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## Get Unstuck: 30 Days of Overcoming Your Creative Block with Danielle Krysa

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### Chapter 1 - Get Unstuck

#### Overview

(calm music) - Hi, my name is Danielle Krysa. I am a collage artist, but I'm also the blogger and author known as The Jealous Curator. I have spent about 10 years talking to professional and amateur artists, and the thing that the both of them have in common is they both get blocked. Everyone gets creative blocks, but the trick is pushing through them instead of quitting. So that's what we're gonna do in this challenge, play with lots of tips, and tricks, and different projects that will help you when you are blocked so that you can move forward and keep going with your creative process. I'm gonna be sharing some of my favorite unblocking tips, as well as projects for professional artists. We'll do things like go for walks, cut up old books, and even visit the grocery store for some supplies. When I was a young artist just fresh out of art school, nobody had ever really talked about inner critics or blocks, so when I hit them, I didn't realize that was just part of being a creative person. I thought it meant I couldn't be an artist and that I should just quit, which I did for a really long time. And I've since learned that that is ridiculous. Nobody should quit if you have a day where you don't have an idea or your inner critic is telling you to stop. You need to show up, you need to get into the studio, and you need to make something.

#### Materials

- As far as materials go, especially for unblocking projects, I would suggest getting all of the materials that you really, really love because if you're working with things you already like, you're instantly gonna feel more creative. So for me, I do a lot of cutting and we're gonna do a lot of cutting in this challenge. So my favorite thing to use is actually kitchen scissors. I just find that they cut really nicely along the edge. You can get very close and have a lot of control which I'll show you as we go along. You can use these little ring knives too which are life changers. You can get really, really close or you can go around corners. It gives you a lot more control than scissors. So I would highly recommend those and there's also of course the good old X-ACTO blade. We are going to be using some straws to move paint around like we did when we were kids blowing paint. And as far as bases go, I like to have all sorts of different things that you could use in the studio. You don't have to have really expensive, beautiful paper or canvas. You can have old book covers, watercolor paper, craft paper that you find anywhere that you like and that way you've got all sorts of go-to materials to begin with. Now when it comes to gluing, I don't use a glue stick. A lot of people do but I tend to get more glue on me than on paper so I like to use a white glue called PVA. It gives me a lot of control, I use a paint brush and paint the glue onto the back of the ephemera, and then glue it down and again, I'll be showing you how to do that to avoid buckling and to avoid glue squishing out of the sides. I have a huge bucket of paints in my studio. I have collage, I have acrylic. I have paint from the dollar store so don't feel that it has to be precious or really expensive. I tend to lean towards wash because I really like the vibrance of it and I like neon so there's a lot of neon in my palette. But you can really use whatever you like, whatever you're attracted to. I also have washi tape here because when you don't feel like gluing, why not stick it on with tape. I have a whole bunch of old paint brushes. Again, do not be precious. That's a huge trap for being blocked, feeling that you need perfect, precious materials. You don't, some of these brushes are 25 years old. I'm dating myself but that's okay. And of course paper ephemera that we'll be cutting up. Various pens,

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that will just be for playing around, adding line work to things. We'll also be using a hole punch because we're gonna make some confetti for ourselves, as well as a bunch of materials that are gonna come into play as creativity strikes.

#### Day 1 - Take a walk

- Hi, welcome to day one of getting unblocked. So, we are going to spend today thinking about getting present, because the thing is, there really is inspiration everywhere, I realize that is totally cliché, but it is cliché because it is true. So, we're gonna begin by going for a walk, and if you do this in your day to day life, it adds just a little bit of creativity to your every day, it's like exercise, you just need to introduce it in some way, so the way we're going to do it is by going for a walk, have your phone with you, which I know you do, and we're going to start out by looking for five things. You don't have to think about what they're gonna be, because I am going to tell you. So, we're going to look for a circle, something blue, a pattern of some kind, something old, and something simple, and while we're out there, looking for certain things while we're walking down our regular old block that we always walk down, suddenly it's gonna be totally different because now we're actually looking for inspiration by using these cues. (inspirational digital music)

#### Day 2 - Photo collage

- Welcome back to day two for unblocking challenge. So yesterday we went for a walk and we had a bunch of key words that we were looking for on that walk. Now, I found all sorts of things. We had a circle, blue, pattern, simple, and old. Now, that doesn't mean that when you're out on that walk, you're only looking for one circle or one pattern. Just whatever catches your eye, take a photo of it. So that's what I did, and I've got a whole bunch here. I have more than one pattern. And the reason I did that is because once I have all of my pieces cut out, I might wanna use a different composition and make sure that colors go together and things like that. So I'm just gonna cut these up, abstracting them even more than they already are. And see, I'm not even gonna be precious about this at all. And I'll just cut them into fours. This was a really cool piece for old, the skeleton husband and wife here. And we'll separate these two, cut it into four. And this way we're just kind of getting lots of elements that we can use. You can do this with books when you're making collage as well. Every professional artist I've ever talked to has said the key is not being precious. And as soon as you chop something up and as soon as you don't use perfectly straight lines, you can't possibly be precious about it because you're not even starting with it being perfect. You're starting with it being a little bit off. This was really cool for circle, this bike rack. This is another circle, this old key lock. This would've worked for old or blue. And the really cool thing about this is you walk through the same neighborhood every single day. Would you have ever noticed this old lock before? Probably not. But when you stop and look a little closer, you find these really beautiful things that are right in front of you. And inspiration really is everywhere. So if you just stop a little bit and look around, you can find it. So just do a couple more of these. I think I've got enough to do what we're gonna do. So we found five. I would recommend, I suggested the five words that we were looking for, but have a friend write down five words that you're gonna look for next time, or look up, find five words in a book and that's what you're after. This little leaf is our simple 'cause you can't get much more simple than a little leaf on the sidewalk. Cut it up. And then the last one I need is blue. I like this lock. I'm gonna use that for my blue. So now I've got all of these different things cut up. And it's almost like a puzzle. And again, I'm gonna keep saying this over and over and over until you're sick of hearing it, but don't be precious. So now you don't have to pick the perfect thing. Just grab whichever one

appeals to you the most. So you can use, again, watercolor paper. Any size works. I like watercolor paper because it's a bit thicker so it can handle the white glue. You can also use an old book cover, found ephemera paper as your background, whatever you like, but I am going to start with just a small piece of watercolor paper. So let's see, we need old. Here's some olds that I like the look of. I like this lady's skirt. Maybe that will be our old. Now let's do a pattern. Maybe this one. Circle. Blue. And now simple. Where's my little leaf? There we go. Turn them around, find a composition that you like. Maybe make that pink in the middle. And you've got this really lovely little simple collage. This is now an abstracted version of our walk. So we're going to attach these pieces using the PVA. So I have my PVA in a little dish, and I just use any paintbrushes that I have around and put it on the back of the piece I'm gonna put down. And this way it just gives me a lot more control. I can spread it around. Don't go right up to the edges, because it will squish out a little bit when you put it down, which isn't a disaster because it does dry clear, but it's kinda nicer if it doesn't squish out. So the trick to this is putting it down flat and not pushing like that because then glue will come out. Just put it down flat and press it. I use the palm of my hand a lot. And just press it down. And then the glue doesn't come out and you've got a nice, clean, no bubbled piece. We can just continue on and do the exact same thing with all five. So again, we just find the spot we want. And again, not being precious. Oh, I got glue on it. No big deal, I'm not precious. (laughs) And then we just flatten it down with the palm. Done. And I'm just doing it in a straight line. Could be my designer, yours is a designer, but you can do whatever you like. You could put it in a little composition like that, stack it up, whatever works for you. I'm just gonna do them in a little line. To make it official, I like to add a little title so that it's not just cut up things from a walk. I'm gonna make it into art by adding a title. So we'll call it A Morning Walk. There we go, and I'll sign it, and now it's super official. And you can create pieces like this every day, every week until your whole studio is filled with these little bits of inspiration from around your neighborhood.

### Day 3 - Idea jar

- One of the other props I really love is the use of an idea jar. I know that you've been in your studio where there are days when you are staring at a blank piece of paper, and you think what should I make? And the ideas just don't come, sometimes the possibilities are so endless that you don't know where to begin. So, that's what an idea jar is for. We're gonna start with three jars, three little boxes, three containers, whatever you've got that you want to use, and then we're gonna give each of them a category, the first being your medium that you're gonna choose. So I've got colored pencils, watercolor, thread and yarn, crayons, ballpoint pen, tape or a pencil. Now you can use these or you can, if you've got a studio filled with other things, you can make a different mediums list. The next one is motif, things like waves, boxy, triangles, spiky, stripes, letter forms, floral, diamonds, dots, whatever it is that you really love, you can put that into your jar. And our final category, of course, is color. So choose your favorites that are in your studio. I have navy blue, green, lavender, red, yellow, neon anything, because that's what I love, aqua blue, I'm gonna add one more. I'm gonna do a pink because I love pink. And then I've got all of my categories for all of my jars. I've color-coded my categories, you don't have to, I just got cute with my Post-it Notes. Now this is gonna be like a raffle, I don't want you to be able to cheat and only pick the things you want to pick. So we're gonna fold them in half, pop them into the jars. So here's our medium jar. The next time you're in the studio staring at a blank piece of paper not sure what to do, or maybe you have too many ideas, let the jars do the work for you. So this is how it would be, you would come in, I've got nothing today, let's see what the jars provide. Okay, we're doing something with colored pencils in

pink, and it has to involve stripes. There you go, you've got your ideas and off you go.

