

A photograph of a flowering bush with yellow flowers against a blue sky and a sandy ground. The bush is in the foreground, with its branches and leaves extending across the frame. The flowers are bright yellow and appear to be in full bloom. The background shows a clear blue sky and a sandy area, possibly a beach or a park. The overall mood is bright and sunny.

comeback

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style
style

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HOW YOU DO THINGS SETS YOU APART

Style isn't just how you pair the clothes you wear. It's your individual way of doing things, your voice that underlies all that you do. And when you're seeking opportunities, that style is what makes you stand out and guide your actions. Ultimately, your style is what makes you the perfect fit for the task, no matter what that is.

But, how do you really discover your style? And once you've found it, how do you refine it? Make it shine through your work? In this issue, we attempt to answer these questions with stories of finding your style, making it a part of your career, and not letting the world damper the style that sets you apart.

This is Issue 7.

- Iris

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CURRENT INSPIRATION

Rattlesnake Ledge. In any mountainous view (especially in our lovely state of Washington), you'll find layers upon layers of landscape and skyline. The green forests spillover across the horizon, an infinite distance that could easily be lost in. It's a grand reminder that there are beautiful places in this world, and the busy bustling lives we live are just a small part of what we could do.





The Transition from Proficiency to Passion





*by Margaret
Lipsey*



HOLIDAYS IN BLUE | 2016 | 20X24 | ACRYLIC ON PAPER

I kind of fell into becoming a chef, partly because I was good at cooking, partly due to a romanticized vision of cooking while listening to jazz, and partly because I couldn't think of what else to do. I was a good student and excelled, if I felt so inclined as to actually commit myself to learning, but I wasn't really drawn to any particular subject so I spent my learning years dabbling. After graduating university, I decided to head off to culinary school in Vermont. The program was amazing and intense and I came out of school a confident and competent chef. I spent the next 15 years in that profession. People loved my work. I was really good at it. I didn't mind the crazy long hours or working holidays and weekends. I was good under pressure. I could focus on the larger picture and the details of an event. And yet....something big was missing. I would spend New Year's Eve lamenting my choices. Wondering, very melodramatically, what I was doing with my life. I didn't

try and grow my business. I got to the point near the end where I refused more jobs than I took. And then one day, I was done. I couldn't continue any longer. I stopped.

Up to that point, I had had very little time for any sort of real hobby. My creative outlet was my work and it was usually confined to the limits of the event or the client. I did dabble with various things, painting, poetry, sewing, knitting, etc. but nothing stuck longer than a few months and then I would get caught up in work again. After I stopped cooking, I really didn't do anything for about a year. I continued to work part time at a cooking store, which I'd been doing for a couple years. I spent time with my family and I waited.

The year I turned forty was monumental. In March, I decided I would try and teach myself calligraphy, I wasn't getting any younger and I had always wanted to learn. The wonderful thing about calligraphy is it takes very little space, you can practice for 10 minutes or an hour, and if you a persistent you see improvement. I spent all of April practicing a little bit every day and I saw that improvement. In May, I decided to try out watercolours. I opted for brushes and paper over a trip to the spa. Then I played all that summer. I spent snippets of time making women in dresses, trying out different strokes to get different textures. It was quick and daily and a moment of quiet.

By the fall, my husband saw I needed more space. He made me a little studio in the house. Some of my acrylic paints and palette knives were there from my last attempt to have a hobby 7 years earlier. Making one of the

dresses with acrylic was a game changer. Suddenly, there was a spirit within the piece. A friend of mine from university dared me to switch from paper to canvas. She told me to buy an 18x24 and said I was ready. Not wanting to seem afraid, I bought that size and a larger canvas. The Women I painted on those canvases were my first sales. My very first sale took about 2 weeks because I tried to convince the buyer that she really didn't want my art. But she did. And then I went after a 6 foot canvas because all bets were off. I was committed to a path.

