

# Anything Goes: A Mixed-Media Notebook Adventure with Kara Kramer & Carla Sonheim... Welcome!



Hello!

First we want to thank you again for joining us for this month of working in our notebooks/sketchbooks/art journals... whatever you want to call them! (Anything Goes!) We are thrilled to be here and are excited to work alongside you.

If you have taken other classes through our platform, you might find this class to be a little less structured than our usual offerings—it's not really an "assignment-based" class. Instead, we are trying to hold space and provide some inspiration for you to try and "touch" your Anything Goes Notebooks each day. While you might get a few techniques from us along the way in the Zoom calls and whatnot, it's not really about the techniques! It's about showing up with your art supplies and listening to what you might "need" to do that day.



Giving ourselves what we need is essential, whatever that looks like... it is a reminder. For me (Kara) it seems to be calling for a doubling down. I forget and then remember I have to choose what I need again and again. It isn't a one-time thing. Sometimes there are more outside pulls which create an even deeper need for me to sit and spend time using a glue stick to collage random bits of scraps onto a piece of paper that no one will ever see but me. Simply because it feels good.

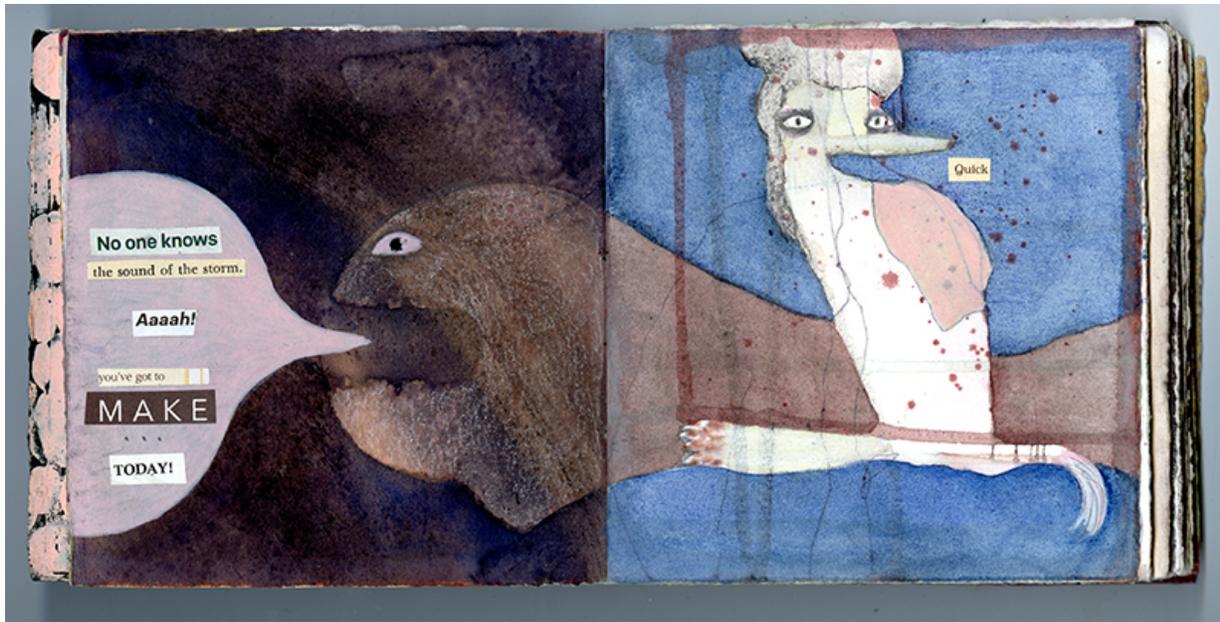
Keeping an Anything Goes Notebook is my favorite way to refuel and feel free. And it keeps all these moments and time spent exploring in one place to build upon day after day.



Notebook pages by Kara.

And as I (Carla) wrote in a recent newsletter, when I am able to find the time and space to sit down to my studio table, the process helps me keep my center, and when I'm centered, I can be so much more effective and helpful when I face the stress and chaos that is life outside of the art table. (Plus... drawing, painting, printing, writing, smudging and gluing is just plain fun!)





Notebook pages by Carla.

