



PROJECT #15

KEEP AN ART JOURNAL



First of all, why even keep an art journal?

Well, the main reason is that there are ideas and feelings and drawings and inventions just waiting inside you. That is why so many artists, writers, musicians, thinkers, and tinkerers of all kinds use journals to explore and express their ideas.

[*Art journal from artjournalist.com*]



That is also why there are as many different kinds of art journals as there are kinds of people. And when you create your own, there will be no other art journal like it in the entire world.

Below are some journals we came across, but if you want to see about a million more, just do a web search for “art journals.”

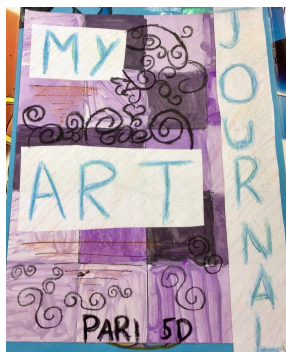
[*Art journal samples in order: Dietrich Guilherme, Frida Kahlo, Celestine Hart, Sarah@HubPages, Dan Eldon, Lynda Barry*]



An art journal is especially important during difficult times because it can give you a place to let out your feelings — your worry, fear, sadness, and frustration, and of course, your love, hope, wisdom, and gratitude.

Not only do you get to release all those swirling emotions, but you get to turn them into art.

[*Artwork by Areeba Siddique*]



Think of an art journal as your own private paper world where you get to be 100% YOU. However you want to express yourself, whatever you want to say, in whatever colors or words or songs or scribbles come to you, those empty pages are yours to fill.

[*photo #1 from The Back Art Room Blog, photo #2 from daisyyellow.com*]

Step 1 of 13

For this project you will need:

An art journal or sketchbook (if you want to make your own, skip to the next step)
Writing and drawing materials — pencils, pens, crayons, whatever you have
(Optional) Collaging materials: scissors, glue or tape, and some magazines, newspapers or junk mail

Step 2 of 13

To make an art journal, you will need...

A stack of paper — regular old white paper, lined paper, colored paper, cut-up grocery bags, etc. Some artists like to mix papers together.

(Optional) Heavier paper or cardboard to use as your cover

A pair of scissors

Something to hold the paper together, like string, yarn, fishing line, dental floss, a rubberband, a plastic bag (we'll explain later)

(Optional) a paper punch, nail, or other hole-making tool

Step 3 of 13

Okay, let's get your art journal made!

Here are two videos that will show you how — the first from our artist friend, Jen Stady, and the second from Portland educator, Kelly Merrill.

https://okyou.org/wp-content/uploads/joined_video_5a41dc57b1b14e72903d769b058e9e9c.mp4

Step 4 of 13

The hardest part is getting started, so we recommend diving right in with...

Art Journal Exercise #1: Make a mess.

Why make a mess? Because for one thing it feels amazing — especially if you're a bit of a perfectionist. Also, when you set yourself free, you often create something that your trying-to-be-perfect brain would have never come up with.

Here are some ways to get messy...



Step 5 of 13

Imagine your pen is a mouse scurrying around the page (or pages if you're doing both the left and right side of your journal). Dart and dash and spin around like you're being chased by a cat.

Write your name (or other words) in different styles—big and bold, jagged and swirly, balloony and towering, backwards and upside down.

Glue or tape pictures or words from a magazine or junk mail — don't worry if you're covering up your letters and lines —that's part of making a mess!

Trace your hand. Find an object or two and trace them too. It's okay if your tracings overlap — in fact, we highly recommend it!

Keep going until you've completely covered your page(s)

[Journal pages by Alisa Burke]

Step 6 of 13

Okay, now that you are properly warmed up, we have collected some ideas for you to try. Skip around or skip over as you wish, and of course, add your own ideas.

To get in the habit of keeping an art journal, try to do at least one exercise every day — even if you only spend 5 minutes on it. It helps if you pick a daily art journaling time, like first thing in the morning or 4pm every afternoon.

Ready for Art Journal Exercise #2?

We'll let cartoonist Jonathan Hill tell you all about it.

