

What Made You THINK of THAT?



Feeding your creative mind to find artistic inspiration anywhere and everywhere

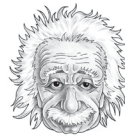
This resource has three sections:

- Where Ideas Come From
- Losing Your Fear of Failure
- Feeding Your Creative Mind
- Suggestions to Grow your Inspiration

Where Ideas Come From

I'm often asked by people viewing my work "How did you think of doing that? Where did the idea to do that come from?". Because they are seeing only one finished result of the creative process, my ideas may appear to just fall out of the sky and land somewhere inside my head.

Sometimes, it does seem that way, but most of the time, the artwork they are looking at is only one of a series of works that has progressed over time to become what it is in that moment.



ArtSpeak

Abstract art: (also known as *nonfigurative art*, *nonobjective art*, and *nonrepresentational art*) An art form that uses line, color and form without the use of recognizable subject matter.

Art Discipline: An in-depth study of a particular form of art, such as photography, painting or sculpture.

Figurative art: Art that portrays real objects, also known as representational art.

Impressionism: A style of painting and drawing that originated in France in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries and sought to capture a visual impression of a subject rather than its objective reality.

Landscape painting: A painting with a landscape as its primary subject, such as a countryside or mountain view.

Mandala: Most commonly, an intricate circular design which originated as a spiritual ritual in Indian religions.

Portrait: An artwork depicting a likeness to the face (and sometimes the body) of a person or animal.

Undertone: The result of painting a color underneath a painting to give an overall warmth or coolness to the finished work.

In truth, ideas don't fall from the sky. They are the result of thoughts and experiences that have come before. A mind rich with experience and knowledge is full of ideas. In order for a mind to be creative, you need to feed it with nourishing stimuli. Ideas evolve and grow, and the more you practice coming up with ideas, the easier it gets. Figures 1 to 6 illustrates how ideas can evolve.

The painting in Figure 1 was created purely out of the desire not to waste paint. No kidding! I had been working on another oil painting and after I had finished, there was still quite a bit of paint left on the palette. Buying paints regularly can add up and begin to be quite costly, and I couldn't bring myself to throw it away.

I had a canvas nearby, so I took all the leftover yellow paint and painted the whole thing yellow, thinking I would use it as an undertone for another painting.



But, there was still quite a bit of paint left on the palette. Then, I remembered I had recently seen a video of an artist creating beautiful works with drops of paint arranged in stunning patterns. Knowing nothing about how she prepared for this technique, nor what paint medium she was using, I dipped my brush into the sticky oil paint and dabbed a wonky looking dot on the canvas. It stood up like a stiff meringue and didn't make a very nice looking dot.

No matter. I wasn't going to waste that paint and I was in the mood to let my mind wander as I just felt like doodling with my paint. I quickly found that if I turned my brush the other way around and used the wood end, I could get better meringue-like peaks. Surprisingly, I found I really loved the meditative quality of systematically dipping my brush end into the paint and making dot after dot, letting my mind go.

Treating this painting purely as an exercise with no intention to display or offer it for sale, I continued to simply enjoy the process and let it go where it wanted. It now hangs on my wall as a reminder of where my new style of painting began. Let me explain.

Shortly after finishing this whimsical piece of art, I happened to be shopping at my favorite art supplies store. I was looking for a white marker or pen that would make fine lines for another project I was working on at the time. I was introduced to water-based paint pens and fell in love with them instantly.

Building on the idea of making dots and the joy in the meditative quality of this kind of work, I created a small mandala (Figure 2 on the next page). I loved it, so I created a few more. With each one, new ideas would come to light, based on the one before, and soon they evolved to look like the paintings in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 2



Figure 3



When I got the hang of this new technique and was feeling confident with the new style, I ventured out into larger paintings.

Figure 5 evolved from the earlier mandalas.

Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6 (on the next page) was based on floral mandalas (and the fact that it was autumn).

So, you can see, if you hadn't been following along with the process, the ideas for the last two paintings may seem as though an idea just popped into my head one day.

Figure 6



Losing Your Fear of Failure

Fear of failure can be the biggest stumbling block for an artist. When you can learn to accept that it's okay for an artwork to occasionally not live up to your expectations and that nothing bad will happen when it doesn't, you can begin to let go of the limitations you put on yourself.

When you set the bar so high that every work you create must be perfect, it creates a huge demand and puts high stress on *you* to be perfect. This is impossible!

Nobody's perfect, and yet, we are all perfect exactly the way we are; otherwise, if we were any different, we'd be somebody else!

