

FIELD NOTE 0000002

September 8, 2026

Field Notes from the Mabuhay Stories Experiment Beyond the Story Score.

PUT DOWN THE BRUSH

There are at least two ways to close a door too soon.

The first is to judge what is emerging before it has had enough time to become anything.

The second is to keep adding after something has already become enough.

Bob Ross understood both.

So did Mona Brookes, from another angle.

Brookes teaches us not to prejudge the mark.

Bob teaches us not to overwork the painting.

Together they suggest two disciplines of threshold stewardship:

Early judgment kills possibility.

Late restraint preserves possibility.

Both keep more doors open for the embers to burn—and to transfer beyond the thresholds they encounter.

DON'T ERASE TOO SOON

A mark appears.

It looks awkward.

Maybe accidental.

Maybe unlike what anyone expected.

The temptation is to correct it immediately.

Erase it.

Explain it.

Replace it.

Tell the maker how it ought to look.

But an apparently errant mark may simply be a mark whose future has not yet arrived.

Add something.

Look again.

Perhaps what appeared to be a mistake becomes a road.

A branch.

A shadow.

A wing.

A doorway.

Or something nobody else in the room could have imagined because the mark belongs first to the person making it.

That is one form of Stewardship:

Protect what is unfinished from being judged as finished too soon.

The same principle travels easily beyond drawing.

A strange interpretation may need another sentence.

A disagreement may need more time.

A silence may need to remain silent.

A question may need to stay open.

An idea that initially seems unpromising may contain an ember nobody yet knows how to tend.

Do not extinguish it merely because its usefulness is not immediately visible.

BUT DON'T KEEP PAINTING FOREVER

There comes another moment.

The painting works.

The Story works.

The page works.

The conversation has reached a natural resting place.

And still the creator feels the temptation:

One more tree.

One more explanation.

One more paragraph.

One more lesson.

One more requirement.

One more sentence making certain everybody understands what we intended.

This can close the door just as surely as premature judgment.

At some point another addition no longer enlarges the work.

It muddies it.

And sometimes the idea behind that extra addition is perfectly good.

It simply belongs somewhere else.

Perhaps in the next painting.

The next Story.

The next conversation.

The next Field Note.

There will be pages enough for later.

RESTRAINT IS NOT THE OPPOSITE OF GENERATIVITY

It can look as though stopping is a loss of possibility.

Often it is the opposite.

At the right moment, restraint allows possibility to escape its creator.

The painter puts down the brush.

The author publishes the book.

The Steward stops explaining.

The receiving giver carries something away.

Now what was made is free to encounter someone else.

And that person may see something the maker never saw.

Add something the maker never imagined.

Ask a question the maker never anticipated.

Carry the ember somewhere the maker will never go.

That is not the work becoming less complete.

It is the encounter becoming larger than the work.

THE NEXT GOOD IDEA MAY NEED ITS OWN CANVAS

One reason creators overwork things is that the next idea arrives before the present work is finished.

The instinct is understandable:

Put it here too.

But not every good idea belongs in the current artifact.

Sometimes the most generative thing we can do with a new possibility is protect it from being squeezed into an old container.

The extra tree may not belong in this landscape.

It may be the first tree in the next one.

The extra insight may not belong in this Guide.

It may be a Field Note.

The observation from one Story encounter may not require rewriting the entire Story Score.

It may simply deserve its own page.

That is another way of keeping doors open.

We do not have to choose between preserving the integrity of what exists and honoring what comes next.

We can do both.

Finish this canvas.

Save the next mark for the next one.

A STORY STEWARD HAS TO KNOW BOTH MOMENTS

Threshold keeping therefore requires two kinds of patience.

At the beginning:

Wait before deciding what something cannot become.

At the end:

Stop before adding what it no longer needs.

Between those moments lies the work of tending.

Notice.

Encourage.

Ask.

Add when addition helps.

Wait when waiting helps.

And eventually:

Release.

That sequence can be expressed very simply:

 **IGNITE** — Don't prejudge the mark.

 **OPEN** — Give it somewhere to become.

 **TEND** — Add what helps it live.

 **RELEASE** — Stop adding when enough is enough.

 **TRANSFER** — Let the ember cross into another receiving giver.

The flame does not have to remain exactly what it was in the creator's hands.

In fact, perhaps it should not.

Story becomes listener.

Listener becomes illuminator.

Illuminator becomes fellow receiving giver.

Child changes adult.

Adult changes child.

The ember travels.

BOB ROSS 101

Perhaps the whole thing can be reduced to this:

Don't kill the happy little accident too early.

And:

Don't kill the painting by refusing to stop.

Everything between those two moments is tending.

Early judgment closes the future before it arrives.

Late restraint preserves enough openness for another future to begin.

That is why completion is not the premium.

Encounter is.

Completion still matters.

A painting needs to be finished.

A Story needs a last page.

A Guide eventually needs to be published.

But finishing one thing well may be exactly what creates the room in which the next thing can begin.

So:

**FINISH WHAT NEEDS FINISHING.
LEAVE OPEN WHAT NEEDS LIVING.
DON'T MUDDY TODAY'S PAINTING
WITH TOMORROW'S PAINT.**

And when the time arrives—

Put down the brush.

The next canvas is waiting.



**HANG THE DOOR.
TEND THE EMBERS.**

KEEP IT OPEN FOR MORE.

And wherever the next mark may lead—

**MAY WE HELP MERCY ABOUND...
RIGHT ON THE STREETS WHERE WE LIVE.**