IAAA
International Association of Astronomical Artists

PULSAR

- Grand Canyon Workshop
- 2D to 3D Art
- Inspiration

2013, Issue 3
IAAA.org
Welcome to the latest issue of Pulsar! speech from a prolific SF writer. It resonates with a lot of artists, so please give it a good read and let it sink in and percolate.

Inside, we have the start of the Grand Canyon workshop review, with how the artists prepare, to whet your appetite.

Also, we have a great article about a collaboration between two of our artist members, and finally an inspirational speech from a prolific SF writer. It resonates with a lot of artists, so please give it a good read and let it sink in and percolate.

We’d like to have more artist profiles! If you have done new work lately, please contact the editor (email address on the back page) and submit a short review and photo.

We welcome some more new members as well. Our group is a diverse and wonderful bunch.

Upcoming Workshops

Yes, you saw that right, “Workshops” with a plural “s” on the end!

The Board has been diligently discussing workshops and art shows for the past few weeks and is now ready to announce our plans for the next FOUR workshops. This will give folks more than enough planning time to work out which ones you want to attend (hopefully all!). It also gives us the chance to solicit from the membership for volunteers to act as Host for the workshop. So, without any further ado, here is the proposed IAAA workshop schedule for the next four years.

- 2013 Pyramid Lake / Black Rock, Nevada, USA
- 2014 Iceland
- 2015 Atacama, Chile
- 2016 Great Northwest USA

Exact itineraries are of course not yet available, nor are the exact dates. Most will be in the August/September time frame to accommodate school schedules and local weather. So, if you are interested in attending, please pipe up! More importantly, if you feel up to playing host to one of these locales, please let me know as soon as possible. Remember, without a Host, there is no workshop, so volunteer!

For the Nevada workshop, the planned itinerary is to start with arrivals in Las Vegas on 5 September, visit the Valley of Fire on the 6th, the red rock canyons outside of Vegas the morning of the 7th, then drive up to Reno. On the 8th and 9th the plan is to visit Pyramid Lake north and east shores seeing the rocks formations and geysers in the lake. On the 10 and 11th, we’ll make a sojourn up to the Black Rock Flats where Burning Man is held and visit some interesting canyons and formations there. Then on the 12th, it’s departure time. If you’re interested in going or need more info, please contact Jon Ramer.

Welcome New Members!

We have several new members to welcome! And we have more new members that are lined up for the next issue. If you’re new and I haven’t done a feature yet, please write me!

Welcome to Emerald Mayo, an artist member in California! “When I feel lost and disconnected the celestial bodies support and motivate me to explode creatively, painting my universe around me, appreciating each breathe of life flowing through me. Every rendering of color against the black canvas solidifies an otherwise vague existence, giving order and meaning to a seemingly chaotic and random course. It is then that I feel the primordial urge to press on despite the darkness. It is then that I discover my strength as a creator and to trust in the universe that everything happens with purpose.”

Next, also welcome Bryan Verstagg, a new artist member from Canada! “I’ve been working in the graphics industry for over 20 years, focusing on architectural rendering and photography for the past 11 years.”
Welcome New Members!

Please welcome as an artist member, David Sander, from Australia! “From providing desktop publishing services to supplying the television and motion picture industries with visual effects, graphics, grading, writing, directing and production services.”

And also welcome as an artist member, Joan Tripp, from New York! “It is a love of the paint itself which most involves her, the creation of color fused with color that creates varied forms, real or abstract. A fascination with space, planets, galaxies, and stardust provide the impetus to experiment with pure color to reproduce in paint some of the most magnificent forms in the universe. It is her hope that rather than curtail space exploration, the journey will be expanded for in space lies the hope of the future.”

From 2D to Glass
By Julie Rodriguez-Jones

I have collaborated with Joy Day on quite a few things including tons of greeting card printing (probably in the thousands by now), embroidery on ministerial stoles, orders of worship, giclees and now a flaming rose nebula bowl.