Give yourself permission to fail once in a while. Really! If you allow yourself to fail, it not only takes away the pressure, it allows your mind to relax so that you are receptive to fresh, new ideas. When you are stressed, it becomes very difficult to think clearly or creatively. If you find yourself worried about how a painting or drawing is going to turn out, ask yourself "What's the worst that can happen?". Recognize what it is that you are afraid of, accept it, and boldly go forward!

Figure 7 is an example of the type of art I was making before I fearlessly embarked on this new direction. I find the possibilities of where this new style will go exciting!

Figure 7



Feeding Your Creative Mind

The very first idea that sparked the series in this example, stemming from not wanting to waste paint and having seen a video of another artist's work that intrigued me, launched my work in a whole new direction. However, in order for me to *think* about using dots of paint on my canvas, it was necessary for me to be open to new stimuli.

Developing an attitude of awareness and a willingness to see and experience new things is essential for a creative mind. The minute you say to yourself “No, that won’t work.”, you close the door for other ideas to come. If I had said to myself at the beginning of this process “No, this oil paint isn’t making nice dots like that other artist made. I’ll do something else instead.”, I believe I never would have continued on to produce the type of art I do today – work that brings me great joy and satisfaction as I watch it continue to evolve.

My favorite question to ask myself is “What if?”. Asking this question always opens the doors of possibilities. What if I use gold instead of blue? What if I use paint pens instead of brushes? What if I use circles and create a great big mandala with these paint pens? What if? Having an open mind (and eyes and ears) allows you to be more receptive when good ideas come along, and that can be just about anywhere, anytime.

Suggestions to Grow your Inspiration

One of the best ways to grow your inspiration, especially if you are new at this, is to put yourself in creative places. That can mean many different things. I was fortunate, during my university days, to have professors that made a point of introducing us to all sorts of experiences and art forms – usually followed by discussion and a project.

These experiences ranged from visiting new exhibits and installations, and seeing movies with brilliant cinematography, to viewing homemade, religious shrines along the roadside. We were encouraged to take classes outside our chosen disciplines. Once, we were even given a project to try painting or drawing in a style by an artist we didn’t like (that was interesting).

Following is a list of places, spaces and ideas where you can allow your amazing brain to spark some wonderful new ideas of your own.

1. Make a point of visiting art galleries and exhibitions regularly.

Seeing other artists’ work can serve as a springboard for new ideas and open your mind to things you may never have thought of before. If you are not close to any galleries, there are loads of online galleries on the internet. Check out online galleries in different countries.

2. Join an art group or form one of your own.

Getting together with other artists is a great way to discover new ways of thinking and doing things; sparking ideas and inspiration for future projects.

3. Take a course in something you’ve never done before.

Learning new things always helps to open your mind to new possibilities. For example, if your main discipline is landscape oil painting, take a course in something completely different, like abstract photography, or pottery, or social anthropology (... yes, I did).

4. Go somewhere you’ve never been before.

This can be as varied as vacationing in another country or walking into a local store that you’ve never had occasion to visit, just to experience the discovery of something new.

5. Go somewhere you've been before with the intention of looking for creative ideas.

For example, I love going to home decorating stores and looking at the displays. Interior design is a form of art, too, and sometimes a combination of colors or fabric design can set my creative mind in high gear.

6. Challenge yourself by using a new medium.

If you primarily work with pencils, try watercolor, or collage, or photography. Or if you mostly work with paint, try something like tissue paper collage, or colored sand, or even painting with coffee!

7. Choose subject matter that you haven't studied before.

For example, if you usually paint landscapes, try painting plastic bags, or children, or junk food, or construction cranes, or... you get the idea.

8. Randomly open a book and read a sentence or phrase and create an artwork about that.

Portraying an idea rather than an object or landscape can be an interesting and challenging exercise. It opens your mind to thinking in new ways and discourages you from reverting to your habitual way of thinking. Try drawing music!

9. Choose a different style.

Challenge yourself to work in a style you've never tried before. If you are an abstract painter, try a figurative piece or a portrait. If you work in a detailed manner, try a loose style, like impressionism.



Challenges!

1. Think of a time you had an idea because something else completely different and unrelated sparked your imagination.
2. Look up a famous artist and see if you can find how many styles or phases the artist went through in his/her lifetime.
3. Search the internet for three artists, whose art you've never seen before, that work in a style you find interesting.
4. Come up with five different things you can do to challenge your creative thinking. Do one of them.
5. Choose one of the nine suggestions on Pages 5 and 6 to help you grow your inspiration and do it this month.

To learn more about the artist's work, visit:

www.CailinGreen.com
Facebook: Cailin Green Artist

To learn about the artist's music, visit:
www.CampbellAndGreen.ca
www.YouTube.com, Campbell + Green channel

