

10 Taking it Public – when you are no longer satisfied keeping your ideas in a vacuum... or locked in your room.

Rudolf Nureyev, the first great male ballet dancer to defect from Russia to the USA back in the 60s, was asked once how to become a successful artist... to which he replied as follows: “To be come successful you need three things: luck, talent, and drive. And if you have any two of those, you MIGHT be successful.”

I think he nailed it. “Might” is a very big and important word here; and so is the implication that you don’t necessarily need any one of those if you have the other two. Perhaps that explains why some artists you might consider talentless have been able to make a living from their work. It’s not a competition, except perhaps with yourself. You do not need to worry about what others are doing, unless it helps motivate you to make your own. If it gets in your way, stop letting it in and focus instead on you and the constructive ways in which you can help your own cause.

You are about to release something you’ve made out into the world and of course you want it to succeed. You may even have hopes that it will bring you some success. I personally think it is good to have that type of aspiration in the back of your mind because it tastes of optimism, hope and confidence. Will that happen? We cannot control the myriad factors involved. We can only try.

Put it out there. Run your checklist of the other factors you need to have taken into account: have you done your due diligence for your work by examining it from all the angles? And do you know why you are doing this? Great, you are in fine shape to confidently release it into the world. I hope it brings you satisfaction, and perhaps even some financial gain. But if you are doing it to express something about life... and doing it generously. you will find it rewarding.

Rembrandt Van Rijn is a famous painter who died poor. I do not think he wanted to die poor, but he did. In his later years he amassed a large cache of self-portraits that reflected his take on his own life. They became increasingly more dark through the years, as in use of darker and darker colors and revealing less and less of his face, the majority being in shadow. The reason he painted so many self-portraits late in life was his lack of money for a model. The power of these great works, as individual pieces and as a whole history of his later years, is applauded; and he is revered for his artistry and skill. Had he not been penniless, his work would probably have been different, although equally probably still worthy of master status. He would have had the money for a model, and might have been a little lighter of spirit, which would certainly have informed his work.

Rembrandt continued to make work no matter his financial situation. And he left the world a gift of his great work. If Woody Allen is correct about “90% of life is just showing up” the same holds true for the work we make: It gets done if - and only if - you do it.

Make your creative work, be thoughtful and thorough, run your checklist, and go blow someone’s mind. The mind you blow might be your own!