

# Where Do Ideas Come From?

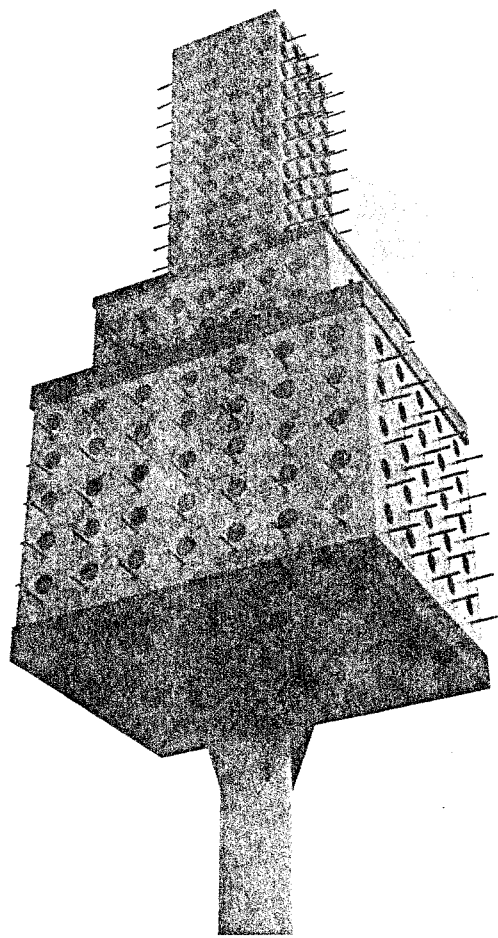
When you look at a bird nest or analyze a spider web, you can see that both are made with incredible skill. But these skills of animals come from instinct and are inborn.



▲ A bower bird decorates its nest.

Turid Hölldobler, prepared from Heinz Sielmann, *Lockende Wildnis*, Gütersloh and Vienna, 1970.

- **Problem solving.** Problem solving means taking risks. You may not reach a successful idea the first time. Follow the words of Thomas Edison who said, "If I fail 99 times, I won't have wasted my time. I'll know 99 ways it won't work." Actually, Edison tried thousands of filaments and conditions before he succeeded in making a light bulb.
- **Inventing.** Inventing is another special way of creating. The man who invented hook-and-loop fasteners made a connection. He walked through a field and found burrs stuck to his pant legs. By examining the burrs he discovered that at the end of each of the sharp needles is a tiny hook. He decided that if he made similar hooked material, it would stick to a fuzzy surface. Now we use hook-and-loop fasteners on shoes and belts and shirts, even in factories.



▲ Highrise for birds.

Only humans have the capability of using creativity or of thinking of new ways to make or do something. No bird will ever make a bird high-rise. This one in Dearborn Park in Chicago was made by an artist named Dan Yarbrough.

Where do ideas come from? very often they will come from making connections. Try some of the following ways to expand your creative thinking skills:

- **Connecting or building associations.** Try to think of words, events, or relationships among items. For example, when looking at the bark of a tree or the ripple of water, think about the line, texture, and pattern that is created.
- **Metaphor or simile.** Think of unusual comparisons among items. Use the phrase, "The \_\_\_\_\_ feels like a \_\_\_\_\_." Have fun thinking of unique and unusual comparisons.
- **Collaborate.** Listen to others; work together.