#### Day 4 - Thrift shop challenge

- I work with a lot of found imagery. And one of the best places to find those images is at the thrift shop. Now I would recommend setting a challenge for yourself. One of the things that most professional artists have told me is that they like to create a sandbox and then play within it. So basically that means set yourself some rules so that you have limits. I'm gonna give you the limit of going to the thrift shop and only buying three books. Because at the thrift shop you could buy 45 books. And then you'll have too many possibilities to start with. So buy three books. And I'd even challenge you to only spend five dollars. So that you're really limiting your choices. Find three books. And when you're looking for those books, I wait until there's an emotional reaction. If I pick something up and flip through it and my heart races a little bit, and I realize like ooh, I can cut out so many things from this book, that's the one I'm bringing home. So I want you to get three books and one ceramic weirdo. It might be a little squirrel shaker or it might be a little cat. Something like that. Find that and bring it back to your studio. Here is what I found at the thrift shop. And it was a hard decision 'cause there was a lot of good stuff. But I had to choose something. Cookbooks are fantastic. Especially old cookbooks because the paper is a little bit thicker. So it's really nice for cutting out. And who doesn't love chocolate? This was found in the art section. This old school watercolor book. And it's just so much goodness. Not only can I cut her out, but there's beautiful textures you could cut out just in here and get these really nice colors. So there's a lot of potential with that one. And then anybody that knows me knows that I cannot leave the thrift shop without a book of royals. (laughs) I can't do anything unless I have Queen Elizabeth and her mom and Charles in there. So I didn't leave without a royal book. I also found this little guy in the ceramic section. We're not gonna touch him today. But we're gonna come back to him. I work mostly in collage. So after a trip to the thrift shop I can't control myself and I have to come home and flip through all of the books and see what I found. And inevitably get out my scissors and start cutting. There's all sorts of things that you can find. And you don't have to take things literally. You don't have to cut things out perfectly. You could just use textures. You could cut shapes out of things. I found this shaved chocolate that I thought looked remarkably like a crown. Which of course, you know I do love Queen Elizabeth. So here we go. And I am going to take it out of context by changing it from a chocolate shaving into a fancy crown. So when I cut, a little trick is to go just inside the line so that you don't get the outside line. Like if you did that, you would have too much of the caramel color. So I go just inside. And the nice thing is when you're cutting out something that's not representational, nobody really knows that you're cheating. So if I'm not doing this exactly like the photograph, who's gonna know? We'll just kinda work our way around this toothpick because you know, we don't really want that in there. And now we've got a little double chocolate crown. So I'm not gonna put Liz in the crown. This lady you might remember her from our water color book. And so again, you can use scissors. You can rip. This terrifies people when you just do that. But you can because we're not gonna be precious. So you can rip her out like that. And place the crown on her like that if you like. Or you can cut out perfectly. And again, I will just go right a tiny bit inside of her hairline so that we don't end up with that little white ridge of background. I want her to be really, if I'm going to go clean, I want her to be really clean. So that when she sits on my final piece of paper, there's no background to her. So let's just cut out her collar here maybe. Around her hair. And the nice thing with collage is just you know, go for it. Especially in this situation. We've got all these other ladies to choose from. So if you "ruin it," you've got more chances to do it again. And that's

one of the things I love so much about collage is it just feels like you can't do it wrong. If you miss cut something, okay. Like for example, say I'd accidentally ripped into her. Well that's kind of cool. Maybe I will separate it a little bit and then put the crown on her. And that happy accident actually turned into a really great composition. So there's really nothing that you can do wrong. I have a stack of paper here from previous projects that didn't work out. So instead of throwing things away, I always just save them because you never know when they might be a good contribution to a new project. So these have paint marks on them. You can either use this as the beginning point or you can flip it over and you've got a clean white sheet. I like this piece. This acrylic paint almost looks like icing. Which I think will go nicely with the chocolate. So now I've got these three elements. And how do I want to do this? I can incorporate the pink. And with collage, with anything really, but especially with collage, people want to glue immediately. Don't glue immediately. You can play around with composition. Decide if the pink actually looks better up here. I actually kind of like that one. And so just because I like it, I don't stop. I just kinda keep playing until I come up with where I am gonna land before the glue comes out because then you can't go backwards. So this is going to be our final composition. Obviously we're gonna have to put her down first so that we can put the crown on top of her. You sort of have to think about your layering when you're collaging of what's gonna go on the top and what's on the bottom. So we'll just begin again by taking the glue on a paintbrush and moving it all around. You don't want any blobs because then you might get a buckle in the paper. So I use the side of the brush and just smooth it out. Again, you don't want to go too close to the edges because you don't want it to squeeze out the sides. And this comes with practice too. There's been many a piece I've done with glue everywhere. So it just comes with practice. So let me make sure I'm getting her close enough so that the crown, yes. So we'll just place her here. Again, I use the palm of my hand. Just gently press it down. And we'll go back and put her chocolate crown on. Into the icing. Press down gently with our hand. And we've taken all of these things completely out of context and turned it into a little chocolate and icing queen.

#### Day 5 - Painted pages

- We've already talked about heading into the studio and having no ideas at all when we were talking about the jar slips. Another thing you can do on days like that is procrastinate with purpose. So if you know that there's gonna be things you need to prep that take time dry, do it when you aren't feeling particularly creative, and then you've got it ready for you when you are feeling really creative. So today, we're just going to prep some pages with paint colors so that we can then later cut them up and use them as abstract objects in collage work. So again, back to the very beginning when we were talking about our materials, have your favorite colors for this one. Pick maybe five to seven colors that you can use to paint pages with, and that way, when you do come back to start a new project, you have these pages that are already in the palette that you love, and so you're kind of instantly feeling ready to go. I've got a few different colors of gouache here, I really love using gouache, I like its matte finish and the really neon colors you can get. And I also have a little bit of black ink. So, I'm just going to start, I've got watercolor paper, again I like to use it because it doesn't buckle. And I'll just put it on nice and solid, I love hot pink, so that's my go-to beginning place, and just to make it go a bit further and so that I have different textures when I do come back to cut this up, I won't do the whole thing solidly. I'm gonna just let this turn into a bit of a gradient, and a bit of a wash at the very bottom so that I have different things to choose from once I get everything cut up. There we go, and it doesn't need to be perfect. Not precious, I'm not being precious. A little bit more pink at the top, there we go. And then that one can just start drying. I'm

not even gonna clean my brush, I'm gonna go again. This one I think I will do a gradient from pink into lavender. This just gives you so many more choices, and you would never do this in a painting, it wouldn't feel quite perfect enough, but when you come back and cut this out, you'll get these really beautiful gradients that go from one side of the shape that you cut to the other. I know I find on days when I am procrastinating with purpose, I might go into the studio thinking, ugh, I have no ideas and nothing's coming, so I'll just do prep work, but once you get the paints out, once you start seeing these colors, sometimes it just gets your creative juices flowing whether you planned that or not. I also like to splatter with ink over top of some of these solid colors, because then it gives it a different kind of texture, I'm not just doing the same thing that I've already done, and makes nice little rocks and things like that, it gets your imagination flowing a little bit more. So, I'll just finish this lavender. And I like to do the ink splatters when the gouache is wet, because then it'll bleed and create little starbursts, which is kind of nice. Now you might want to wear a small Corn Apron for this because you could get splattered too. Little brushes sometimes work, let's see, back up, here we go. There, just little tiny splatters like that. Black sumi ink is really nice for this, and I also like to go back into the gouache and almost make it ink-like by adding a whole bunch of water, and then you can do little splashes with that too, if you don't have ink, you can kind of make your own. So, we'll do this, and add some little splatters to this too. It just makes it a little bit more interesting when you come back, and again it gets your ideas flowing that you might not have thought of otherwise. It's like being a kid when you just played and splashed around without worrying about galleries accepting your work or buyers, you're just playing and having fun. So we're gonna let these dry, and come back to them tomorrow and make some new work.