\* \* \*

We will start our weeks with 10 prompts for you to possibly incorporate into your Anything Goes Notebooks. These prompts are not meant to be "assignments" per se, but as starting points to get you going. Sometimes it's pretty easy to get "in," but certain mornings, we may have trouble gaining access and dropping into the pages. Or, you might want more of a focus within the swirl of paint and patterns and marks. We have both found (over many years!) that giving ourselves little starting points—prompts—helps us get things rolling.

The prompts are mini, low-stake, fun ways to simply get your hands moving. Because once you are in a process of moving materials around, momentum starts to grow and then you just never know what else will appear.

I (Kara) keep a box of prompts above my desk and continue to grab from it as well as invent new ones from time to time.

I (Carla) give myself limitations all of the time, as I very much agree with Rem Koolhaas' statement, "Without firm limits there is no play," and Igor Stravinsky's "The more

constraints one imposes, the more one frees oneself of the chains that shackle the spirit."

Below you will find 10 prompts to explore... Try one or two as you like and then see how it goes! We've packaged the same 10 prompts two ways: a mini version, and a large version. Use the one that is best for you!

Have fun, and please post your explorations at the forums, and Kara will be in your inbox Wednesday (February 4th) with her "Note of the Week." ;)

Kara & Carla

# WEEK #1 Prompts

Click to Open Printable PDFs!



Week 1 Mini Version (print, cut, fold, pick at random) – 3 Pages

<https://images.carlasonheim.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/31214542/anythingweek1miniprompts-1.pdf>

Week 1 Large Version – 10 Pages

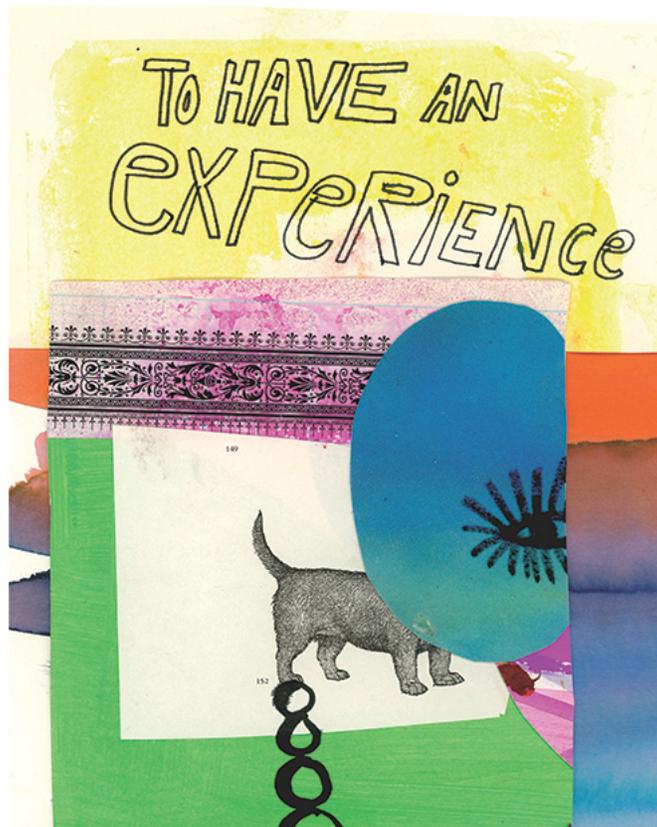
<https://images.carlasonheim.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/31214735/Anthingweek1promptslarge-1.pdf>

## WEEK #1 – Kara's Note of the Week



Hi Everyone!

Hope you are enjoying getting into your notebooks. When Carla asked me to join her in offering this month long exploration, I immediately said YES! Whether you already keep some kind of notebook or this is brand new for you, I am very excited that you have said Yes too!

