



THE
PERFECT
BAIT

BOBBY CHIU

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IMAGINISM BOOKS

The Perfect Bait

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First Edition

Dedicated to my brother Ben.

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Introduction

Consider squirrels.

Squirrels have not change in thousands of years. If we compare squirrels today to squirrels in our ancestors' times, or to squirrels of the future in the era of our grandchildren, they will generally be the same looking squirrels. Nothing has changed or will have changed. Squirrels of the future will still live in trees, still eat the same types of nuts and seeds, and have many of the same behaviors.

If we consider people or society, on the other hand, and compare our society now with society fifty, twenty or even ten years ago, we will see that life as we know it has changed quite dramatically. Buildings today look different, people look different. It's not like humans have grown a third eye or anything, but our clothes, hair and makeup have all changed noticeably. The ways in which we do things are different. We have become more open-minded, less ignorant. We're smarter and more efficient.

Everything is evolving.

This is what makes the human race amazing: we are evolving right now and all of us will notice the evolution of our species over time. The way the world is now is not the way the world will become. The way we do things now is not the best way. That's why things change; that's why society changes.

There's always a better way.

When somebody gives you instructions, those are instructions for how we did things before. However, if we are to contribute to our own evolution, we need to start thinking about WHY we do the things we do and ask ourselves, is there a better way?

Through constant re-thinking and re-evaluating, you will have a much better chance of molding your life into the life you want, and not the life that people say you should have.

My name is Bobby Chiu, and I'm an independent artist. This book is an accumulation of what I feel makes a successful, creative person.

Why did I make this book?

From an early age, I learned that the things we do and how we do them might not always be the best way. Times change and so do people, and so do the ways in which we do things.

When I was a student in art school, I had an idea of making a book. It would be about how to become a successful artist, as seen from the viewpoint of somebody who wasn't successful yet.

Over the next ten years, I wrote down all the thoughts and methods that worked for my career, so that

one day, if I ever DID become successful, I would have a “step by step” of how I did it. During this time, I’ve been very fortunate to do a lot of the things that I’ve always wanted to do, and live the way that I wanted to live.

In addition to doing art, I’ve also been lucky enough to meet some of my favorite artists, each very successful in what they do, and interview them at length. In learning their stories, I felt that it was time to put this book together.

This isn’t the only way to create success as a creative person, but it’s my way. And hopefully by telling you, you will find that this way works or you will find an even better way. Whatever the case, hope this affects you in a positive manner.

As I wrote this book and as time passed and the world started to change, so did my perceptions. And everybody that I met, everybody that I interviewed, all these successful people adjusted my thinking as well.

I have the honor of calling many of them my friends; many of them I only met face to face for the very first time recently. Either way, I made it my mission to learn about their inspiring stories and how they became successful. On top of that, how did I become successful? What were MY philosophies?

Doing art is like fishing, where the artist is the fisherman or woman, and the client and the customers are the fish. Part of becoming successful in today’s interconnected world is the ability to get the attention of the right kinds of people, essentially making the perfect bait (art) to attract the right kind of “fish”. Much of this comes from the ability to look at things from various points of view, to understand the perspective of the “fish” (your client or customer or collector) and the perspective of the “fisherman”. The ability to see things from multiple points of view will give you more than a better understanding of how to make a better lure or attract bigger fish; it will help you make better decisions in general.

How do different people do it? What do you think is the right way? What makes sense to you?

To become successful at art—or business, or sports or anything, really—you have to realize that your potential is unlimited. In fact, whether you realize it or not, the idea of POTENTIAL—what we imagine the world around us can offer and what it could be—is at the heart of why many of us became artists in the first place.

For director, Chris Sanders, this spark to become an artist was given to him by his father:

Chris Sanders: *I remember what he said. There’s a limit to what you can build but you can DRAW anything.*

Now as you’re reading or listening to this book, keep yourself open to ideas. If you approach all ideas with cynicism and skepticism, then you will find that you are absolutely right and everything that you believe will go wrong, WILL.

Cynicism and skepticism, only creates an expectation of failure, which encourages you to give up if you don’t immediately succeed (which is easy to do because, really, how often does a person succeed

on their first try at anything?). As a result, success will be extremely rare and difficult to come by.

However, if you ARE open to ideas and you DO believe, then—again—you will find that you are absolutely right and the things in this book will work largely because of the simple fact that you believe they will. Faith and belief in yourself creates an expectation of success, which encourages you to try again if you don't immediately succeed, and it's that resiliency against failure and setbacks that ultimately leads to success.

This book talks about a way of living. There are the principles that I stand behind, that I adhere to in order to create a successful life for myself as an artist. It's how I got the jobs that I always wanted without asking for them; it's how I am able to work on Hollywood movies from the comfort of my studio in Toronto, Canada.

The two main things that you need for this way of life are belief and passion. So as you hear or read these words, also listen to the meaning behind them, and not just the words themselves. Picture me telling you these words in person and really try to focus and understand. The more you absorb and think about them for yourself, if they really make sense to you, they will become things that you must do.

