

HUSHING

from Fearless Creating: A Step-by-Step Guide to Starting and Completing Your Work of Art by Eric Maisel

“Hushing is what we do when we go into a museum and sit in front of one painting for fifteen minutes. Hushing is what we do when we drink in a book or a movie. Hushing is what we do when we quiet our mind so as to catch the snatch of melody or lyric that is wanting to arrive. Hushing is a quieting and an opening.

There is no creative life without this ability to hush. If you hush only infrequently, if you hush when you encounter someone else’s work but not in support of your own work, you must learn to hush more. This dreaminess, this trance state, this place of reverie is the bedrock upon which art is built. If your mind is full of noise, you must quiet it. If your mind is easily distracted, you must discipline it. If you cannot hush, you cannot create.

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To creative you must quiet your mind. You need a quiet mind so that ideas will have the chance of connecting. You are hushing your mind so that you can use your mind. But much too often our mind is on autoscan, darting from one thought, usually a negative one, to another.

HUSHING EXERCISE

You must stop your mind from operating on autoscan. Maintaining an autoscan mind is no way to live and no way to think.

Find a quiet place. If there is no quiet place in your environment, that’s your first task, to make a haven in which silence is available. Enter that quiet place affirmatively by whispering, “I am hushing.” Continue saying “hush” or “s-s-s-sh.” Gently hush your thoughts just as if you were comforting a baby.

Work to grow quiet inside. Thoughts will come, but hush them away. Work to hush your thoughts until you have no thoughts, until you are just empty and breathing. This will take some time. Don’t despair if you can’t do it easily, quickly, or even at all. Just try. Hush and hush again.

When you’re as quiet as you feel you can be, murmur to yourself, “Deeper.” Hush and wait. Feel your breathing deepen, feel yourself descending. You will want to close your eyes. Go silently into the darkness.

You are entrancing yourself. What do you see? Ideas will come to you, melodies, lyrics, images. The very darkness will acquire a tone, the very silence a music.

Something that passes by in that hushed stillness may seem especially important. That is an idea with vivacity. Hush again and hold it. Give it a chance to grow more distinct. Hold it and nurture it until you can capture it. Then write it down, draw it, play it on the piano.

Whether you have been creating for decades or are just now starting, this is an exercise to return to again and again. This is the most important single thing you can do to support your wish to create. Hush your busy mind. Go quiet. Depth will follow.