

Don't Throw Any Of Yourself Away

By Zachary Kai

Ever heard of Austin Kleon? This writer who draws (as he puts it) has written three books on creativity I refer to almost every week: Steal Like An Artist, Show Your Work, and Keep Going. In the first one, he shares a piece of advice that's stuck with me ever since: "Don't throw any of yourself away."

Why did it resonate? Well... I was doing the exact opposite of what he'd suggested. I've long struggled with this (entirely self-imposed) pressure to 'specialize.' Pick one thing and stick to it. Yet my urge is (and always has been) to amass as many useful skills as possible.

Baking? Cooking? Graphic design?
No-code automation? HTML +
CSS? Book publishing? Knitting?
Handsewing? Drawing? Photography?
Research? Collecting obscure facts?
Writing (of almost every kind?)
Stagecraft? Stop-motion animation?
The list goes on...

My entire life, I've had countless times where I've sworn I'll focus on one thing, putting all my energy into it... Only for the urge to continue with everything I've neglected get so strong I give up. And rather than recognize the call for help and answer it... I start the cycle again.

This year, I've learned lots about myself. And in all honesty... So what if I'm a jack of all esoteric/creative trades, and a master of none? This is how my brain works. So, I've taken his advice. No longer will I throw any of myself away!

I've picked up drawing again for the first time in over two years. I can't tell you how much of a relief that's been. If you're like me, know it's not a curse. It'll only become one if you decide 'other people' know your head better than you.

