



Mel Lim

# RULES OF MASTERY

by Mel Lim

Mastery requires that we rediscover process. As true craftspeople, we focus on the quality of our work rather than the competitive landscape that so often dictates what people should be doing and how quickly they should be executing their efforts. To craft is to be challenged by "time to market" pressures generated to satisfy market demand. It can be distracting. But the most rewarding work is the work that challenges us, forces us to reach beyond our known limits, and to take the time necessary to evolve to that next level of excellence.

MASTERY SERIES

## RULES OF MASTERY

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We exist in space as a group of molecules held together by energy. And we live our lives interacting with other groups of molecules, and sometimes transforming and shaping them depending upon our level of intent and approach. We are all creators in our personal universe, and as such, we have the amazing ability to nurture and manifest visions, and transform them into something tangible and experiential that can be shared with others on both a micro and macro global scale.

As we go through life, our ongoing encounters with the material world develop our knowledge of patterns and behaviors, enhance our cognitive skills and deepen our understanding of the nature of things. We learn to think, coordinate and create, and we have the brilliance of our hands to teach us of the form and fluidity of life. When we are deeply attuned to the wonder, nuance, and potential of the material world before us, we may even refine our creative skills and become artisans and craftspeople.

I define a craftsperson as anyone who has spent much of their life passionately perfecting, pushing, experimenting, and connecting with their craft in pursuit of either finding new ways to make their work better, or helping to enhance the lives of others. We defy inertia and according to the laws of physics, we are objects in motion staying in motion. We are driven by nature to create, to be in motion, moving ourselves and other objects through space, and being a force that acts upon other objects to effect change. The art and science of crafting and creating lets us explore and intuit, and cultivate skill and ingenuity. Our reward is in the doing, learning, growing and pushing boundaries. And if we are passionate about our craft, we give our ourselves over fully to our creative process.

As craftspeople, we recognize that our passion for our work is buried deep inside of us. We generously allocate time for creating and often make personal sacrifices to do so. It's important to balance our love of creating with wisdom and purpose so we don't lose sight of our goals and priorities. Mindfulness is essential in craftsmanship. We must know who we are, and why we do what we do. The question Why is the main driver of

all action. It frames the issue and approach, helps us set our intentions, and invites reflection. It then radiates out to How and finally What it is we do. In examining why, how, and what, we balance mind and heart and build a sensitive and sensible design argument for action and outcome. The gifts of the mind include thinking, analyzing, strategizing, comparing, adding and subtracting. The heart focuses on connectivity, emotional attachment, love, passion, and compassion. Synergy between the two impacts all dimensions of life and keeps us aligned with our path and purpose.

In our focused dedication to our craft, we can achieve nothing short of mastery. Mastery is defined as having knowledge and skill that allows you to do, use, or understand something very well. Mastery also requires having considerable self-knowledge. After answering the Why, How, and What, there are additional important questions to ask and examine honestly. For example, are you aware of your core values and aspirations? What motivates you and what feels so meaningful that it rewards your sense of purpose? Are you creating in a way that provides lasting value and impact? Why would anyone care about what you are bringing forward into the world? Will THEY find it meaningful? Does your work reflect your thorough understanding of history, culture and traditions? What do you sacrifice in your dedication to creating something of exceptional quality? What does "mastery" mean to you?

Craftsmanship is a contribution to the greater good. It influences, and it serves. And it offers the potential for mastery. As each of us lives the raw truth of our most authentic motivation, I offer a set of guidelines which I call The Rules of Mastery. They are simple tools for consideration, and invite introspection and reflection. Ultimately, they are designed to advance each of us toward the ultimate perfection of our craft.

## *Rule 1: Find Your Highs/Meaning/Passion*

What is the penultimate accomplishment you could possibly desire in life? What will be your vehicle for achievement? What do you love and loathe? For what do you live? What gives your life true meaning and purpose? What exhilarates you and what defeats you? What are your expectations and what surprises and delights you? How can you balance your responsibilities with your hopes and dreams? Answer all of these and then move forward to craft your world accordingly.