This book is not just a book that you read, it's something that you have to prepare for mentally. As you read this book, teach other what you've learned. Teaching is a part of learning. Through teaching once, you learn twice.

As my career as an artist grew and as I watched the careers of other artists blossom, I started to write down my thoughts and philosophies that ultimately led to a successful me.

The many well-known artists that I've met and talked to, how did they become successful? I found out and wrote those down as well.

I collected all of my research and notes over the last ten-plus years and divided the ingredients necessary for success as an artist into five major components. Each component, is just as important as the other to create a successful, creative artist that is in demand.

In the following chapters, I will go over each part and show you how I obtained these ingredients of success. I picture it as if I was talking to myself as a fresh art school graduate and giving the younger me the master plan to become successful.

The five steps are:

1. **Increase your skill:** This is a must. It is imperative that you increase your skills in order to gain more success. In this episode, I share my methods and exercises for increasing my artistic skills, how I avoid bad drawing days, and my philosophy for developing one's own personal style.
2. **Motivation:** You must be motivated, there is no compromise. Every single successful person that I have met has had an abundance of motivation that kept them going. Motivation creates persistence and persistence creates ability. What exercises can you do, what thoughts and principles can you adopt in order to unlock the motivated you?

3. **Exposure:** Every artist needs exposure. If you do not have exposure, nobody will see your work ~~nobody will see what you've done, and therefore nobody will hire you to do anything.~~ What can you do to get not just exposure but the RIGHT KIND of exposure?
4. **Attracting big clients:** How do we get to the big fish? How do we get those dream jobs?
5. **Financial security:** This is a big one. Over and over again, I've seen talent go to waste because the artist is choosing that are unappealing or boring to them. Why must they choose these jobs? Because they're not financially secure enough to be able to pick and choose, or wait for those jobs that they want. How do you get financial security as an artist?

At a point of struggle in my career, I asked one of my favorite artists, Stephen Silver, who now is one of my best friends, for some advice. I asked him if he thought I had what it took to make it as an artist. I was extremely frustrated and disheartened and didn't know where my art would take me.

Stephen talked to me for over an hour, even though we didn't even know each other, and he convinced me that I COULD become a successful artist. At the end of our conversation, I told him how much his advice meant to me, how much it changed me, and asked me what I could do to repay him.

He said, "When you come to a point in your career when you feel like you can give back, start giving back. Do this for somebody else and we'll call it even."

That really stuck with me. And that's why it has been one of my missions to help and motivate those artists out there who might not have been fortunate enough to talk with their favorite artists or somebody they admired.

So, this is for you.

And if my advice works for you—if it helps you even a little bit—I ask that you help somebody else as well. You must pass on the gift of belief and passion.

Because these are the batteries that run everything else.

Increasing Your Artistic Skill Level

A superstar athlete would not reach the pinnacle of his or her sport, sign a lucrative contract, and then stop practicing.

Likewise, artistically-speaking, improving your skill is an ongoing process; if you're committed to becoming a successful artist, you're in effect committed to constantly and consistently improving your artistic skills. This means putting in the necessary time and effort to become a faster, more accurate, and more creative artist.

Story artist Khris Pearn is one of the fastest artists I know. On the subject of speed he told me:

Khris Pearn: *Mentally, you're always trying to make good judgments... You're always trying to design good shapes. You're always trying to create good art.*

Let's suppose when you do this, you're drawing at 100% capacity. At 100% of your ability, it takes you maybe 10 minutes to do a good drawing.

Now, let's say you do 50% of your ability—by knocking back a drawing at 50% of your ability, you'll speed up by 50%. Initially, you'll draw worse for a little while. But the more you draw, the quicker your design sense will adapt and begin to catch up to that demand, the demand of drawing faster.

With practice, your ability will catch up so that you're back at 100% again but now you're drawing twice as fast as before. And then repeat—squeeze your 5-minute ability by another 50% to double your speed. Next thing you know, you're doing a drawing in two minutes, then one minute.

You draw out your quantity, and then you work, work, work, and eventually you're quality catches back up to the demand that you're making, and the time.

I've met and had the privilege to know many famous, successful artists, and one thing is apparent: there are principles involved in creating a successful artist, but there's no infallible blueprint. There are commonalities among all these artists and how they do things, but how they got to where they are—what school they went to, what books they read, what they did to increase their artistic skill—always seemed to be different. Schools are great, but artists don't always need to attend fancy, expensive colleges in order to really learn. Today, information is so widely available that people can learn by themselves more and more easily. What we need more than anything else is simply the passion and desire to better ourselves.

Here's what award-winning illustrator, Jason Seiler, has to say about his passion for art:

Jason Seiler: *You have to love what you're doing. You have to want to get up at crazy hours and just draw. There have been times when I've gone to bed and I'm super tired, and I have to get up crazy early the next day and work on a job. But halfway through the night I'll wake up and be like, "Oh my gosh, I need to get some sketching done, just for myself before I actually work on this job." So I'll go to work even earlier than planned, just to sketch. You don't need to do that*

all the time, but my point is, you've got to have that passion.