The image for the bowl was originally a commissioned piece for a website home page, http://www.fire-of-roses.com, and a giclee print. My image was created in Photoshop, originally beginning with another piece (looking nothing like the image below) which was morphed into the flaming rose nebula. Multiple layers were created, colors were changed, several blur tool was used and then the liquefy feature was used to draw the swirls in the nebula. The stars in the pattern of the Southern Cross were added as the website is in Australia and finally planets and a comet were created and added.

I was considering what to give my husband for Father’s Day and asked Joy for ideas. One suggestion was an ice cream dish and she suggested that I use one of my pieces of art for the pattern which she would then paint on the dish. Actually the image is embedded into the bowl so it is even dishwasher safe! I thought the colors in the flaming rose nebula would make a great design. Below is the process and the final result.

I first e-mailed the image to Joy Day.

Thanks to Joy for posting the process on Facebook. Many people were interested in this and asked questions. The descriptions below were captured from both photo captions and answers to questions that a variety of people asked.
Joy started with raw glass for the dessert bowl. The frit painted nebula is sandwiched between two clear sheets in their little blueboy kiln. It started at 500 degrees and progressed to a full blown 1600 degrees to fuse the glass. Joy commented that the freeform nebula patterns were finger painted, mixing the two colors of frit powder together, and hoping no breeze or sneeze came along!

Joy says, "It cooled overnight, so I'll be taking it out and seeing what it's become. The initial flat plate is finished. The edges rounded beautifully and the design is very good! The next step is to take it out, clean it up and proceed to form it into a dessert bowl."

This is the nebula glass painting on a clear, iridescent 6" round. The back of the plate is textured from the kiln. The plate is about 1/4" thick.

This is the small dessert dish ceramic mold.

Joy says, "I noticed a supremely increased stress level when I just put it in for the mold. The piece sits on top of the mold. When it fires up to 1200 degrees, it will flow down into the shape, kind of stretching the center section just a bit. It isn't going to be as deep as the mold, as the glass will drop down into the mold once it starts to form.

Once the glass gets a little fluid, it will slide down into the mold a little bit. When it starts hitting the side of the mold, it will start to take the mold's shape due to gravity. When it finally hits the bottom, the top edge will be about an inch or so down into the mold. The glass won't stretch out to completely line the inside of the bowl, but instead it will slide down into the bowl a bit as it reforms itself into the bowl shape. When I say it "gets fluid" the glass is still pretty stiff. It's a slow process to get it to take a curved shape. When I'm blowing glass and it's molten, the glass is about the consistency of honey. When it's casting at about 1600 degrees, it's like really thick tar. When it's molding at about 1200-1300 degrees, it's like really thick wet cardboard. You can't bend it by yourself, but with a constant pressure on it (gravity) it will slowly stretch in spots and scrunch in spots to take on the new shape it's being forced into. The stretching and scrunching is on a micro level, so the pattern painted on the glass won't change much."
“This is the dessert dish still inside the mold, so you can see how it drops down into the bowl to get its shape, but still holds the design.” I asked if I should hand wash it and Joy said, “I don’t think you need to hand wash it. The painting is actual glass (not just the craft “glass paint”), plus it’s fused in between two layers of glass, so it’s a solid piece. It would take many hundred degrees to affect it, and a dishwasher certainly doesn’t do that!”

Here is the dessert bowl from the side so you can see the shape it molded to.

Here is the finished bowl, 4.5” across and about 2” deep. This is going to be a keepsake for sure.

A flurry of excitement and activity began late February on the IAAA list serve with the announcement of the tentative site for the 2011 workshop, including proposed dates and itinerary. In order to negotiate hotel accommodations, transportation, and studio workspace for the evening sessions during the workshop, the level of interest needed to be determined. Exactly how many members planned to attend? When organizing a workshop for artists, the thought of herding cats easily comes to mind. Everyone has some special need, want, and/or interest during their workshop experience. As a consequence, a lead time of six months is often required to iron out possible changes to the itinerary. During that time period, all attendees are expected to negotiate and purchase their own transportation to and from the workshop rendezvous point. This 24th workshop was no different. Within a month, the tentative list of attendees had rounded out to fifteen.