The Women opened my creative floodgates and I started playing in textures for abstract works. I had found an outlet. The work flowed and I eventually there was no other choice than to make it a full time. I didn't start painting with the intention of finding a new career. I didn't believe by that point in my life that I would know what passion was. Looking back, I can't believe it took me so long to see the path. At the same time I know that having gone the long way I am so much better prepared for the challenges of this career. The life I lived before becoming an artist gave me confidence in my perspective and in my voice. I learned so many skills that directly affect how I do business as an artist.

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CATCHING WAVES | 2016 | 24X36 | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS



ERIN McCLURE

How I Found My Voice and Restarted My Career

Since a young age, writing has been my go-to coping mechanism. When I was frustrated with my two younger sisters' insubordinate behavior (they refused to stick to the script for the specific Wizard of Oz characters I had assigned them—Toto and a flying monkey), I unloaded my grievances in my upholstered, floral-patterned journal, venting for pages and pages in a wide, unhinged scrawl. When I was in fifth grade, I was homeschooled and had very few friends. I created an alternate universe in my black and white marble-covered composition book where I went to a ritzy private school, was the popular girl in a large group of friends, and had a killer Saved by the Bell-esque wardrobe (think midriff-baring tops, acid-washed jeans, and white Reebok hi-tops).

Even though I still have a habit of re-treating into my writing, I like to think it's for less bizarre purposes. After all, writing helped me uncover my voice and restart my career.

When I attended the University of Georgia, I had high hopes of graduating with a degree from its esteemed Grady School of Journalism. I'd wanted to work in advertising since a seventh grade teacher (an actual teacher, not a fictional one that lived in my journal) told me I should go into marketing.

"You're strategic, and very perceptive. You also know how to use color and design very well," my teacher said.

"I think you should be a writer," my mother said.

#1

Listen when people you trust tell you what your natural skills are.

A career in marketing made sense to me. Until I received my rejection letter from Grady, and had to improvise. I decided to promote my French minor to a major, hoping I could parlay it into some sort of international business job. I liked to travel. “I am NOT going to be a teacher, though,” I told anyone who asked.

After graduating in 2005, I spent a year flubbing interviews and getting passed over for corporate jobs due to my “lack of experience.” In the fall 2006, I finally landed my first real job. As a French teacher, I taught middle school French for six years before my husband took a new job in Idaho and we moved across the country.

After we moved, I tried to restart my career. I Googled every advertising and marketing agency in town and spent hours crafting specialized cover letters and altering my resume to include different companies’ objectives. Only one agency agreed to meet me, but I was ecstatic and immediately went out to buy a new outfit for the meeting at a chic boutique downtown. When the agency’s CEO said they’d be interested in having me do some copywriting for them, I was elated, and even bought champagne on the way home. When my husband asked what the champagne was for, I told him I’d gotten a marketing job.

“That’s amazing! What happened?”

When I elaborated on the details and told him the whole story, his face changed. “It doesn’t really sound like you got a job...”

He was right. I never heard from that agency again.

#2

Be confident, just not overly confident.

A few weeks later, a friend told me that a receptionist position was available at the local Chamber of Commerce. Admittedly, answering phones for a low hourly wage was not where I wanted to start out, but I hoped to work my way up into a salaried position over time.

After working at the Chamber for over a year, I started to feel like my wheels were spinning again. I had yet to be promoted when the marketing director asked me to help write posts for the Chamber’s blog, I agreed. The blog added an interesting distraction to my somewhat mundane workdays, and I enjoyed working on it. My blog posts (and the Christmas card I had distributed to staff members) got the attention of a director of the Boise Valley Economic Partnership (an affiliate company of the Chamber), and he hired me to write a feature article for their website and newsletter.

#3

Remember the people that took a chance to help you, and remember to do the same for others.

I spent a month writing my first article for BVEP. Since I was an hourly employee, I wasn't permitted to take work home, so I had to write it at my desk between answering phone calls and welcoming visitors. I conducted interviews and did library research on my lunch hour. I poured my energy into writing that article because someone was finally taking a chance on me and I didn't want to be a disappointment. When it was published, I shared it on social media, emailed links to family members, friends, and former co-workers. Entitled "Boise Foothills: A Backyard, Not Just A Backdrop", it's still one of BVEP's most-read feature articles to date (even if half of those views were my mom).