A part of finding your passion is just to get into the right frame of mind. For example, no one wants to fail, and most people hate the frustration that comes with failure. But there is actually a great reason for you to love it and enjoy it: because every road to success is paved with frustration and failure, that's how you get to success. You just have to turn your frame of mind around. Instead of thinking, "I've failed," take your setback as, "I'm on the right track."

Even someone as successful as character designer, Peter de Sève, has his failures. And when he does, he embraces them:

***Peter de Sève:** There are tons of failures. There are failures all the time, Every time I sit down to do a drawing, there's a possibility of failure. For better or worse, I never sit down with ultimate confidence that what I'm going to do is going to turn out great. But I think that's probably a healthy thing. I try not to get complacent about my work because every time I sit down, I feel like I'm on a tightrope and the piece can go up in flames.*

Along the same lines, Pixar animator Everett Downing says: "If you want to be exceptional, you have to be comfortable with being out of your comfort zone."

So the next time that you come towards an artistic challenge, don't try to avoid it—take it head on. This is one of the best ways to develop extra sets of tools with which to create your ideas.

How do we create art? How do artists paint and draw? We can think in all sorts of different ways.

For example, we can think in terms of lines: You try to draw a straight line at the same angle as a line that you see in real life, and you try to match them up. That's one way of thinking.

Another simple way of thinking is looking at something and saying "How dark is that thing? Does the part that I'm drawing right now have the same darkness as what I'm looking at?" That's another way of thinking: in terms of values.

You can look at a color and you can start thinking about hue, saturation and value—three different ways of thinking, all rolled up into one.

You can think in terms of muscles. When artists look at a person and think about the muscles underneath the skin, it helps them better describe the overall person.

And there are many, many more ways of thinking, some that are simple, many that are more complex. Relate each way of thinking to different "muscles" in your brain. How do you strengthen and grow the muscles in your body? You have to exercise them, work them out. The same goes for the "muscles" in your brain.

I remember the first time I tried to visualize a box and turn it in my head. It was extremely difficult. And I was just picturing a simple, linear box. In the beginning, it felt like I was not capable of imagining this box, visualizing it in my head and turning it in the way I wanted to.

Despite hard concentration, this went on for two or three weeks, and for much of the time it didn't seem like I was making any progress at all. It felt like trying to move a boulder: I was exerting effort

but couldn't see any results.

But eventually, things started to change and the box in my head started to turn. And once it started happening, it CONTINUED to happen, more and more easily the more I did it.

So, if you're trying hard then trust me, you're making progress. You might not see it right away, but under the surface, things are clicking into place, little by little. And once you break through, you'll be amazed at how quickly more progress follows.

Start learning to think by copying things, matching the same angles, proportions, values and colors. Like a full-body workout for your muscles, you can practice a whole bunch of different ways of thinking just by copying. Once you really learn one way of thinking; once you've become an expert on thinking in lines, switch to thinking in values and become an expert on that too. Once you're able to think in a variety of different ways, you can start to visualize.

I talk about this idea of visualization in different contexts in each of the five chapters of this book. That's because I believe visualizing is the most powerful way to think. Legendary MAD Magazine artist, Mort Drucker, says in his Schoolism video that he can visualize the whole person before he draws them.

Visualizing also happens to be one of the hardest ways in which to learn to think, so don't feel like it's just going to come overnight. Just the opposite—it's going to take a lot of hard work and dedication.

During his career at Disney, visual development artist, Marcelo Vignali, took figure drawing classes in the studio, but was unable to attend for a couple of weeks:

***Marcelo Vignali:** And something came up the next week and I missed that class too. So between having missed those two weeks, it was going to be three weeks between the times that I had drawn. So I remember thinking "Oh my goodness, I'm never going to reach my goal of being able to draw the figure and understand this thing at this rate." I mean, if I start creating lapses in attendance—even if the reasons for not going were legitimate—it's not good for learning. So I started thinking about that and I thought, "The only way that I am going to attain my goal is to be unreasonable." And I had to logically plan to be unreasonable. And I thought my Wednesday is not negotiable.*

And that was it. From then on, I continued going to the drawing classes throughout the remainder of my time at Disney. And for that one particular class, I was never negotiable.

When it comes to learning how to visualize, I would suggest first trying to visualize, simple linear things. The goal here is to construct images in your mind using lines.

Once you have a firm grasp on that, start to visualize in light—visualize how dark something is, how light something is. Even try to turn the object in your mind. After that, visualize in colors, incorporating hue and saturation, which is even more difficult.

After that, visualize in time. Think about how you would finish this painting from beginning to end. What would the sketch be? What would the drawing be? What would the underpainting be? Think about all the different steps that you would go through to complete this piece. You can practice this even without drawing or painting, so you can do it constantly. Whatever you see in the world, look at

it, and ask yourself, “How would I paint this? What would be the first step? What would be the second step? What would be the third step?” And so on and so forth.

I do this all the time. Sometimes it’s even hard to turn off! When I’m driving, I might look at the road and start to think “How would I paint this picture? What would I start with?” Maybe a gradient here, and then I’d paint the road, followed by the basic structure of the cars, and all the highlights there and so on. And before you know it, I don’t notice that I’m driving.

