



Roots of Style: Weaving Together Life, Love, and Fashion

Isabel Toledo, Rubén Toledo (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Roots of Style: Weaving Together Life, Love, and Fashion for online ebook

SoCal Heather says

I've admired Isabel and Ruben Toledo for many years so it was a pleasure to read this. Her love of fashion, art and creativity is seen clearly in the book and is inspiring. Ruben Toledo illustrates the book and I enjoyed the art as much as the story

Alexis says

While my opinion may be a bit biased, considering Isabel and Ruben are my aunt and uncle, this book was fantastic. I've read a few bios, but this was by far my favorite. Ruben's artwork is fun and compliments Isabel's interesting, inspirational story. I learned a lot about her that she's never told me before, and it made me appreciate her and Ruben and all that they've worked for even more.

Monica says

Isabel Toledo is creative, innovative and unique. This book tells about the fashion world from her perspective.

Isabel's way of designing is very much her own. She believes in movement and letting the fabric speak to her. She believes in art as an entity that flows into all areas of life. Reading about her process was wonderful and inspiring.

Isabel does do a lot of name dropping in this book but most of the time I felt that it was justified. It is not the best written book but entertaining and motivating just the same.

Overall, I am VERY glad that I won this in the First Reads giveaways. I will read this book again and look to it frequently for inspiration.

Shuriu says

I really enjoyed making things with my hands and thinking my way through a design problem, like having too little fabric, not enough time, or no access to an industrial closure like a zipper. All innovations happen through problem solving. When you start to build your vision, to sew your first designs, the unexpected problem appears. How you navigate around this roadblock is where innovation is born and where you discover your identity as a designer. (p. 86-87)

If you must lose yourself to find yourself, this is best done when you disconnect from the structured time imposed by the preset social countdown and take stock of the things within you that simply make you feel whole. For me, that meant sewing, gardening, and contemplating nature and space -- or doing any other

physical activity, as long as I didn't have to join the automatic treadmill of a prestructured life. What most people don't realize is that time really is on your side if you stop watching the clock. You are rewarded by time itself. And this sense of freedom from structured time is essential to me. In order to bloom into your full potential, you have to allow yourself this free-range time, a time when you are not yet sure where you are going but are certain to arrive exactly at your absolute and proper destination. This state of mind allows you to fall in love with your interests, with your surroundings, and with your world, inspiring you to make a difference by adding the very best part of yourself to the tapestry of life. (p. 105-106)

My love of freedom and the luxury of time are elements that I try to infuse into my clothes. When you take the time to care, to focus on whatever you are doing, this sense of focus and dedication will be infused into your work, no matter what your work may be. People can really feel this. I certainly can feel it in other people's work. (p. 106)

....I have always addressed every challenge in my life from the core of self-respect. The idea of getting something "right" or having the right answer becomes relative and completely defined by your own standards.

You can arrive at your own right answers only through experience and time, as you test out what you don't already know or understand. I take great pleasure in the experience of not knowing. It gives me the abundance of energy I need to figure things out and think my way through new and challenging ideas. These are the unexpected ingredients outside of myself that refresh and nourish my pool of knowledge, and help open up unexpected avenues of thought. These moments of not knowing are valuable, and often lead to great opportunities, as I explore and invent new solutions. (p. 107)

Giving yourself the freedom to follow your instincts means that you must be generous with your own time. Allowing yourself the time you need to follow your own hunches is the way to achieve and discover who you are, and how best to design and create things that truly reflect your individuality. (p. 108)

I have always loved the raw in me. I'm comfortable with the unknown and with its mystery. In my work, I'm constantly trying to discover a way to solve new design challenges. That's what inspires me to keep making things that inspire me. (p. 165)

Staying raw means leaving room in your life for the unexpected and unperfected. The raw in you is often the most sincere response. There will be enough time later to refine and edit, but to keep the raw flowing, all of your life is a treasure. When your life partner appreciates the raw in you, too, that's divine. (p. 166)

