

# GETTING IT DONE

**HIS WORK MAY BE IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE, BUT CREATOR AND PRODUCER CAMERON KOSTOPOULOS—WHOSE VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE *BODY OF MINE* IS THE 2024 RECIPIENT OF THE PGA'S INNOVATION AWARD—NEEDS BOTH THE TACTICAL AND THE TECHNICAL TO GET THROUGH THE WORKDAY. HE ALSO NEEDS TO DO A LOT OF STRETCHING.**

WRITTEN BY WHITNEY FRIEDLANDER

## SHARPIE S-GEL 0.7 PENS IN BLACK

"I have to use that pen because even though I make things that are digital, it always starts with a notebook and a pen," Kostopoulos says.

He also spins the pens around his fingers while talking, something he's done since high school. It helps him think. "I had a friend in biology class who could do it and I was like, 'What are you doing? How do you do that?' So I forced myself to learn."

## MORNING PAGES

Pen spinning is one of the "artist's brain activities" that Kostopoulos learned from Julia Cameron's book *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. Another is the process of "morning pages."

Kostopoulos begins his mornings with his trusty Sharpie and handwrites three pages in a journal the size of a paperback novel. Freed from the easy-to-correct nature of a laptop, Kostopoulos takes a few moments to jot down whatever comes to his mind each morning. Sometimes he'll ask others to write messages to him in these books, such as a page-long letter from a friend he'd met on a trip to Switzerland.

"Doing this first thing in the morning is like dumping your brain of all the gunk that's in there, so you can actually get to the creative part." But, he adds, "It's also a way of training yourself to not separate good ideas and bad ideas, but just let ideas flow." It could be complaints about the exercise itself, his dreams, or an idea he's mulling.



## UNREAL ENGINE

Kostopoulos uses the computer graphics game engine Unreal for both his immersive and live-action work. "When I'm doing live-action work, I use Unreal Engine to storyboard, to work remotely with production designers and cinematographers, to scout a location, and to set-dress it," he says. "Even with live action, that gives me a lot of creative freedom without burning through a budget because we got a couch and decided we didn't like it. Or we got all this wallpaper and decided we wanted a different color. Or even saving a day of blocking with an actor because we're able to do it all digitally."

He says he prefers Unreal versus alternatives like Unity because the former is more of a filmmaker's tool for designing immersive, interactive work. "It allows me to do interactive stuff without having to have a computer science background."

Cameron also uses the photo-specific AI service Midjourney to help with storyboards and to create looks, line up shots and communicate with artists. "Sometimes I'll have an idea for something, and I'll just spend 30 minutes ideating on it in Midjourney until I get the exact thing I want."



### CHATGPT

Kostopoulos sees the controversial AI-generated writing platform as “a writers room.”

“It doesn’t make good dialogue and doesn’t usually have good ideas, but what it does do is let you think about things in a different way,” he says. “I treat ChatGPT as a journal that talks back to me. Sometimes I’ll just brain-dump into ChatGPT just to ask it a question. Having an instant response and an instant challenge to what you’re doing can sometimes help you think in a different way, even if you don’t use any of its ideas.”

As he is not fluent in coding, Kostopoulos will sometimes ask ChatGPT to write code for him. “I’m able to make interactions without learning how to code, which opens up the world of interactive to a whole new group of people who don’t come from that coding background,” he explains.



### BACK ROLLER

Considering how much time Kostopoulos sits at his computer, it’s not a surprise when he says that buying a foam back roller changed his life. He didn’t put much thought into the brand of roller, and says he probably just bought the first one he found on Amazon.

“Feeling your back pop is the best feeling,” he says with a laugh. ■



**UNREAL  
ENGINE**