In addition to practicing new ways of thinking and mastering them, there are other habits and knowledge you can adopt to help you succeed.

Increase your vocabulary of descriptive words. When you increase the number of words you can use to describe the subtleties of different pieces of art, you will increase your ability to perceive them and, by extension, you will increase your ability to think more descriptively and produce art that can be described by others in many different ways.

When you draw, don’t doodle but LEARN. Doodling means that you are just spending time doing random drawings, and you are not trying to learn. Perhaps you’re trying to create something but the thing you’re creating is not challenging for you and therefore not helping you to improve. Always try to create for the purpose of learning something.

That’s the best way to increase your skill level, don’t just create for the sake of creating.

Push yourself.

Challenge yourself.

We all have a huge amount of potential talent waiting to be unlocked, but effort is the key to creating the tools that you need to release this talent. So if you are just drawing without putting forth the effort to learn, then you will learn very slowly because you will not be concentrating on building the tools you need to create complex ideas.

Have you ever had an idea in your head of a great painting? You see it very clearly and proceed to paint it down. However, by the time you’re done, it looks nothing like what you’d first envisioned. This is probably because you didn’t have the proper artistic tools and skills to create exactly what was in your head.

The muscles in your brain, the different ways to think—those are your tools for creating. And once you start strengthening these ways of thinking, you will find that you have a crane to build things with instead of a nail and a rock.

Start creating the cranes, earth-movers, and power tools of your mind, and develop your proficiency with all these tools. When you have the right tools, you will be able to create anything.

A great practice to help develop the initial tools that you need to create your own style and to make great art exactly as you intended it, is to study different artists. That’s why I created Schoolism.com.

In Schoolism, I contact the artists that I like and ask them to teach courses about the way they do what they do, explain their methods and philosophies. And then the students—including myself—would

watch the lessons and improve our skills.

Even if I know how to do something one way, it's still valuable for me to learn how other people successfully do the same thing but in their own ways. Then I can best choose which way is the most effective, which one I like most, and perhaps improve my own methods by learning from others.

Learning from others is a great habit to get into because, when you study another artist, you're leaning on the knowledge that they've already learned, except that you're doing so through their lens. So, while you wouldn't want to create a style solely out of a Frankenstein combination of a bunch of different artists, this is nevertheless a quick and efficient way of building a necessary of techniques, knowledge, and style. So, when you study an artist, by copying his or her work, try to analyze their every line, every brushstroke, and understand the rationale behind every aspect of their art. Why did they make this line or brushstroke this way instead of some other way, what does this add to the piece, what is their interpretation of the subject?

When studying other artists, it's important to diversify. A lot of the people fall into the trap of concentrating only on their favorite artist and painting and drawing the heck out of that artist's work until they become a watered down clone of the artist that they were studying. Doing this will not give your art or ideas any value; you must develop your own identity as an artist.

According to Peter de Sève, style is as personal as a fingerprint:

***Peter de Sève:** I think all the styles that we love and admire, artists whose work really turns us on, I think those people tapped into something in themselves that was really personal and meant something to them. It wasn't about what was popular then, and it wasn't them trying to figure out what would be great or what everybody would love. I think, at least for me, I've always known the kind of pictures that I liked. I think a style really comes out of a very personal place. I don't think it comes from outside of you, I don't think it's something you can target. I think you'll end up just monkeying or mimicking somebody else if you don't do something that comes from a genuine place of interest or passion within yourself.*

The best way to create your own style is to search for knowledge; with knowledge, your style will form itself.

But once you've gathered a wide enough sampling of information (as filtered by the artists you studied), where do you go to find this intangible spark of knowledge that will give life and originality to your own style?

Simply put, you go to source of art: life.

Consider that art is an interpretation of life. Therefore, it stands to reason that good artists are great at interpreting life and do so in such a way that is very appealing to their audience. So, when you're studying other artists, I say you're "sampling" because no matter how great their interpretation of life might be, it will only be an interpretation of life, which means you'll be interpreting the interpretation. Other artists can and will inform your art, but ultimately, your interpretation of life must be your own, which is why the only thing that can give your art that unique "you-ness" is your own experience and how you—not some other successful artist but YOU yourself—interpret life. If you can learn to perceive life more effectively, this would result in an immediate improvement in the

quality of your art.

As always, knowledge is the key.

Once you've built up a good set of fundamentals, developed basic tools, studied a few different artists and a few different styles, start looking at the fundamentals of life. Analyze why things are the way they are. Study life itself and start making your own tools for creating art that interpret life in your own way. Constantly look for new things to figure out.

How does grass work? How does water work? How do clouds work? What kind of different clouds are there? Become a cloud expert.

Every time we learn something new, we can't to put it into our drawings. New knowledge affects our art and, ultimately, our style.

There is a very simple driving force behind the style of Pixar art director, Dice Tsutsumi:

***Dice Tsutsumi:** When I'm creating a painting, a drawing, I wouldn't really let myself do something I don't like. So in a way, that's my style.*

The best way to create a great style is to not look for it.