#4

Don't be shy about promoting your work if it demonstrates your capabilities.

Three months, two feature articles, and one newspaper guest opinion column later, I decided to leave my job at the Chamber of Commerce and pursue a job using more of my

talents. I worked as a freelance writer for a few months, contributing stories for local NPR and writing copy for businesses' advertising campaigns. I started listening to podcasts for tips on growing a business, and took certification courses to learn more about social media management and content strategy. I joined a business mentorship group and adopted strategies to help me communicate and implement my skills more effectively.

#5

Take time to sharpen your skills — there's always room for improvement.

This past fall, I filed paperwork to officially list my business, EM Dash Creative Media, as a Limited Liability Company. I joined the Chamber of Commerce as a member, and went from going months without projects to having a client wait list. I've definitely had missteps, and I've learned from them. Not every day goes smoothly, and not every project is trouble-shoot-free. The digital marketing landscape changes every day, but I'm quick to adapt. For the first time, I'm happy in my professional life because I found my voice, and I'm getting to use it.

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blakey

MAKING IT WORK

**part of an
interview series by
Bea Helman**

When I was twelve, and then fifteen, and then seventeen, I dreamed of working in magazines. I would read them after school, rip out the pages, imagine what it would be like, to walk down the halls with my arms full of a new spring issue, to sit at my desk with a jar of pens and a fresh pad sitting there on my desk, embossed with my name. I did eventually end up in magazines, but in a way I could never have imagined; a small me could never have believed that working for a giant publication company would ever be anything but supremely fulfilling. I've always been fascinated in the ways that other people go about their dreams, the ways that they deal with stress and the constant balancing of life and work. Blakey is the kind of magical person that manages to brew kombucha on a windowsill and put together a presentation, and then wake up the next day and commute to coffee with a friend before plotting out her next creative venture. She is, in other words, the exact kind of person that I wanted to be, when I was just starting college. I got picked her brain and got inside her head to figure out how she makes it all work, what she sees ahead and how she sees it happening

1. Name! Age! Hometown! Occupation!

Blakey Bessire. 19. Portland, Maine.
Student!

2. Preferred creative medium(s)?

I like to paint with gouache and water-color and I take lots of photos!

3. What are some of your creative and academic goals?

For the summer, my goal is to read a ton. Not just like a bit, but a lot. I'm always happier when I'm reading. Right now I'm working on Simon Reynolds, Shock and Awe and In Search of Lost Time, the Proust tomb. I find that when I'm reading a lot in my life that I have more inspiration for the things that I want to make. Sometimes that comes out in essays or poems or small paintings, or a knitting pattern maybe, or a collage! Basically I want to read, which in turn, I'm hoping, leads to a ton of creating.

4. How do you like to learn?

I was homeschooled for middle school and high school, which gave me a ton of out of classroom time. I love learning and digging into new information and material and that sometimes doesn't totally fit into a classroom. However, college has been really fun because it became in some way a perfect balance of engaging lecture and outside research. I love research.

5. Do you have any strategies when it comes to getting something that you want?

I'm a big fan of just seeing what happens. Trying not to second-guess yourself and putting your whole self in always leads to something to be proud of. However, that also can correlate to creative burn out really quickly. I feel like there is a balance between how much you need to give to what you make and how much you keep for yourself - i think figuring out the coordination between the two would be really helpful for me. In terms of getting what I want, I'm a pretty persistent emailer which I'm still not sure is a good thing or a bad thing. But it never hurts to shoot high because you never know if someone will like that super weird photo shoot you did until they find it while sitting through their emails. I feel like I always have a list of the safe bets, and the reaches and I always try the reaches first.

