

The 'Top 10s' To Removing The Rut

By Daric Gill

Stuck in a rut? Explored a concept for too long? Or simply out of ideas? We all have this issue from time to time. Here's a creative way to remove the rut while staying true to your real motives.

Step 1— Locate Themes

Look through your past work. What concepts do you usually explore? What basic techniques and ideas do you envy in other people's artwork? Locate themes, concepts, and sketches that you revisit often.

****Pro Tip**** Try to focus on work that you've made in recent years. If you haven't made much work lately, it's ok. Simply address why in the next step.

Step 2— Top 10 List

Start a Top 10 list that centers around areas that you want to explore or resolved further. *Shoot for 10 items. If you can't make it to 10, settle for no less than 5.*

Example lists:

- Top 10 themes in your sketches
- Top 10 things that you DO NOT want to be asked about your work
- Top 10 artists/websites/emotions that inspire you
- Top 10 excuses for not working
- Top 10 successes within a piece or body of your art

Pro Tip The hardest list to make is also the most revealing. For most artists, I suggest making a list of 'the Top 10 you DO NOT want to be asked'. This list is the most revealing if you're stuck in a rut. It identifies the loopholes or problem spots in the artwork that we've tried to hide from. Keep in mind those technical skills and concept themes addressed in Step 1 and use those to develop your lists.

Step 3—Ask why

Use 1 of the following questions for each item on your Top 10:

-“Why?”

-“Define further?”

-“Where does this lead me?”

The only rule You can't answer using the words, “I like...” or “I’m interested in...”. Those are empty phrases that distract. Instead, get to the point by defining rather than stating. ** "I like donuts," is strikingly less effective as, "The doughy texture of donuts makes my mouth water." **

Step 4— Ask why... like a child

So you've listed an item and located why it's a important. However, we need to dig deeper to get to any real substance. After all, we started the list to get passed the obvious. We're going to keep asking why until we get to the meat of the answer. Usually I suggest asking "Why?" at least 3 times per item.

Example Top 10:

#1. I tend to work with decayed material.

(Why?): Because I think decayed materials are beautiful.

(Define *your* definition of beauty?): Textures that layer on top each other with exposed edges that seem as though they hint at age.

(Why aged?): Age provides a sense of nostalgia. As if to say, “there was a better time, once.”

END RESULT: *I utilize decayed material to convey a sense of past glory, gone wrong.*

Try it yourself:

1. Item from Top 10

a. Why? (About above statement)

b. Why? Or define? Or where does that lead me? (about statement a.)

c. Why? Or define? Or where does that lead me? (about statement b.)