Instead, look for knowledge. Whenever you learn something new, it affects your art. Learn enough things and the sum of that knowledge will create a style.

If you developed your style from life (as opposed to mimicking other artists), then you will have created a much more unique style. Life is the best designer; it is where all artists get their inspiration from. Confucius said, "Everything has beauty, but no everyone sees it."

So, find the beauty in life. Look for it in the most mundane things. Find the beauty in a light bulb, in a spoon. Get interested in it. Really look at the subtleties and think, "Why do I see that? Where is that light coming from?"

As you go on your search for knowledge, you will start to gravitate towards certain aspects of life. For example, if you've always been a fan of horror movies, perhaps you will find yourself staring at your raw steak a bit longer than usual and thinking, "What is it about this steak that makes me interpret it to be flesh?" You might be interested in skeletons a lot more than the average person. You can start learning about bones and start incorporating that into your paintings.

For me, I'm very much interested in creatures, so I do everything I can to learn more and more about how the creatures of our planet work, and that helps me to better understand and create my own worlds, my own creatures.

A great style is unique to the artist. Often, when I look at a drawing or a painting that has a really successful style, and then I meet the artist, I understand the paintings even more because there's a clear connection between the artist and the work.

For example, one of my favorite artists is Peter de Sève. His style is very charming, humorous, and effortless, so when I met him, it was no surprise to me that he is all of those things: he's a funny and

naturally charming person.

Another great example is Kei Acedera. Her art is very sweet, genuine, and appealing. And of course, so is she.

I draw creatures. Where did that come from? How does that reflect me?

When I was growing up in Toronto, Canada, and going to school in my area, there weren't very many Chinese people. I guess in a way, I felt like a creature—I was very different from everybody else.

I also have an underbite and as a child that kind of thing affects you more. In many ways, that made me feel even more like a creature. And you can see in many of my creatures, they have underbites as well.

This wasn't something that I thought about until much later on, when, while lecturing on style, I noticed these patterns in my own work. Throughout my career, I found myself gravitating towards things that looked unusual—creatures and strange animals.

And that's why I say go out and explore life. See and learn as much as you can out there, and you'll certainly find yourself gravitating towards certain topics, certain subjects and creating a style that's all your own—one that reflects you as a person, whether you know it or not.

I often see things in my paintings that reflect my life.

For example, a few years ago, my brother got rabbits. When I tried to pet them, one of them tried to bite me. After that, I subconsciously started adding rabbits into my paintings—rabbits that are about to be trapped or which look disgusting and weird.

Another way to develop your style is to limit yourself. Try restricting the mediums that you can use. For example, try working with just one green marker and one brown pencil crayon. What kind of art can you create with that?

When you limit yourself, you force yourself to be more innovative, and often, that creativity creates new style that nobody has ever seen before.

But most of all, you must draw and paint to learn, not just to create. The motivational writer, Ralph Marston, said, "Excellence is not a skill, it's an attitude."

You must have the mindset that you're on the search for knowledge, not just as style.

An important habit that really helped me create my style and increase my artistic skill is keeping a sketchbook beside my bed.

I sketch in that sketchbook first thing in the morning when I wake up. So, before I climb out of bed, before I brush my teeth, before ANYTHING, I'm sketching. I've found that when I sketch first thing in the morning, it makes it much easier for me to draw and paint throughout the day.

If I wait until the afternoon to start painting or sketching, it becomes dramatically more difficult and usually have a bad drawing day. Ever since I started sketching first thing in the morning, my bad

drawing days have all but disappeared.

Another good habit that has helped me is, before I go to sleep, I think what I'm going to draw the next day. When you have a reason to get up in the morning, it makes it that much easier to do so.

Vincent van Gogh once said, "I dream of painting and then I paint my dreams."

You don't always have to draw in order to practice drawing. Practice with your eyes and brain when you have no paper. This is another great habit to have. Remember, one of the most powerful ways to think in life is to visualize.

Here's one last piece of advice from Marcelo Vignali

Marcelo Vignali: *Relax. Take your time. Be patient. These things don't come overnight. If, let's say, you wanted to be a good artist and I had the power to bestow that upon you and just boom, that's it. You've got it. What joy would that be? Within a couple of years, you'd get bored with it and move on.*

No, what keeps us engaged in art is that it is so elusive, that it's intangible.

You could be drawing well on one particular thing and then as years go by it develops into something else. Then you look back at your older work and say, "Wow that was wonderful what I was doing back then. Why didn't I keep that up? Yes I learned this but I already started forgetting this, I have to take some of this and incorporate it back over here..."

The whole process is fun. I would just remind people that the reason we do art is because it is fun. So be patient because the journey is, I think, more fun than the destination. And I think that the journey... It's good to have a destination as a goal, but really, the journey is the goal. That is the danger if we rush by it too quickly: we don't really appreciate what a wonderful time we were actually having as we were learning.

Freeing The Motivated You

Motivating yourself is a battle.

