

9 Stretch - Lengthen and strengthen every muscle (brain, too!)

The world's fastest animal, the cheetah, is sleek and lean and limber. Rocketing as it can, from 0 to 60 mph (100 kph) can only happen if the muscles tense quickly to get it going, but then relax and lay out very long as it streamlines its form through the long jumping strides. If it were too bulky and /or not limber, its muscles would cramp or get injured if it tried to go too fast. It wouldn't be able to streamline itself through the air, which would also lend to slower speeds. Our compromised cheetah might then be incapable of catching its preferred prey and it would come to rely on a different diet. It might gradually starve if adaptation were too slow.

The great weightlifters of the world know that lifting exhausts muscles and must be complemented by stretching those same muscle groups. So, like the ballet dancers who keep their muscles long and strong in order to propel their bodies through space quickly and with the illusion of effortlessness (not unlike the cheetah), we too want to achieve that same effect, both while we work and in the reflection of each finished product.

Living and working creatively demands the same give and take between exercise and stretching. If you work too long in any one way, you will bulk up on a constant diet of that particular thing; concentrating on any one thing for a long period will throw the balance off; and balancing the components is the goal of a thorough examination of your creative process.

Stretch your muscles, your mind, your theories, your skills, your awareness of your medium and other mediums, your understanding of the world, your understanding of your peers and colleagues, your sense of yourself... as a person, an artist, and a citizen of spaceship Earth.

The alternative is to wither and slowly die, while adapting to a compromised life.