blank canvas is not so scary.

Maybe your past problem solving successes have involved talking to a friend or co-worker. Or perhaps you visually mapped a process. Or maybe you took something apart to see how it worked so that you could apply the same logic to your problem. Whatever worked in the past can be applied to a new challenge.

2. **Hit the books.** I'm a voracious reader with a huge library of resources – business, art, the business of art, etc. I consult these resources regularly for information and inspiration. For example, this week my painting challenge was how to organize and compose an abstract painting. I had this great under-painting with exciting patches of color, pattern, and texture, and I had an idea of what I wanted to say through the painting. Rather than depend on my intuition for the composition, I decided I needed a reminder of the principles of design. Three books from my library gave me what I needed.
3. **Consult a friend or colleague.** Those of us who are artists, writers, or very small business owners often work alone for hours or days at a time. A staff meeting is “me, myself, and I.” The voices in your head may be your best sources of inspiration or your worst critics, but it's often helpful to get outside your head and talk with other people. A weekly breakfast meeting with people you trust to share ideas, show off works in progress, or problem solve may be just the stimulation you need to unglue your stuck creative process.

I once read about a research project that revealed the health benefits of getting together with others to discuss art. Among other things, and I'll express this as delicately as possible, the regular art discussions produced better (ahem) regularity in other important life functions.

If you need a collaborative facilitator – for your work team or “me, myself, and I,” give me a call. I specialize in helping teams and individuals “come unglued” and identify new creative possibilities. Reach me at 801-209-3062 or sue@cocreativeworks.com.

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