6. What are some of the biggest obstacles in this process?

With creative output, things become hard to control. At least for me. Sometimes the only thing I can do is write down ideas and shoot a ton of rolls even if I'm not working on a project at the moment. But then there are the times when nothing feels quite inspiring anymore. I went through a period recently at school where I just couldn't make anything. When you are terribly overwhelmed it's really hard to push yourself to that place where you're ready to have a creative output. I'm hoping next year I can work on some ways to really help myself not burn out creatively -- maybe setting aside more time in my day to just sit and think, or procrastinating less...





7. When you want to be productive, what's your process?

-Having my *space* all nice and cozy. I like to be surrounded by my things; I guess it makes me feel safer.

-Having been properly proteined because I favor drawing over hypoglycemia.

-Having my fave pens, brushes, etc. all ready so I don't have to go rummage through drawers to find everything.

-I always have different folders on my computer of inspiration images; right now it's a lot of images from Agnes Varda's *Uncle Yanco*, some Tomatsu Shomei photographs, and some screenshots of portraits of the Court of Versailles.

8. When are you most productive?

I always get sleepy mid afternoon so often the morning is better for me. But sometimes I go through nighttime phases where I work well in the dark. I think the summer is going to be a lot easier as a time and space to work in because it feels so expansive compared to a really long school year.

9. What do you do when you're stressed?

Face mask and tv are important components of the distress repertoire. Hugging my mom is also something that helps. Having a night of laziness, or even a day of laziness can really hit the reset button sometimes.





good song (Kate Shilonosova is amazing and I love her).

13. How do you stay organized?

Lots of lists!! Small lists and big lists and lists in different books and on sticky notes and on computers.

14. How do you try to balance creative work with the desire to hang out with people or your family, or watch tv?

I think I have a pretty good balance going right now. My boyfriend is living with me and my family this summer, so practically everyone I would want to see is always nearby! Someone is always in the kitchen, or on the lawn, or sitting listening to music - getting to always interact together makes it easier to steal away for a few hours to make some collages, or just get out some watercolors in the excitement of the kitchen where everyone always is.

10. Who are some of your favorite photographers?

I love Seydou Keita, Yasumasa Morimura, Jacques Henri Lartigue, I love the films of Agnes Varda and draw from them for a lot of inspiration, Masayoshi` Sukita's photos of David Bowie and Yellow Magic Orchestra, the cinematography of Chris Marker's films (Sans Soleil specifically right now) to name a few.

12. Do you listen to music when you work and if so what?

Yes!! I love Tatsuro Yamashita, I listen to his album Ride on Time while I work a lot. Akiko Yano's album "I'm Home" is another favorite. I've been listening to a lot of the Lemon Twigs as well as Kate NV's Kata, such a

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fiction student +
full time photographer**

DON'T LET LIFE DILUTE YOUR DREAMS



BY NICOLE WOOD

CEO + CO-FOUNDER
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Everyone has big dreams. Some bury theirs deeper than others. Deep down under a lifetime of experiences telling them their dreams aren't possible. Some days the dreamer in you might take over and think, "wouldn't it be incredible if...", but you shut it down right away before that dream can even manifest itself into a goal. You discredit it as crazy and unrealistic in an effort of self-preservation, so you're not disappointed if it does not come to fruition. You force yourself to forget about the incredible and return to the "good enough."

Henry Miller once wrote, "One of the reasons why so few of us ever act, instead of react, is because we are continually stifling our deepest impulses." He questioned, "Why are we so full of restraint? Why do we not give in all directions? Is it fear of losing

ourselves? Until we do lose ourselves there is no hope of finding ourselves." Fear is a powerful motivator. It is scary to make a change or pursue a dream. Allowing our dreamer to be heard by the world makes us vulnerable. For she is a reflection of our truest self, the one without a restraint-driven façade. When we finally let go and allow ourselves to get lost in the dream, that is when we really start to create something special.

Life often has a dilution effect on dreams. When we were younger we let the dreamer have a voice. We'd say, "I want to be president." Or "I want to be a famous artist." Or "I want to be an inventor." But societal pressures take over, and we are taught to believe that the dreamer in us is not the voice of brilliance but rather the voice of irresponsibility. And this leads us to settling for a watered down version of our vision. But what if we gave our dreamer a platform? What if we let her speak? What would our lives look like?