#### Day 6 - Abstract shape collage

- You don't always need to use found images in collage. You can sometimes just use color or texture. So we're going to take the painted pages from yesterday and just cut them up into abstract shapes. A few of my favorite go-tos are mounds, sort of oblong circles, triangles. And again, we can't be precious, so that's why those shapes sort of work nicely. I don't have to worry that this is a perfect anything. It's just a mound. So you can do lots of different sizes. The other kind of thing I like to do is triangles because those can end up being trees or mountains or just triangles. And again, they don't need to be perfect. And this is what I like from what we did yesterday. When you've got a bunch of different colors going on one page, once you cut them out, you get all sorts of really beautiful color combinations. Sometimes where the paint overlaps is a really beautiful place to do a cut because then you get this really nice gradation that you didn't really plan, and now you've got this great triangle with these beautiful strokes on it. Tiny little mounds. Speech bubbles are always fun because even though this is an abstract, if you make a little speech bubble, you can add a bit of narrative to whatever it is that you're gonna make. So I already prepped a whole bunch of these pieces. I constantly do that any time I'm procrastinating with purpose in my studio. I just cut things out, listen to music, and then that way on days when I am feeling ready to roll, I have a little basket filled with all sorts of shapes to get started. Now, I would love to take credit for this (laughs) idea, but this is actually Kate Pugsley. She is an artist from Chicago, and she was one of the artists featured in my book *Creative Block*. And when I asked her, what do you do when you're stuck, this was her project that she recommended. And she does not use the kind of colors I use. She uses really muted tones, earth tones. So pick the colors that you like. Make the shapes that you like. And then you've got a little collection of go-to pieces when you're ready. So I'll just clear this away and use this piece as my starting. So let's grab some of these mounds and things. I start by composing

before I glue because, again, what happens sometimes when people glue first is that you've got this triangle and now you've sort of painted yourself into a corner because now you have to work around this thing that you've glued down there. So before you glue anything, just start playing around. Bring out some of the mounds. Maybe it can be representational if you want it to. I can make a little scene with rocks. They can overlap each other. Feels very Bob Ross. You could have a happy little mountain up here, (laughs) a little rock. So you can play around with that. Or maybe we get rid of all of those and you do a whole bunch of triangles and it looks like a little collection of trees. It also doesn't have to look like anything real if you don't want it to. And you could just turn it in to some sort of abstract pattern. So it just lets you really truly play and experiment. And you will be shocked by how many happy accidents you run into where all of a sudden maybe there's a project you've been working on that you're stuck on. And just by doing this kind of thing where you're truly just playing, you think, oh my gosh, that would be amazing if I bring it in to whatever project I'm doing. It might even just be the color palette that gets you excited and thinking about something else. So I'm just gonna do, I love these, the Sumi ink splatters that we had. See how it sort of makes these things look like little stones? And then because of my work, I like to have everything having a narrative. My parents always told me I told too many stories. Well, too bad, because that's how I work. (laughs) so I love using these speech bubbles because right now we've basically got maybe some rocks and some little cactus things, but as soon as you add a speech bubble, it almost looks like these little things are in conversation. The viewers that are looking at it might infer their own story for what they think is happening. And I just thing it's funny, 'cause what would a rock say to a cactus? I don't know, but we'll find out. So there we go. That's what I would do, 'cause it's funny. So again, grab my trusty white glue, my brush. And again, because if I've got things layered over top of each other, you have to sort of step backwards a little bit and do your first layer glued down and move on top of that. Put it down gently with the palm of my hand. The next one was this guy. Watercolor paper doesn't overlap great, just because it's a little bit thicker. Found ephemera works a little bit better because it's thinner. But it still does the trick. Just pat that down. And again, I'm not being precious. If this is not the exact thing I had laid out a moment ago, that is okay, maybe it's even better than what I had before. And then we can just go on from there. And then I'll just add a title to the bottom, again, making it look a little more official. So how about Nature Convos? Little sign, and it's officially art.

#### Day 7 - Found photo collage

- You can combine your abstract shapes that we've made with photos. So again, that kind of creates a narrative, gets you out of your head, and get you sort of mixing different ideas and different mediums. So because I work with found photos a lot and I'm organized (laughs) because it's really annoying to look through boxes and boxes when you're trying to find one thing, I keep these clear envelopes by theme. So this is my royal family envelope. This is tiny people. I have one for roses, I have one for food. That way, when I'm looking for something, it's easy to find. So let's do something with the royals. I have a thing with Diana lately. Let's get a little Diana out here. So I have worked with these shapes a lot because they are my go-to shapes, and these little mounds can very quickly look like ice cream cones. And so, let's make some ice cream cones. And Diana can sheepishly look at them and wish that she was having one maybe. We'll put her in a little forest of ice cream cones. And this is what I like using people cut out for, is it just instantly adds a story. Without her, yes, it's ice cream cones and it's cute. Maybe it could be a fabric pattern, maybe it could be a nice print. But as soon as you add a person, it instantly adds a dialogue because now, what is Diana thinking about

this ice cream? You could always dig back into your people and maybe a Charles finds his way in there or a queen. And it could be my years and years in design school, but whenever I do a composition, I always do things in odd numbers. Threes, fives, sevens, those groupings always look so much nicer than just even numbered groups. And so it's a good little trick. The other thing that we were taught in design school for composition was to keep in mind small, medium, and large. So if you're noticing that your composition's looking a bit funny, maybe it's because you've got too many triangles that are the same size, or everything is too big. So if you can break it up and introduce small, medium, large. Just because we cut these up the other day doesn't mean you can't go back in and think, oh, actually, I need a smaller one and recut these shapes. This is looking a little bit funny because you can't see the white against the white, so let's just cut that one down, too. So you can go back into any of this stuff as often as you like. And so there we go. We've got our little composition of Diana and the ice cream cones. Once you have the final composition that you're happy with, grab your glue stick or your white glue and glue everything into place.

#### Day 8 - Working with multiples

- This is another project from my book *Creative Block*, and it is one of my all-time favorite unblocking projects. This one is by Trey Speegle. He's a painter from New York, and he suggested this, and I do it all the time. And I do it with workshops all over the world. So what you wanna do is find an image that you like. It could be something that you created, something from a magazine. I have chosen to work with Frida Kahlo, and I need you to photocopy it a dozen times. So having it in a grid is fine so you're using less paper. The whole idea of this is to take away the preciousness of working with one image. If you just had one image of Frida that you were going to alter, you might feel terrified to put that first mark down. So by having at least a dozen or more, then you've taken that away. I want you to alter them very, very quickly. Set an egg timer, set a timer on your phone if you need to, and all 12 of these should be done within, say, 15 minutes. That way you don't have time to get hung up. You just have to take action and go for it. So that is exactly what I'm going to do. We're just gonna alter four of these to start, and let's go with a little bit of makeup. We'll give Frida some nice blue eyeshadow. There we go. And again, this could be it, I could be done right here. You don't need to alter it anymore than that. I'll just add a little bit of color to her flowers. You can see them here, I've just watered down my gouache so that it's more like watercolor, as opposed to the nice, thick matte gouache that I've got for her makeup. And really that's all you need to do. This is why your timer doesn't need to be set for more than 15 minutes because now we're done. So let's move onto the next one. We could use, let's do her necklace. We'll paint in these beads. And again, this is just one of these projects that's just meant to loosen you up, be fun, and they cause you start thinking about things that you wouldn't have done otherwise. It might give you an idea to work with washiness and matte. It might give you an idea to work with polka dots because you did these beads, and it wouldn't have been something that you would have done in your normal work. But because you're just playing, suddenly these ideas just kind of come out of nowhere. So we'll do that. Now she's got her necklace going. Maybe we should finish off her cigarette, too. I'll let it burn on the end there. Now you don't just need to use paint. If you wanna go in with marker or felt tip pens, you can go in and add dimension to it so it makes it a little bit more graphic. We can go around her watch, darken it in. And really, that one is done. You don't need to do anymore. If you do wanna do more, great, you can cover it all, but remember that your timer is on and I don't want you to get so hung up on the fact that you love this one so much, it's the only you're working on. So let's fill in this background, and we'll just go for it with the marker. I'm not gonna worry if it's perfect, 'cause it

doesn't matter because I have a sheet of eight more if I wanna do more. And by doing something like this, it just takes that fear away. There we go, give Frida a little more of an outline there. I'm using a brush pen for this. You could use a Sharpie. You could use pencil, whatever you've got handy, really. I try not to get too hung up on materials when I'm doing things like this. I like to just grab what's close and make it work. There we go, I'm not even gonna fill in the entire background, just this sort of messiness. Maybe it's Frida's creative energy circling around her. There we go. And then I love polka dots. I'm kinda digging this necklace, so I'm gonna actually give her flowers some little tiny dots. If you just put gouache or acrylic right on the tip of a paintbrush, a small paintbrush like this, and just touch down and lift off, you can make really nice little polka dots. So we'll give her a pink polka dot flower and a blue one. That way if you end up doing 12 or if you end up liking at least four of these, this nice little palette ties them all together. The first time I did this, I did 50 of them, and I liked about 23 of them, and I recycled the rest. And I remember thinking, wow, I've never done 23 of anything that I liked, let alone in 20 minutes or half an hour. So it really just frees you up to have some fun. Okay, that's it for her. (water swishing) And because I can't not use gold, let's bring in a little gold fine liner here, too. Gold necklace. This isn't in Frida's heyday when the money was rolling in, you know, gold everything. Golden flowers. And you're gonna like some of these more than the others, and that's the whole point. You're not going to love everything, nor should you. This is just for playing and experimenting and figuring out what you're gonna do next. All of the projects that we're doing are jump starters. They won't be the ones going off to MoMA (laughs), but they will help you with the work that comes after this. There we go, we've got four beginning places, and then you can continue with all 12.