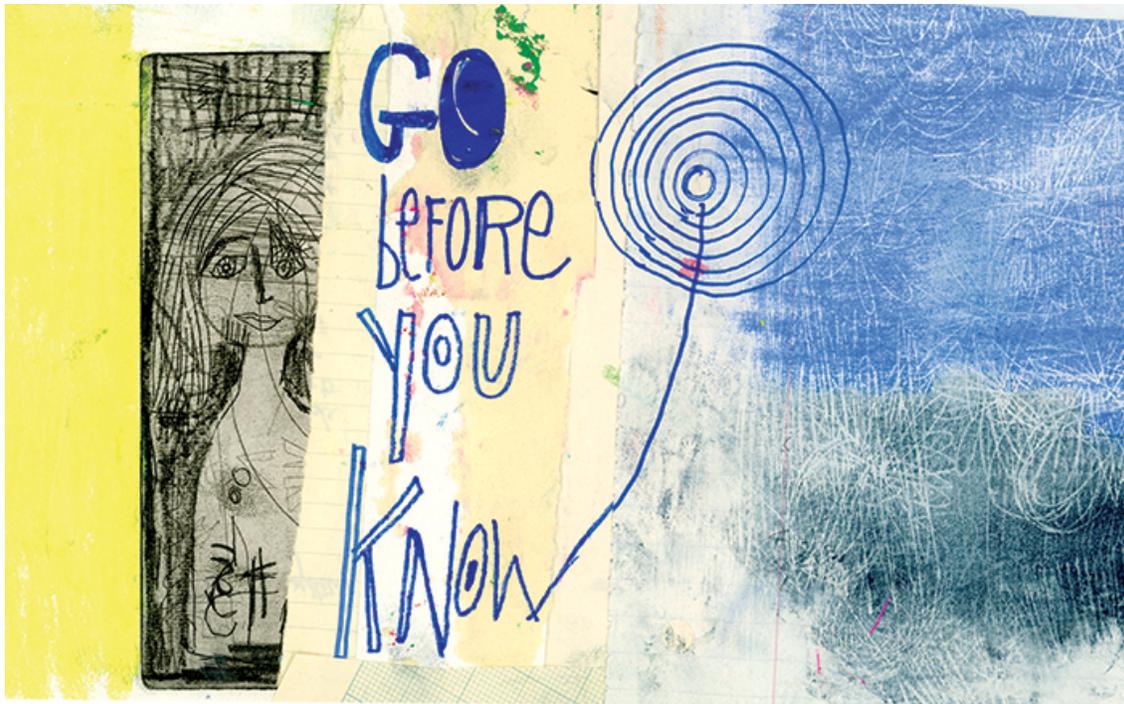


I had a teacher once in college who while looking at my drawings asked, “What are you after?”

This question at the time annoyed me. How the heck do I know...I’m just going along doing what I do! Without too much thought I blurted out... “I’m after not being after.” He told me to write it down. I didn’t then. But over the years, I have often revisited this exchange and the question, “What are you after?”



It is similar to asking “What is your WHY?” In life, so many things have to have a known reason before you begin. This is for that. That is for this. And it is how the world and interactions often work. But I strongly believe when it comes to creation and art the reason, the WHY, follows more of an intuitive path. It isn’t known first through thinking rather it’s a sense.

