

gathering smoke and such.....

Walter Mosley

If you want to be an "artist" or a "maker", you have to make stuff everyday. The consistency, the monotony, the certainty, all vagaries and passions are covered by this daily occurrence. You don't go to the well once but daily. You don't skip a child's breakfast or forget to wake up in the morning. Sleep comes to you each day, and so does the muse. She comes softly and quietly, behind your left ear or in the corner of a room... Her words are whispers, her idea shifting renditions of possibilities that have not been resolved, though they have occurred and reoccurred a thousand times in your mind. She, or it, is a collection of memories not exactly your own. These reminiscences surface in dreams or out of abstract notions brought on by tastes and excitations, failures and hopes that you experience continually. These ideas have no physical form.

They are "smoky concepts" liable to disappear at the slightest disturbance. An alarm clock or ringing telephone will dispel a brief "insight": answering the call will erase any trace of revelry from the world. Our most precious ability, the knack of creation, is also our most fleeting resource... What may be fades in the world of necessity. How can I create when I have to go to work, cook my dinner, remember what I did wrong to the people who have stopped calling? And even if I do find a moment here and there - a weekend away in the mountains, say - how can I say everything I need to say before the world comes crashing back with all its sirens and shouts and television shows?... 'I have a lot of ideas inside of me', I often hear people say. "But I can't seem to get them out?"

The answer is, always is, everyday.

The dream of any artist is a fickle and amorphous thing... you make a few notations in your sketch book and sigh. This exhalation is not exhaustion but anticipation at the prospect of an image exposing a notion you still only partly understand.... if you leave this idea now and come back to it later you may find that the life has drained out of it.... you no longer can conjure the "smell".

The idea itself seems bereft of feelings... it is weak.. and dissipated... like smoke.

This is the first important lesson to be learned as an artist.

Making work is like gathering smoke. ...It is an excursion into the ether of ideas.... There's no time to waste.... The next day you return there wont be much except some flimsy vapours or some dampness on the ground. At times you have to breathe life back into them and gather them up again....It doesn't matter what time of day you work, but you have to work everyday because creation - like life - it is always slipping away from you. You've gotta do it everyday...(although it doesn't really matter for how long)...All that you need to do it is to keep your mind and your heart open to "the work"

Nothing that we create is "Art" at first. It is simply a collection of notions that may never be understood. Reality fights against your dreams, it tries to deny creation and change. The world wants you to be someone with solid ideas, not someone blowing smoke.

Give it a day and reality will begin to scatter your notions: give it two days, it will drive them off. The act of making is a kind of guerrilla warfare: there is no vacation, there is no leave, no relief. There is actually very little chance of "victory".....

but the next day comes, and you pick up where you left off , in the cool shifting mists of the morning. (new day).