#### Day 9 - A message to your inner critic

- Everyone has an inner critic, but it's how you deal with that inner critic that's going to help or hinder you. So, every professional artist I've talked to has one too, but they have to shut it down. They have galleries waiting for 'em, they have collectors waiting for them, so they can't let that little voice rule their world. So there's lots of little tips and tricks for shutting that inner critic down, and one of them is my favorite is naming it. And I was actually teaching a class, and I had a high school student, I asked him what he called his inner critic, was it mini me or what. And he said, "Oh, I call my inner critic Arlo." And I thought that was the best thing I had ever heard, and I actually stole it, and now I named mine Arlo. But I would highly recommend choosing a name for your inner critic. Because inner critic is just this floaty, dark nightmarish thing that makes you feel bad. But if you name it Tim or Janine or whatever you wanna name it, suddenly you've personified it, and it's not this scary thing. It's just Arlo, and you can tell him to get out of your studio because you're busy working. So we are gonna write a little ransom note to Tim or Janine or Arlo telling them to take a hike and leave us alone. So we are gonna grab one or all three books that you found at the thrift shop and start cutting out letters, a la ransom note style. So I've just got one here from the chocolate cookbook. So we'll just cut out a few letters. You might not know what you're gonna say yet, so just grab whatever letters you want. You can be thinking about what you want to say as you go. There's a C. And just get a little collection of letters going. Some of them are gonna be big and little. Just as I mentioned the other day, it's nice to have things that are small, medium, and large for your final design anyway, so whatever you can find. This is a little S. There we go. I have some already cut out, so let's just use these. And I know what I'm gonna tell Arlo. I don't want Arlo anywhere near my work. He's allowed to show up if he wants, he can have an opinion, but unless he can learn to say it nicely, he's not welcome. So, (laughing) that's what a lot of the artists say is that

they have learned to work with their inner critic. They're not always best friends, but when they hear that little voice pipe up, they know that there's probably something not quite right. So they do listen, but they don't put up with any flack from them. So I am going to spell out not today, Arlo. So let's see. So now you can grab your glue and put these things into place. I have a little trick to pick up tiny pieces. It goes like this. Otherwise I can't pick them up. So nothing like a little spit to get (laughing) it up onto your hand. Little bit of glue, into place, palm down, and here we go again. (laughing) You can make as many messages as you want to and say as many things as you'd like to your inner critic and then hang them up in your studio so that when you walk in there, you remember that you are already telling Arlo, Tim, or Janine where to go.

#### Day 10 - Idea jar prompt

- I didn't know what I wanted to make today, so I let the jars tell me. I have pulled three things and the jars are telling me that I am using paint, I'm gonna make some kind of arc, and I have to use pink. So I'm just gonna grab all the pinks that I have. I'll use these three and do an arc with them. I do rainbows quite a bit or gradient sort of arcs, so a little trick I like to use is I put the colors together right beside each other on the palette so that they're almost touching. You can do this with rainbow colors if you like, you can do it with blue hues, gray-scale, all really good. And then I need to get a wider brush so that I, something that's wide enough that can fit all three colors on it. So I've got that. Just gonna dip it in and lift it off and now I've got three colors all side by side, all my pinks that the jar told me to use. So here we go, let's do a big beautiful arc. There we go. And when it dries out like that, that's no problem. Well, you could leave it like that if you wanted to. You can also dip into your water just a little bit. This works really nicely with gouache and acrylic. Oops, splashed. And go over it again. And it just blends everything even more, gives it a bit of a watercolor feel. And there we go. I've done what the jar told me, I did a pink arc. And so this might go into my pile of papers, maybe a person will get added to this. Maybe this arc will end up in a pile that gets cut up and turned into abstract shapes. But for now, it is a starting point, it's what the jars told me to do, and it was better than being in the studio doing nothing.

#### Day 11 - Kitchen Materials

- Just like inspiration is everywhere, materials can come from anywhere. You don't need expensive, fancy things. You can just look in your kitchen. So for this exercise, I raided my pantry. I have things that are basically just leftover from my son's birthday party and they are gonna be transformed into art supplies. I've taken this goodie bag and cut it down to give myself a single page to work on. There's some straws leftover from the party, paper straws, and some food colorings from decorating his cake. So what we're going to do, I don't know if y'all remember this from being a kid, but we'll drop the food coloring on like ink, and then use the straw to blow it and make little trees for ourselves. So, once again we are not going to worry about perfection because this is not going to be perfect. (chuckles) We can't control what's gonna happen so let's just see. There we go, one little branch. What I really like is when the colors cross over each other and does some blending for you. You can use whatever colors you want but it's just how I decorated this cake so it's what I have. And if you change the direction of which way you're blowing, you'll get branches going in all different directions too. And the last one let's do a little bit of this magenta. And this just is proof that you don't need to have fancy things, you can just find whatever in your cupboard and turn it into art and it might even be that this gives you a great idea for the studio later that you can get out India Ink or you can water down gouache and you can do exactly the same thing. This is a really fun

thing to do, again, with watercolor or any other paint, you can take a paint brush, dip it in a bit of water and just touch it to the ends. You'll get little blooms and we'll just give ourselves some little flowers here. The next thing I'm going to do is cut up the extra strip I have from the bag and make a few little leaves that we can glue onto the branches as well. So just little leaf shape, little eye shapes almost. And I got just a couple of those. And you can really do whatever you want with this. But as a collage artist, I feel the need to glue stuff to everything I guess. You can fold them in half so they have a little bit of dimension to them. I'm just gonna grab a new brush and a little bit of white glue. I'll just dip it on one end of the leaf. Make a little spot for it. Squidged up, that's okay, it dries clear. Pop another one on there too. Gonna be over here. And that's it, that's basically proof that you can create right from your kitchen counter and you don't even have to worry about getting too fancy about it. The whole thing, remember I'm gonna say it again and again, don't be precious. (chuckles)

#### Day 12 - Art making with your kindergarten self

- Remember when you were a little kid, and you just made things to make things, and you didn't worry about what anyone else was gonna think or where this is gonna end up, except, maybe on the refrigerator? Well, that's what we're gonna do today. We've got pom-poms and macaroni and glue. (chuckles) Which, when you were a kid, that was really all you needed to create a masterpiece. This is all about just remembering how fun it is to make things. And again, this will not end up in MoMA, although, who knows. But if it doesn't, it's gonna give you ideas for other things, like pom-poms. See, you can incorporate them into anything, and I've actually incorporated them into fine art pieces that I've hung in galleries. So, ya never know where this kind of thing is gonna go. I'm going to start with the rainbow. We did this on another one of our activities, but I've just lined up my paint really close, side by side. Instead of trying to do one color at a time for the rainbow, it's nicer if you can do them all at the same time. So I've chosen a brush that's wide enough that we'll scoop up all of those colors. So, let's just spread it out and get them all on our brush. There we go, now I've got the rainbow. Well, I'm going to reverse it. Okay, here we go. Voila. A rainbow that any seven-year-old would be very, very proud of. Okay, next. Let's get our macaroni in place. So this just requires a whole bunch of glue, put on like a kid would put on. Just all blobbed around. This is going to be our big macaroni cloud. This project is actually from my book *Your Inner Critic Is a Big Jerk*. There's a whole bunch of activities called projects from the kindergarten drawer, because it really is just so important. All of us were art kids, I know everybody watching this was an art kid when they were little. And at some point along the way, we started worrying what other people thought. When we were kids, and we found a feather on the way home from school, and picked it up and brought it home, we didn't worry about anything except sticking it to a piece of paper and putting glitter on it. So this is really just about having fun, doing something silly, and remembering what it feels like to be a kid. I'm gonna need one more noodle in the middle of that cloud right there. Okay, there. Just gonna let that dry for a second. And let's head over to the end of our rainbow and add some pom-poms. So, again, I'm just going to use glue. I like to put the glue on the pom-pom and on the paper, just so that you're sure that they're going to stick. Otherwise, it just sometimes falls off. So it just can go together like that. And just line it up with that color in the rainbow. We'll just continue adding the pom-poms at the end of the rainbow with the coordinating color. So there's our blue one. And we'll just have them sprinkle out over the space. Can go anywhere you want. Because we're seven and we don't care. And we just need our green one. Okay, pom-poms complete. So, the last thing we need to do is make our macaroni cloud white. So I've got some white acrylic paint here. I'll just grab a big soft brush. Get your white paint on there. And this is still a little bit wet with

the glue. So we'll just sort of touch it around. Certainly doesn't need to be perfect. Just a nice macaroni cloud (chuckling) that is now destined to be hung on your fridge, making everybody very, very proud of you, I'm quite sure. To make it official, I'm going to add a title. My mother is an artist, too, and I used to watch her when I was little. And there was always a title and a signature on her work. So I thought it was very important for me to have a title and a signature on my work too. Before it got framed or put on the fridge, there was always a title. So let's go with Danielle's Rainbow. We'll date it, because that's important for the historians. There we go. Ready for the fridge. (chuckling)