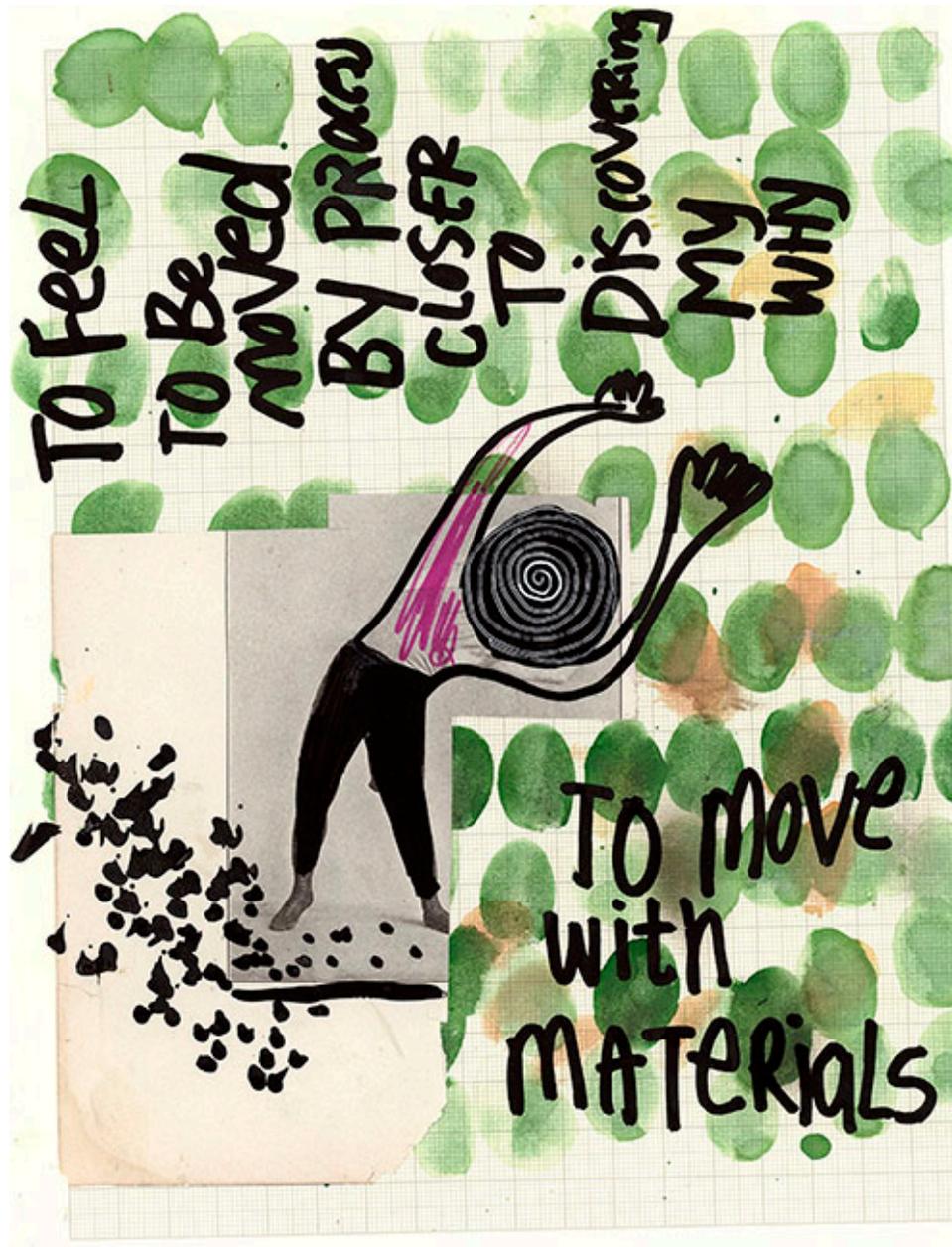


A process of leaning into something that isn't formed...yet.

As I name my WHY for keeping a notebook practice, there are aspects that change and become multi-tiered. But the top reason that continues to guide it all is FOR THE FEEL.



It is for the actual time spent moving my hands, smooching oil pastels within wet paint, watching a strange character appear, pressing an inky pen firmly down onto soft paper making a groove...



...all these movements are a way to connect to a different state of being. One where I am open and receptive to what is and allow space to explore something anew.

That sounds like a lot...it is and it isn't.

Basically, I return to my notebook practice for the EXPERIENCE. And the “what” that occurs and remains, is a trail of marks, images, textures, smudges, and words that build upon one another over time. It doesn’t need to make any sense. It doesn’t need to look perfect. It doesn’t need to be organized. The pages can hold it all.



This morning as I witnessed my hand repeat a triangle pattern across a painted page on my desk, I also noticed something move within. My thoughts began to climb into the back seat of my mind, as my attention shifted to the sensation of ink on paper.

The artist Corita Kent said,

“Love the moment and the energy of that moment will spread beyond all boundaries.”

I often find that the feeling or quality experienced while moving freely on paper has a way of dancing out into the rest of my day. Curious to hear how it goes for you.



Before Glue.



### After Glue.

It doesn't matter how much time you spend in your notebook. Some days it may only be 5 minutes splashing some color down and other times longer. But try to touch base daily.

You are creating a trail!

Kara

P.S. Here's a bonus video prompt!

