As a cartoonist I’m very aware of the value of thinking with your hand. Sketching out an idea not only embodies the intangible concept that’s floating around in your head, but also allows it to grow and blossom in unexpected ways on the page. Our increasing dependence on computers makes me wonder if the simulations of writing and drawing that they provide may have fundamentally changed thinking itself by removing the full range of our nimble digits from the digital process.

With the following strip I’ve tried to put a spin on the back-to-the-drawing-board, if-at-first-you-don’t-succeed clichés that one associates with the genesis of “Big Ideas.” It offers several vignettes on the brilliant mistakes that precede the masterstrokes we all celebrate, beginning with the primal quest for a better mouse trap. There’s always some satisfaction in satirizing our betters, but I hope these comic blackouts also serve as a tribute to seminal thinkers by acknowledging the blunders that might have presaged their brainstorm. To err is human, but to innovate — well, that’s really divine.
Since the time a drawing board consisted of a patch of dirt and a stick, mice and men have been going back to it with their best-laid plans.

We get us a sabre tooth’s skull, bait it with a grape and... SNAP! Fresh mouse stew!

Do you hear this? Aren’t you worried?!!

Not really.

History often blew away a first draft... as the ancient Egyptians learned.

What in the name of Ra...?!!

Pharaoh, I thought it would provide you shade in the afterlife.

Ironically, the architect himself was buried head first... later that day.
In 450 BCE, Chinese warlords began work on a bamboo curtain to curb intruders.

Don’t eat that! At least growl at the invaders—You’re a bear, remember?

They had to rethink their not-so-great wall.

Inspiration can be intoxicating.

Here’s my plan for the bell tower in Pisa.

But a sober second take can salvage a cock-eyed proposal.

A third might even have set it straight.

Da Vinci sketched his Mona Lisa many times.

He had to invent Groucho glasses to get the right expression.
“20” : An Anthology

A VISIT BY IN-LAWS SKEWED OMAR KHAYYAM’S INITIAL ESTIMATE OF A SOLAR YEAR’S LENGTH.
WHY DIDN’T YOU STICK WITH THE TENT-MAKING?

IT TOOK A LOAF OF BREAD, A JUG OF WINE AND THEIR DEPARTURE TO REFOCUS HIM.
A MERE 365.242198 DAYS TILL THEY RETURN.

E X P E R I M E N T A T I O N IS THE NECESSARY EVIL THAT MAKES MONKEYS OF WISE MEN.

NOTE: DON’T STUDY FLAME WITH MICROSCOPE.

D O N ’ T Y E L L , M R . W A T S O N !

T O B E O R T O N O T B E ... O O P S !


A L G O R E D I D N ’ T I N V E N T A L G O R I T H M S , D I D H E ?


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