

Nothing>Something Workshop

(Developed by Zannah Marsh & Marina Zurkow)

Materials: (paper, sharpies)

What we are going to do:

Help you get from a shred of an idea, intuition or hunch to be able to articulate specific forms, contexts, content, and technologies to explore, explode, expand your idea.

You will end up with enough hints at specifics to be able to experiment and develop your ideas. The goal is to get you out of your head, encourage you to jump in, start making, stop fretting and start having fun!

What's a hunch?

A hunch could be any of the following, a vision, an obsession, a question or a concept, for instance:

- Vision: I see a room full of lights and mirrors
- Obsession: I love teeth I love reflective surfaces
- Question- Why were mirrors so coveted by people? What do mirrors mean to ancient civilizations?
- Concept: Mirrors as a metaphor for vanity and light washing it off us.

>Direction: write your hunch 2 minutes

In the center of your paper. One sentence or less. Circle it.

>Direction: freewriting, 5-7 minutes *(to be effective you have to let this go on a bit too long!).*

- Word associations, connections, questions, feelings, images-- anything that comes to mind when you think about your hunch.... Let yourself wander, be open to surprises!
- Blue sky brainstorming. Turn your filters off!
- Don't edit. No judgments, don't think about money or practicalities or functionalities or scale
- if you get stuck, free-write/doodle/drift through it.

BUT DO TRY TO WRITE CLEARLY...YOUR PARTNER WILL HAVE TO READ IT.

>Direction: directed expansion, Categories 12-15 minutes

Again, let go of your bias! Even if you are certain you want to make an iphone app, imagine your project in some other forms.

- Add words to your sheet.

- Keep an uncritical mindset.
- Let ideas flow. Be a bit fanciful, silly
- If you're not sure, add more/give yourself more options:
- Expand, don't reduce.
- These are not final decisions!
- More is better.

Categories:

Imagine and write at least 3 ideas for each of these:

- **Forms** (video, sculpture, website, diorama, comic book, collage).
- **Materials** (concrete, plexiglass, living tissue, rice paper, cake)
- **Scale** (use analogies: big as a house, small as a marble)
- **Affects/emotions** (clumsy, cheerful, morose, businesslike)
- **Verbs** (motivate, collapse, upset, tickle, spin, collect, etc)
- **Motivations** (why do you want to do/explore this? your reason, underlying impulse, larger aim?)
- **Inspirations** (projects, people, contexts that inspire you to follow this hunch)
- **Ideal audiences** (be specific: Guyanese senior citizens, tech geeks in Brooklyn or Fukushima, 3-5 yr old Americans, white hipsters, demographic, economic, social circles)
- **Context/location** (gallery, dark alley, the internet, public park, suburban cul-desac)

Leave two minutes for wrap-up, review the list you wrote up on the white board.

>Direction: trade sheets and respond on paper: 3 minutes *Use a different color sharpie.*

For respondents:

- Circle what's jumps out at you! What's most exciting, interesting?
- Note questions, where you're confused, or want more information!
- Make connections/links where you see them!

>Direction: feedback / discuss response, 5 minutes each. / 10 min total

Respondent's job:

- Ask questions, describe what you think the project might be, ask for clarification.
- If confused, revisit the 9 brainstorming categories, and ask for more info.

- Don't be critical, be expansive! Ideas are babies, don't treat them too roughly.
- Not "no..." or "don't..." but "**yes, and...**"

Switch and repeat

>Direction: reflection on paper: 5 minutes

- Take your paper back.
- Take a few minutes to reflect on the conversation you had: the questions that came up, any "aha!" moments? some uncharted spaces uncovered? clarification of your idea?
- Any surprises? Any new directions or areas of research revealed?
- Write notes to recap the comments you got and conversation you had when you swapped papers.

>Direction: Concept hunt 5 minutes

- Look at what you've got.
- Are any overarching themes emerging?
- Any connections or trends starting to point in a direction?
- Any burning questions that your work could take on and address?
- Look for the beating heart of the idea.
- Can you abstract a driving concept?
- Your motivation may be a good place to look for this, but it could emerge from anywhere: form, audience...