

How to overcome art block with **Oliver Zhu**

by Zadie Martin

Everyone struggles with moving forward from time to time, especially creatives. However, there are methods to overcome these artistic blocks. Over time, each individual finds the strategies unique to them that help them overcome them. When it comes to art block, Junior Oliver Zhu has a few methods that help him. Zhu is an artist who has the talent to sketch anything in front of him.

“ Sometimes I’ll try to copy the style and copy the strokes just to try and practice replicating that type of style.

When Zhu was in elementary school and a beginning artist, copying simpler drawings from books and tv shows allowed him to improve his line confidence and gave him plenty of inspiration. Seeing different styles and methods of creating art allowed Zhu to start out with a more complete understanding of creation and what type of art that he wanted to make,

which at the time was putting his own artistic flair on characters he was already familiar with.

Now that Zhu has been making art for a longer time and has developed niches within drawing, his first tip is searching for inspiration wherever he can get it.

“[My inspiration is] other artworks in general...it could be something online or it could be ancient pottery and stuff. Anywhere you have people trying to express [something meaningful], in terms of visual media, there is potential for inspiration,” said Zhu.

Other times he goes back to his roots and tries copying other art styles. “Sometimes I’ll try to copy the style and copy the strokes just to try and practice replicating that type of style.”

Seeking inspiration from other artists, taking what the artist does well and applying it to your own work will help beginner and advanced artists.

Zhu often finds his inspirations online through social media or through artists sharing their work.



Tisiphone / Oliver Zhu
digital art

“When looking for inspirations I usually single out ones that I think were born out of passion. Think like, a sort of liveliness or effortlessness... I’m not so much invested in the details” This gives a lot more room for artists to add their own touch onto a concept.

When Zhu does get stuck in an art block he tries distracting himself until he feels ready to return to drawing. “To combat that I focus on something else until I can come back to it later and draw.”

Zhu wants to create art that has meaning and so he tries to avoid inspirations that are born without any significance. “I don’t like art styles that don’t feel genuine to me, like something AI generated or something that’s really simplified down. Like the corporate animation style. It feels like you’ve degraded from a stick figure. Or, Things that feel detailed just for the sake of being detailed rather than trying to express something greater.”

Zhu feels called to art that focuses more on the interpretation rather than the detail. To him, art with detail simply for the sake of detail gets muddled and harder to learn through. It also takes away from a central vision of the piece.

“I think there was a time where I really admired detailed work, where it’d be like the smallest pixel brush and smallest lines but I think that I do not prize that anymore.” Zhu tries not to get caught up in this way of thinking because it creates art block and limits what he thinks he’s able to create. Besides that when artists pour their efforts into analytical ways of doing art, their creativity is limited. “For me, I try not to get too caught up in if this angle is right or is this line right.”

Getting caught up in details can headway the process of art block, making creating art a lot harder. Steering clear of obsessiveness will move your art forward.

“Drawing is like gambling and sometimes you lose a lot and you just can’t get it right, the solution is to just stop gambling. Then I’ll come back when I’m ready to draw again.” said Zhu. “I create artwork because it’s cool and creates something beautiful. Ya know bears, they sit down and look at the scenery because it’s beautiful; humans are just like that.”

Combating art block is a challenge for a lot of artists but Zhu knows there are a variety of ways to deal with it. **7**



Untitled / Oliver Zhu
charcoal on paper