Monthly updates circulated between the potential roster of artists consisting of additional information concerning the expected climate of northeast Arizona typical in September and possible local weather forecast in the workshop region. By the end of August with the hotel accommodations secured, $150 per artist workshop fees paid, and itinerary finally secured, the final roster was set. The 2011 workshop roster included: Andrew and Michael Carroll (Colorado), Dr. Dan Durda (Colorado), Dave Hardy (UK), Dr. Bill Hartmann (Arizona), April Faries (Washington), Marilyn Flynn (New Mexico), Dr. Mark Garlick (UK), Pam Lee (California), Tim Malles (Florida), Pat Rawlins.
An unexpected novelty developed during the planning phase. Vincent Poutrain, a filmmaker from France, and his cameraman, Jean-Manuel Costa, expressed their interest to film our group in action during the workshop. Vincent was into the story of one of our IAAA patron saints, Lucien Rudaux, and by extension interested in the emergence of art based on space-related themes. Vincent's curiosity began to develop about a year ago after Ron Miller and Bill Hartmann had exchanged e-mails with Elsa Desmert, in France, who had written a dissertation on this subject of Rudaux and about space art as a "school" with a role in the larger art picture.

During a science meeting in Europe, Bill ended up having lunch with Elsa and Vincent and talked about space art. It was twenty-five years ago in the mid-1980s that Ron first realized that Rudaux was the granddaddy of Bonestellian space art and early attempts to paint realistically what other planets might look like. By the end of the 1980s, Bill and Dave Hardy worked independently on different tracks, with their contacts in Paris, to encourage the publishers of Rudaux's 1937 book "Sur les Autres Mondes" (On Other Worlds) to re-release a facsimile. 

By 1990, Rudaux's book was reprinted; and with it came a renewed interest in this little known French artist. It was this story that Vincent is so eager to capture, the re-discovery of Rudaux who had a larger global influence than most people realized in France. Having contacts with members of the Rudaux family, Vincent was interested in interviewing various artists during the workshop to illustrate the range of Rudaux's influence. Filming artists painting on location was one of his intentions for his documentary to get astronomical art on the world map as a legitimate and interesting international art movement, with IAAA artists at the forefront as torchbearers of the genre Rudaux initiated.

Preparations, Intentions, and Embarkations

1) Kara's experience: I couldn't sleep, the excitement was too much. Rumbling thoughts coursed through my mind as I tossed and turned. Did I pack everything, including art supplies, and clothing for the rumored rainy season in northeast Arizona? Would seven 11 inches by 14 inches gray gesso canvas boards be enough? Would the Koh-I-Noor oil colored pencils, and colored lithographic crayons, be sufficient? Would Bill remember to bring a can of black aerosol spray for my continued experiment with nighttime renditions executed in daylight? Was every detail involving the flight secured for the 13-hour transition phase to Flagstaff, AZ? Was I taking too much, or not enough? Worry surrounded me like an electron cloud around an atomic nucleus that throbs to remain neutral. At 3:45 AM, the alarm sounded and dropped like a flag at a racetrack. I was off to the new Panama City FL airport twenty minutes away.

2) Bill's preparations: I spent the week in advance looking at some painting books about favorite painters and getting psyched about being able to paint without restriction for a whole week. I had already been to all the sites we would visit, and "in tourist mode" photographed them. I was really challenging myself to get some paintings done during the workshop and not just come home with more photos and memories. I didn't want this attitude to seem too exclusionary, but on the other hand it's always problematic whether a whole van full of artists could ever agree on what spot to go to or for how long! :) I knew I was lucky to live close enough to bring my car up to Flagstaff, which would give me more freedom to get to -- or stay at, or return to -- sites where I wanted to work, hopefully with some like-minded IAAA'ers. I learned Pam and Marilynn were also bringing cars, which would maximize mobility of any members who would want to hang out at painting spots for a few hours.

