10 Rules for Play - Paula Scher

1. Meet the collaborator or client. Read their brief. Go home and do something mindless, something rote like cleaning out your closet. This will clear your brain so you can freely associate. Ideas will follow.

2. Sit down and open your design history books—all at once. Perhaps buy the big Taschen books (volumes one and two) and look at it all in one sitting. Don't flag anything, or even try to copy anything. Start on your new project a day later.

3. Sit in any waiting room. A doctor, dentist or car inspection garage where you have absolutely nothing to do for about an hour. Or take a flight with no Wi-Fi, and no leg room. Get stuck in traffic. Make sketches on a very small lined pad (even a napkin will do) with a good pen. The worse the environment, the better the result! Your mind will really wander and open up the playground.

4. Nurture the relationships which afford you freedom. This is my 29th season working with the New York Public Theater, and I still push it forward. My teams have always loved working on it, because they get to play and invent.

5. Maintain the right balance of work. This is key in keeping designers, and design teams, sane and enthusiastic. Lift your team up, ensure they're on a variety of projects, and push them to question ideas. I believe the goal of the designer is to raise the expectation of what good design can be. Better work will breed better work.

6. Recognize that opportunities for play are really quite rare. Take on pro-bono, or near pro-bono projects, to really be able to practice your craft-it's where I often make the most discoveries.

7. Change your tools! Get off the computer. Look at other disciplines that have nothing to do with your project. Get yourself to a bookstore. Go to a museum. Go to a gallery. Go shopping!

8. Make peace with how you can be influenced. Nothing I make is either entirely new or totally original. Everything I have designed has been influenced by something or someone else. What may make the work seem more original is that I tend to avoid trends so…

9. Don't use mood boards to influence anything. You're only going to make something that is slightly different from what already exists in the marketplace. I have used the same methods in my work for the past 50 years regardless of trends and technology.

10. Initiate your own cluster. This is how design shifts develop: one brand will do something somewhat daring and the others will follow suit, thereby making it ordinary. Be the one to initiate.