<https://vimeo.com/1161309947>

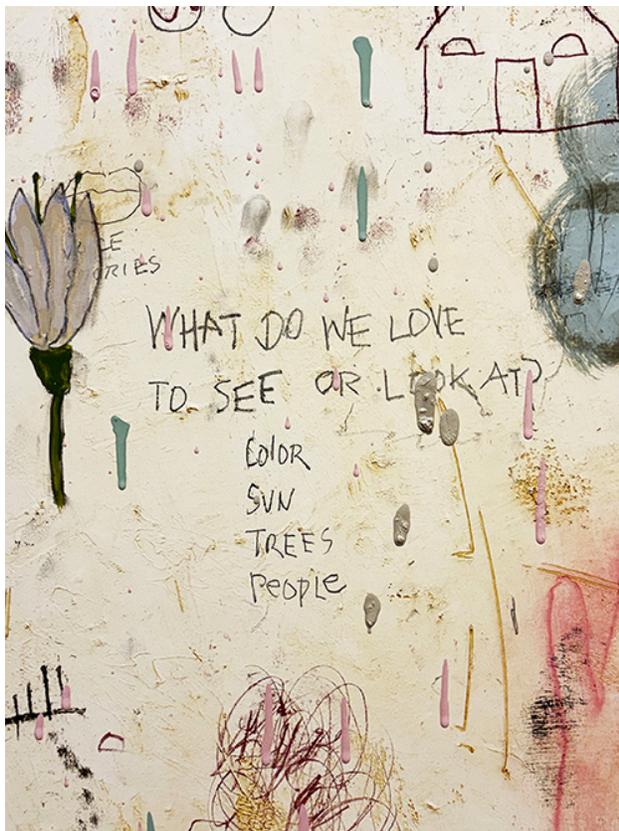
P.S.S. Carla and I will end our weekly messages with three outside links that we have found inspiring recently!

# 3 things ...

There are always outside influences that inspire me. Even a tiny moment of noticing a pattern on the street. Here are three things I enjoyed recently:

1.

Last weekend I went to this art show by painter Squeak Carnwath. Loved seeing her paintings up close where she combines images and writing. Here is a detail of one that feels like a good notebook prompt question also! <https://www.janelombardgallery.com/squeak-carnwath/>



2.

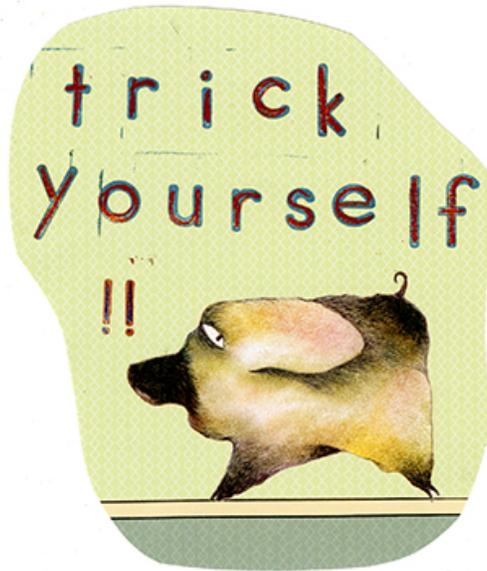
“Colour is about feeling, right?” Frank Bowling. I really enjoyed listening to the artist Frank Bowling talk about color and his work. Check it out here. <https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/frank-bowling-the-light-that-others-will-see>

3.

Over the holidays I went to the [Frida Khalo Museum](#) in Mexico City. It was a highlight. One of my favorite things was seeing her notebooks:



## WEEK #1 - Carla's Note of the Week



Hi Everyone!

It's been so fun to see your pages at the class forums. I hope you are enjoying the process so far!

I wanted to share the three notebooks that I've re-purposed as Anything Goes Notebooks for this class (and for the year, as it will take that long to fill them!).



All three happen to be hand-bound books with nice watercolor paper (either made myself or by others). But the ONLY reason I'm able to actually USE THEM in 2026 is that they have all three sat on my shelves—mostly untouched—FOR YEARS because they were so "precious" and "expensive." (Years!)

..... The heck with that!



I mention this first thing as I wanted you to know that I definitely have a block when it comes to using expensive materials, and so I resonate very much with Kara's habit of using inexpensive notebooks. In fact, using "office supplies" when I first started making art in earnest 25 years ago was one of the main ways I "tricked" myself into just letting go and enjoying the process.



Because by using ballpoint pens, Sharpies or kid's markers on cheap printer paper, I could convince my subconscious that what I was doing was "no big deal." It was "just for fun." And if I made a drawing I didn't like, it was easy to toss it, as the paper only cost me about two cents!

