

Making Your Mark

The Anatomy of One Illustrator's Success in Publishing

by Peter H. Reynolds

I feel blessed. Blessed - and slightly incredulous.

I sit here wondering - how did this happen to me? Peter Reynolds - the kid who just loved to doodle. Doing what I loved. Loving what I did. Now here I am with one of the best literary agents in NYC, an agent in Hollywood, published work in nearly a dozen of the best publishing houses, with reviews and awards that keep piling up, and my writing and artwork is now being shared around the globe by millions of people - from China to the UK, from the US to Australia. It's a bit dizzying.

But how did it happen? In my 43 years I have journeyed around the globe and met countless creative people. Many more accomplished than I may ever be. But still too many who are ripe with creativity who never pursued their talent the way they should have. Creativity delayed. Creativity shelved. Dreams boxed away.

But this art thing is hard. So many of us have been thwarted by the specter and tales fed to us as children of "the starving artist" and the well-intentioned, but deadly advice to pursue "something to fall back on - something that will pay the bills." Fear eats dreams. Especially many timid, artistic souls who are searching to add beauty to this world. The older I get, the more I realize how much courage it takes to lead the life you were meant to live. And how we as educators and life-long learners need to nurture the spirit needed to fuel a creative journey.

In fact, this theme of "navigating one's true potential" is a constant theme in my work. The little boy in my book *The North Star* shows just how lost one can get by following the expected path, other people's paths - and then he discovers a way to navigate his own, authentic journey by discovering his own personal stars that guide him. In my newest book *The Dot*, Vashti is the obstinate little girl in art class who refuses to draw because she simply thinks she can't - and the teacher who helps her launch an amazing creative



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journey by encouraging her to “make your mark and see where it takes you.” It's hard, but you have to start somewhere. Trust your instincts - voyage bravely.

And here I am - making my mark - in publishing, broadcast, etc. But my mission really is to help inspire others on their creative journey. So I'll use this opportunity to share some tips on how I managed to scale and climb over that steep and sometimes daunting publishing wall. At the very least, I hope I simply help you feel inspired to paint the painting that needs YOU to bring it life - or the poem that you keep meaning to pen.

Peter H. Reynolds Eight Tips for Creative Publishing!

1) Keep a Journal.

This may be the single most important thing I ever did to ensure I captured my daily creative thoughts. Many times I would write letters to my daughter Sarah - sharing how I saw the world. This is a great way to focus your writing and spark new ideas. In fact, I drew my book *The North Star* in my journal. The trick is just getting it down - and then sharing it.

2) Just Do It.

It's the old Nike thing - "just do it" - it's true. I tell kids who ask me how they can do what I do, "Just keep practicing - draw everyday - you just keep going - it's the only way to get better and find your own style."

3) Publishing-Lite.

I get nearly daily requests for help from people trying to "get into the business."

And I advocate for very low-level self-publishing. Take your story or picture book - even in rough form - photocopy and staple it. Now do a couple of things.

a.) Share!

Give a couple copies of your book away. Strategically give copies to 2 or 3 teachers - whose age target matches what level your story is at. Or sell them for 50 cents a copy.

b.) Try Print-on-Demand.

If you're feeling more ambitious, do the web print-on-demand thing (Xlibris or CafePress.) If you can sell 25 copies to friends and relatives, then it's a sign that you've got a support network ready to cheer you on. The real test will be when you get requests for additional copies.

4) Go Back to School!

If you're writing children's book, the more important feedback is from teacher and kids. Go to classrooms - read your work out loud and talk about how you write and/or draw. Educators love showing kids process. Share with them - what's your inspiration, your favorite books. Model your curiosity, exploration and discovery. By reading your work out loud, you get the reality test - what words are working, what pictures get the laugh or the "ooh" and "ahh."



5) Set Goals.

If you don't commit to your creative expression - time slips away and takes with it all the possible art, words and creation that you could have brought to life. Tell yourself - "This holiday I am going to have my story done for my children." Carve out time - schedule it in - make it a priority!

6) Create Your Ritual.

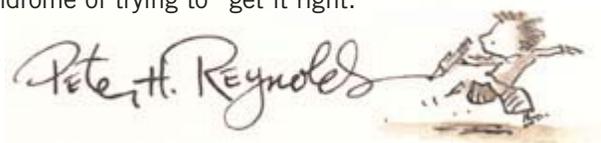
My bedtime has become my ritual for my daily creativity retreat. I have everything there by my bedside - my little altar - blank journals, pencils and surrounded by books. Stack of books with words. Stack of books with no words. Invitations to be inspired - and...