With no sign of the gang, I drove 10 minutes over to a beautiful spot I knew, where I had once camped as a graduate student. I started a painting there of a view of Mount Humphrey, the summit of the San Francisco Peaks complex, as seen across a field of flowers from the grounds of the research labs of the Museum of Northern Arizona. The volcanic peaks are a prominent landmark of Flagstaff. It was around 1962 that my grad student friends and I camped virtually on this spot when we met Gene Shoemaker, who had an office there at that time in those fledgling days of space exploration. I also had later experiences with the museum grounds. What I didn't finish on Sunday, I planned to go back to on our final Saturday to finish the painting after most of the others left.

I came back to the hotel around dinnertime with 16x20 inch painting half done, and found the rest of the gang moving in... It was a great "day Zero" and a good start. I was even more psyched to paint!

3) Marilynn's perspective: Having not painted outdoors in some time, I packed way too many art supplies because I wasn't sure what I would feel like working with when I got to the workshop, and I was also bringing extras for others to borrow if they needed to. For myself, I was planning on trying out some new colored pencils, some new drawing techniques and some 'plein air' style paintings in acrylic on canvas. And just in case (thank heavens) I also packed my old go-to media, watercolors. I had never worked outdoors with acrylics before, so it was going to be a grand (canyon) experiment. (It turned out to be a grand mess, as the weather did not cooperate and...
I found working outdoors with acrylics to be too cumbersome!

I didn't have high expectations of creating any great art during this workshop, because I knew how rusty my skills were... not only because I hadn't painted outside for a long time, but because I'd also been painting mostly all digital art in my studio for some time, too. Although I wanted to try to do as much painting as I could during the workshop to reinvigorate my 'real paint' techniques, I knew attending would be good for me just as a chance to reconnect with old friends, meet new ones, and have some great photo-ops. So I was trying (probably not too successfully) not to put too much pressure on myself to produce finished or "saleable" paintings. It was enough that I was getting out of the house, back on the road, and painting in the field again. The workshop was another important step for me to try to get back into the world and back to painting in this new life I have to live since losing my husband in an aviation accident a couple of years ago.

Pam Lee and I decided to meet at the Grand Canyon a few days in advance of the workshop to search for some good painting spots and try to brush up on our rusty plein air skills. I tossed everything into my trusty-rusty pickup truck and headed north. There is much to be said about the benefits of not having to pack for a commercial plane flight!

Having put those worries aside, we hit the trails and discovered a lot of interesting spots. One of the highlights for me was finding out that the Bright Angel Trail was not at all difficult to hike down (as long as one didn't go down too far!). So, I was able to get below the rim of the canyon for the first time - well on foot that is... my husband and I were some of the last people to fly into the canyon below the rim in our private plane before they shut the canyon down to that kind of air traffic back in the 1980's. I like painting large rock formations from below looking up, rather than from a 'bird's eye view', so I was able to find some good painting and photo locations below the rim. Although the tourist traffic on the trail was like a highway at rush hour sometimes, we managed to sit down and get some artwork done.

4) Tim's account: After having an overwhelmingly positive experience at the 2009 Kitt Peak workshop my intention was to immediately commit in 2011. Having the event in Arizona again made it so much easier to make arrangements for the trip. I was able to get to the event very early on the first day to spend as much time as possible with the artists and the workshop organizer, Pam Lee. She was very helpful in organizing for us to be participating, their bios, achievements, and amazing artworks. This would greatly enrich the experience of meeting them in person. I also researched the areas where we would visit to be able get the most out of the experience. All of these target sites I would be visiting for the first time. I made a list of some of my goals for the week; and, how I might be able to make my own contributions to the workshop. I was greatly pleased that I would be able to have the chance and time to share one of my art projects with the group.

The most challenging part of preparing is designing and packing the air travel kit. I wanted to bring my 1/2 French easel with sketching and oil painting supplies for daily plein air painting plus warm clothing, rain gear, camera, etc. I also decided to pack some books I had by some of the artists to have them autographed. After carefully deciding what I really needed and what I could leave behind it was easy to pack things, all within the baggage weight-limit guidelines. It was as simple as that really!