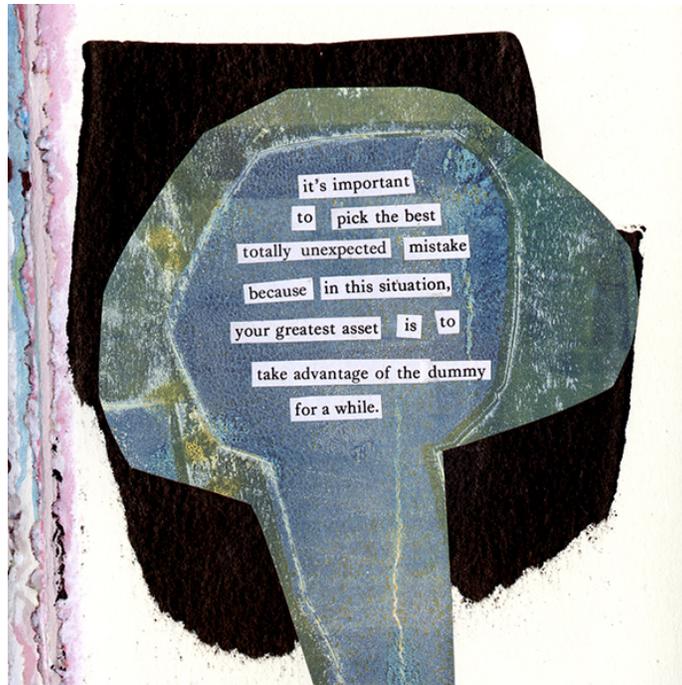


And to this day I still "TRICK MYSELF" in various ways, as it's just so easy to get inside my head and fret too much over WHAT to draw or WHY I'm drawing or WHAT I'm going to "do" with it in the end. So even though I have been able to upgrade to nicer paper at this moment in time, I still use ballpoint pen or a simple disposable mechanical pencil for most of my drawings, for example.



Do you find it helpful to "trick" yourself into things, too? Or would you like to give it a try? Here are a few things to try:

- Use inexpensive supplies (takes the pressure off of it being a "serious" piece of art).
- Use your non-dominant hand (takes ALL the pressure off!)
- Let time pass so you "forget" how expensive your supplies were.
- Mess up your pages beforehand so they're already "wrecked."
- Follow the prompts before thinking too much.
- Set a timer (moving quickly helps get you out of your head).
- Remind yourself over and over again that Mistakes Are Opportunities (for lots of things, including learning, laughing at yourself, and giving you something to cover up with collage or paint).



And finally,

- Embrace randomness and "gamify" your process!

I've found that I especially need to be a trickster when it comes to the WHAT I'm going to draw or paint. (Am I just going to draw that same bunny over and over again? The answer is, "Well, yes. Yes I am.")



But I DO like to get out of my bunny rut sometimes, and I've found that randomly picking two words is a fun way to stretch my creativity, so I will do a "Random Pick Exercise" to help mix things up. Below is a bonus Random Pick prompt video (originally as part of our 365 yearlong class we did in 2018!). The idea is that you pick two random words from a box of slips of paper with words on them, and then you COMBINE the two words somehow in a creative way:

<https://vimeo.com/263798017/6325b60b78?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

I think I'll end now so I can get back to my notebooks!

Remember our Class Mantra from Kara: "It doesn't matter how much time you spend in your notebook. Some days it may only be 5 minutes splashing some color down and other times longer. But try to touch base daily."