7) Unleash Imagination.

I recently met an artist whose wife and children are also quite artistic. As accomplished as he was with realistic drawing, he struggled with one big challenge - imagination. When his kids asked him to draw a dragon - he was stumped. If it didn't exist in front of him, he couldn't draw it. I told him - "Think what is it similar to? You do know how to draw a dragon. You can draw a horse, you can draw wings - now, paint it green and you're half way there! Block everything else out and only see that drawing in your head." I'm drawing in my head.

8) Be Uncareful!

Sometimes people never start a project because they're afraid they'll make a mistake or it wouldn't look perfect. This happens with kids and adults - in art classes and in the workplace. My book *The Dot* tackles that fear head on and I'm delighted to hear of so many people resonating with the message, including art educators around the world who have seen kids pack away their artistic selves, year after year, until only "the class artist remains." I'm out to change that - and part of my mantra is telling kids (and grown up kids) to be uncareful! Don't worry about doing it perfectly - just do it, get it out, experiment, enjoy the happy accidents you'll inevitably make. My next book *Ish*, part of *The Dot* creativity trilogy, will tackle how to handle that paralyzing syndrome of trying to "get it right."



Peter H. Reynolds Background

Peter H. Reynolds' award-winning publishing career includes the new hit book called *The Dot*, which was released last October by Candlewick Press and printed in eleven languages, is in its fourth print run, and is winning a string of major awards, including the Oppenheim Platinum Toy Award, Borders Books' ORIGINAL VOICES 2004 Award, and the Christopher Medal. *The Dot* has also received starred reviews in industry bible Publishers Weekly, Booklist Journal and American School Library Journal. Reynolds other work includes his cornerstone work *The North Star*, the best-selling *Judy Moody* series written by Megan McDonald, Eleanor Estes' *The Alley* and *The Tunnel of Hugsy Goode*, Judy Blume's *Fudge* series, and Ellen Potter's *Olivia Kidney*. His new book *Ish* will arrive in bookstores September 2004.



Peter has shared his media/publishing ventures with his identical twin brother Paul. Peter and Paul Reynolds founded and run children's media company FableVision (www.fablevision.com) based in Watertown, MA. FableVision's mission is to use media, storytelling & technology to reach, support and inspire ALL learners. The FableVision team includes a diverse group of educators, writers, animators, instructional designers, programmers, interactive media specialists, as well as academic and research partners. For more details on Peter Reynolds' publishing career, browse his newly launched site <http://www.peterhreynolds.com>.

For more Peter H. Reynolds Creativity Tips:

http://www.fablevision.com/education/creativity_tips/index.html

Peter H. Reynolds' personal site:

<http://www.peterhreynolds.com>

Peter H. Reynolds' children's media company:

<http://www.fablevision.com>

Peter H. Reynolds bookshop:

<http://www.dedhambluebunny.com>



The Physics of Lightfast Color

By David Pyle

Director of Technical Education for Winsor & Newton
From *What Every Artist Needs to Know About Paint and Color*
Kraus, Publications (c)2000

Light is energy. And light, even though it travels at an invariable speed (most of the time, at least, but that's a topic or another time and space), it does a number of different things as it dances and ricochets about.

Energy is made of little packets, or "quanta," of energy, which oscillate when moving around. When oscillating widely, they're called "infrared" energy. If the rate of oscillation tightens up a bit, they become red light. And if that red light happens to bounce into your eye, or my eye, or anybody's eye that happens to be sensitive to energy at that particular frequency, the "color cones" at the back of your eyeballs get stimulated, sending a specific signal up the optic nerve to our brain. At that point, our brain says, "Hey! There's a red light" or a Rome apple or marinara sauce or cadmium red on some painting.

Shorten up the oscillation even more, and it becomes visible as orange, then yellow, then green, then blue, then violet, and finally, ultraviolet. And our eyes are set up to be stimulated by all of those frequencies, recognizing color, until we get to the ultraviolet, which is where energy frequencies pass out of the visible spectrum and move on to x-rays and gamma rays and all kinds of cool, high-energy kinds of things.

If energy is bouncing into your eye, it's bouncing into other things too: most specifically, for the purposes of our discussion, a few select particles of pigment on the surface of a painting. Light from the sun is full of energy moving at all of the frequencies that make up the visible spectrum and more (The same is true, in varying degree, of energy that comes from artificial light, like light bulbs). When that energy smacks up against a particle of phthalocyanine pigment, for example, all of the energy except some at a very specific frequency is absorbed. The energy that isn't absorbed, and that bounces back out into the environment, may well find its way into your eye, stimulating your color cones, and making you say, "Hey! That's phthalo blue!"

