

What do we have here?

A doubter's manifesto.

An article of affirmation.

An artist who says: I see you.

Read these pages in order or at random.

Read them while creating a story, a dance, a sculpture, a poem, a painting, a weaving, a song...

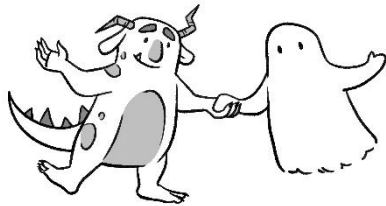
The hope is you see yourself, realize you are not alone, learn that doubt is not your assassin.

A bit of truth, a bit of courage, floats across these pages.

Some repetition too—because you need to hear this more than once. And a wisp of contradiction because...that's life. I need this as much as you.

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A young Sylvia Plath wrote in her journal that “the worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.” That sounds true, but I don't think it is true.



Her assertion implies that only by banishing doubt can you effectively be creative—to practice your art. There are moments, to be sure, when an artist in the flow of creativity (cognitive disinhibition) does not feel doubt blocking the way.

But realistically, doubt is a near-constant companion of anyone making art in any form. Doubt is fuel as well as foe.

Let us therefore not engage in fruitless attempts to banish doubt, or even conquer it. Let us seek productive co-existence with this emotional shadow that hovers nearby, just out of sight, like a ghost.

Let us befriend the ghost.

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René Descartes said, “I think, therefore I am.” Equally true: “I doubt, therefore I am.”

Doubt is to life as water is to life. We do not live without either. We do not live without a persistent undercurrent of questions, both tiny and tremendous.

Anyone who claims never to doubt—or to “suffer” from a state of doubt—is lying, either to themselves or to everyone.

Doubt is baked into the human condition and transcends culture, epoch, and geography. People all over the world,



in every time period, speak of doubt and the crises of faith it engenders.

Doubt is with us/within us/us.

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Doubting is not failing.

Doubting is not succeeding.

Doubting is not about getting ahead or falling behind; stopping or starting.

Doubting exists in that liminal space where every aspect of art-making is a shade of effort—an embryo of creation.

Doubting may feel like rocket fuel or like doom—but imagine it is neither of those.

Hold space for doubt without imposing labels.

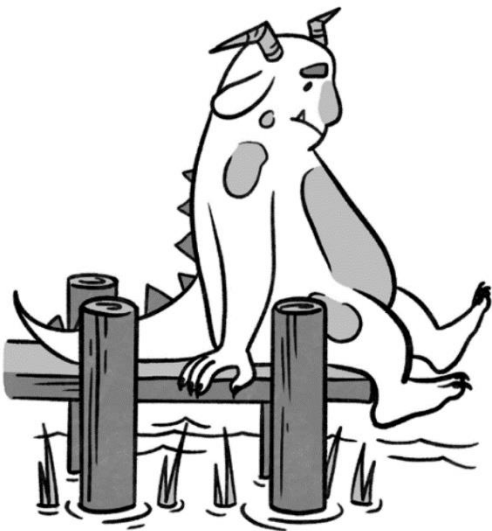
Reserve judgment: of yourself of your art-in-progress of what's in your head/hand/heart

Doubt arises during the many phases of art becoming art.

Let it be. Leave it alone.

Keep working.

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Every single act of creating is also an act of doubting.

You cannot “make” without wondering.

You cannot wonder without questioning.

You cannot question—deeply—without exposing yourself to the unknown.

Becoming exposed leads to feeling vulnerable.

Feeling vulnerable leaves you open to uncertainty.

Uncertainty is a close cousin of doubt: a state where truth and clarity shimmer like ghosts.

So much you do not know, cannot pin down.

Cannot point to and say, Yes! That!

When you create, you will doubt: Accepting that is your gift to yourself.