



Exploring

Self, Community and Nature with chance, coincidence, accident, Unconscious Intelligence by making objects as compasses, tools of personal exploration from *The Casual Alchemist* by Daniel Mack

The helical twist of our 3 Living Realities: The Imagined, The Perceived, The Remembered.

It changes. Needs reviewing, refreshing by causally Looking In, Out, Back and Ahead.

These are not tasks, but invitations, idyls to “kindle magic in an unmysterious world .”

Joseph Stella

Casual Alchemy Characteristics



CURIOSITY-DRIVEN: Wonder Room motif

LOOSE PARTS: just have interesting stuff around and see what happens

ALLOWS NEEDS to be revealed

ALWAYS in “course-correction”

STAY SIMPLE

INDIRECT: known by absence, effect, *like magic*

GUIDED DISCOVERY:
that fine balance between teaching and learning styles



ELLIPTICAL, REFRACTED Style of learning

KALIEDOSCOPIC: same pieces keep realigning

WHY DO THIS?

“Bidden or not bidden, the gods arrive.”

... in accident, disguise, chance, coincidence, events

... alone, in pairs, triples or mobs

***You’ve been
jolted, bumped,
injured or just
sensed a Shift.***

***You want to
Adjust.***

***You have the
time and
interest to
PLAY more.***

***You want
access to more
Energy***

***You want to
tell a truth
about nature***

and human nature *Walking in Three Worlds David Horton*

***You are aware of hungers, tasks put off
too long.***

***You want to see, feel and reveal the less visible; to hear
and speak the less spoken. This is called “flow”, Magic.***

You want safe practice with chaos, transition, intuition

You are recognizing your NEEDS:



Making helps discover and express what we're Needing. There are Four Deep Needs, and maybe two others. ***The Need for WONDER, STORIES, KRAFTING, THE CARNAL and maybe the Need to HEAL and the Need for COMMUNITY***

Need for Wonder, Awe and Play

Wonder is simply the opportunity to admire the world for its vitality, complexity and relentlessness. It's the chance to feel **WOW!** It's also called *numina*. -that momentary amazement at being here. Working consciously with natural materials stimulates and addresses this need for contact with other realities. This capacity for wonder or appreciation is at the core of creativity, of making. Wonder involves ambiguity. *Oh, it's this... and that.... And THAT!*" It's the capacity to flip, flicker between parts of realities. ***Life Drifts***. Play is related to wonder. Much play is only ***entertainment or recreation***... broad, but shallow ways of spending time. This kind of play is profound or infinite Play. Open to Chance, Accident, Magic, relinquishing control

Need for Stories:

We are always in stories, figuring out the story lines. Kurt Vonnegut describes the proto story as "***man in hole; man gets out of hole***". All daily lives are greater and lesser stories, (often being told as they happen on the cell phone) Stories, even mundane ones, are all threads in the vital myth-making needed to live. But it is especially the ***Deep Stories*** we are searching for. By choice or not, we all hunt the ***daimon***, that other self, the true self eclipsed during the first part of life as the bright sun of socialization and expectations cooked us. The daimon waits, along with many other lesser "s'elves" for the cue to step back on our stage. We must have the

stories to know who we are and who we can become and to stay in touch with the mystical around us.

Objects and object-making are vital ways of keeping the Stories going. *Things help*, allowing us to of revisit, revise, repair, update and expand our stories. The Basic Story is always still there, but it can always, always grow more.

Drawn Inward? Building, unearthing the Stories of ***Who You Are? Where you Came From*** Humans are story-based. Our own, others, interactions What are your various Lineages?

Need for the Carnal:

Whatever else we are, we are animals. Contact with the earth, air, water, fire, light and dark, cold and heat is urgent. We need reminders of sensuality, awakened and emphasized sense experiences. (Richard Louv “nature deficit disorder.”) Carl Jung referred to the “Bush Soul” This need also includes encounters with Natural Time. Unlike technological time, in organic time, things are not always available when you want them. There are seasons. There is waiting and planning. There is accommodation to using what is available here and now. If you are Vexed, pre-occupied? Focus on it! It’s your portal in. We have a ***need for the Feral***, the Risky, the Disturbing. The Disorderly. Nature holds and reflects that for us. Humans are hard-wired with the organic and experience distress in the relentless presence of the technological. Making with natural materials explores expresses and feeds this need.