Following your instinct is not difficult -- it's shutting out all of the other noise that's key. You have to find the environment that allows you to focus and feel clear enough to hear your own thoughts. If you can't find it, you have to form these surroundings yourself. You must generate your own existence. (p. 199-200)

....I was ready to take a sabbatical of the soul and work at a pace more in keeping with my own internal rhythms. (p. 283)

....Gardening did expose me to patience. Growth takes time, and while I anticipated the beautiful blooms, I found myself enjoying the process of gardening. I learned to appreciate the fact that not even plants are at their peak at all times, and that each stage of growth has its own beauty and unique form. (p. 112)

The advice I give to young artists today is that you must love what you are doing, because with love and focus, you will become successful. Give yourself the luxury of time to focus on yourself and cultivate your

mind. You certainly do not want to be caged into doing something you do not fully love for the rest of your life. You must envision the bigger picture, then focus in on the details to arrive at your own original idea. That is dedication to detail, where you are the detail. This is an important life credo, one that is constant in everything I make. (p. 115)

What had inspired my father to make such a lavish purchase?having such a beautiful gift inspired me, because it made me feel as if I should get to work and make something worthy of such a grand portfolio. My father's gesture, and having the portfolio in my hand, propelled me to focus, stop floating, and become a professional. (p. 134)

....I'd also buy lace doilies in thrift shops and sew them together to make clothing, like lace patchwork dresses. (p. 154)

...one of the things that I admired most of all about the ladies at the Met was the way they backed and repaired a garment by darning it, almost mimicking the cloth -- something most museums don't do any longer. The science and technology of restoration has eliminated this process. (p. 158)

At the height of her career, [Madeleine] Vionnet employed over a thousand workers and took good care of all of them, providing not only great working conditions, but health benefits as well. This fact has always been a real inspiration to me. When your work and your aesthetic can be so well aligned to how you manage your business, every square inch of effort can be enjoyed by all and will be rewarded in the long run. (p. 159)

I was also privileged to see the interior workings of a Dior corset and feel the soft sculpture of a Balenciaga coat -- all masterpieces of engineering and craft that are not always evident from the outside, but created for the wearer's ease and comfort as well the splendor of the total effect. (p. 160)

You cannot learn to have a creative vision. This flows from inside you. With enough curiosity, practice, and experimentation, your creative voice will come through naturally, woven out of the threads of your own life experiences. (p. 162)

We are all born with that secret key that gives you the power to unlock your ideas. Ruben and I were extremely lucky in that we not only found our secret keys to creativity as children, but also found each other along the way and could fully share our curiosity and wonder. The fact that we were both transplanted immigrants really provided us with a clean slate, from which we could organically grow into our new shapes without any preconceived ideas or road map. (p. 167)

CONSISTENCY (one of the qualities that makes me love MEP)

I learned early on the importance of consistency from my parents. whether they were right or wrong in my eyes, their consistency was what grounded me. I learned to navigate my way around an issue, a conflict, or a point of view because I could count on the base they provided. When all else might shift in life, this sense of stability and consistency was fortifying. (p. 178-179)

All ideas have to start somewhere, and that somewhere is sometimes a very raw place. Your imagination needs to be free of editing. The urge to create should never be burdened with perfection. This is the importance of appreciating every stage of your life and work. You will never be in the exact same place again. These raw seeds you will nurture to fruition soon enough. (p. 195)

....there is opportunity for those who don't fit in because they lack the inclination or tools to follow the industry's standard rules. There is still a place at the table for the outsider, and that's good, because outsiders enrich our culture. (p. 202)

In a way, Ruben and I were lucky to have been starting out in fashion completely self-taught and learning it all from the ground up. The fashion landscape of 1984 wasn't overcrowded with big brand names. Designers were not yet in the race for branding. Many designer names existed, but fashion wasn't yet such a huge corporate entity being traded on Wall Street. (p. 203-204)

Models in 1984 were not yet known as "supermodels." They were merely gorgeous women. All were individualists. These women were models by day, but were also leading independent, creative lives of their own as painters, photographers, filmmakers, and writers. These women made the clothes come alive with their own understanding of the role fashion plays in a woman's life, injecting their own personalities and life experiences into the presentation. They were like film actresses, really, with complex emotions and feelings toward the clothing they were about to present. They were responsible for communicating my vision to the audience. (p. 219)

By the late 1990s, the quaint and intimate persona of fashion had begun a fast-paced growth into what we know today as megabrand. The days when fashion designers were expected to propose new ideas and solutions for dressing women had shifted to an era of branding. The fashion machinery had become too expensive for me to continue participating in the show cycle.

