

The Power of Doodling

Doodling is a form of automatic writing. It is a way of dreaming. When people sit at the phone with pen in hand and they scribble away as others talk to them they are allowing their thoughts and emotions to take form on the page.

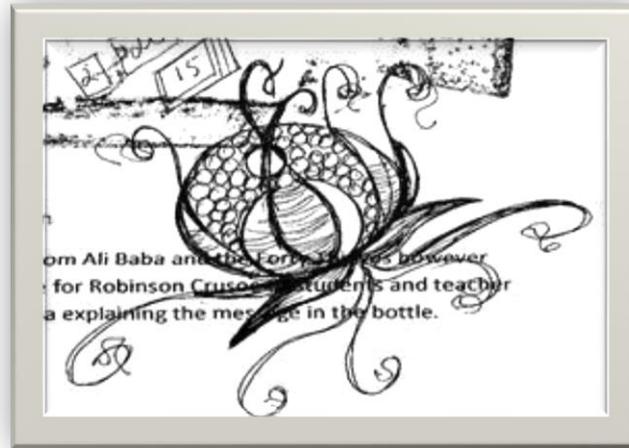
Doodling can be a gentle gateway to the unconscious. That part of the mind that is free to roam and to imagine. When we doodle we are less inclined to have the critic talking to us and judging our work. Rather the hand just wanders over the page and simple shapes, lines and forms appear to create patterns. Artists usually are not planning but allowing the forms to appear on the page. For most people doodling is a relaxing activity.

The reason doodling is so stress free is that it is a kind of visual free association. And through the non-verbal process people are able to tap into a reservoir of self-knowledge contained not in words but in images.

When a story is read to a class and the students are encouraged to doodle as they listen a process of self-reflexion is begun. If the listener can let go of other distractions and focus on the story allowing the drawings to emerge a wealth of interesting material can emerge.

Dr Burns suggests that there are universal patterns of doodle symbolism. "Even at their simplest, the idle jottings we repeat in the margins of our notebooks can evoke childhood memories and associations that provide clues even to our obsessions."

As designed by nature, human individuals always feel the need to be engaged in a productive action. Every time we have to stand still and stiff, we long for moving. Isn't it that what Mother Nature gave us hands for? Working?! Even if we just fiddle, fidget or do pen spinning, we need to divert our hands.



Dr Robert Burns, former director of the Institute for Human Development in Seattle studied doodles to use them to diagnose emotional problems of clinical parents, doodles reveal ideas locked in our head“ ([Blog or Die Trying](#))

In [Global Citizens Creative Arts Text](#) we talked of the work of Fiona Foley and how looking at the past can bring up unpleasant and uncomfortable feelings. This is called [Cognitive Dissonance](#).

We talked about the way that Foley provided writing booths where people could sit just to think things over.

So for the purposes of this listening exercise we have adopted Foley’s didactic style and by asking the students to doodle while a story is read to them. The class may want to choose an audio book together or there may be a pressing need to listen to a set text.

Whatever type of story it is that you choose to listen to relax into it allowing all kinds of feelings to flow into the drawings and doodles.

Happy, sad and uncomfortable all feelings are a part of the fabric that creates our world. Allow it all to flow through the pen as together students and teacher listen and work with the material.

It is anticipated that by the end of the sessions the students will have some interesting visually inspiring material captured in their journals. This material might be private so they may wish to decline talking about their work during

critique and this is perfectly acceptable. Some students might be burning to talk about the story and the works they have created. This is natural because it is not uncommon for students to have a heightened listening experience when they work this way. Both reactions are to be valued because it is the depth of the experience and the freedom released that is important for this exercise.

Resources:

- [Learning to Work with Critique](#)

[All feedback welcome](#)

Email global.citizens.art@gmail.com with **Feedback about Workheets in the subject line.**