

When Inspiration Shits



The inspiration-sucking Ghoul of Creative Death came recently to roost on my shoulder. He came without warning, and without invitation. I didn't notice him at first. He crept in quietly and unannounced. Slowly, my usual pace of beading and designing waned. I figured I was just a tad tired, perhaps a tad stressed from my day job. But the feeling kept getting worse, until creatively speaking, I became a catatonic jellyfish without the talent to create a simple square. Heck, I couldn't even draw a line, straight or otherwise. There wasn't a bead that interested me. I had no inspiration to create the simplest of patterns.

What scared me was that I didn't care. What was worse was that I didn't care if I ever cared again.

At first, I struggled against the Ghoul. I desperately looked at all the images that I filed. Images to be used for tapestries, images for some ideas to fly with, and images that are meant to inspire me. None moved me.

Patterns in various states of readiness filed in my "In Progress" folder looked hopeless to me. I wondered what I liked in the images to begin with. They looked like they were beyond any hope of becoming a pattern that would be remotely acceptable to anyone. I thought of the hours I needed to get any one of them "ready" and lost all interest in working on them. It seemed too much effort to put into something I had no clue as to if anyone would like it enough to buy it. Some images never make good bead patterns, everything I started seemed to fit that distinction.

I thought that perhaps I should just bead and forget designing for a while. I went through all of my finished patterns, hoping that ONE of them would inspire me to pick up a needle and thread and start beading. Perhaps an earring or bracelet would be a quick fix and get me in motion again. I could not find one pattern that interested me. Even the ones I remembered classifying as "Gotta do THIS one

myself!!” held no fascination for me. Likewise, nix, nada, no way, on the patterns in the library of beading books and magazines I own. Not a single pattern looked like fun to me.

I looked at my horde of beads. Perhaps inspiration would hit while I looked at all the unique beads I had! I hoped that some of those beads would jump out at me and scream, “Remember the ideas you had when you bought ME”?! I stared for hours. Hours became a day. Then days became a week. Then, I lost track of time.

I had hit bottom. In desperation, I went through catalogues, looked at websites that sold beads, I looked at beadwork on line and went to look at jewelry in stores and galleries in hopes that something, anything, would spark a fire in me. No such luck. I think the Ghoul was laughing his evil laugh.

It appeared that the Ghoul was not here for a visit. I guess I did not notice the moving van he had at the front door the day he first perched on my shoulder. I began to notice that the Ghoul was following my every move, coloring my otherwise bright world with shades of putrid grays. The Ghoul made my mood black. I wondered if I would ever create again. Had I reached the end of my creative rope? Was I “Washed Up”? Had I become a “Has Been”?

Dark, evil thoughts entered my mind. How much money could I get for my bead stash on EBAY? Maybe a bead shop would take what I have. I’ll offer a terrific deal, and take a loss, and still feel rich, that’s how many beads I have accumulated over the years. With the money I would get for all my beads, I could pay off my credit card debt and have enough left over to take an exotic trip somewhere in this wide world! Maybe I could become a Travel Writer! I would simply fade away, quietly, without any fanfare, no announcements, no apologies. I doubted anyone would notice my disappearance. If needed, I was sure that my Ghoul would be all too happy to write my creative epithet. I suspect he would write something like this:

*She cannot design, she cannot bead
It appears she has gone to seed
Take her beads and sell the lot
Use for them she will have not*

Since struggling to find inspiration got me nowhere, I decided not to fight it. What’s a little time to rest, to allow myself to become a non-productive vegetable? Let the creative juices slowly come back, on their own terms. Surely,

the Ghoul will tire of me, as I got more and more BORING with nothing left for him to suck out of me. He would then leave, allowing my creative Muse to come back. By the way...where the hell was she? Probably sunning herself on a beach somewhere. She could at least have sent me an artsy postcard!

I spent time watching TV, something I rarely do, at least not without some beads on my lap. It seemed to me they could use a visit from a creative Muse too! They must have relations of my Ghoul in their midst, judging from the crap that's on the Tube. Only their Ghouls are more mischievous. Their Ghouls lead them to believe they are creating something worthwhile, something with creative genius. While mine simply rendered me motionless without the smallest illusion of thinking I am creative.

I rested, did not worry about my self imposed deadlines and quotas to create patterns and beadwork. I puttered around and did other things, things I never allowed myself the time to indulge in. I discovered that it was a vacation of sorts!

For a few weeks I did next to nothing connected to beadwork. Yes, I created an easy pattern here and there, but I did not pick up a bead and needle. I did not create a pattern that had any sort of challenge for me. But I did not fret about my "slump" in creativity, but rather enjoyed the time off!

Then I noticed that the Ghoul was not really a Ghoul at all. What I thought was a creative blood-sucking monster was in actuality my Muse in disguise. She recognized a need, which I did not. TIME OFF!! She had her way of ensuring that I took that time, to refresh and renew.

What I have learned about these dark times is that all artists experience them at one time or another. And likely even more than once, if they stay in their careers long enough. You cannot not force inspiration and creativity. The more you struggle with it, the more elusive those creative spurts will be. The longer you work, and struggle to keep up with your self imposed workload, the more worn you and your work becomes.

Allow your creative Muse to go on vacation from time to time. Better yet, go on vacation with her! There is nothing like a trip to a far away land, even if it's just the jungle of your own backyard, to bring back creative ideas and the passion you know is always there. Indulge in your well-needed rest then when you are refreshed, you and your Muse will frolic amongst the beads again!