To this point, our discussion on the topic of light and energy and pigment and eyes has been quite active, filled with words like “bouncing” and “smacking” and the like. That’s on purpose, because the processes of light absorption and reflection and any subsequent stimulation are most active, indeed. So active and violent, in fact, that if a pigment particle lacks the required degree of structural integrity, it’s likely to be blown to smithereens.

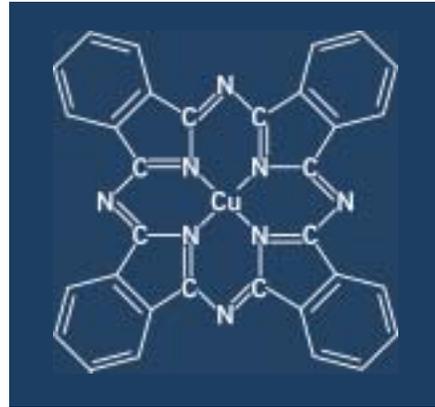
Take a look at the chemical diagram for phthalocyanine (see Figure A, to the right). It’s a symmetrical, well constructed piece of work. With all of those double bonds and rings reinforcing each other in a well balanced structure, this is a pigment just made to withstand constant bombardment of energy. And as long as this molecular compound keeps the structure shown, it will continue to absorb and reflect energy in a way that characterizes phthalo blue. If this molecule is altered, or broken or blown apart, it will participate in the absorption and reflection of energy in a completely new way. It will no longer work like phthalocyanine blue. It will, in fact, fade.

And that’s how pigment and color work. The pigments that have the requisite structural integrity to withstand the constant, brutal bombardment of light energy, like the phthalocyanines, and the umbers and cadmiums, are called “light-fast.” Those that do not, like the one used to make genuine alizarin crimson, crack and fall to bits under the assault. They fade away and are called “fugitive.”

Should every image or every painting be produced with the express intent that it lasts for centuries? That’s not for me to answer. Certainly, there’s been lots of artwork-in particular over the last twenty-five years-that has been produced with the understanding that it will be transitory. The remarkable installations of Christo and Jeanne-Claude are an example of long years and astonishing energy invested into ephemeral projects, each one created with the understanding that the finished installation will be in place for but short period of time. When asked why the works remain for only a few days, Jeanne-Claude says, “It’s much like with childhood. Because you know it will not last, it is all the more precious. We want to endow our work with that quality of love and tenderness for what we know will not be here tomorrow.”

But even Christo and Jeanne-Claude can’t avoid the permanence issue. The chief strategy for funding their installa-

tions is in the production of working drawings and collages, works that serve to help in the conceptualization, design, and engineering process, but that also are sold to museums and collectors. “But they (the drawings and collages) are not the project,” says Jeanne-Claude. “They are about the project. Just like the photographs of the completed work are not the work, they are about the work.”



Courtesy of Winsor & Newton.

Figure A *The chemical structure of phthalocyanine pigment.*

The decision about intended permanence rightly rests with the artist. But there has also been a huge volume of work that has proven to be highly transient, and quite unintentionally. And that doesn’t include the countless paintings, handprints, and color cut-outs made by children that are fading into oblivion upon the walls of parents and grandparents the world over. Childhood, like the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, may be precious and fleeting. But there’s every reason to expect the relics that follow in their wake to be of value and to be long lasting.

Whether your concern with paints and colors comes exclusively out of your interests as an artist or teacher, or if there’s parental sentiment, as well, then there’s no substitute for understanding what makes permanent color. When your intent is to produce work that will last past your, and your children’s, lifetime, then a clear understanding of the paint film, how it forms, and how pigment remains intact under the daily assault from light will help you do exactly that.

*In our next issue will include another excerpt from David Pyle’s book *What Every Artist Needs to Know About Painting and Color* explaining how you can test for lightfastness.*

Choosing a Watercolor Paper

With so many different types of watercolor papers to choose from, it can be difficult figuring out which one you should buy. There is the finish to think about, the weight of the paper, and various fiber contents to choose from. I don't think there is any one formula that will tell you, "this is the paper to use," but I'm hoping we can give you some direction to help make your choice easier.

Watercolor paper comes in three different finishes; Hot Press, Rough, and Cold Press. Cold Press is the most popular finish because it has a light texture which can be incorporated into your painting design. The textured is great for dry brush techniques, but is also great with washes. It is the most universal finish in watercolor paper, not too textured and not too smooth. The majority of artists use cold press.