Since all of the logistics, for the workshops to run smoothly, are extensively preplanned behind the scenes by the workshop organizer, attendees are free to have the entire time to focus on creating, interacting, and being inspired. As a regular attendee of other art workshops, I can attest to the fact that the IAAA workshop offers an experience and value not only unequalled, but also unheard of in our trade!

5) Dave's journey: My journey from the UK, though long, went very smoothly. At Denver airport, Mikey as promised, met me with a green 'alien' hat on so that I would recognize him (Pity I didn't have a camera handy)! He took me to his lovely home in Littleton, CO, where I met his even lovelier wife, Caroline. It was then early evening there, but early next morning for me, so I went to bed as soon as I was decently able. Slept well and awoke quite refreshed. On the day after I arrived Mike drove me to Deer Creek Canyon Park, where there are fascinating red rock formations, which we walked around for an hour or so. On the evening of 10th September we went to the Red Rock Cafe, where we met up with Andy Chaikin and his girlfriend. It was good to see Andy again as I think we last actually met in Hawaii in 1991...

6) Mark's summary: I didn't make many preparations at all for the workshop, actually. I am not a plein-air artist, and I don't do traditional art anymore even in a studio -- although I think I could get back
I also brought my laptop and my studio. A corner of my bedroom becomes a sized living space with my own room for a desk, which I would love to try it sometime. Instead, I intended to at least accomplish a bit of pencil sketching. For this purpose, I brought with me a clipboard, my trusty 9” x 12” multi-use drawing pad that has always been with me on three IAAA workshops, a selection of No. 2 pencils, pencil sharpener, and eraser. That’s it. These items were always in my backpack, ready to be pulled out on a moment’s notice. Though I don’t do it very often, I enjoy the challenge of roughly capturing a scene in 15 or 20 minutes and that’s what I intended to do. I knew this workshop had an ambitious schedule and would be fast paced, so my modest pencil sketching goals had the advantage of being relatively easy to fit into a very busy tourist schedule!

After clearing it with Jon, we planned to coordinate our set-up and I did bring my sketch books with me and some coloured pastels, thinking that I’d be more inclined to do a spot on digital art and/or photo surgery. In fact in the end I did not use nor even look at my pastels, and I only used the PC for editing photos and Skype calls.

7) Aldo’s and Dario’s tale: When I heard that the IAAA was planning a Grand Canyon workshop, I immediately made the decision to attend. I’ve never visited the Grand Canyon, Meteor Crater, or any of the other wonderful locations in Arizona. What better way to do that than in the company of my fellow IAAA’ers? The two previous IAAA workshops I participated in were wonderful experiences and I really looked forward to seeing my space artist friends again.

After the initial workshop discussions, when the attendee list was firming up, it occurred to me to invite my brother, Dario, to join us. He and I had spoken many times about visiting the Grand Canyon together and this was the ideal opportunity. We live far apart and don’t get to see each other very often. After clearing it with Jon, we made our reservations and our travel plans were set.

My artistic goals for the workshop were straightforward, which greatly simplified my planning. I intended to do a great deal of photography of terrain and sky, for use as reference and background imagery in my digital visualization work. For this purpose, I purchased a new Canon SD4500 compact camera. Dario is a seasoned traveler and an avid photographer. I knew that he would be bringing along his extensive Canon DSLR set-up and we planned to coordinate our photographic efforts.

I am not a plein aire painter, though I do a lot of it. Instead, I intended to at least accomplish a bit of pencil sketching. For this purpose, I brought with me a clipboard, my trusty 9” x 12” multi-use drawing pad that has always been with me on three IAAA workshops, a selection of No. 2 pencils, pencil sharpener, and eraser. That’s it. These items were always in my backpack, ready to be pulled out on a moment’s notice. Though I don’t do it very often, I enjoy the challenge of roughly capturing a scene in 15 or 20 minutes and that’s what I intended to do. I knew this workshop had an ambitious schedule and would be fast paced, so my modest pencil sketching goals had the advantage of being relatively easy to fit into a very busy tourist schedule!

