

On rituals as motivational tool



Janet Goodspeed discusses how she motivates herself, putting in the work to find your style, and how pleasure shows us why we are alive.

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As told to Janet Frishberg, 2451 words.

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You have an interesting perspective on the creative process from your training in tarot and astrology. Are there rituals in art making that are supportive for you, either in getting ideas or in working on the art?

I struggle with that. I think a lot of people struggle with that. It's something that I'd like to have more mastery over. There are definitely certain conditions that need to be met in order to set the stage. Part of that for me is having an external space to work. I'm super, super fortunate to have a studio in the city I live in, Vancouver, because this kind of non-commercial space is very hard to find for an affordable price on top of rent for my apartment and all that. Being able to leave my house and get here to the studio is probably the most important thing.

But one thing that I really like in terms of astrology and tarot is doing a daily draw for what you're gonna work on. I usually journal in the morning and pull a tarot card and get the vibe for the day.

Also, there's this super fun concept in astrology called the Planetary Days. Our days are named after the planets - Sunday is Sun day, Monday's Moon day, Tuesday's Mars day, *merdi en Francais*, Wednesday is Mercury day, etc., etc. Saturday is Saturn day...now I feel bad for not saying Jupiter day, Thursday, and Venus day, Friday. I use that idea a lot to apply to what I'm working on creatively.

Okay so does that mean that on Wednesday, you're catching up on all your emails, or writing tasks, and on Monday you'd be more taking care of your body, or in an intuitive space?

Those are both great examples. Today, Wednesday, just sort of happened to fall that way, for instance, I had to make a bunch of weird phone calls, very mercurial stuff. I also took care of emails and updated my newsletter.

Venus is the planet associated with artists, specifically, so Venus is probably the one that I would go to in terms of making art, sharing art, and developing relationships, doing collaborations with people for art. That's Fridays. And also Monday evenings, because when the sun goes down on Monday, it becomes Venus's night. Venus is so great for beauty.

So the nights have different planets than the days do?

Yeah, they switch over at sunset. You can try paying attention to it over the course of several weeks. It's a vibe thing.

As somebody who's paying a lot of attention to astrology, how do you think of creative resistance and astrology? Like when you don't want to work on a project, are you looking to the planets to see if there's a reason for that? And then, do you give yourself permission to not work on it until the transit is done, or how do you use

that?

Oh, absolutely. I always love permission to procrastinate. It's so easy to find a reason to not do the thing that you should do, or actually want to do. There are definitely times of the year, seasons and astrological seasons, where I feel more capable of doing the type of hunkering down that I need to do in order to get stuff produced. The other thing I like to use with astrology is elections.

That's using astrology to plan the timing of events?

Yeah, so if you're trying to find a good time to launch something, you can use astrology to find an auspicious time to share your work with the world. That gives me a built in astrological timeline to work with. So I have to finish it, it gives me a deadline.

Okay, so you know when you're going to go live with it, and then you just have to work backwards from that so that you don't miss the window.

Yeah, that's what I did for the last Kickstarter. I had a time when I wanted to launch it, and I told myself, I'm going to make it happen by then. Otherwise I won't do anything.

How do you deal with fear in the creative process? Especially with projects that are more visible and public.

I think cultivating appropriate spaces for yourself is really important, like knowing where you fit in. For me, that's made this a way less fearful experience. With the last Kickstarter, it was part of a Witchstarter thing happening in October. So it was all occult and witchy projects. That was great, because people were finding me who already might be interested in astrology and tarot.

I do the same thing if I'm selling the stuff I make in a local shop, I just try to get in with the weirdos. I literally do a market here called Weirdos Market, which is fantastic. That way your elevator pitch can be more fine-tuned to people who might also already know what tarot is, or don't think it's the devil's work. You've already got people who are on that wavelength.

But I think it's also having a little bit of detachment. I know the way I feel about jewelry, and wearable art, is specific. I have very specific taste, and so does everyone. It's personal. Especially with this medium—you wear it close to your body, you are always interacting with it. Even the style of chain is really particular for the individual person. So you can't take that personally. People just have taste.

Totally. It's actually so cool that we all are attracted to different sets of objects and music and art.

I always think about Ira Glass, and his idea about doing your 10,000 hours.

His talk about "the gap?"

Exactly. And part of it is your taste. It's getting yourself and your skills to your taste level. I think a lot about striving to get to the level of your own personal taste. Because you're always growing, and along the way you should be exposing yourself to more people's art, and more of the world—more architecture and culture and everything.

Sometimes I've thought that an inherent part of my taste is that I'm drawn to things that... I have no idea how the person made it. Or even if I get how they made it, I'm not capable of doing it myself. I don't have the skill level. It's almost like that's built into my preference for it. Which means I would never look at something I've made and think, I want that on my body, or on my wall. Because inherent to my taste is some sort of aspirational nature.

Yes. We probably can't claim that's a universal experience, but I feel that way, too. Although sometimes if I see

something and I think I could make that, that does make me more attracted to it, because I want that around to remind me, so that I can do my own version of that thing. Not to rip someone else's idea off, but for that aspirational part.

You also mentioned that you have a specific ritual that you've been doing in the midst of your creative process at your studio, and that it's like a portal. I want to hear all about it.

Yes, I have this ritual of going to The Dollar Store, and if I need a notebook or a picture frame or a soap dish, I'll also always get myself this candy bar that's called Big Turk.

