

## What Is Magic in Art and Writing?

In the beginning when we are young and passionate, we believe in magic. As we advance through our school years, we learn more and more scientific theory, more facts, more ways to think dispassionately that undoes the idea of magic's existence. We reward hard work and high grades in all the basic subject areas. What happens with arts? How many of us were told whether we were poets or painters that there was no way we could succeed in life "doing that" so we suffered our way through tedious jobs and turned our back on creativity?

As adulthood proceeds into middle age, I, for one, have finally discovered some partial answers to that question above. Growing up/old/ becoming adult combined with life's unexpected dramas, can thrash the magic right out of a person.

For me, the idea that someone can write a successful poem was one form of magic. I imagined that it all came from some magical feeling endowed on a writer by the Great Spirit. I felt this way about artists as well. Weren't they the lucky ones, to set brush to paper or pencil and draw something so life-like that it resembled a photograph. The magic involved in photography is a topic for another time.

For several years since 2003 I attended writers' workshops. I was taught and critiqued by some of the best, a Pulitzer prize nominee in one class, as a matter of fact. 2011, I began art lessons for drawing, painting, and any other medium of wall art.

From the writers' workshops and mentors, I learned that if you impose a form on a wild piece of writing that may be rambling yet beautiful, a writer can create a powerful composition and a successful, concise

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composition. Using form requires planning whether it be a simple prompt like a topic upon which to write, or a more complex plan like that involved in crafting a villanelle with its formal rhyme scheme and repeating lines.

Over time I began to understand that I write two different ways. The first is the magical way. It "just comes to me", as so many students love to say with bemused wonder. We don't lose our desire to believe in magic as we age, it just shows itself differently. These writings evolve out of a feeling somewhere beneath the heart. This is the thing you are born with. Second, I realized I can now also assign myself a topic and write an effective story on purpose, without waiting for the magic to show itself. So combining magic and lessons brings the poetry full circle: poetry on demand that is magical.

When I sat down at my first art lesson I felt as if I could not draw. I felt I was not blessed with that magic. I said aloud that I can not draw. My teacher assigned me several specific exercises. Miserably I stumbled my way through them.

Out of my own magic I had drawn some fairly successful pen and ink works in recent years, some even sold, but often I came away from them with the feeling that something was missing. My teacher explained to me after the first few weeks of lessons, that with artwork we have to make a plan. It is not, in fact, about sitting down at your easel and splashing out a Renoir or Monet. Instead she showed me how to do 5 second-sketches of my subject, then to grid my sketch pad page into 6 sections and to create small variations on the subject in each box. After, I choose the one that I feel magical about, I practice colors and technique on a separate margin. Last, I proceed on to a large canvas or paper. The process of organizing the thoughts and practicing the hand-to-brain pathways allows for successful drawing. Thus, the magic comes full circle in drawings on demand. The question "Why?" answers itself. "Why not?"

Whether you are free-lance writer struggling to compose a coherent piece to sell or an artist wrestling with the desire for a great piece of wall art, organizing your thought processes and training your brain can have an impact on the rest of your life. Perhaps you become neater. Perhaps you face crises

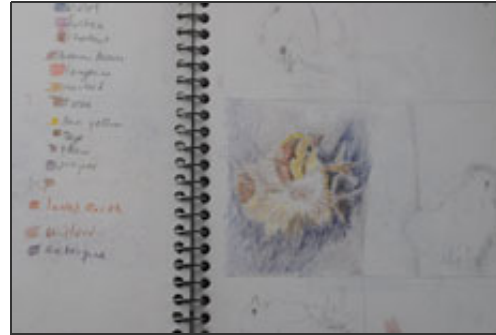
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with greater aplomb. Maybe you learn better planning or to allow a plan B. Perhaps you learn to have faith in yourself. The magic is never gone when we, as adults, experience writers' or artists' blocks. It is simply temporarily unavailable. Maybe it is down for renovation or maybe the brain is busily working on the next composition in a secret place that has not yet been revealed to you. Be still. You can do it. Your teachers have given you tools to manage the creative process. What a magical gift!

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