Hot press has a very smooth surface and is great for fine details and smooth washes. The fibers have been compressed on the paper machine to create this smooth surface so paint won't easily penetrate into the paper. Washes will remain on the surface a little longer than the other two finishes which can create some interesting effects and hard edges.

Rough watercolor paper is highly textured and is a great surface to use with paintings that include subjects with texture such as landscapes. A wash on this paper allows the paint to puddle more in the valleys, leaving less pigment on the peaks, revealing the texture of the paper to a greater degree. The heavy texture is better for dry-brush because the peaks are larger and catch the paint better, allowing the white of the sheet to show through in the valleys. Mixing the two techniques can create some interesting textures in a final painting.

Watercolor paper also comes in different weights, sizes, and formats such as sheets, pads and blocks. Generally the heavier the weight, the less the sheet buckles when water is applied to the paper. Because paper is made with water and fiber, the fibers shrink after the paper has been dried on the machine. It's like a cotton sweater that gets dried too much and shrinks. However, unlike the sweater, when you add water again the fibers will expand. This is why watercolor paper buckles. To prevent buckling, lighter weight sheets should be stretched. Generally, 140 lb (300 gsm) or lighter paper should be stretched. The 300 lb. (638 gsm) is heavy enough so that it doesn't need to be stretched.

When using single sheets or pads of paper, your best bet is to stretch the sheet by soaking it in water and then taping it down to a sturdy board. As the paper dries, the paper becomes taut between the taped edges.

Paper that comes in a block is bound on all four sides. The paper may buckle as you paint on it, but by leaving the sheet in the block to dry, it will become flat again. Blocks are great when you are on-location or in a classroom setting. You don't have to carry a board with a stretched sheet of watercolor paper, you can work right on the block. Once the painting is dry, remove the top sheet by slipping a dull knife in the opening and carefully slide it around the gummed edge of the sheet.

Watercolor paper is made with many different fibers like cellulose (wood) fibers, cotton fibers, synthetic, or a combination of fibers. Alpha cellulose fibers are acid free, contain very little lignin and can be used for most applications. Cotton fibers are longer and withstand scrubbing and reworking better, plus they are naturally lignin free. Papers containing cotton fiber are by far the best and we recommend using these papers for final paintings. Refer to our Winter 2004 eNewsletter for more information on cotton fiber and longevity.

Combination fibers are papers that contain more than one kind of fiber. We offer Aquarius II Watercolor which has cotton and synthetic fibers. Even though this is a lightweight watercolor paper, the synthetic fiber helps reduce buckling so the paper doesn't need stretching.

Strathmore offers several grades of watercolor paper in various finishes. You can read about our various watercolor papers on the watercolor page of our website. We have provided the handy guide on the following page to help you choose the right paper for your next project. We would suggest that you experiment with different papers and surfaces. Each painting may require a different surface, and trying them out is the best way to tell which paper you might like for that particular subject. So don't just stick with one surface, try different papers and have some fun with it.

Consult the Strathmore Watercolor Paper Guide on the next page to find the appropriate paper for your needs.

Strathmore Watercolor Paper Guide	STUDENT	INTERMEDIATE	PROFESSIONAL	ACID FREE	COTTON FIBER	MIXED MEDIA	DETAILED ILLUSTRATION	DRY BRUSH	SCRAPING	COLOR LIFTING
300 Series Watercolor	X			X		G	NR	G	G	G
400 Series Watercolor		X		X		G	NR	VG	G	VG
500 Series Imperial Cold Press		X	X	X	X	E	NR	E	E	E
500 Series Imperial Hot Press		X	X	X	X	E	VG	G	E	E
500 Series Imperial Rough		X	X	X	X	E	NR	E	E	E
500 Series Aquarius II*		X	X	X	X	E	G	VG	G	VG
500 Series Gemini Cold Press		X	X	X	X	E	NR	E	E	E
500 Series Gemini Rough		X	X	X	X	E	NR	E	E	E

*Aquarius II is a blend of cotton and synthetic fibers.

Graduate Keepsake Journal Online Project Sheet

Graduation time is coming up quickly and we have a project that will remind you of those special days for years to come. Our Graduate Keepsake Journal is a great way to preserve the memories of your final school days. It is easy to make and looks great as well.

This journal uses our black Artagain paper which is great to use with gel pens. The rich black color is a great background for gel colors and is acid free so you can mount photographs on it as well. The pad is available in 6"x9" so all you need to do is tear the sheets out of the pad. There is no need to cut down the pages. If you want white pages instead of black, just use the Bristol pad paper by cutting them in half to make 6"x9" pages.

Visit our website www.strathmoreartist.com to print out the full instructions to this handsome journal.