#### Day 13 - Random object still life

- Sometimes I like to work with three-dimensional objects as a starting place instead of just 2D books and images. So again, you don't have to go anywhere or do anything, you get to walk around your house and find five objects, random objects that you love and we're gonna put them together and create little compositions. These are some things that I've chosen. I have a roll of washi tape from my studio, a spool or thread from my junk drawer. A little concrete diamond that for some reason I have on my mantle. (chuckles) This is a cold cream pot that was owned, my grandmother who was an Avon lady. There's nothing in there. Smells really, really good. And then this little iridescent puppy we found at the thrift shop the other day, so I'm going to put them all together in a few different ways. None of them are right, none of them are wrong. Just any kind of setup that appeals to me and I'll take photographs of them. You can just play around with how this goes and you don't have to take a picture of the first arrangement if it's not working for you. You can keep on playing until it does. And maybe we'll give him a little hat. So I've got one arrangement I like. I'm gonna take a photograph of this. Maybe from a few different angles. We'll do another arrangement and you can get weird and things can be not how you think that they're supposed to be until you find something that you like. I keep repeating myself but this really is all about just thinking differently and hoping for happy accidents that will inspire you next time you head into the studio. You'll end up doing a painting of an upside-down dog and that's what's going to MoMA maybe. (chuckles) Let's try one more arrangement. You could do 30 or 40 arrangements if you like and then print those out as a series and frame them. Here's what you can do with this. You've now got these photos of three or four arrangements or as many as you like. You could print that out in black and white and alter it like I did with the Frida piece. You could use it as a place to start for a painting or a drawing or a print. You could really take this and do anything with it that you like, the idea is just that you're looking at the objects that surround you, objects that you love in a different light, seeing them as inspiration, moving them around, looking for compositions that you would normally never see, and embracing them and moving forward with something new and creative.

#### Day 14 - Revamping an unsuccessful piece

- Have you ever made a piece of work that you don't like? I know you have. (laughing) So have I. You don't need to throw it away, you don't need to recycle it. You can repurpose it and turn into something entirely new. This is a piece that I did awhile ago, and I really don't like it. It did not turn out how I had hoped. I didn't like how this paint worked out. The composition wasn't working for me, I don't know. But I have saved it forever, and today, we are going to repurpose it and turn it into a piece of art that hopefully I will like. So I want you to go through your cupboards or find a piece that you don't like and that you would want to rip up and throw away, and we're gonna turn it into something new. I've got a cutting board and a ruler and an X-ACTO blade. You could use scissors,

you could tear it. You don't have to be precise with it. I am going to though. And I'm just gonna cut it up into equal strips. So some of the strips have a little bit of action on them. Some of the strips have almost nothing on them. You could cut these into squares, anything you like, circles, whatever works for you, just so that you are destroying your original composition. It's very satisfying, especially when it's something that you really hate, to cut (laughing) it up and have it be no more. These are one-inch strips. I'm just using the cutting mat as a guide. Sometimes I'm very precise, and sometimes I'm not. In this situation, I've chosen to be. Okay. Last strip. There we go, now we have new materials to work with, and they're abstracted. So, let's take a fresh sheet of paper. I'm going to jumble these up. Might as well take the old composition that I didn't like and just completely get rid of it. And then we're gonna just start placing them back down, and you can flip them around so that they aren't the way that they were before. They can be back and forth, oh, let's get that yellow away from that yellow. See I already like this better. We'll put this skirt in the middle of nowhere. Oh my gosh, I'm a genius. Okay, then, let's move that dress away from there. It's kind of like a puzzle, and you can just keep playing around until you actually like it. This doesn't really have much room, so I will just toss that. There we go. Actually what does it look like like this? Just keep playing around until you find the composition that works for you. There we go. Well, no, I like this yellow over here. See this is why I don't glue anything first (laughing) because it's never quite right the first time out. So just keep playing. There we go. I actually like it a lot better in a landscape. So I've got a new composition. I love this compared to that piece (laughing) that we had a few minutes ago. And I'm just going to take my white glue, a brush, and glue these strips into place, and I'll have an entirely new piece that I actually might frame and put up in my studio. (light music)

#### Day 15 - Two halves make a whole

- This project is another one from my book *Creative Blog*. It was given to me by Wane White who is an amazing artist from LA, and all his project said was, cut something in half and make another whole and I thought, okay. But it works like a charm. So, I'm gonna show two examples of how you can do this by attaching half of a photo with another half of a photo to make something new or you could use half of a photo and just a colored piece of paper. I'm using the paper that we painted a few days ago. So, grab your books from the thrift shop. Flip through, find a couple of images that you really like. I of course love Princess Diana. So I've got Diana, I've got a woman from our water color book, more Diana and some colored sheets. I'm going to start by ripping Diana out of this book. A lot of people are actually terrified to rip things out of books. I say go for it. (page tearing) You can't be a collage artist if you don't rip things out of books. So, we're gonna start with Diana and we're going to combine her with this woman. They look like kindred spirits to me. So you could use an X-acto blade if you want to be X-acto or you can just use scissors or you can rip, whatever you like. I am just going to use my scissors and go right up. We need two halves to make a whole says Wane, so let's make our halves. (scissors cutting) Cut off this border. We don't need that. (scissors cutting) You don't have to use people either. You could just use two landscapes that you find and combine something tropical with something mountainous or just combine two textures. Okay, and let's go right up the, we'll join their lips so we'll go right up the middle of her lips here. (scissors cutting) You don't necessarily need to choose items that are in scale. You can really do whatever you want, and the more pages you rip out and try combining two halves to make a whole, you'll start to see that different combinations as we talked about earlier with small, medium, large for your compositions actually works really really well. I now have two halves of Diana and two halves of this woman from the water color book. So I'm gonna decide when I put them down on my

water color paper before I glue which halves to turn into a whole. So I've got, I could put these two together, which I quite like. We could try these two. That's quite weird. You can even try it from this side. But I like them being together like this I think. So, this will be my new whole from two halves. I might just mark with a pencil and cut this down so that we've got a nice composition with an extra paper on the end. (scissors cutting) Get rid of this white strip. (scissors cutting) I'm going to use a piece of water color paper, but you can use anything that you like. Got a little extra on the end. (scissors cutting) Can you tell that I'm not being precious at all? (scissors cutting) There we go. We've got two halves that have now made a whole. I'll grab a brush and my glue and put them together. There we go. Now we have a entire whole made from two halves. I could get a little bit more particular and cut off the white just so I have a nice clean composition. (scissors cutting) There are a lot of projects you can do to unblock the, in my mind I always think it sort of turns the ordinary into the extraordinary and this is one of those things. Just images that were regular old images in any book that you find, suddenly you've created sort of an odd and interesting new composition that looks a little bit more modern than just something you would find in a book. We're gonna try this again now with a colored piece of paper and a photograph instead of two photographs together. I'm going to use one the pieces of paper that we painted the other day along with more Diana. Sorry Chuck, you're gonna get cut out of this one. This fits almost perfectly. But again I will just slice through here with my scissors. (scissors cutting) And we can do what we did before and clean it up a little bit once they're glued together. (scissors cutting) Cut the edges off of this one too so it's clean. I chose this piece of paper because I thought it worked really nicely with the dresses that the ladies are wearing in this photograph. You could also choose something that clashed completely and see how that looks because sometimes you can find really cool color palettes that way just by mixing up things you would never intend to have together. Then we have to cut this one in half. (scissors cutting) There we go. So I will grab my water color paper as my base again. You could use a wood panel if you like or a colored piece of paper in the background. And whatever works. So let's just snip the top of this off so it's measuring a little closer. There we go. Now these are our two halves that are gonna make a new whole. Once again, grabbing my brush and my white glue. This is my life. White glue and paint brushes. (brush thuds) And voila, another whole made from two halves. I love this project because without it there's no way I would've ever put these two women together. I never would've cut up this paper and added it to this photograph but I've done it and I actually really like both and it gives me ideas now for future projects which I hope it will for you as well.