After years of silencing my dreamer, I decided to give her a mic. I quit my well-paying job and my upward career trajectory to start back at the bottom, building my own business from nothing more than an idea. The journey has not been easy, but it has been oh so worth it. Every day now feels like I'm adventuring around my own personal playground. Sure, sometimes I still fall and skin my knee, but I get right back up and swirl around a colorful slide with a big ole smile on my face. It's my playground. And I've built it to have all the things I want in it. I'm no longer going down

the same straight metal slide over and over again in some public park. Sure, leaving the comfort of a slide already built and a consistent ride was scary, but for me the thought of going down that same metal slide for 30 or 40 more years was even scarier.

There's a recipe for building the life you want which I tapped into to craft my ideal workday. I have to be passionate about what I'm doing. I have to read about my industry out of choice, not obligation. Because I'm so passionate about my work, I don't struggle to find motivation to work but rather struggle to keep boundaries in place for when to shut down. I have to be utilizing my unique skills, the things which make me shine, feel valued, feel accomplished. I have to work in an environment which aligns with my values. For me, I need an organizational culture which fosters innovation, demands authenticity, celebrates humor. And I have to know that more days than not, my work is directly correlated with my personal purpose, what I want my life to be about and how I want to make an impact on this world. Now that I have built a life where I am following my passion, engaging my skills, honoring my values, and living my purpose, I sleep better. I laugh more. I care more. I show up more. I'm more the person I want to be because I'm living the life I want to live. You don't need to quit your job to do this. You just need to start listening to that little voice you've told to "shh" for so long. You need to muster the courage. And then, you need to get building.

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THE JOURNEY TO HEAVEN





THE JOURNEY TO HEAVEN



Last year, in September specifically, my family and I decided to travel to one of the most beautiful places in Pakistan and, arguably, the world. We were heading to Kashmir; an area known, unfortunately, more for the age old argument of whether the land belongs to India or Pakistan than for the sights it had to offer. Thus, up to that point, anything and everything that I had heard about Kashmir revolved around the India-Pakistan politics surrounding it. That all changed as soon as we stepped in to Kashmiri territory. The places we visited held breath-taking sights and a history accompanying them that was hundreds of years old. The entire trip was a blast, save for one hurdle in the road, Urang Kel; a mountain where I went through one of the most profound experiences of my life.

My family and I visited Kel on the third day of our trip. Kel was a town at a short distance from the bottom of the Urang Kel Mountain. It was chilly out that day and the skies were cloudy which should've been a sign to not embark on an hour long hike. Unfortunately, my over-adventurous family had never been one to pay attention to such warnings. The plan they told us seemed simple enough. We would take a cable car across Kel to the bottom of the mountain from where a tour guide would receive us. The guide would then give us the appropriate gear to

make the rest of the journey to the mountain's base, a place described by locals as "Heaven on Earth". Everything was going as planned at first. Sure, the cable car made all sorts of whirring noises and constantly seemed like it was going to snap right off of the cable, squashing us like pancakes but that was part of the deal. We knew we were in for an adventure.

What we were not prepared for was how steep the hike was. There was no walking path and no marked out trails that we could follow. The guide did his best to take us up as quickly as possible but even he found the hike difficult to negotiate at times. My family, though, managed to adjust to the terrain





eventually. I did not. The fact that I was not the fittest in the family didn't help either.

I was constantly struggling to land one foot after the other while trying to retain my balance. The path was especially treacherous as it got steeper and my feet started throbbing from the effort of the climb. I had agreed to the hike because I thought it wouldn't be too difficult but somewhere along the lines of seeing my family race ahead of me, and noticing that there were barely any rest points, I realized that I didn't have it in me to make the climb. Then things got worse. It started raining. Heavily.

