

*Although Robert is a painter and not a polymer clay artist, his words apply to all creative endeavors. Substitute brushes for clay tools and it all works. Be sure to check out the letters section at his site.*

*Irish Red*

An old Chinese proverb says:

"Do not grasp the brush before the spirit and the thoughts are concentrated."

This part of the creative process--the beginning part--needs to be handled with the same sort of attention as given to the later stroking. This is where you envision the potential; this is where you sort out the variables for the dish you are about to concoct.

Why go for the same automatic cold rice, when almond gai-ding or egg foo-yong could be in the wok? A list of creative ingredients is valuable. Every artist needs his or her own, and they ought to be reassessed regularly. I'm not saying this is anyway near definitive but right now I'm playing with extenders, texture gels, glazes, giant brushes, wire brushes, combs, plastic scrapers, sponges, little rollers, linen rags. The mere thought of these tools and media when projected onto a blank canvas widens the range of possibilities. With retooling, the compositions, motifs, and passages change as the mind morphs with them.

The possibility of possibilities turns jobs into adventures. Having said that, the thoughtful and intelligent elimination of variables works too. How to simplify; how to have form follow function. The architect's job holds its own joy--and while results and outcomes can't be too finely predicted in a creative process, the payoff is that desire and resolve are better honed in this zone.

Thinking things out in advance also leads to economy and freshness in the production zone. You empower yourself to be casual and fluent. Unpleasant overworking and compositional boo-boos have a better chance of being avoided.

And hey, it's not always easy.

But the idea of all this early thinking and visualizing is to make later activities both more professional and a little easier. And best of all it helps your finished product to look like it was all so easy. And that makes everybody else crazy. And that's the idea.

Best regards,  
Robert

PS: "Easy is right. Begin right and you will be easy. Continue easy and you are right. The right way to go easy is to forget the right way, and forget that the going is easy." --Chuang Tzu

- Esoterica: Economy of process is improved by re-addressing your familiar order of doing things.
- Take satisfaction in the idea that every individual work may require or even demand a different order.
- Foreground--background, subject--surround, dark--light, strong--weak, soft--hard, big--small.
- Our minds are made for yin and yang.

If you would like to comment on this letter or give your own thoughts, systems or opinions, please do so by [e-mailing Robert](#).

Purchase a copy of Robert Genn's "The Painter's Keys" - the seminar in a book for artists and all creative people - online at: [http://www.painterskeys.com/purchase\\_TPK.htm](http://www.painterskeys.com/purchase_TPK.htm)

To see some art work by Robert Genn, click on the thumbnails below:



"Self Portrait with Emily"



Robert and Emily in his studio



Robert painting on location