#### Day 16 - Collaborate with a friend

- A blank page can be full of endless possibilities. Which is actually kind of terrifying because where do you even start? So if you are afraid of white paper like I am or a big white canvas, put the pressure on someone else to make the first mark. I often get my son, Charlie, to come into the studio and make the first mark and I have to work from there. So today we're gonna get Creativebug's Charlie to come in and make the first mark for me. (soft peaceful music) Okay, ready, Boo? He's like, what is happening? Go on. Go on. (laughing) That's hilarious. Well, that was hilarious and actually really, really helpful. Charlie has now made these terrifying white pages filled with marks of little paw prints and bits of tail. And now I'm gonna turn them into art. As a collage artist, I have my pouch of tiny people that I can pull out at any moment. So I think that they're going to add some context to Charlie's little feet marks. So first, I have a lady attending a gallery opening. I'm going to put her here. And we're gonna change these crazy little paw marks into very high concept

fine art. And she has just bought one. So I'm gonna glue her into place. She's got her wine and her program guide to the show and she loves this piece because of the aqua hues and I'm going to just to make it really fancy, gold always makes things fancy. Let's just add a blob of gold right on the page. And this is a very high tech art tool that I like to use. It's a cheese knife, a wooden cheese knife. But I really like to use it to do this. Ooh, ah. Now it's super, super beautiful fine art. There we go, that's what she's going to buy and take home to her living room. So any good art show always has a supply of red dots when something has been purchased. We'll add a little sold dot. There we go. Eleanor has bought her piece and she'll be taking this glorious work home. The more you play with these kind of prompts, the more quickly these ideas will come to you. I work like this all the time so usually as soon as put a little person down, the idea pops into my mind. When those ideas don't pop into my mind, I just keep going. Not every little person belongs with every little blob of paint. So I've done this really quickly, but you will too as you sort of begin to play. And don't feel like the first thing you put down needs to be the final composition. Keep going through the piles of books. Keep going through your images. I'm going to do another one using pieces that we've created in days before this. Just to show you a different way of doing it. So let's get her out of the way and we've got this piece. The first thing I notice in this is this mound. So I'm gonna flip this around and use it as a mound because the colored paper that we cut up a few days ago, I was telling you I love that shape. So let's just find one that works. Maybe this little rock, no. That's too big 'cause it covers up that mound. A little sherberty one. I actually think this one's the nicest 'cause you can still see the line that Charlie left for me and it echoes this line. So this again is just about using the things that you've got right in front of you instead of feeling like you have to reinvent the wheel every single time. So I've got this little mound echoing this mound and I've gone through my pile of little people and some worked, some didn't. The one I felt worked the best was of course my Liz, Queen Elizabeth, with her dress blowing up in the wind. Because this looks sort of outside to me. It looks like a rock. Maybe this is the wind blowing clouds around. So for me, the narrative just comes together quite quickly. I'm just gonna glue these into place and we'll have another entirely new composition. I'll use a smaller brush for Liz because she's got these tiny little legs and if I use a big brush, we're gonna get glue everywhere. So I'll use a smaller brush for this smaller piece. This is why I use a paintbrush versus a glue stick because then I can have this control and get in on these tiny little bits without the glue stick getting everywhere. I've got Liz in her skirt. I'll put her feet overlapping. If I put her above, she's gonna look like she's floating above it. So I'm gonna put her half on and half off of this little mound so it actually looks like she's standing on there. And there you have it. Charlie and I have now collaborated on two pieces of fine art.

#### Day 17 - Idea jar prompt

- Today let's ask our jars what to do again because it's easier when they tell us. So, let's see. I need a color. Orange. And a medium. Cut paper. And some kind of motif. Dots. Dots, cut paper and the color orange. I will start by looking for some orange and dots. So let's see. I love her lips, we could even do that. Oo, those are nice. Yeah, actually let's just go with these. So again don't be afraid. Rip it right out of the book. No fear. So we've got, I really like these colors. And they're already dots but, dots are really fun to make with a hole punch because you can make your own perfect circles that are almost like confetti. So we'll just grab this hole punch here. And start making my dots. Oh. There they come. (paper rustling) I've got a few dots here now that are all orange. I'm doing exactly what the jars are telling me to do. This isn't quite enough for me. It could be. If that's all you wanted to do you could create a little orange dotty pattern out of cut paper. You've done exactly what the jars

told you to do. But I love my little people and I love my royals, so I'm gonna go back through my royals book and try and get Diana or Liz in here. Because I'm working with a smaller sheet I'm gonna try and find a smaller Diana that will work nicely in my composition, but I need her to be in orange. No. I'm gonna call that orange. It's a bit reddish but let's say that reddish orange and oh look, she's even got dots on her dress. Perfect. So, I'll quickly cut her out so I'm working with a smaller chunk of paper. It's a bit easier for cutting that way. And I'm going to show you how to use my favorite ring knife. This gives you so much control. You just slide it onto your finger like that and instead of an X-acto blade where you're so much further out you got great great control. So you can get in around all of these tiny little corners. I'm always sort of cutting toward me and rotating the paper as I go. You want to be careful because this is incredibly sharp and many collage artists will tell you that they have sliced their finger. So I keep my fingers as far away from the action as I can. You can also use it as a pivot. Stop right there and rotate your paper, so you're not lifting your knife on and off and losing the line where you're working. And I keep talking about not being precious and you really shouldn't be especially for these exercises. I do tend to get a little bit precious about cutting, but that's just because this is the way I work. It starts getting tricky now when she's half cut out. You just need to hold the paper down as you go. That's not her hand, that's someone else's hand. Okay. Stop. I'm gonna keep my point in and pivot the paper. I'll go around her hand. This is when things get tricky. You could always go back with scissors if you need to. Maybe I will do that. Pivot, around. I'll just keep that wide and come back with my scissors. Now I'm almost done. I'm gonna go wide around her face too, because you want, when it's a profile like that you want to be able to get her nose and everything careful. And we'll go around her hat. So close. Have we got her all the way around? Almost. Hair, and the back of this hat. Oh (laughs). Well look at that. I was not precious and now her hat ripped but that's okay, that's what glue is for. See in my younger years I would've freaked out. No need. We'll just save that. Okay. Now I'm just gonna use my scissors to get in around her face and around her hands. It'll just give me a little bit more control and get a nice clean cut. If you ever see a little halo of black or whatever the background color is, just go a little bit more inside what is is you're cutting out and you'll be able to get rid of that edge. It's tricky with hands and noses though, but you can do it if you just go slow and carefully. Now we've got Diana all cut out and ready to be part of her dots. I'm going to start by gluing Diana in place and fixing her hat (laughs), that I lost. Again, I'm using a smaller brush this time because we've got these tiny little bits like her hand and her feet. Sometimes depending on what you're working with, which kind of books, like you can see that the glue is sort of resisting the paper a little bit, beading a little, it doesn't matter at all. It'll still do what it needs to do. If it doesn't you will quickly find out and you can lift it off and just apply a little bit more in the areas where it didn't touch. Okay, so I'm just gonna place her right in the middle of the page. We're gonna use the negative space just to be the environment that she's in. Press her down with your palm. And I'll grab this tiny little piece of hat. Because this tore off a little bit you can see there's white on there, I'm just gonna try and lift her up a little bit so that I can put this underneath so that we don't have that white edge on top of her hair. Just put a bit of glue on the paper first instead 'cause then I know exactly where it's gonna go. So a little reconstructive surgery here. I'll just slide that under her hair, and press it down. Not perfect but saved. Especially for something like this. This is where you learn these little techniques. It's how you learn how to cut better, it's how you learn to tuck things underneath and hide your little accidents so that when you get to your big pieces you know what you're doing. Alright, now we've got all of our little dots to apply and I actually love how her hands are in this picture. I think she was reaching for flowers that someone was giving her, but I'm gonna fill in her hands with little dots. So, let's grab

one. Okay I'm gonna do what I did before where I'm gonna put the glue right here so it looks like it's being held in Diana's hand. And there. Now it looks like she's dropping it. And I'm just gonna continue dropping these so it looks like they've been dropped into a little pile at her feet. Like that. And I'll glue all of those into place. Now if you had pulled these three slips, dots, cut paper and orange you would've come up with something completely different. That's what's really excited about this is that it gives you possibilities to play within but it's not so huge that you can't figure out what to do. So just be very open to what the jar tells you, go and search through all of your supplies and see what you end up doing.