I actually don't know if that candy bar exists in the States, I'm in Vancouver, Canada. But I really like this candy bar. I only ever buy it when I'm alone. It's this ritual where I tell myself I'm going to get a supply for my work, but really the underlying desire is this candy bar. I also have terrible teeth with thin enamel and have always struggled with maintaining them. So I really shouldn't have sugary treats, but who cares? I'm obsessed with this candy bar.

The candy bar itself is very gross. I don't even know why they still make it. It's an antiquated thing that's referencing Turkish delight. But it's very different from that. It's a jujube-based candy bar. The garbage at my studio space where I go to work on jewelry is like 90 percent Big Turk wrappers [laughs].

From you?

From me. Just a garbage can full of candy wrappers.

I've never heard of it. What does it taste like?

It's very sweet. A lot of people's touchstone for Turkish delight is *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, which of course was a huge book for me as a kid. The whole series, actually. The candy bar is dense, squishy, and it's not the same texture as actual Turkish delight. It's more of a chewy, gets-stuck-in-your-teeth kind of experience. So it's like this bright, ruby pink, bar made of jujube that's wrapped in crappy Nestle milk chocolate.

So what does it do for you? And what about it is a portal?

Well, it's the nostalgia factor. It's a return to a thing that you remember from the past, but now I've opened this new chapter with it.

I'm guessing that supporting Big Candy is probably against your values now though?

Totally. I should be getting artisanal chocolate bars from the organic grocery store, you know? But I just need Big Turk.

Part of it also sounds like you're getting like this easy, quick fuel to stay in the art trance for longer. Do you only eat it at the studio?

Pretty much just at the studio. It's very ritualistic.

For me, something about the walk is really important. I don't drive, and I'm lucky to live a very pedestrian lifestyle.

I might actually change my ritual of the Big Turk to try to go to a mom and pop corner store because those are dying away. But that's the juice, that's the really good stuff, if you can have the ritual of walking to the place and getting the thing. It has to be cheap enough that you can justify doing it with some frequency. But

then also having a cute interaction really bumps up the joy of being a neighborhood person, or in astrology it would be a 3rd-house person.

I've been really lucky. I've lived in the same neighborhood for over a decade and I've worked here in various retail establishments and been a regular at certain places. Those little bump-into-people relationships are really nice. I don't think the people at The Dollar Store know me yet. I would like them to know me [laughs].

You're working on it. You're putting in the time.

Well, I don't do it every day or even every week. It's an indulgence. I also like to deny myself pleasure. Sometimes I'll be like, "Oh, not today, can't have that today."

What do you get from that denial?

It's the reward. When you eventually agree with yourself that you are allowed, it's so much better.

These little games we play with ourselves.

Oh yeah. I spend a lot of time alone, as a partially self-employed person, and I have to play games with myself to motivate myself.

Same. It's really important actually, just how you organize your own inner world to get the work done.

Yeah, and I'm still really trying to fine-tune that. So if I can weaponize the Big Turk against myself, that might help. This particular relationship with this candy bar is juicy. It brings up a lot, you know?

Absolutely. It's almost that people often want the thing that's directly in opposition to one of their deepest values, I've noticed.

It's confusing.

Totally. You don't like Big Candy, and you like your little neighborhood spots, but you're going to The Dollar Store and buying this candy bar.

The Dollar Store in itself is a whole thing. Just the amount of plastic and that kind of cheap import business that's not good for neighborhoods. How cities work and how neighborhoods work is something I think about a lot. When neighborhoods get gentrified and all of the small businesses can't afford to rent, what moves in is Starbucks and other chains and these Dollar Stores and check cashing places, right?

So it goes against my values in some pretty distinct ways.

Do you recommend this ritual to other artists?

Yeah, have a candy bar. Get yourself that candy bar you haven't had in a really long time and reward yourself with it, or just have a good cry [laughs].

Is that what it's papering over?

I mean, I'm never papering over tears. They're just coming.

I'm curious, do you have guilt around this habit?

I don't have a lot of guilt in my life. I have a lot of pleasure. I'm a pleasure seeker and I'm lucky because I

haven't grown up with a culture of guilt. I wasn't raised in a kind of religion that reinforced that, or I broke free of any kind of religion that would've reinforced that fairly early. So, I'm pretty hedonistic. I'm a pleasure-seeking person, even if I'm sometimes in that tension of denying or delaying pleasure to be a reward.

I have asked, do I actually feel guilty about this? Or do I just really, really like it? And I don't feel guilty about my other guilty pleasures either. Like, I love to watch RuPaul until four A.M. sometimes, by myself with my headphones in. I watch really shitty reality dating shows. And I don't feel bad about that, even though it's probably melting my brain.

What allows you to not feel guilt about doing those things?

I think we were put on earth to actually enjoy our bodies and to seek out novel experiences and to delight in what it is that makes us human and what is in opposition to struggle. We're not just here to work and eat healthy and have a savings account. We're here to experiment and get messy and be weird. And, that's where the art, the creation of it all comes from for me.

Janet Goodspeed recommends:

Time Nomad. An app for tracking planetary hours

Tiger Time. A 20 minute podcast on one topic at a time in a friendly conversational format

Gathering Colour. A book about colour, wild crafting, and magic by Caitlin French

Styling With The Stars. A digital guidebook on how to dress for the planets by Chloe Margherita

Esoterica. A youtube channel devoted to scholarly research of the arcane in history, philosophy and religion

Name

Janet Goodspeed

Vocation

artist, jeweler, diviner

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Amanda Bullick