To Be Continued Next PULSAR!!

Neil Gaiman
Addresses the University of the Arts Class of 2012

I got out into the world, I wrote, and I became a better writer the more I wrote, and I wrote some more, and nobody ever seemed to mind that I was making it up as I went along, they just read what I wrote and they paid for it, or they didn’t, and often they commission me to write something else for them.

Looking back, I’ve had a remarkable ride. I’m not sure I can call it a career, because a career implies that I had some kind of career plan, and I never did. The nearest thing I had was a list I made when I was 15 of everything I wanted to do: to write an adult novel, a children’s book, a comic, a movie, record an audiobook, write an episode of Doctor Who... and so on. I didn’t have a career. I just did the next thing on the list.

So I thought I’d tell you everything I wish I’d known starting out, and a few things that, looking back on it, I suppose that I did know. And that I would also give you the best piece of advice I’d ever got, which I completely failed to follow.

First of all: When you start out on a career in the arts you have no idea what you are doing.

This is great. People who know what they are doing know the rules, and know what is possible and impossible. You do not. You should not. The rules on what is possible and impossible in the arts were made by people who had not tested the bounds of the possible by going beyond them. And you can.

I learned to write by writing. I tended...
to do anything as long as it felt like an adventure, and to stop when it felt like work, which meant that life did not feel like work.

Thirdly. When you start off, you have to deal with the problems of failure. You need to be thickskinned, to learn that not every project will survive. A freelance life, a life in the arts, is sometimes like putting messages in bottles, on a desert island, and hoping that someone will find one of your bottles and open it and read it, and put something in a bottle that will wash its way back to you: appreciation, or a commission, or money, or love. And you have to accept that you may put out a hundred things for every bottle that winds up coming back.

The problems of failure are problems of discouragement, of hopelessness, of hunger. You want everything to happen and you want it now, and things go wrong. My first book – a piece of journalism I had done for the money, and which had already bought me an electric typewriter from the advance – should have been a bestseller. It should have paid me a lot of money. If I did work I was proud of, I had always wanted to do any more, because now they had to earn a certain amount every month just to keep where they were. They couldn't go and do the things that mattered, and that they had really wanted to do; and that seemed as big a tragedy as any problem of failure.

And after that, the biggest problem of success is that the world conspires to stop you doing the thing that you do, because you are successful. There was a day when I looked up and realised that I had become someone who professionally replied to email, and who wrote as a hobby. I started answering fewer emails, and was relieved to find I was writing much more.

Fourthly, I hope you'll make mistakes. If you're making mistakes, it means you're out there doing something. And the mistakes in themselves can be useful. I once misspelled Caroline, in a letter, transposing the A and the O, and I thought, "Caroline looks like a real name..."

And remember that whatever discipline you are in, whether you are a musician or a photographer, a fine artist or a cartoonist, a writer, a dancer, a designer, whatever you do you have one thing that's unique. You have the ability to make art.

And for me, and for so many of the people I have known, that's been a lifesaver. The moment that you feel that, just possibly, you're walking down the street naked, exposing too much of your heart and your mind and what exists on the inside, showing too much of yourself. That's the moment you may be starting to get it right.

The things I've done that worked the best were the things I was the least certain about, the stories where I was sure they would either work, or more likely be the kinds of embarrassing failures people would gather together and talk about until the end of time. They always had that in common: looking back at them, people explain why they were inevitable successes. While I was doing them, I had no idea.

I still don't. And where would be the fun in making something you knew was going to work?

