

7 Ways to Spark Your Creativity

Instant inspiration, courtesy of designer Anna Rabinowicz



Photo: William Abronowicz

1. Read *Not a Box*, by Antoinette Portis

A rabbit sits in a cardboard box and uses his imagination to transform it into a racecar, a mountain, a robot. The lesson? "Anything can be anything," Anna says.

2. Go outside

Nature informs most of Anna's designs: "A pinecone, a caterpillar, some gnarled gourds from a pumpkin patch—the natural world is full of bizarre, beautiful stuff."

3. Start a collection

Curating your own little exhibit of similar objects makes you more attuned to what's special about each one. "Try to figure out why the designers made the choices they did, and you'll get a peek into their creative process," Anna says. "I collect toothbrushes. They have to do something very specific—and it's not a very exciting something—but their simplicity is an opportunity for imaginative design."

4. Touch stuff

Everywhere Anna goes, she picks up objects she sees. "I get acquainted with a thing's thing-ness. I experience it with my hands, not just my eyes."

5. Travel solo

"Once in a while, go somewhere alone," says Anna. "It's much easier to experience everything around you and to cover lots of ground. I decided to be a designer at the top of the Antoni Gaudí cathedral in Barcelona, because I was so moved by the architecture." But you don't necessarily have to cross an ocean. "You can get inspired by traveling practically anywhere, as long as you're open to what you see."

6. Go analog

"Don't check your e-mail when you're creating," Anna says. "Nothing earth-shattering is going to happen in an hour or two."

7. Grab every opportunity

Hosting a group of friends? Make party favors. Received a gift? Write a handwritten note. "If you're having dinner at home tonight," Anna says, "why not make something you never made before?"

From the February 2011 issue of [*O, The Oprah Magazine*](#)