

From the Toronto Star—Feb. 24/05

It's time to take a Creative Break

Workshop course lets you try new tools, materials Mag decides it's time for her to take a break, too
MAG RUFFMAN
ToolGirl

Every month, I change the pithy quotes hanging on the wall beside my desk. For February, this is my favourite (from Alfred North Whitehead): "Ideas won't keep; something must be done about them."

I'm not sure what you do about your ideas, but I like to write mine down on tiny shreds of paper and then lose them. This cuts down on my guilt over doing nothing about my ideas. "I was going to do something about my ideas," I whine, "but I lost the piece of paper."

I finally met someone who does do something about her ideas, and she can probably help you with yours. Sue Mitchell is a Toronto entrepreneur who noticed something about the home improvement shows on TV.

"There's something missing. Even though TV and magazines may give you a rough idea of how to do something, they don't really show you the tools and materials, or how to troubleshoot the techniques," she says.

"There are lots of people who would like to try their hand at new projects, but don't know where to start. I came up with a way to give them that opportunity." Mitchell's concept, Creative Break, is a workshop program that offers attendees the chance to try using new tools and materials in a supervised, creative space. People sign up for a three-hour workshop and go home with their own handmade project — a wooden planter, a stained-glass stepping stone or a hand-formed garden pot. The casual approach creates an atmosphere of playfulness and easy banter.

"I provide all of the materials. People get a real charge out of it. It's something they would never find time for on their own, and they love the feeling of doing art just like kids get to do," says Mitchell. "Adults have a huge need for creative time."

Mitchell has recently started hosting parties in homes and offices, or for organizations looking for something a little different for their members. She will custom-design a workshop to fit your needs



(call 416-899-0065 or visit <http://www.creativebreak.ca>).

Her background in new media makes her innovative, but she's handy, too. I've even used a couple of her workshop ideas in columns, like the earring storage rack and hypertufa pots.

With a past that includes working with an aid organization in Nicaragua, farming garlic in B.C. and running post-production units on American TV series, Mitchell is no stranger to innovation and creativity.

"I can figure anything out. The only thing I run out of is time."

But never ideas.

TIME OUT: And speaking of ideas, I'm going to take a creative break of my own for a while. I'm going to build a few things, write a few things and plan a few things, but won't be resuming my column until I'm good and rested, with lots of new ideas.

In the meantime, I'll leave you with my other favourite quote of the month, this one from George Eliot: "It's never too late to be who you might have been." Especially true if you might have been bossier and more irritable. Now there's an idea! Let me write that down.

Thank you for all your great feedback and wonderful letters over the past three years. I'll see you in a few months after I write five novels, four screenplays and a biography of Canada's favourite anti-hero. Go ahead, guess who. If you're right, I'll make you buy the book.

Mag Ruffman worked as a licensed contractor before hosting TV's *A Repair to Remember* and *Anything I Can Do*. For more projects, visit <http://www.anythingicando.com>