And sometimes the things I did really didn't work. There are stories of mine that have never been reprinted. Some of them
who ever plans to create art for other
freelancer knowledge. Secret knowledge is
which these days would be easy to check,
sounded likely, and I sounded confident,
other fields too. And it's this:
job, so that I hadn't actually lied, I'd just
world, and more and more of today's world
work however you get work.
never even left the house. But I learned as
much from them as I did from the things
that worked.
Sixthly, I will pass on some secret
freelancer knowledge. Secret knowledge is
always good. And it is useful for anyone
who ever plans to create art for other
people, to enter a freelance world of any
kind. I learned it in comics, but it applies to
other fields too. And it's this:
People get hired because, somehow,
they get hired. In my case I did something
which these days would be easy to check,
and would get me into trouble, and when
I started out, in those pre-internet days,
seemed like a sensible career strategy: when
I was asked by editors who I'd worked for,
I lied. I listed a handful of magazines that
sounded likely, and I sounded confident,
and I got jobs. I then made it a point of
honour to have written something for each
of the magazines I'd listed to get that first
job, so that I hadn't actually lied, I'd just
been chronologically challenged... You get
work however you get work.
People keep working, in a freelance
world, and more and more of today's world
is freelance, because their work is good,
and because they are easy to get along with,
and because they deliver the work on time.
And you don't even need all three. Two out
of three is fine. People will tolerate how
unpleasant you are if your work is good
and you deliver it on time. They'll forgive
the lateness of the work if it's good, and if
they like you. And you don't have to be as
good as the others if you're on time and it's
always a pleasure to hear from you.
When I agreed to give this address, I
started trying to think what the best advice
I'd been given over the years was.
And it came from Stephen King twenty
years ago, at the height of the success of
Sandman. I was writing a comic that people
loved and were taking seriously. King had
liked Sandman and my novel with Terry
Pratchett, Good Omens, and he saw the
madness, the long signing lines, all that,
and his advice was this:
"This is really great. You should enjoy it."
And I didn't. Best advice I got that
I ignored. Instead I worried about it. I
worried about the next deadline, the next
idea, the next story. There wasn't a moment
for the next fourteen or fifteen years that
I wasn't writing something in my head,
or wondering about it. And I didn't stop
and look around and go, this is really fun.
I wish I'd enjoyed it more. It's been an
amazing ride. But there were parts of the
ride I missed, because I was too worried
about things going wrong, about what came
next, to enjoy the bit I was on.
That was the hardest lesson for me, I
think: to let go and enjoy the ride, because
the ride takes you to some remarkable and
unexpected places.
And here, on this platform, today, is
one of those places. (I am enjoying myself
immensely.)
To all today's graduates: I wish you luck.
Luck is useful. Often you will discover that
the harder you work, and the more wisely
you work, the luckier you get. But there is
luck, and it helps.
We're in a transitional world right now, if
you're in any kind of artistic field, because
the nature of distribution is changing, the
models by which creators got their work
out into the world, and got to keep a
roof over their heads and buy sandwiches
while they did that, are all changing. I've
talked to people at the top of the food
chain in publishing, in bookelling, in all
those areas, and nobody knows what the
landscape will look like two years from
now, let alone a decade away. The distribution
channels that people had built over the last
century or so are in flux for print, for visual
artists, for musicians, for creative people of all
kinds.
Which is, on the one hand, intimidating,
and on the other, immensely liberating.
The rules, the assumptions, the now-we're
supposed to's of how you get your work seen,
and what you do then, are breaking down. The
gatekeepers are leaving their gates. You can be
as creative as you need to be to get your work
seen. You Tube and the web (and whatever
comes after You Tube and the web) can give
you more people watching than television ever
did. The old rules are crumbling and nobody
knows what the new rules are.
So make up your own rules.
Someone asked me recently how to do
something she thought was going to be
difficult, in this case recording an audio book,
and I suggested she pretend that she was
someone who could do it. Not pretend to do
it, but pretend she was someone who could.
She put up a notice to this effect on the studio
wall, and she said it helped.
So be wise, because the world needs more
wisdom, and if you cannot be wise, pretend to
be someone who is wise, and then just behave
like they would.
And now go, and make interesting mistakes,
make amazing mistakes, make glorious and
fantastic mistakes. Break rules. Leave the
world more interesting for your being here.
Make good art.
---Neil Gaiman, Writer

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