Finding Passion

Wednesday, May 4, 2022

I sit here and stare at the sunny windows with a whole bunch of nice looking house plants and think about how I should be practicing drawing. I think about how I should be practicing with my camera. And, I think about how I should really focus on the project I’m working on and start working on it.

It’s all uninspiring.

I was reading something. It was an interview with an artist or something. He talked about how he loved to draw. He carried a sketchbook with him since he was a child and would draw whenever he could. My nephews would just start drawing when they got bored. It came from figures from their imaginations. They didn’t need to be lifelike or from a model. The just drew. This is having passion.

I don’t have that. I don’t think I ever did. I wonder if it can be developed?

I read somewhere else that Leonardo da Vinci would shake when he sat down to draw. I sometimes feel that way. I stare at a subject and I dread it. I have no idea if the drawing will turn out. It probably won’t. You have to get into that weird sense of focus before everything comes together. Getting there can be exhausting.

Later that afternoon…

I just ran across yet another bit of advice that I’ve dreaded from my passive consummation of media: if you want to be a good writer, you have to write every day. Replace writing with playing music, photography, cooking, ceramics, drawing, painting, carpentry, and even the everyday things that you make your living at, and you have it. You need to practice. You need to practice something even when the muses aren’t helping you; even if you aren’t inspired.

I remember reading some Kurt Vonnegut Jr. book where he talked about discussing his latest project with his editor. He told his editor that he hated writing, who replied with something to the effect of, “the smith isn’t in love with his anvil.” The story went on and eventually came to the topic of Kurt’s brother who was a basic researcher with GE.

Eventually, the punchline was that his brother was having a long running affair with his anvil.

I think the reason we wind up hating these things that are, occasionally, enjoyable and fulfilling, is, at least partly, because at some point we feel under pressure to complete them. Whether it’s a work deadline, or a class, or even the nagging feeling of, “I gotta do it or I’m a slug.” What is amazing is how easy it is to find something to distract you from it. How many excuses for procrastination can there be?

What is really amazing is the layers of procrastination you can come up with. You can’t work on your creative project because you have to work. Then, you can’t focus on work, so you read the news. After a time of jumping from diversion to uninspired non-focus to the next diversion, you find that you haven’t actually done anything all day.

A whole day of your life has just been wasted.