Need for Krafting/Making: (German for strength) is just the innate thirst to learn to do something more, new, active and different. It is about curiosity, skills and developing competence. More importantly, it is our way of affirming the need and our capacity for Transformation. We make to remind ourselves that we change. Differentiate between alternative approaches to making: the bricoleur and the craftsman. Mastery is overrated. **Casual Alchemy centers on Making as the Way:**

In times of Destruction, Create Something. Maxine Kingston
In times of Creation, Destroy Something. Anon

Making-Based Approach is a fundamental non-verbal form of communication. Making likely preceded language. It connects into the brain along different paths than speaking or writing does. It's a way to escape the velvet tyranny of words.

YOU ALREADY HAVE THE BASICS

The Eye: It knows. Right away, it sizes up. It has a sense of beauty, proportion, safety. It winces and twinkles at the rights and wrongs of making. Trust your eye to guide you in selecting - seeing-. Everybody sees differently and each of our eyes sees things from a slightly different perspective. Your eye is the ally in designing and making.



The Hand is the Proto-Tool with its strength and near-infinite motions to grasp, turn, angle, pose, position, twist, grab, discard... Units of measurement are hand-based: the inch, a pinch, a handful, two-fingers. Remember hands are not perfect; they are different sizes, fingers have been cut and healed oddly; fingers curl and stiffen... Strength comes and goes. Most tools are hand helpers.



The Body: The Body provides the frame of reference, the viewpoint on the world and the physical connection to convey unspoken messages to our fellows. The body is a rich grammar of emotion and action. The gesture of the arm, the foot, the tilted head, the open chest... Body language is a fundamental part of making.

Magical Thinking. To ask "What if I did it another way, and yet another?" It's the Queen of Hearts talking to the Alice in us all. That one key feature of Homo Sapiens is the capacity and perhaps, need, to imagine what does not yet exist.

The Maker's Attitude: *Live like there are gods in everything.* See yourself as a **Researcher**, an experimenter. Your life is a laboratory Assume that everyone you see, everywhere you go, everything you do is an important project. Key indicators are coincidence, accident, frustration, annoyances, weather, anxieties, close calls, hunches distraction, digressions and intuition ... Greet them like friends; learn more about them; don't ignore them

Making is seeing, finding, arranging, disassembling, reassembling; Fitting geometries onto natural materials to retain animation of nature and indication of handwork. It is creating a simple understructure and an elaborated over structure with the Low Tech, the Casual, the Common, the Ordinary. We use regular materials irregular ways.... irregular materials-regular ways, select-re-position- combine- enlarge. These are the Alchemic Ways: engaging the head, heart and hand, the technical, intuitive and spiritual By exploring the powers of the ephemeral, the accidental, chance, the coincidental, the casual, allowing for Guided Discovery, "Kindling" *We are Playing!*



Making is larger and more universal than art, closer to what John Cage says: "**Art is about self-alteration, not self-expression**". Morse Peckham went further, calling art-making the opportunity to practice coping with disorder and the unsettling experiences of life. Celts honored Makers as Seers and Healers. Their objects healed us by making things that worked with the disturbing themes of life: balance-imbalance, center-off-center, beauty-violence, grief.

Make Meaning!

"The poet's labor is to struggle with the meaninglessness and silence of the world until he can force it to mean; until he can make the silence answer and the Non-being be."

Archibald MacLeish Poetry and Experience (1961)

How do you Make Meaning in Your Life?

What do you already make? food, objects, deals, trouble, time?

What ways are you a Maker:

homemaker, smithy, bricoleur, tinker, bodger add more! Do you putz? futz? putter? diddle?

Making is simply creating **patterns on materials**, ordering and reordering by adding *more* or *subtracting* something, or a combination of the two. It can be done with tools or just your hands, outside, inside, anywhere, anytime.

Making is not a linear or progressive activity. You are looking for the Portal of the Moment. They change and shift. Your intuition will get drawn to one or some of these approaches more than others. Be alert to changing opportunities to look behind the visible, the evident... at the borders, the folds, the cracks. We want to quiet the critic, the clock-watcher, efficiency expert, the Product Developer, the Utilitarian. This is a chance to meet the reptile brain.

Making Meditations

INWARD, OUTWARD, DOWNWARD, UPWARD

Look over this collection of items like it's a menu in a local restaurant and you are hungry. You can do these alone or with others and share work in progress.



Start with a Deep Breath or two.

Recognize a vital intention, concern, interest, person, part of your body.

Honor Today's Moods/Curiosities

Scrying looking into something shiny: water, fire, mirror. Notice Shadows, Smells, Temperatures.



