



EnSights: Understanding the Message and Mythology in Your Art

Annotated Resources

Compiled and Annotated by Michelle Belto

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Information and Exercises

[Mind, Body, Spirit: Connecting with Your Creative Self](#), Mary Braheny & Diane Halperin. Health Communications, Inc. Deerfield Beach, Florida 1989 (*Written by two creative arts therapists, this small book is designed for therapists working with groups. It contains many exercises that can be adapted to your personal work.*)

[Drawing on the Artist Within](#), Betty Edwards. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1986. (*Like her first book, drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, Betty Edwards provides a solid foundation for using analog drawing to understand yourself.*)

[Your Mythic Journey: Finding Meaning in Your Life Through Writing and Storytelling](#), Sam Keen & Anne Valley-Fox. Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. Los Angeles, 1973. (*This book provides a comprehensive way to discover something about the myths that we each live by. You could use this book alone for a year's worth of writing/journaling prompts.*)

[The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity](#), Julia Cameron, Jeremy P Tarcher/Perigee, New York, 1992. (*This is an inner workbook that explores psyche and spirit through writing, visualization, ritual and imagination.*)

[Creative Strength Training: Prompts, Exercises and Personal Stories for Encouraging Artistic Genius](#). Jane Dunnewold, North Light Books, Cincinnati, Ohio 2016. (*Designed and written by a fiber artist for visual artists, this book has art exercises that help the reader to connect with their own story and to other artists with related stories. Unlike most books in this genre, this one is filled with art.*)

[Personal Mythology, The Psychology of Your Evolving Self.](#) David Feinstein, Ph.D. and Stanley Krippner, Ph.D. Jeremy P Tarcher, Inc. Los Angeles, 1988. *(A self-guided workshop using the idea that our life patterns are based on an inherited mythology. The key to change lies in understanding our personal mythology. Most of the activities come from guided meditations. Case studies allow the reader to see how others have followed the process.)*

[Soul Collage: An Intuitive Collage Process for Individuals and Groups.](#) Seena B Frost. Hanford Mead Publishers, Inc. Santa Cruz, CA. 2001. *(A simple, but effective way to use a visual intuitive process for understanding ourselves, using collaged images from magazines to create a deck of cards that are both personal and powerful.)*

[Art Is a Spiritual Path: Encaging the Sacred Through the Practice of Art and Writing.](#) Pat B. Allen. Shambhala Publishing. Boston & London. 2005. *(This book focuses on our studio work as a spiritual practice. She outlines clearly the role of artist as witness and the profound application of intention in our work.)*

[Trust the Process: An Artist's Guide to Letting Go.](#) Shaun McNiff, Shambhala, Boston & London. 1998. *(If you choose only one book to read, this is the one I recommend because it provides a foundation for the work of art making as a process for our own and the world's spiritual healing.)*

[No More Secondhand Art: Awakening the Artist Within.](#) Peter London. Shambhala, Boston & London. 2013. *(This is a staple on the bookshelf for any artist who is looking to be authentic. There are twelve "encounters" that are self-directed art experiences with follow up reflection questions that are powerful enough to lead you in a new artistic direction.)*

[The Creative Conversation-ArtMaking as Playful Prayer.](#) Bridget Benton. Eyes A Flame Publishing, Portland, OR. 2011. *(Designed as a twelve-week approach of art and creativity as a spiritual practice, this book uses simple materials and exercises to develop a playful attitude and a more authentic inner voice. This could easily serve as a personal studio retreat for anyone who wants to engage with art in a meaningful way.)*

[The Artist's Journey-Bold Strokes to Spark Creativity.](#) Nancy Hillis, M.D. The Artist's Journey Press. Santa Cruz, CA. 2018. *(Through guided exercises and painting challenges Hillis, a painter and existential psychiatrist, takes the reader on a hero's journey toward a more passionate and fearless art. The body of the type is limited and well-spaced so that the book can be used as a workbook.*

Research and Context

[Opening to Inner Light: The Transformation of Human Nature and Consciousness](#). Ralph Metzner, Ph.D., Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. Los Angeles, CA. 1986. *(In the vein of Joseph Campbell, Ralph Metzner describes the processes of human transformation as it unfolds across cultures and religions using ten mega-metaphors. This has been the most transformative book I have ever used. I have read it over and over throughout the years until it is tattered and worn.)*

[An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols](#). J.C. Cooper. Thames and Hudson, London. 1979 *(This is my go-to book when I am wanting more information about a symbol or metaphor that comes up in my work. I did a quick comparison between my earlier book and the one published in 2013 that is linked. It seems to be a reprinting and not a real update.)*

[A Dictionary of Symbols](#). J.E. Cirlot. Philosophical Library. New York. 1962. *(Another take on symbols that is well-researched and studied.)*

[How to Interpret Your Own Dreams \(In One Minute or Less\)](#). Tom Chetwynd. Bell Publishing Company. New York, 1988. *(A good overall dream book with imagery arranged in a dictionary format.)*

[The Dream Dictionary: The Key to Your Unconscious](#). Jo Jean Boushahla and Virginia Reidel-Geubtner. The Pilgrim Press. New York, 1983. *(A good dictionary with images and symbols that might appear in your work and their common understandings. There is also a chapter on dreams and how to work with them. Unlike the Cooper book, which reflects how a symbol, such as SNAKE, for example, is seen throughout history and cultures, the dream book will offer suggested interpretations for the same symbol. Reading entries from both books often provides insights. There are a lot of dream dictionaries out there. This one seems to be well-rounded and grounded. I tend to use symbol dictionaries much more often.)*