SOME NOTES:

THESE EXERCISES WERE TAKEN FROM THE
"RESTROOM" INTERVIEW CLASS I TAUGHT AT
OAC FOR PRE-CALCULUS & CONTINUING ED.
THEY ARE NOT AS NEARLY "SCHEMATIC" OR
AS COMPREHENSIVE AS THEY SHOULD BE, BUT
HOPEFULLY YOU CAN GET THE SPIRIT OF
THEY. MANY OF THE EXERCISES WERE EITHER
TAUGHT TO ME OR LEARNED FROM OTHER ARTS
TEACHERS BY LINDA BERRY AND
DRAWING IS MAGIC BY JOHN HENDRIX.
I TRULY TEACH MIDDLE SCHOOL,
HIGH SCHOOL, AND AT THE COLLEGE
LEVEL AT AN ART SCHOOL, BUT I CAN'T
EXPRESS ENOUGH THE VALUE OF SOMEONE
TO EXPERIMENT IN A GROUP TO HELP IMPROVE
THEIR ART. I'M NOT A GROUP-DRIVEN AND TO
RESOLVE, STRESS AND ANXIETY, THESE
EXERCISES ARE FOR EVERYONE!
CREATE MORE!
FEAR LESS!
XOXO
JONATHAN HILL
@JONATHANHILL
NO SERIOUSLY, GO TO
CREATE MORE, FEAR LESS BLOG
FOR MORE FREE PROJECTS & RESOURCES



Step 7 of 13

Jonathan had so many other ideas to share that he made this comic for you.

In it you'll find all kinds of creative exercises to try — and some you might want to try again and again. Artists often experiment with different approaches to the same exercise. It's all part of stretching your creative muscles.

Step 8 of 13

Next up, a virtual field trip to the Portland Art Museum!

Art Journal Exercise #3: Snoop out some art you love and capture it in your journal

First, [click here](#) to magically travel over to the Portland Art Museum.

See the menu at the top? Great. Click on “Art & Artists.” This will give you some options to choose from. Select the one that says “The Collection.”

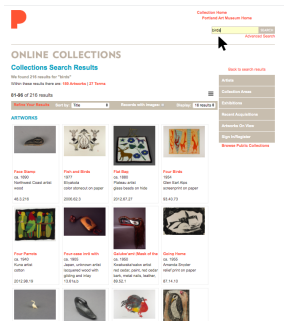
Step 9 of 13

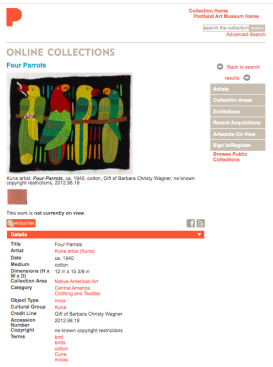
Does your screen look like something like the photos on the right? If not, [click](#) here and we'll transport you there.

Now, click on the square image that says “Collection Areas”. You can now wander around the museum by choosing whatever interests you.

You can also use the search option (magnifying glass up in the menu). For example, try typing into the search bar “Bird” or “Shoe”.

Keep exploring the museum until you find a piece of art you really love. You don't have to know why you love it — art is mysterious that way. Sometimes it speaks straight to our hearts.





Step 10 of 13

When you find that special piece of art, click on it so you can take a closer look and learn a little more about it. What do you appreciate about it? What does it make you feel?

After you've spent some time getting to know this wonderful work of art, open up your art journal and see if you can capture it — in a drawing or words or however you wish.

You can try to recreate the artwork if you want, or you can just use the style or shape or subject or color as inspiration for creating your own work of art.



Step 11 of 13

How about just one more exercise before we send you on your merry way?

Art Journal Exercise #4: Draw your favorite song

Yes, it is possible to draw music. Just listen to your favorite song (or pick out a new favorite on Songify or app of your choice) and while you listen, notice the rhythm and flow of the notes. It's a good idea to listen to the song once with your eyes closed so you can see the sounds in your mind.

What colors came to mind? What lines or shapes or images did you see?

Play the song again and, working with colors that capture the mood of your song, let your pens dance around the page — or imagine that your pen is an instrument playing along with the song. If you want to really get into the feeling, try moving your pen around your page with your eyes closed.

Step 12 of 13

As for **Art Journal Exercise #5 to Infinity**, you can find endless ideas around your house, out on a walk, inside your head, or by searching around the internet.

Here are a few of our favorite sources of inspiration:

1. Hannah Chhar and Sarah Trastanetz's [Junk Journal](#) project, which was a finalist in our 2023 [OK Challenge](#) competition
2. [Pinterest](#) — just search “art journal”
3. [Artjournalist.com](#) — one of many websites where you can find all kinds of creative prompts to keep your daily art journaling practice going

Step 13 of 13

Want to share some of your journal pages in our gallery? We would love to see them!