On the one side is the Primitive You that seeks instant gratification. On the other side is the Evolved You that knows you need to work now in order to receive greater rewards later on. The Primitive You will distract you from your ultimate goals, and if you don't fight back and really tame and conquer it, the Primitive You will tame and conquer YOU.

This is a constant, internal war that is happening whether we like it or not. So we must fight back and conquer our primitive selves if we want to achieve great things.

The primitive parts of us are scared of things we shouldn't be scared of. Take public speaking for example: there is usually no threat of mortal danger when speaking in front of a crowd, so there's no logical reason to be afraid. And yet, that is one of the most common fear among all people.

Sometimes people are so afraid of failure that they don't even want to try. This is completely irrational, but nevertheless I get these kinds of e-mails all the time: "Well, what if I put all my effort and I don't get to my goal? Then I would be so disappointed, I would get into a huge depression and my whole life would be over."

So in this chapter, I want to share with you my methods and philosophies on how I conquered my fear and became motivated. These are the things I wrote down and practiced as a student—not even having begun my career yet—and they have led me to where I am today.

These are the things I chose to believe in, and if you believe in them too, you're destined for success. But you must believe fully.

The first thing is, success is determined by effort and improvement, and not by whether or not you achieved that thing that you were after. For example, if you entered an art contest, success is not determined by whether or not you win the contest but by whether or not you squeezed every ounce of effort out of your abilities.

It may sound trite, but it's true. We have to get out of this frame of mind that success is only measured in terms of material rewards.

Success is determined by whether or not you put forth 100% effort, and if you're painting or creating to improve. Don't occupy yourself with competing against others. We're all on our own journeys; if you want to compete with someone, compete with yourself.

Think of it this way: if you're among a group of people who are just trying to break into the industry, it wouldn't make sense to compete with them because winning will only give you a false sense of security; you might think that you're so great for being the best among your group, but you would

forget that you aspire for much greater things than that group has accomplished, so it's really a hollow victory.

However, if you only compete with yourself, your success will only guarantee constant and continued improvement. Your potential would then be endless. So always compare yourself to yourself and nobody else. Measure your success in terms of your personal growth and the growth of your work. Open your eyes and learn about what everybody is doing but remember, we are all on our own paths.

Thinking like this, allows you to control whether or not you've succeeded. The famous, award-winning character, Hellboy, was created by artist, Mike Mignola, out of his love for his art and desire to create something for himself:

Mike Mignola: *I briefly courted the idea of trying to do a commercial comic—like my version of Batman—but I figured I wouldn't have any fun doing it. I'd spend a year doing it and nobody would buy it and I would have wasted my time. So, why don't I take a shot at doing exactly what I want? So if it doesn't work—and believe me I didn't think it would work!—but even if it doesn't work then I have something on the shelf someday, after years of crawling on my hands and knees to the comic business begging for work and doing work I hate, at least I have one thing on my shelf that I would say, "Gee, once when I was relatively young, I drew that kind of book that I wanted draw."*

Today, Hellboy is the superstar of numerous comic books, a series of novels, two animated films, two feature films, and a line of toys. There are few independent artists that have done what Mike has done so he has had few people to compete with. Instead, he competes with himself, and that allows him to continue to push his art and characters to greater and greater heights.

If I'm working on a project and there's over \$100 million in the budget, and much of the movie is visual and I have to design the characters, I do not determine my success by whether or not this movie wins an Academy Award or breaks blockbuster records. My success is determined by whether or not I tried my absolute hardest.

Four-time Oscar award winner, Clint Eastwood, said, "There's a lot of great movies that have won an Academy Award and a lot of great movies that haven't. You just do the best you can."

Success is not determined by whether or not the director, the producer, or whoever's in charge likes your stuff. No. We can't win every battle this way; we can't let the battles that we so-called "lose" affect us negatively.

So my battle is always with myself. Did I try my hardest? Did I improve myself? If I did, then I will inevitably win in the long run—I will inevitably be successful in the long run.

And that's the most important thing.

The next important belief I have is, if bad things happen when I'm trying my absolute best and working hard, good things are just around the corner. Let me repeat this because this is one of the core philosophies that I have adopted.

If bad things happen to you when you are trying your hardest, then that means you're about to reach

the next level and good things are on their way. However, you MUST choose to stay positive and work through it.

I cannot stress enough how important this is.

The true character of a person and whether or not they will succeed is determined by how he or she deals with failure.

Like all of us, Pixar animator, Aaron Hartline, has had his share of success and failure, and his sage advice is this:

Aaron Hartline: *Put your head down and work hard and, it sounds bad to say but I promise you, you're going to get rejected. People are going to say no and no and no. And then all it takes is that one yes. And it's what you make with that yes that moves you onto the next level, and the next level.*

When I graduated college, I took a job at a television studio doing work that was not art-related. I spent my nights doing art freelance, hoping and wishing that I could build up a big enough client list to allow me to quit my job and just do freelance full-time. The day that I took the leap and quit my job to start my independent art career in earnest, something happened to me that was extremely bad luck. I went home and my computer wouldn't start.

Instead, it just made this whir and click sound, whir and click. The disk that turned in my hard drive was broken and couldn't spin properly anymore. That was the sound of my whole portfolio, lost and gone. Whir and click. All the high res versions of many of my earliest paintings were irretrievable.

