

How does an artist look at the world?

First, you figure out what's worth stealing, then you move on to the next thing.

That's about all there is to it.

When you look at the world this way, you stop worrying about what's "good" and what's "bad"—there's only stuff worth stealing, and stuff that's not worth stealing.

Everything is up for grabs. If you don't find something worth stealing today, you might find it worth stealing tomorrow or a month or a year from now.

When people call something "original," nine out of ten times they just don't know the references or the original sources involved.

If we're free from the burden of trying to be completely original, we can stop trying to make something out of nothing, and we can embrace influence instead of running away from it.

Every new idea is just a mashup or a remix of one or more previous ideas.

Your job is to collect good ideas. The more good ideas you collect, the more you can choose from to be influenced by.

Carry a notebook and a pen with you wherever you go. Get used to pulling it out and jotting down your thoughts and observations. Copy your favorite passages out of books. Record overheard conversations. Doodle when you're on the phone.

Keep a swipe file. It's just what it sounds like—a file to keep track of the stuff you've swiped from others.

Steal Like an Artist

If I'd waited to know who I was or what I was about before I started "being creative," well, I'd still be sitting around trying to figure myself out instead of making things. In my experience, it's in the act of making things and doing our work that we figure out who we are.

You might be scared to start. That's natural. There's this very real thing that runs rampant in educated people. It's called "impostor syndrome."

The clinical definition is a "psychological phenomenon in which people are unable to internalize their accomplishments." It means that you feel like a phony, like you're just winging it, that you really don't have any idea what you're doing.

Don't Wait Until You Know Who You Are to Get Started

Nobody is born with a style or a voice. We don't come out of the womb knowing who we are. In the beginning, we learn by pretending to be our heroes. We learn by copying.

We're talking about practice here, not plagiarism—plagiarism is trying to pass someone else's work off as your own.

The reason to copy your heroes and their style is so that you might somehow get a glimpse into their minds. That's what you really want—to internalize their way of looking at the world. If you just mimic the surface of somebody's work without understanding where they are coming from, your work will never be anything more than a knockoff.

The best advice is not to write what you know, it's to write what you like.

Write the Book You Want to Read

The manifesto is this: Draw the art you want to see, start the business you want to run, play the music you want to hear, write the books you want to read, build the products you want to use—do the work you want to see done.

It's the side projects that really take off. By side projects I mean the stuff that you thought was just messing around. Stuff that's just play. That's actually the good stuff. That's when the magic happens.

Side Projects and Hobbies Are Important

If you have two or three real passions, don't feel like you have to pick and choose between them. Don't discard. Keep all your passions in your life.

Steal Like An Artist  
Austin Kleon

It's a two-step process. Step one, "do good work," is incredibly hard. There are no shortcuts. Make stuff every day. Know you're going to suck for a while. Fail.

The Secret: Do Good Work and Share It with People	Get better. Step two, "share it with people," was really hard up until about ten years ago or so. Now, it's very simple: "Put your stuff on the Internet."
Geography Is No Longer Our Master	<p>You don't have to live anywhere other than the place you are to start connecting with the world you want to be in. If you feel stuck somewhere, if you're too young or too old or too broke, or if you're somehow tied down to a place, take heart. There's a community of people out there you can connect with.</p> <p>Your brain gets too comfortable in your everyday surroundings. You need to make it uncomfortable. You need to spend some time in another land, among people that do things differently than you. Travel makes the world look new, and when the world looks new, our brains work harder.</p> <p>It helps to live around interesting people, and not necessarily people who do what you do.</p>
Be Nice. (The World Is a Small Town)	<p>Remember "garbage in, garbage out"? You're only going to be as good as the people you surround yourself with. In the digital space, that means following the best people online—the people who are way smarter and better than you, the people who are doing the really interesting work. Pay attention to what they're talking about, what they're doing, what they're linking to.</p> <p>If you talk about someone on the Internet, they will find out. Everybody has a Google alert on their name. The best way to vanquish your enemies on the Internet? Ignore them. The best way to make friends on the Internet? Say nice things about them.</p> <p>You're going to see a lot of stupid stuff out there and you're going to feel like you need to correct it.</p>
Creativity Is Subtraction	<p>But instead of wasting my anger on complaining or lashing out at people, I try to channel it into my writing and my drawing.</p> <p>People will misinterpret you and what you do. They might even call you names. So get comfortable with being misunderstood, disparaged, or ignored—the trick is to be too busy doing your work to care.</p> <p>In this age of information abundance and overload, those who get ahead will be the folks who figure out what to leave out, so they can concentrate on what's really important to them. Nothing is more paralyzing than the idea of limitless possibilities. The idea that you can do anything is absolutely terrifying.</p> <p>Don't make excuses for not working—make things with the time, space, and materials you have, right now.</p> <p>In the end, creativity isn't just the things we choose to put in, it's the things we choose to leave out.</p>