

A QUESTION ANSWERED
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As an artist, the most common question I'm asked is: "How do you come up with ideas for your work?" Many artists who are asked the same question will cite the "right side of the brain" concept.

And we can all pretty much agree about that, so it is a big part of the answer. The right half of the brain is where most creativity occurs, but you also use the left side of the brain to organize your thoughts into communicable ideas.

How do I use the right side of my brain for creativity? One way is during sleep, you can get many ideas for creating and resolving problems in painting.

I work in five different media: watercolor, acrylic, pastel, paper collage and mixed media. Mixed meaning I use all the above in one painting. As a collagist, paper of all kinds excites me. Here is one good example: I have been a secretary for most of my working life. Over the years I have opened tons of work-related mail, many of which were invoices or bills. The envelopes that mail comes in always intrigued me. The paper inside of the envelope is patterned in different designs and usually in various shades of gray, blue or black. Some will have the company's name or logo printed over and over. They are all different.

I started collecting the envelopes and had been thinking of some way to incorporate them into a piece of artwork. During sleep, I dreamed of my younger sister working on a quilt. The next morning I woke up really excited. I used the power of dreaming to my advantage. I knew what I was going to do with all the envelope patterns. I planned on making an envelope quilt out of paper. I got together with my sister and asked her for some patterns on quilting. I picked out a simple design called a pinwheel.

I finally assembled the piece but wanted to go a step further by alternating the pinwheel pattern with blocks done in cancelled stamps. I stamped the middle of each block with one of my rubber stamps of a circular design and then I used embroidery thread in the middle of each stamp. It is titled: "Envelope Quilt – the best part of bills". I think it is a good example of how dreaming can enhance your work.

There are many ways to come up with ideas for composing a painting. One is observation of the world around you. Sometimes all you have to do is look out your window and there is a scene waiting to be painted. I enjoy going out and working on location but there are distracting influences like weather and bugs. So, if I don't feel like fighting the elements, I rely on taking my camera with me wherever I go. I have boxes of pictures I have taken to use for reference in composition and/or subject matter.

I use all six senses to absorb what I see around me. I also have a collection of books and magazines to stimulate and motivate myself into thoughts of creativity.

I do a lot of still life paintings that include plates, bottles and flowers. I use glassware and plates from my own collections and flowers from my own gardens for a compilation of a still life. I like to do design work in my still life pieces and keep files of designs that I have found in magazines, cards, and newsprint to use in my paintings.

I keep stimulated by looking at other artists work, and going to galleries and museums as often as I can. I love watching other artists work, so demonstrations and workshops have to be included. When I lived in Dallas, TX, I worked with ten or more other women every second Saturday for four years. We worked with artist, Paula Rayer-Nemec, who is an experimental painter and each workshop was an exploration on how far we could push ourselves with new ideas in our media. The workshops were fun, full of energy, stimulating, motivating and a time to learn more about our own creativity.

So, to answer the question of where do my ideas come from. I would have to say they come from within but not without the help of outside influences that I have mentioned. All in all, I don't really care where the ideas come from as long as they keep coming! I know that without my art, without my creativity and/or self expression, I could not be.