Many people would look at this as fate telling me that I made the wrong move and I shouldn't be a freelancer. That thought had definitely crossed my mind, but as soon as it did, another one followed, much bigger, much louder, and in much disagreement.

It said, "Fate is testing you to see what you are going to do now. You are on your way to becoming an amazing freelancer and you're going to have a great career, but first you must pass this test to show that you're worthy of the good fortune that will follow."

When you're doing something big, fate will constantly enter the room and push you down. It will stand over you and taunt you. It will ask, "Are you strong enough to get back up and keep going? Because if you are, great things will happen."

That's what I did; that was what I chose to believe.

Whether or not it was true is irrelevant, my belief made it real; it was what moved me forward then and it CONTINUES to move me forward now. I believe that made computer trouble was just fate testing me; I believe that if I chose to move forward and battle through, then great things will happen and my career will go to that next level.

Because I believed this, it became true.

If I chose to be defeated by my broken hard drive and thought instead, "Oh this is fate telling me I shouldn't be a freelancer! Who am I kidding, I should beg for my job back," then my life would have

been dramatically different and you would have no reason to listen to this book because I would have accomplished very little.

When I was building my digital painting class on Schoolism.com, I was faced with a huge roadblock that became sicker than I'd ever been in my life.

This was during a time when I had to record my classes, yet I couldn't speak, and I was struck down by one sickness after another. A cough became the flu, then some other virus, and on and on. At one point, my doctor diagnosed me with chicken pox, even though I had already had chicken pox as a kid and was therefore supposedly immune to it. I remember sitting on my balcony one night, staring off into the darkness, and thinking, "Why is this happening to me? Of all times that I could get sick, why now?"

Then that reminded me about fate's tests.

I was knocked down to see if I was worthy of the great things that come once I had Schoolism up and running. How did I know this? Because I was trying my absolute hardest and was on the cusp of achieving something remarkable.

After I re-asserted that belief, I became energized. Far from feeling sick and depressed, my belief that something amazing was just around the corner helped pick me up and give me the energy and the motivation to continue. Which was exactly what I did: I kept going.

Now, the key part in this thinking is that you must already be trying as hard as you can. If you're not trying hard, you're inviting bad things to happen to you. You know in your heart whether or not you slack off a little more than you should; you're the best judge of whether or not you've done everything humanly possible to reach your goals. So be honest with yourself: are you trying your absolute hardest? If not, what changes can you make within yourself to ensure that you WILL BE trying your hardest from now on? This is vital because bad things happen to successful people and unsuccessful people alike. But when you're trying your hardest and really giving it your all, and bad things STILL happen to you, then that means great things are on their way.

So, when you're working and trying hard and something bad happens, won't you be excited and curious to see what great thing is around the corner if you just keep going? There's your motivation, there's your hard work.

Hard work is a valuable commodity, so the ability to always work hard is an invaluable asset, much more so than simply being brilliantly talented. With over 20 film credits to his name, feature film matte painter, Dylan Cole, knows a thing or two about the value of working hard:

Dylan Cole: *I think hard work trumps talent. There's so much talent wasted by laziness, it's disgusting. And so, cultivated talent, I would say, is probably the best thing. But yes, just brute force, hard work.*

With every disadvantage we think we have, there's a hidden advantage in there somewhere, you just have to look for it. For example, in Tim Burton's movie, "Alice in Wonderland", there were three main character designers: myself, Kei Acedera, and our friend, Michael Kutsche from Germany. All three of us were asked to move to London, England to work on set. But during that time, I was

teaching life drawing to fourth year students at Sheridan College, and I didn't want to abandon them halfway through their graduating semester.

So Kei and I decided to stay in Toronto and do the character designs from our studio here. Michael, on the other hand, moved to London where he got to meet Tim Burton, see Johnny Depp and Tim Burton together on set, and work at Arthur Rackham's studio.

He told Kei and I awesome stories of things that happened in London and definitely, a big part of me wishes we could have gone too. But with every disadvantage, there's a hidden advantage in there, somewhere.

When we started working on our next movie after "Alice in Wonderland", the studio asked us to move down to Hollywood to work on the film. We said no, and they said, "If you can't move down, I don't think this is going to work."

We replied, "Well, it worked for Tim Burton, how about we give it a try?"

And they responded, "Oh, Ok then, I guess we can give it a shot."

In the end, everything worked just fine.

And now Kei and I get to work from the comfort of our studio in Toronto where our friends and family are, and no one demands that we move to work on set anymore. So, that was the advantage that came out of the initial disadvantage of not being able to move to London to work on "Alice".

If you're a young student just starting your career, you could think, "Oh no, this is a disadvantage. I'm too young, everybody has more experience than me."

Or you can think of it as, "I have a great advantage. I am young and vibrant and my ideas are going to be very creative and very in tune with the young people of today."

If you're an older person, you might think, "Man, I'm so much older than these young people who are snatching up all the jobs. I'm too far into my life to chase this career as an artist."