The fashion cycle had swung in another direction. The idea that designers should be encouraged to explore raw concepts and make creative risks was almost extinct, because it was seen as too financially risky. The fashion scene shifted to the entertaining, slick theatrical productions of the fashion shows themselves. The emphasis was no longer on the clothes; in fact, the spotlight seemed to be on everything *but* the clothes. Accessories became the main focus, because that was where the profit was made, and clothes merely formed a backdrop to sell accessories. (p. 274-275)

Dee says

I won this book as a Goodreads First Read.

Claudia Reynoso says

Great story. If you are interested in fashion you will love it. Isabel Toledo has a captivating story of how she became a great designer..

Andrea says

A beautiful memoir of a wonderful designer discovering her gifts in late 70's/early 80's NYC. Life, love, and creativity pretty much sums it up. Personally, I really liked the little nuggets about developing one's personal

voice and vision. It also underscored how important it is to have people that believe in you and nurture you. Really great if you win the parent lottery, but if not, mentors and other creatives can certainly make a huge impact. For those of you interested in style, the creative process and collaboration, I'd say it's worth a read.

Rachel says

Not the most inspiring book that I have ever read, but it did have some glimmers of wisdom in it. My general takeaway: don't lose your sense of wonder, and Isabel loves Ruben. The end.

Jessica says

This was my second attempt to finish this book, and I'm sad to report that I stopped around page 70, which isn't even as far as I went last time. And I'm not someone who tends to quit on books!

I'm extremely picky when it comes to autobiographies. In the beginning, Toledo's backstory was interesting. But all of the technical career stuff seemed to put me to sleep. Sadly, I couldn't bring myself to finish it. Reading it was becoming a chore, and a reader should never have that experience.

Angela says

Besides being a memoir this book talked a lot about fashion design which I really enjoyed but may not appeal to other readers.

Sarah says

While I am not a "fashionista" by any means, Roots of Style was perhaps all the more intriguing to me because Isabel Toledo's fundamental message is about following your passion and talent, and about artistry, which made the idea of "high fashion" more approachable. Her tone is not at all distant, but clear and grounded, explaining how her memories, lessons learned, and connections and collaborations cohered and eased her into the fashion world with such success. I found that I wanted to look up pictures of her actual pieces while she mentioned them or the concepts behind them, and the illustrations by Ruben Toledo are a fun part of the read.

Rebecca Tolley says

"Since i spent months preparing the clothes to be shown on mannequins and forms, and building up the forms to support the dresses, I was able to experience the work of all the fashion greats firsthand from the inside out." 160

"I learned at the Met that a dress is much more than what you see on the surface." 161

Claire Kennedy says

I teach sewing, so of course I adore this book, as Toledo is able to express what all sewists know, that the creation of dress is way under-valued, under-appreciated, unknown and unaccepted in today's consumerism. You can certainly tell that this author loves her work, with the way she lovingly describes it, and for those who think they know fashion or want to know more about it, this is a fabulous read.

Brooke says

Such an inspiration for design artists and a very fun read. I didn't feel it was a well written as it could have been, but it was still engaging from beginning to end. I highly recommend for any creative individual looking for a rich history of design and the inspiration to get started!

Tania says

I adored this book. Hearing the designer's story against the background of Cuba, Studio 54 and the changes in the apparel/fashion industry in the past few decades was fascinating. Intertwined is the story of her romance and creative working relationship with her husband and a dose of her own philosophy for living an artist's life. I also loved the illustrations by Ruben. The only thing I would change is to add a photography insert to show some photos of her work.