#### Day 18 - Roll the dice

- Instead of using your jars to set the limitations, you could also use something like dice. I have an odd little die here that has a whole bunch of numbers on it, I'm gonna use that. I just found it in my game closet. It just sort of sets parameters. And we're gonna set some parameters on the types of images I'm allowed to use and the number of colors that I'm allowed to use. Three. Okay, that means I'm gonna choose three colors of paint that I can work with. I have a bunch of paint out already, and I will just randomly choose three of them. These three are in a row, so those are the three colors I'll use for this piece. Okay, let's move this guy out of the way. We'll use it again in a minute, but until then I'm gonna use these first three colors. And instead of just using them solid and matte, I'm gonna do a bloom of paint. So you just put a whole bunch of water wherever you like. Use a really big brush so that you can get as much water around there as you can. And then you can just dip it into one of your colors. You don't need very much at all. Touch it down on the water, and it's gonna spread. Push it around a little bit. I often pick up my paper and let it move. And we'll go to the next color. I'm not even gonna wash my brush in between. I'm just gonna go grab a little bit more, put it in a different area of the water. Let that move around. Okay, and my last color's this darker one. Touch that down. There, and eventually these are all going to bleed together and we're gonna get this really beautiful bloom of color. If you tip it too much, you're gonna get little rivers that run off the side, which is kinda cool too. But if you just tip it and move it around a little bit, all three of your colors will blend. And again, this is just a chance to let the dice tell you what to do. And maybe you would've only ever used one color. Now suddenly you're using three. Maybe the dice would tell you you were supposed to use nine colors, and you'll get an entirely different result. So we'll just move this out of the way and let it dry. And I'm gonna shake the die again to help choose an image. Two, okay. I have envelopes that I've already numbered. And because I've got a two, that means my little people won't be involved, these textures and patterns won't be involved, but all of these cut up roses that I've been collecting for ages are going to be incorporated into this piece somehow. Once your paint has dried, we will pull this back in. I'm going to work with my roses in my envelope number two and figure out some sort of composition. Again, like we've done before, it doesn't mean just because I painted it this way, we don't have to work this way. Does it look better like this? Like this? Just keep playing until you find something that you like. Then we're gonna have to bring in a bunch of roses. So I'm going to choose roses that kind of work with this color combination. Sometimes choosing things that are totally not part of it work really nicely too. So just play around, grab a bunch of things. Some will stay, some will go. Just get a lot so that you can really play around with what you might wanna do. All right. So looking at this, I'm not loving this really neon part considering the pieces I've pulled out of my envelope, so I think I'll probably start with covering that a little bit, the intense part, with a rose. That one might be too big. Gonna make a bouquet. Since I decided to make a bloom of paint and we've been given by the dice these blooms

of roses, let's just work with that and make a big, beautiful bouquet. And I'm repeating myself again, but don't get out the glue yet until you know what it is you wanna do. This is kind of cool. Instead of using the actual cut out roses, there's roses on the back too. So I think I'm gonna leave it flipped around in the negative way. There really are no rules, which is what I love about collage. Nobody knows what you had intended, (laughs) what the plan was. You get to just keep going. The other thing I like to do sometimes is instead of just layering flat, flat, flat, you can put part of the rose under that one and the other petal comes above. And it just creates really nice layering. When you go back to glue, you have just have to remember to tuck things under. And let's throw in this bright red anyway, even though it doesn't totally go. Gonna get rid of this orange guy. And I'll just balance the composition by having a larger one over here. Is that too many roses? I think that's too many roses. I'm getting rid of that guy. There, shift it around until you're happy. Like that little one peaking out. There, blooms on blooms. So I'm happy with this. Once I have a composition I really, really like, I will sometimes take a photograph of it just so that when I take it apart and get the glue out, I remember where everything goes. Other times I don't do that because then I get that preciousness that I've been telling you to avoid. So sometimes I just embrace it and know that I have a good sense of composition and it will be fine and I don't need to recreate this exactly for it to be something good. So in this case, I am not going to photograph it. I am just gonna push these gently out of the way. I have a sense of where they all need to go. And then I'm gonna go back and glue them and hope for the best. The final thing I'm gonna do is add a title to the bottom. So let's call this one, since we used dice to decide what we were gonna do, gambling in the garden. Done, signed and dated.

#### Day 19 - Blind contour self portrait

- Today is all about blind contour drawings. So you can do this with a mirror, you can do it with a friend and draw each other. I am in a situation where I don't have, oh I don't have a friend or a mirror, so I am going to work with a photograph of myself as my starting point. The idea is that you only look at that. You don't look down at your page and I'm also not gonna lift my brush pen off of the page as I draw. I can guarantee you that it is not going to be perfect. It is in fact going to be imperfectly perfect. And I actually, I'm not a great drawer, and I actually like blank contour a lot more just because it is so weird and free and not perfect at all. So, I'm going to begin by choosing a piece of paper to work on and instead of using a fresh new page, I'm gonna go into my recycle scrap bin of pieces that have gone awry, and use that as my starting point. That way I'll have a little bit of color, I'll have a little bit of something underneath this terrible, terrible, perfectly imperfect drawing. So, let's see, here are the four pieces I've got. I love the colors in the background, they're a little rainbowy. Maybe I'll use this rainbow piece as my beginning place and draw over top of it. All right, here we go. Looking at me looking at me, not looking down. (laughs) I know that lots of people have technique of how to do this. I do not, I just wing it. K, there's some hair, do some glasses. Oops, I lifted my pen. Do another glasses. A little nose. Oh, how can I get down to my lips, there we go. And a little smile. Oh this is going terribly, I can feel it. And we've got some pompom earrings (laughs). I wonder where the other earring's gonna go. And a neckline. (laughs) Not bad. So, I really love how the rainbow is underneath it. It kinda makes it a little more fun. And because I love working with gouache so much, I'm gonna just go in and add a little bit of wash, maybe some polka dots like we did with the Frida pieces, just to add a little bit of color to this mishap of a drawing. I'll just grab a paintbrush, probably a little one, just because I'm only gonna fill in the pompoms, so I don't need a lot of paint and water. Gonna dip in my water. Let's see, I'll do

something that works with the rainbow. Let's get a little bit of this pink and make it (water splashing) water color. (water splashing) It's a technical term. I'm just gonna go in and fill in my pompoms. The brush pen might run a little bit but that's okay, that might be a pretty happy accident. (water splashing) Let's do the other one in a nice neon red. (water splashing) 'Cause pompom earrings don't have to match. There we go. And then I'm just gonna go in, (water splashing) just dry off my brush a little bit. I'm gonna go in with turquoise without any water and I'm just gonna add some dots. And they'll probably run a little bit, oh, or not. And there we go. Now I've got a little bit more fashion happening in my blind contour. Done, pompom earrings complete. Since this is Danielle Krysa drawing Danielle Krysa, we better give it a signature too. There we go, 2019, beautiful. You can blind contour draw anything that you like. Even that little composition that we put together of found objects from around the house. You could blind contour that. Your pet, a friend, anything, your living room. It just helps you see things in a totally different way. It helps you embrace imperfection and then you've got an entirely new place to start next time you work.

### Day 20 - Office supply challenge

- There is a theme that is starting to develop here, and the idea is that you can find supplies anywhere. Doesn't need to be in the art supply store. So, we've gone through our pantry, now we're gonna go through your home office, so open those drawers, pull out any tape, Post-its, old receipts, envelopes, whatever you can find, and that's gonna be our starting point today. I always like to work in odd numbers, so I've got three different supplies to work with. I have envelopes, I have Post-it Notes, and I've got some gold Scotch Tape that I'm gonna use as well. So, I'm gonna begin with turning this Scotch Tape into paper. I'm going to take one of these Post-it Notes and cover it with gold tape. This is how you can get kind of resourceful with the things that you have. You don't have to use them in context, you can turn them into other things. So, I'm just gonna tape it right onto this paper, and then I'll be able to cut out from this and have little gold bits of things, too. Okay, that will do the trick. Suddenly now I have gold paper, and I can cut shapes out of this and the Post-it Note will hold it in place. Because of the gold, I'm a little bit inspired to do something either gem related, diamond related that are easy to cut out of paper. Instead of gluing this whole thing onto a base of an old book cover or a piece of watercolor paper, I'm just gonna use the envelope as my base. So, I'm just gonna open it up and I'm gonna place all of my little bits and pieces into this envelope coming out. If you wanted to, you could open up your envelope, pop all the glue seams, and suddenly you've got a big white piece of paper to work on, but I really like the idea of something magical and special finding its way out of this envelope, so I need to make those beautiful little things that are gonna come out. Let's cut these into gemstones. Just grab a paper. This is my easy way of doing a diamond. I cut up, across, down, and down to the point. It's a little bit wonky, but it's a gemstone. I'll make some little ones, too 'cause I like to have the small, medium, large in everything that I do. Design school hammered that into me. Do a gold one with our washi tape. There we go. I'll do one more of those. Do a tall, skinny one. Get a few blue in there. They're a little bit wonky and hard to tell that they are gemstones, so I am going to grab a pencil and just add a few key lines to make them look a little more gemstone-ish. There we go, and the wonkier, the better. There we go. That'll just insinuate that that's what we've got. So, now I just wanna pop them into the envelope. Some of them are actually sticky because of the Post-its, but we can glue them into place, too. We'll just have the size variation so that we get a nice balance going. Couple in front. Now, you're probably thinking to yourself, who on Earth would have an envelope full of diamonds? I, of course, know the answer to that. Queen Elizabeth. So, these are gonna be Liz's, this is gonna be

Liz's collection of gemstones. And of course, Liz doesn't want anyone touching her gemstones, so let's use a Post-it Note for what a Post-it Note is for. A little note from Liz. Look, but do not touch, love, Liz. We'll pop that right on top. There, office supplies used to make an envelope full of gemstones. Once this is complete, I would get my white glue as usual and glue all of the gemstones into place. Now, it might seem weird that this piece is final and that it's not glued onto a base and the envelope is the base, but there are a lot of artists that do this in their own practice, and Camilla Engman is one of them. I love her work, and she uses found envelopes as her final pieces. So, even go through your mail and see what's in there. You don't need a brand new envelope. Just have fun, experiment, and see what you've got in those office drawers.