Or you can think, "I'm experienced in life and I'm serious about art and I'm not interested in partying or going out late at night and doing all those things that younger people do. I'm very serious about art and that's what's going to take me to my goals, because I'm older and wiser and much more serious about my craft."

I've been very fortunate to learn many lessons through the experience of just living life. For example, I don't know if it was fate or something else, but ever since I was little, just about everything I tried, always failed or somebody told me no.

When I wanted to quit business school in favor of art, what did my parents say? No.

When I tried to get into animation at my number one choice for art school, did I get in the first time? No.

Did I get into computer animation the first time I applied, even though I graduated at the top of my class?

class? No.

When I tried to get a job as a concept designer—my dream job—did anybody hire me? No.

Even back in high school when I tried to get a job at McDonald's, did they hire me? You know the answer: no.

Today, people don't say no to me nearly as much. I feel like all those no's I got at the beginning of my career were a blessing—it's like fate had exhausted its supply of no's that it could throw at me, it's now only left with "not right now", which is where I am today. So, because of all those no's I've gotten over the years, I don't hear no anymore; I hear "not right now".

And then I will take that "not right now" and I'll say, "Ok, I'll come back later, new and improved and coming at you from a different angle with something new to offer you, and see what you say then."

Eventually, fate will run out of "not right now" to put in my way, and all that will be left is "yes".

The best plans are the ones that have room for adjustment, modification, or improvement. I can't count the number of times I've turned a no into a yes by simply making small changes to an idea.

Every year at Imaginism Studios we take one or two co-op students. We said no to almost every single one of them before we said yes. We want to know if a person really has what it takes to become successful, and to do that we need to see how they deal with failure and rejection; we need to see how they deal with the word "no".

A successful person is never truly successful until they've dealt with a big failure. And how they deal with that failure will determine whether or not they will be successful in the long run.

Will they be too afraid to continue?

Or will their logic explain to them that, "Nobody can tell you no."

Nobody can tell you whether you can make it or not because they don't know you.

The amazing thing is, all of us can make it. All of us have the potential to try. And our bodies and brains are amazing. With enough practice and effort, we can train our muscles and mind to do just about anything.

Art has very few physical requirements. If you can see and pick up a pencil, you can draw. Art's only requirement is mental—it is necessary that an artist WANTS to do art, is MOTIVATED to do art, and is willing to do the things that will improve his or her art. The only thing that stops people from reaching their artistic potential is lack of motivation and that isn't even a thing—it's a choice.

Do I want to do this? Do I want to be motivated?

Don't wait for something to hit you on the head and all of a sudden make you magically motivated and obsessed with art. No lucky accident is going to make you want to paint 24/7 so don't wait for that. It's within your capacity to work hard and be motivated. Swallow all your excuses, pick up your brush and just do it.

Pixar animator, Everett Downing, agrees that going after your dreams is really that simple:

Everett Downing: *Biggest advice I can give you is: if you're passionate about doing this, put everything into it and speak with your honest voice. Be truthful to yourself and never stop. Never stop. Just keep pushing, keep pushing yourself.*

So what is your mission? If you don't have one, create one. Set some goals. Because if you don't have a goal, you don't have a mission, and you won't know where you're going.

On the other hand, if you DO know where you're going and you DO have specific goals, it's much easier to stay motivated.

Now, setting a goal doesn't mean locking yourself into what you're going to do for the rest of your life. It just means, "This is what I'm going to do first, and once I reach this goal, I'll come up with another goal. And then another."

Try not to have too many goals at the same time; having too many goals will only spread yourself thin and make it difficult to accomplish any single thing. The best thing to do, especially at the beginning of your career, is to pick one thing first and direct all your focus onto that one goal. That's the best way to achieve it.

Once you get that first milestone under your belt, you will then be even more motivated to go after the next thing. So right now, list down your goals. Not what you THINK you're capable of, but what your ultimate goal is if you had no limits whatsoever.

Always shoot for the stars! If you land on the moon, hey that's still great! I can tell you anything is possible but you have to first BELIEVE it's possible.

Character designer, Michael Kutsche's advice is simple but true:

Michael Kutsche: *Be more daring, I think that's what I would say. Even if you think it's too far away, or too big, don't let it keep you away from trying it. You never know if you'll get there if you don't try it.*

Why don't you go ahead right now, put down this book, and write down your goal. If you can't come up with a good goal, think of all the things you don't want and go for the opposite. Look at all the different points and think about what kind of job you've described. Do this now. Once you write down this goal, think about it. Stare at it. How important is this goal to you? Where would you put this goal on your list of priorities? How important is it to you? How important do you want it to be?

Fear, laziness—these are the primitive parts of you. The evolved parts of you are logic and your ability to evaluate where you've been and where you're headed. Is it logical to sit on your butt after reading this book and not do a darned thing? Or is it more logical to start using these things right away as motivation, start building your skill set, and going for your goal?

This is a constant battle with ourselves: the logical, more evolved side of you is fighting the more primitive side of you, the part that's lazy and fearful.

When you were a child, your thinking was much more primitive. Every action you took was either to

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