

On finding ideas

Andi Osho

Asking a creative where their ideas come from is a strange question because, in truth, ideas are everywhere. The world is so rich with inspiration that for many artists the trouble is not sourcing ideas but stemming the stream; the dilemma is not what to create but how to transform those ideas into work they are proud of.

At the start of a project, I frequently procrastinate, fearful an idea, 'perfect' in my mind's eye, will be ruined once I attempt to commit it to paper. In the end, however, I know the only way out is through, and that means splurging my creation onto the page in all its gloopy, badly worded bloatedness.

What first appears is horrible – a sure-fire indication I am the talentless imposter I suspect myself to be. Sound familiar? Sometimes, as creatives, we are so horrified by the monstrosity we've spewed forth, it causes our creative machinery to grind to a halt. We become fixated on the outcome before it even exists, our critical mind overriding our creative one. Collapsing these two spaces into one, we get stuck – the writer, blocked. Our critical mind impedes what wants to flow, goading us with paralysing thoughts like, 'I don't know how to write this', 'I'm not good enough', 'that story's already been told' – and before we know it, we've talked ourselves out of a great moment of creativity.

To do true service to our ideas, we need to disentangle the process of generating from that of refining. We must create, allowing our creations to flow uncensored. And trust that when we do engage the critical, analytic mind, it will serve us, assisting in turning our mass of unbridled inspiration

into that exceptional creation we first imagined.

In Elizabeth Gilbert's book, *Big Magic*, she describes ideas as entities seeking a home – in us. She cites example after example of artists who experience ideas as forces of nature gathering around them in the hope they can be birthed into being. As a stand-up comedian, I was hotly pursued by jokes, pestering me until I found my notebook and jotted them down. These often formed my best routines. And conversely, when I stopped performing stand-up, I noticed the jokes stopped coming, too. They knew, in me, there was no longer a place they could call home.

So, as writers and indeed creatives, our job is not to have ideas or even find them but to get ourselves out of the way sufficiently that they might flow through us. And this means turning off, for a moment, that critical chatter. The truth is, once we make ourselves available, we'll be inundated and maybe even wish for these flashes of inspiration to leave us be so we can get on with our work! A true creative dies with many ideas inside them. But don't be disheartened by that thought. When we walk on a beach, we don't become sad because we didn't touch every grain of sand, we simply enjoy the places where our feet made contact.

Andi Osho

As an award-winning comedian, Andi has featured on *Live At the Apollo*, *Mock The Week*, *Room 101*, *The Late, Late Show* and more and created and toured three sell-out Edinburgh shows. As an actor, her credits include *I May Destroy You* (BBC/HBO), *Line of Duty* (BBC), *Death in Paradise* (BBC), *Curfew* (Sky), *Kiri* (Channel 4), *Uncle* (BBC), *Psychoville* (BBC) and *Holby City* (BBC) and feature films *Shazam!* (Warner Bros), *Lights Out* (New Line) and *Swinging With The Finkels* (Kintop Pictures).

Andi has also written and starred in her own E4 sketch pilot, *The Andi O*

Show, Sky comedy short, *Twin Thing* and produced and performed content for numerous shows across TV and radio including *Tonightly* (Channel 4), *The Now Show* (BBC R4) and *Hot Gossip* (BBC R2). She has written for FOX US, BBC Comedy, BBC R4 and BBC R4Xtra. Andi's shorts have screened at film festivals around the world. Her debut novel, *Asking For A Friend* (HarperCollins) will be published in Feb 2021.

Andi is also a regular blogger and will soon launch her new podcast, *Creative Sauce with Andi Osho* in which she discusses all aspects of the creative process and shares advice from industry professionals on topics such as criticism, success, mental health, failure and authenticity.

A recording of this talk can be found on the WritersMosaic website at

writersmosaic.org.uk

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