

**4 Why make anything?** – you have something to say, so... now let's start before you begin, and find out what it *really* is about

Ask most artists about their next work and they'll tell you what they plan on doing next. Ask why waste someone's time with their work, and they might take offense. But I contend that if one doesn't know why it is important to make anything at all, one runs the risk of truly wasting someone else's time. People are going to take precious time out of their lives to read your book, watch your play, visit your exhibition and perhaps even pay to do it, which includes an entrance fee and maybe dinner out and a babysitter. I further contend that it is mandatory that we respect our audience members by knowing why we are making things at the most basic level.

Your play should be stronger than the words on the page. If it isn't, you would be kinder to your viewers to thank them for having come, hand them a copy of the play and send them home to read it when they have time. If you want to insure they can trust you – and that is what is behind their hopes when coming to see your show, a desire to trust their precious time to your quality presentation – you will have done your due diligence in assembling your presentation, which starts with knowing what motivates you to want to make work in the first place.

And it better not be something like, “because it feels good” because that is a selfish motivation and not at all generous. If you're on stage or getting published because you want recognition, you'd be better off in therapy to figure out those issues and use your public art to communicate something less solipsistic.

I'm not suggesting that it can't be fun. This is the stuff that comes before the work. It is the hard work. And the hard work doesn't have to draw blood, because there is a lot of fun in working hard at important concepts. The hard mental work resembles the hard physical work of training in a discipline by rewarding the individual with the satisfaction that comes from investigating something to very deep levels. Most spiders rebuild their webs every day; and the reward is (hopefully) their next meal.

This is soul food. Anything short of this is a waste of your time, and a waste of the time of the people taking in your work.

To make this point in another way, I'd like to quote a saint of the Catholic Church and use her words, slightly altered, to apply to these issues. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux said, “To pick up a pin for love can convert a soul.” She's talking about intention behind a mission. In our case we can apply this as follows: this work doesn't have to be large, nor does it have to have some significance others might recognize as substantial, but it does indeed need to come from the right place within; and if you are doing the good work and are engaging your talents and your faculties in the name of your creative mission as you understand it.

Intention runs to the core of everything we do with our lives.