Carla

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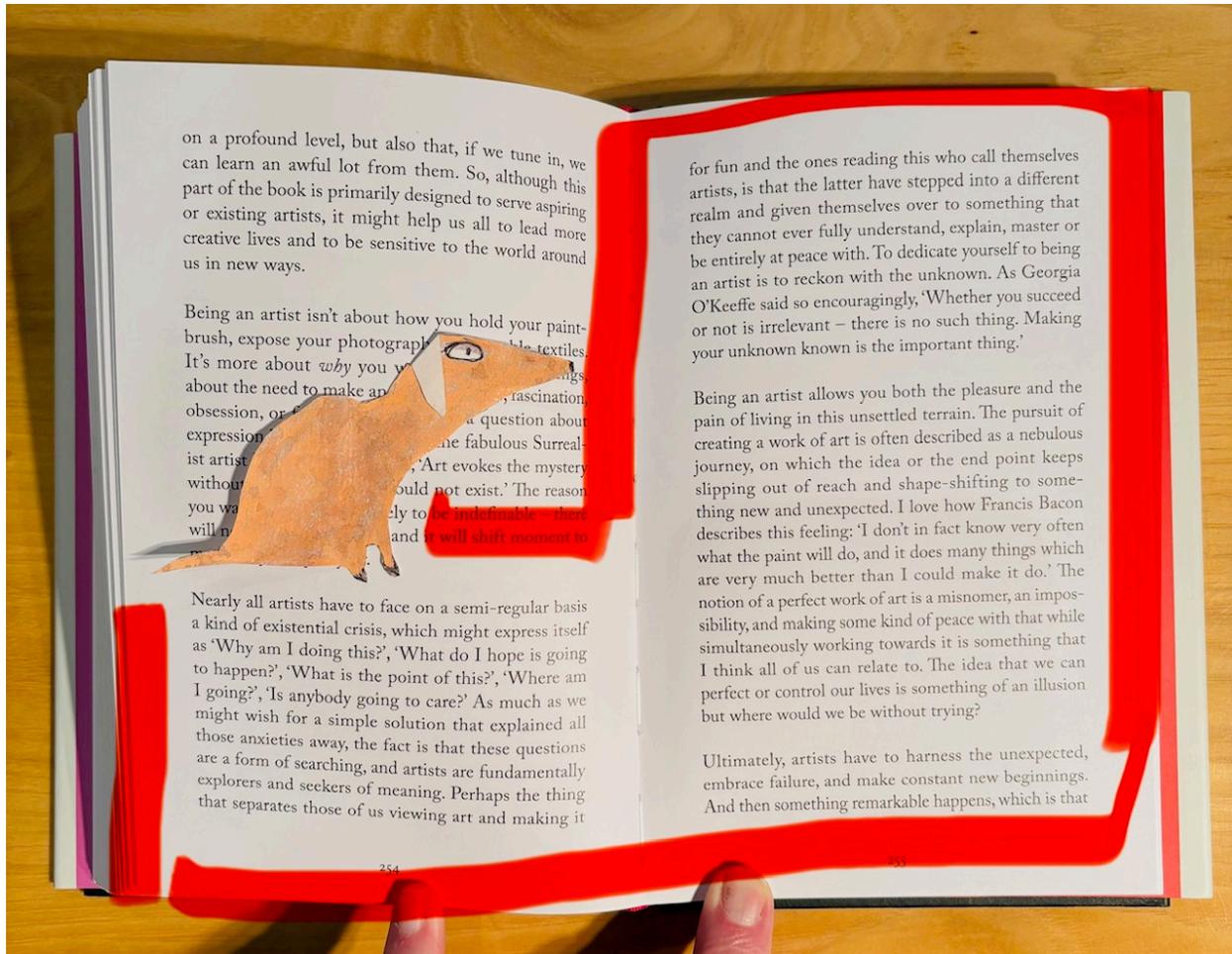


Here are three recent inspiring things:

**1.**

I recently read the book ["How to Art" by Kate Bryan](#). It was a quick read, and I enjoyed it, but I especially loved two pages towards the end of the book, where she talks about the WHY of making art. I'm paraphrasing her here, but she writes:

Nearly all artists have to face on a semi-regular basis a kind of existential crisis: 'Why am I doing this? Why is the point?' These questions are a form of searching, and artists are fundamentally explorers and seekers of meaning. Artists step into a different realm and give themselves over to something they cannot fully understand; to dedicate yourself to being an artist is to reckon with the unknown. (Note: Below is a photo of the two pages so you can read it in its entirety!)



2.

Lately I've been drawing a lot with my eyes closed, and I wondered if any of the Masters had experimented drawing with eyes closed drawings in any serious way. Of course there was! Here is an article about Willem de Kooning's 24 "Closed-Eye Drawings" which were shown at the Museum of Modern Art together 9n 2012: <https://hyperallergic.com/flying-blind-de-koonings-closed-eye-drawings/>



3.

If you like color, check out Philadelphia artist [Martha Rich](#)! Here's a link to a 2009 post featuring some of her altered books: <https://www.booooooom.com/2009/04/09/marcia-brady-and-ultraman-are-in-love/> ... and here's a link to some of her word bubbles! [https://20x200.com/blogs/news/martha-rich-word-bubble-panels?srltid=AfmBOooVyjwIWDXqgK604mjmiDIY8sYOoUg2TzmA2KuB4v47-\\_YpO79r](https://20x200.com/blogs/news/martha-rich-word-bubble-panels?srltid=AfmBOooVyjwIWDXqgK604mjmiDIY8sYOoUg2TzmA2KuB4v47-_YpO79r)

