

## **Keep making the work.**

"Keep making the work." And, "Get the work out there." That was the advice I got five years ago from my mentor-by-proxy, photographer Ray Metzker.

The wisdom of that succinct advice has lately become clear to me [even if I didn't make it so clear to you as I fumbled through Thursday night's program, minus my PowerPoint presentation; and (much worse) minus any "Plan B"].

As artists, we are involved in an uncertain occupation: Will the next piece I make be any good? Will what I create amount to anything worthwhile?

There is no way we can know for certain, of course (although we can increase our odds by using quality materials, and so on). We keep on trying because, by nature we are creative individuals. We attempt things - again and again, and with no guarantee of success - and WHY? Because we love the activity our artmaking involves us in.

For me, the activity, the effort, the attempting, the engagement, the making of the work - the MAKING of the work - is where the purest pleasure, and greatest satisfaction, lies. In expressing ourselves, we are fulfilling ourselves.

As artists, we do what we do because we love what we do.

And is that "worthwhile?" I'd say so.

Nietzsche, the German philosopher, said, "Hope is a greater stimulator of life than any realized dream could ever be."

I hope the next thing I make will be the best thing I have ever made. Don't we all?

And isn't that why we all keep trying?

"Get the work out there." This doesn't happen by itself either. We have to make it happen. And when we feel ready, we want to get it out there the best way we know how. Then, having made the attempt, we cross our fingers and hope for the best. (I love the period between entering my work into something, or applying for something, and getting a response; I love the promise that interval holds.)

We cross our fingers because it is now out of our hands; we can't control the outcome in the same way we can with our artmaking. And this is where serendipity comes in - will the juror be sympathetic to the medium we work in? etc., etc., etc. (and there are ways we can increase our odds here, too, like, doing some research into the juror's background and biases; entering media-specific competitions; and so on).

I make the work because I owe that to myself - to get some pleasure from life! I get the work out there because I owe that to the work. The fruits of our best efforts deserve one more push: out into the world.