Derive just wandering, perhaps getting lost



Also called **Forest-Bathing** “to relax in the forest”

TOOLS-MATERIALS

EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE of
COMMON HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS/TOOLS ,
Again, it's the *Sacred within the Ordinary*

***Look over these lists Which ones jump out?
What can they mean and help say?***

penknife	sandpaper	clippers	saw	paper cutter
needle	drill glue(s)	string-yarn		band aids
wire	dental floss	markers		camera
paper	sticks	rasp		hammer
tape	pencil	stapler		pins
stirrers	clamps	flower frogs		paper clips
feathers	driftwood	cards		butcher paper
buttons	wax	bark		bones
ash	thumbprint	charcoal		rusted objects
stones	Black dirt	envelope corners		black sand
lint	old stamps	road kill		dust
shells	spills/stains	skeletal leaves		fingernails
leaves	mesh bags	flowers		egg cartons
sticks	rubber bands	window sill bugs		small containers
stickers	bits of mirror	fruit		

SIMPLE ACTIONS of MAKING

Wandering	Noticing	Playing	Finding
Gleaning	Collecting	Arranging	Stacking
Storing	Sharing	Altering	Editing
Violating	Cutting	Heating	Coloring
Shedding	Marking	Boiling	Dyeing
Scratching	Piercing	Carving	Charring
Pounding	Shaping	Breaking	Sewing
Knitting	Defacing	Joining	Hiding
Binding	Bundling	Weaving	Drilling
Repairing	Fixing	Recycling	Gifting
Collage	Assemblage	Re-Purposing	Tearing
Emptying	Remembering	Filling	<i>more??</i>

Intuitive Making Activities 3-D and 2-D

Let your Curiosity help choose

Use at least three elements. combining what may seem like opposites...or something Seasonal-Sensory-contrast/comparison like in Haiku.

Do a few at once so no one becomes too important
Just do it; Do it again. Watch and learn from other people.

Ritualize making: Have a place, a space and time.
This does not have to be a studio or workshop. *An Altar?*

Making does not have to be Grand. See how little you can actually make something with and still have meaning.

What Primitive Crafting allows

to represent objects or ideas rather than depict them, Abstraction, exaggeration, Flatness and geometric designs of the figure, particularly facial and bodily proportions favored over naturalistic representation ... *like the difference between prose and poetry.*



Simple Selection: seeing, collecting, presenting on a block, cd case, jar, slide sheet, a ketchup cup from Burger King.



Emerging Shapes *casually* rework an egg carton, paperclip, candy wrapper, twist tie.



Objects from Ephemera

from things that may not last. Perhaps ***Shadow Drawings***. *Look it up*

Bundling/Wrapping with sticks, string or yarn

Stone Work shaping with a pocket knife, riffler and sandpaper

Arrangements balance, placement, color, texture, surprise and *The Temporary*. at Beach? in bushes, under trees. Stacking?

Figures from bark, sticks, wire, mache

Tools for real and sur-real tasks in Wraps

Pedestals, Hooks, Shelves from sticks/slabs

Joining found materials using yarn, wire, string, thread, floss, paper clips, rubber bands, twist ties

Carving with a pocket knife onto a found stone or bark: shaping, smoothing with sandpaper



Accident Use Scraps, Seasonals, Spills, Treat Stains as divinations. Make a deck of such cards.

Shedding re-purposing your collections/mementoes

Play with ephemerals, the Transients: rain, snow, ice, dawn, fog, smoke, twilight, water, air, smoke, shadow, flowers, charcoal, leaking, the aromatic, something only glimpsed,



Arrangements of stones and fallen branches; placing found objects together, somewhere, in a pleasing way--on each other, in a loom, on a chain, in loose weave burlap



Empties Get a box, can, jar. *What to do?* some Story, some truth about nature and human nature.

Imaginal Tools

Add Things to a stick.
Use string, wire, dental floss Maybe add color.

How little of something do you need to make a statement?



