



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Want More? Be Like Picasso, Think Outside the Box!

By Doreen Stern, Ph.D.

Imagine yourself a struggling artist, prolific, yet so poor you frequently burn your own paintings to warm the single room you share with your friend. Would you use fine, high-quality oils to create your works of art? Or might you resort to a more mundane product, so you could continue doing what you love?

If you chose the latter response, you would be aligning yourself with one of the most important artists of the 20th century, Pablo Picasso.

According to scientific analysis, Picasso used run-of-the-mill house paints for his works of art. He did so because they were more affordable and created a glossy finish.

His use of house paint didn't affect the price of his paintings, though. His *Garçon à la Pipe* work set a new price record in 2004, when it fetched the staggering amount of \$104 million.

Picasso wasn't trained to be an innovator. On the contrary, his father, a professor of drawing and the curator of a municipal museum, was considered an academic sort of artist. He specialized in the natural depictions of birds and other game. He believed in the value of formal training.

His father saw to it that by the age of 7, Picasso began copying the masters and drawing the human body from plaster casts and live models, which was how artists were trained in the late 19th century. By 13, Picasso had been admitted to the School of Fine Arts in Barcelona. By 16, his father and uncle enrolled him in the Royal Academy of San Fernando.

Although Picasso began employing new colors there—mauves, misty greens and grays—art critics describe him as “voluntarily submitting to classical standards.”

By his 20th birthday, Picasso's “submission” had ended: he had begun using lines to represent ideas.



By Argentina. Revista Veay Lea [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

Today, art critics describe Picasso as the creator of a new genre called Cubism. It features large, complex canvases, where bodies take unexpected shapes, lines break up, angles are emphasized, and colors are muted.

“Picasso cannot have taken any existing kind of picture as a model. He must have had something in mind,” observes art critic and author Pepe Karmel. “What is it?” Karmel wants to know.

For he believes that Picasso “transformed Impressionism and Post-Impressionism into a fundamentally new and different visual language.”

Of course, few of us are as gifted as Picasso. But each of us has our own unique talents and approach-



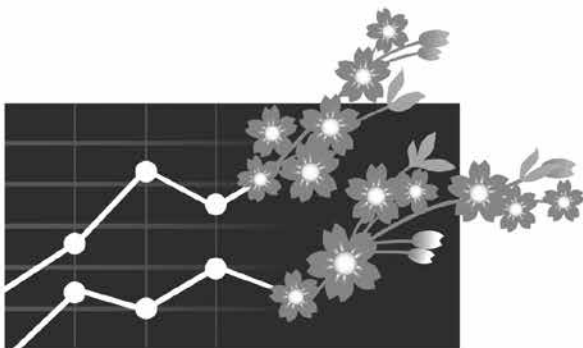
Dr. Doreen Stern is a writer, motivational speaker and success coach in Hartford, Conn. Her goal is to become a best-selling author. She's currently writing a book in the memoir genre, tentatively titled “When I Love Myself.” She can be reached at Docktor@DoreenStern.com.

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es to solving problems. Each of us can combine our persona and strengths with some of the methods Picasso used:

1. Think outside the box, rather than following existing dogma. Remember, few of us are richly rewarded for following orders or doing the same thing as everyone else.
2. Keep going even though it hasn't been done that way before.
3. When you look at something (e.g., data), ask yourself: "What story does it actually tell?" rather than merely what someone else (your manager) wants to know.
4. Develop close working relationships with others outside your immediate area of expertise, as Picasso did with artists of his day. They may help you see problems in transformative ways. ●



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