We were forced to stop at a resting point to wait out the rain. I was standing on a ledge, overlooking the mountain at the time. We were already half way up by then. There was no going back and because of the rain, no going forward. I remember some part of me feeling like this was the end. The ground below me was wet and the hiking stick I had with me was starting to slip in the mud. The odds of the rain stopping or us going anywhere were starting to diminish in my mind but the thing I thought of the most was my family. My parents were there. My older brother and younger siblings were with us as well. The tour guide tried to lift our moods by getting a conversation going but the only thing I



could think of was whether something would happen to us. I tried to push those thoughts out of my head but looking at my family in danger put the fear of God in me.

Fortunately, before my imagination could get any worse, the rain had started clearing up a little and the guide took that as a sign to take us the rest of the way up. As we continued the journey, there were numerous occasions where I nearly lost my balance, landed my foot the wrong way or almost lost the resolve to keep moving forward. Eventually, the tour guide, taking note of my difficulty, paired up with me. He had me put my shoulder around his neck and transfer a lot of my weight on to him, almost carrying me the rest of the way up. I was so embarrassed and frustrated at the time. I felt completely powerless, so unable to help myself or my loved ones. On top of that, the guide having to carry me meant that I was putting his life in danger as well. He may have had experience with the land but even he was prone to error. It was all my fault, I thought. I agreed to a hike I wasn't physically fit enough or prepared for. By agreeing to go on it anyway, I had let my family and myself down. I had failed everyone. However, almost immediately after I had these thoughts, they melted away from my mind. We had finally reached our destination.

Urang Kel was absolutely stunning. It had a sort of magical aura around it. I had never seen anything quite like it before. The place was almost dream like. It seemed too good to be true, too beautiful to exist. And yet, there it was. Flanked by mountains on all sides, carrying tall pine trees, surrounded by flowers of a multitude of colors, and covered with grass of a variety of green shades, I understood what the locals saw in Urang Kel. The best that nature had to offer was staring at me in the face.

The journey to Heaven was grueling. It not only required physical strength but also needed me to be mentally strong. While I thought I had failed to show these qualities, I had actually done things that I did not know I was capable of. Despite having a flurry of fearful thoughts, I ultimately managed to overcome my fears long enough to finish the hike. I also managed to accomplish one of the most demanding tasks that I've ever had to do, and with a body that was so unfit it had started aching ten minutes in to the journey. In doing so, I, along with my family, overcame obstacles of every kind. The most important aspect of the experience, though, was not what I had done but what I have learned upon reflection. The Urang Kel hike had its ups and downs. There were instances where the journey got tough. There were times when I was truly fearful for





my safety and that of everyone around me. Someone was always there to help me out of those times and to support me for which I am eternally grateful. The experience showed me how similar the hike and life were. The journey was almost like a dry run for life itself. Life would have its ups and downs; good times interspersed with bad ones. Urang Kel gave me a taste of how to handle those times and respond to situations where things don't always go my way. It taught me that help in the face of difficulty should not be considered as a sign of weakness but one of strength because accepting that you are fallible and will need to rely on those close to you from time to time requires more courage than trying to face your hurdles alone. Most importantly, it also taught me to not constantly blame myself for the hardships of life; that such negative thoughts could only ever do harm, not good. All of these lessons were ones that I had heard growing up but had never experienced firsthand, that is, until Urang Kel. The hike has shown me how to live. It has taught me that if you work hard enough, have the right mix of people around you, and push yourself through even the toughest of times, the reward is there for the taking and it's as beautiful as you imagined it was going to be.

BY TALHA A. KHAWAJA

a little advice





Style, or the way you do your work, is uniquely your own. In your personal journey of discovering and refining, there will be successes and failures that line the path and create forks in the road. Every time you do your work, show your style, let your ideas shine, you run the risk of losing an opportunity or not fitting the audience your working for. When that happens, take note of what and why that occurred. But never let those setbacks bring doubt to your style. Continue on your personal exploration of what makes your work yours and make sure you are searching for a genuine voice within yourself, not what others want or what may be looking for. Once you have your style, you can find opportunities that fit you, rather than fitting yourself for an opportunity.



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