## *Rule 2: Dedicate Your Life and Breath to Your Craft*

Do you embody your purpose? Are you "one" with your work? When people "see" you, do they automatically see what you bring to the world? For what do you stand, serve, engage, and dedicate yourself? What do you have to offer the world that is wholly of you? This is your craft. Fold your life force into it.

## *Rule 3: Choose Your Heroes Wisely and Be That Person Who Inspires You*

Who are your role models? Who do you aspire to be like and consider a pillar of courage, creativity, values and accomplishment? Allow the stellar example of others elevate you in your own work.

## *Rule 4: Be Accountable*

We must own our mistakes as well as our successes. Accountability is integral to integrity and trust. We must strive always to do what is right, take ownership and make things right when something goes wrong. There is no blame game in accountability. We author our own actions, must bear the consequences of what we deal out to the world, and must always seek to rectify imbalances. Doing the right thing always only makes us better.

## DAY 4 / STEP #4: BE PRESENT

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### *Rule 5: Remember that Big is Not Always Best*

Perfection is in the details. Focused attention to that which seems small and inconsequential can make all the difference in the world. That which is big can be cumbersome, but that which is small can be managed with nimbleness, agility and finesse.

### *Rule 6: View Each Failure as a Stepping Stone toward Constant Perfection*

Failure is a necessary teacher. It is the oil stone on which we sharpen our skill set. Only by knowing what makes us fall down can we get up, stay up, and move forward. Failure teaches us to be humble, mindful, and even compassionate. It also gives us a rich appreciation for our accomplishments and success.

### *Rule 7: Work Hard Each Groundhog Day and Deliver the Originality Born of Quality and Consistency*

Your work is your art. What you bring into the world says something about you. When you work with great diligence and discipline, even though it may seem as if you are doing the same thing over and over, you are engaging your “process” and bringing a refined expression of your effort forward to be recognized and appreciated.

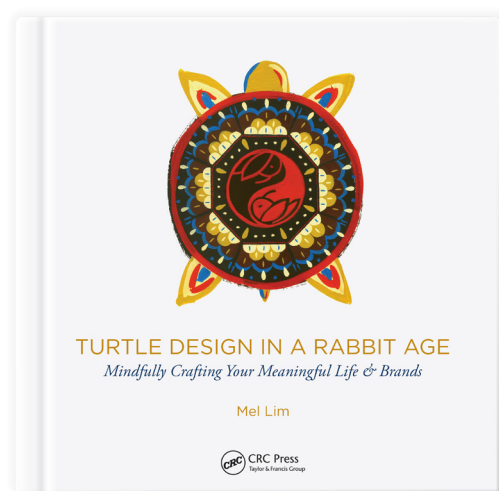




## MEL LIM

*Strategist, Keynote Speaker, Author & Award-Winning Designer*

Mel Lim is a global technology storyteller and strategy consultant. Her success record for growing and scaling companies has positioned her as one of the most sought-after consultants in the tech and software startup scene. Traditionally trained in architecture, this Malaysian-born Chinese immigrant, single mother and serial entrepreneur from humble beginnings began her career designing retail centers, casinos, stadiums, and hotels in Asia, Europe, and the US. Mel went on to found an innovation strategy and design agency that has garnered hundreds of industry accolades. Recognizing her knack for building businesses and products, Mel took her hybrid international background in design and strategy, and accelerated technology startups to multi-million dollar, revenue-generating enterprises, positioning them as market leaders, global brands, and some of the fastest growing, most innovative tech companies in the world. Her current and past clients include well-known names like Varonis, London Jewelers, Axure, LeEco, Tata, Intel, and Comcast.



AVAILABLE ON AMAZON

Mel is currently the President of Maspira Groupe, a startup consultancy focusing on product development and growth strategies. She serves on multiple advisory boards, and lectures worldwide on crafting innovative experiences through mindfulness. Mel recently completed a book entitled *Turtle Design in a Rabbit Age*. Published by CRC Press, her book offers a platform to help people achieve equanimity and find meaning in their work and lives through mindfulness, and companies to craft value by reframing their approach to impact creation and experience design. Always in motion, Mel commutes between sunny San Diego and NYC, and teaches her two boys how to draw like pros.



*Mel Lim*

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