Appropriate/RePurpose Common Forms: Name Tags, Stirrers, Masks, Caps, Cards, band aids

Violate Heating, Coloring, Cutting, Tearing, Marking, Boiling, Scratching, Piercing, Pounding, Charring

Explore *The Matrix*: interlaced, interwoven: *Webs, Nests, Mesh Hanging Chain/ Tree Loom*

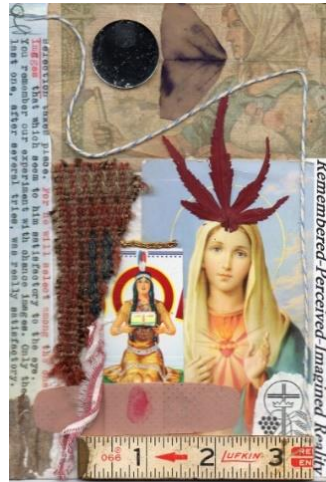
Mask Forms: Making a new identity, occasional Beheading/Masking/Redressing

Worn clothing: T-Shirts, hats, jackets.

Marking on cards, accordion books, large communal murals, in notebooks with dirt, inks, smoke, thumbprints, pounding with fresh leaves, flowers, berries, ground stones

Try home-made brushes from reeds, feathers, grasses

Cards are small playing card size - 2¼” x 3¼”. They are a flexible, modest, fast way to respond—***non-verbally***—to some experience, theme, direction. whatever is comfortable with. Maybe put a Bandaid on a card and see where you go.



Collaging with found and saved materials with mud, ash charcoal, smoke and accidental shapes, stains, spills from coffee, juice. **Pounding** flowers/leaves **Grinding** Creek stones into pigments



Bird from a bit of garden dirt

Pause after a Round of Making



Look for Patterns in your Materials and Making What themes, stories, myths, colors shapes, sizes seem to repeat?

Who Visited while you were making? dropping in to admire, to comment, to judge? In what ways do these activities keep you connected with father, mother, older self, other Selves and disconnect you? What is getting Practiced? What STORY is getting Told and Validated? Imagine these objects are *spiritual decoys*: What/Who are they trying to attract and ***WHY?*** ***Were you*** uncomfortable? surprised? delighted? Impatient? Dreamy Proud?

Does your work create dialogue/interaction with people? or ***distinguish and separate*** you from others?

Did you keep it Casual! *Did it flow or was it Lurching?*



*Aware of How Little was needed ?
How Fast it could be done ?
This is a beach stone, sanded with
one end oiled a bit*

Consider metaphors What else are you making? Are your objects ***ALSO*** doorways, windows, bridges, coffins?

Might you GIFT what you have made to someone?

START YOUR Book of Shadows

the record of your life with magic



A private record of encounters, inspirations, alterations, explorations, violations, exfoliation, sheddings. encounters with the less seen; There are Active/Passive, Conscious/Unconscious forces at play, often to be discovered in this process of doing The Book of Shadows. It's *chthonic*, Indirect and Lunar; *The moon sheds light on unconscious patterns*. It is the portal to the unconscious, emotional field and needs, nourishment, home, and usually reflects the ways we were mothered cared for and indicates the kind if care we can offer others. It includes memories, dreams, regrets; Your encounters with enchantment and despair

Crisis or Depression often help energize the process of doing the Grimoire Depression is sign of erring direction, of loss of contact with Soul; we are warned with depression of ***“unexpected turbulence”*** that may actually serve to awaken us.

What might appear in your Book of Shadows?

YOUR OBJECTS What do you make? collect? ? Assume that these objects are *magical decoys*, lures, bait... ***Who or What are they/you trying to attract?*** Look in dresser and desk drawers for those casually saved shards of your life Revive, re-purpose them in service of this adjusted story you are forging in collages and assemblages. What do you put on Pinterest? Instagram, Facebook?

YOUR BODY What part of your body seems most prominent? A movement with an arm or leg or hand? Your Walk, that gesture? A sound? a smell? Your symptoms, diseases? That Poison Ivy, That Gout, that Back...

YOUR FAMILY Inherited family stories, wisdom, jokes, memories “we always” , Family Tendencies, symptoms, joys, grudges? Whose voice says: “Never good enough” or “Good Job!” What Objects keep you in contact with other, older, family selves ***Make gifts to ancestors, relatives***

YOUR SPIRITUAL CLANS old ones, new ones. Other “transitionals” children, young parents, Woofers

YOUR TASKS Explore ***Ancestral Karma***

YOUR HABITS What **food** do you eat? cook, buy

YOUR INNER LIFE When do you feel most alive? most dulled? Recall moments of Joy, Awe, Wonder; Re-Visit your grief, hurt, sadness. your “old wounds”... inherited wounds, Irish fatalism, ***Your Shadow?***

YOUR MEMORIES tendencies, ways of seeing, Wounds tools, making, smell, places.

YOUR LIFE STAGE What Transitions are you into? What NEEDS are presenting