#### Day 21 - Produce challenge

- Today we are going to produce with produce. See what I did there? You must have done a potato stamp or an apple stamp at some point in your childhood, so we're gonna do that again. Head to the fridge, go through the produce drawers, and you can find whatever you like. You can try it with a carrot, you can try it with an apple. I tried it with an apple, my apples were too juicy, so I have ended up using celery instead, and we're gonna make some celery prints. We're gonna try one that's representational, and then we're gonna also do one that's a pattern that could end up being a textile pattern or a pattern behind a print, anything you like. So, first steps, you have to go to your kitchen and get something from the produce drawer. I'm going to chop up this celery just so that it lasts a little longer and I have more options. We'll just grab a little chunk right here. When you cut celery in half, you get this lovely U shape, or it could be an arc, so you can decide what that's going to be. So let's start playing around with that first. I'm going to make this into a tulip, I think, so, I've got some colors over here that will work. Gonna start with this neon red and a peach, and just blend them together a little bit so I don't have two separate lines going there. Okay. And then it's just like the good old days of potato stamping. Dip your celery, or whatever fruit or vegetable you've got going. Got a nice color on there. And I'm going to make a little garden of tulips. I'll do them at different heights. Tall ones. There's a lotta paint on that one, let's go back and get some paint from that one. And you know what I'm gonna say, odd numbers. (laughs) So I'll do five little tulips. There we go. Now tulips aren't just U's, they usually have a little middle petal, which is great, I'm gonna go back to my celery, and cut it down the middle. So feel free to keep cutting up whatever you've got until you've got different shapes. Now at the end of the celery, it's almost like a little leaf shape, half a U. So I will go back in, dip it in my paint. There we go, not too much. I'm gonna go back and just press it into the middle. Make a little extra petal there. There we go. Now I'm gonna need a stem and some more leaves, so, I went back to the cupboard where we had our food coloring from a few days ago. I'm gonna use the green food coloring to just add some stems. It almost works just like watercolor. This could be a final piece, this could also, you could make a pattern from this. It could be used for textiles, in the background of a painting. Again, I'm pretty fond of wonky lines. Think they're more interesting than perfect lines. There, now I could use the food coloring to paint on little leaves, but, my celery has this perfect leaf shape, so I'm gonna just use that again. So I'll dip that in the food coloring, we'll see how this goes, and add a few, few little leaves. Back and forth on either side. This guy can have two. He's the star. There we go. And all from celery, I have a little garden. All right, so let's go back to our celery and see what else it looks like. Chop a new piece. So, in case you haven't figured it out by now, I really like rainbows and arcs. So, this is a perfect little rainbow. And what we've done in the past when we've painted rainbows, I've placed out paint side by side and we use a brush to scoop that all up to make the rainbow. This time I'm going to dip the celery right in those

three colors. Make sure that I've got three on there. And I'm just gonna dip it onto the page. This time I'm gonna do a pattern that could be used for something down the road. So I'll just do, that's a lotta paint, I'll come back and get that in a minute. There we go. And because we're not being precious, we don't have to worry if it's all exactly the same or not. This is just an idea generator that will lead to fabulous things down the road. There we go. Now we've got a little rainbow pattern. And if that's a little bit too clean for you, I always like a little spatter like we did with the sumi ink a few days ago. I've got these colors in my tray, I might as well use them. So I'm gonna go in, get some blue rain, water it right down. I'm just gonna splash it around a little bit. The way I like to do that is I hold my brush straight over it, and I use my other finger just to tap. You might wanna wear an apron for this so that you don't get covered in rain splatter too. The bigger the brush, the bigger the drops will be, I've just got a little tiny brush going. Let me show you that, I'll do the fatter brush, too. And you can get some bigger drops. There we go. And that'll work into your pattern too. So all from a stalk of celery, we've got two unique pieces of art that didn't exist before we opened up that produce drawer.

#### Day 22 - Objet d'art™

- Remember that little ceramic weirdo that we picked up at the thrift shop? First we used him in a composition with found objects from your house, but today we're going to paint him and make him your very own. So you can begin by coating it with something. Otherwise the paint won't adhere to it properly. I'm going to use white acrylic paint to prime this little guy. You might need two coats just to make sure that you hide everything so that you really have this as a blank canvas for you to begin with. Your hands are gonna get a little bit messy because you need to move him around and pick him up and make sure everything is coated. Depending on the color of your ceramic weirdo, it might take a couple of coats. This is going on pretty quickly 'cause he's white on white so. Don't add any water to this paint. You're gonna want it to be quite thick. I've used house paint in the past as well so if you've got an old can lying around you can use that but make sure it's quite thick so that the entire object gets covered completely. And now once you've got it completely covered we're gonna let this dry before we continue. And luckily for me because thrift shops are the way thrift shops are I actually found two of these iridescent little puppies and I already have one prepped and ready to go. You can paint this anyway you like. You could do it realistically. You could add stripes, ombre, whatever you like. We are going to add dots. So I have chosen three colors that I think go nicely together. Navy blue, a magenta and a lavender and I'm just gonna start with navy blue dots at the top and fade them down into the magenta and then into the lavender at the bottom. So again, we've done this before. I just dip the tip. I've chosen sort of a small but not super tiny brush and I get a lot of paint on the tip of it and just add a dot. Add a dot, add a dot. And you can do it any way you like. You can make it into a pattern. It can be haphazard. The dots can be different sizes. And as I get further down, I can switch over to the next color and I'm gonna incorporate them a little bit so that they, in a way it's like an ombre dot. So as I go down I'm just gonna start leaving a little bit more space in between them so that I can come back and get that magenta in there. Just quickly wash off my brush. (liquid sloshing) Show you on this side. (liquid sloshing) Okay. Don't want your brush to be too wet or else it'll get turned into water color which we don't want or it'll drip all down this guy. So then I can start adding the magenta. And I'll put it back a little bit into that navy blue area so that it's transitioning down into magenta. The dots are a little bit bigger because I did have a tiny bit of water on my brush when I switched. And I'm just gonna start leaving a little bit of space again so that I can transition into the lavender. Incorporate it up into the magenta a bit so that the

transition's a little less harsh. And suddenly that little iridescent puppy from the thrift shop is looking a lot more like a Danielle Krysa piece of art, (laughs) then something that you might find in your grandmothers cupboard from 1968.

#### Day 23 - Make a negative a positive

- My inner critic always has something negative to say. But you don't have to have that as the end result. You can flip it around and turn it into something positive. That's what professionals do because all of us have that voice. Professional, amateur, not even creative. Everyone has that voice in your ear telling you that you're not quite as great as you think that you are. So what you need to do is take the most common thing that that inner critic tells you, its go-to jab, and turn it into something positive. I put this question out to hundreds and hundreds of people, to hear what their inner critic had to say and the most common one that came back again and again was you're going to fail anyway so don't bother trying. So, we need to take that and turn it around and turn it into its positive opposite. Now that can be tricky when it's your own inner critic's voice but for example, this one, you're gonna fail anyway so don't bother trying, you would turn that into, oh, I'm gonna fail like a genius, because that is how geniuses become genius. You have to try again and again and again and make mistakes, you're never going to sit down and create a masterpiece on day one. You need to try and fail and try and fail and get up again. So that would be the positive opposite. So I want you to find a piece of paper that you love, ephemera, a color that you like. I'm going to use an old recipe book of my grandmother's that I love. I'm going to use a blank page instead of one of the amazing pages filled with splatters and my grandmother's writing because that truly is precious to me and I want to keep that. But in this recipe book of hers there are lots of blank pages. So I'm gonna use one of those. So let's tear this out carefully. And I'm gonna use this to write the positive opposite and this will be my beautiful little piece to keep in my studio so that when I walk in in the morning and the inner critic tells me that I'm gonna fail, this will be the first thing that I see and I can read it and know that yes, I'm gonna fail, but I'm gonna fail like a genius. I have been working on perfecting my grandmother's handwriting so I'm gonna try and write it the way that she would. All of her strokes are really elongated so let's try this. I'm going to fail like a genius. And because I'm a collage artist and I need to glue things to things, I pulled out a few roses. My grandmother had amazing rose gardens and pink is the color that I use in all of my work to reference her. So to make this just even more special and more personal to me, I'm just gonna grab one of these roses and add it here, it actually works really nice with the pink lines on the paper. Grab a brush, some white glue, because when you're dealing with things like this that are so personal, it's really nice to make something personal as a reminder to yourself that you're not gonna quit, you're going to keep going, whether that voice has something negative to say, you're in charge, it is not in charge. And if you can use the strength of images you love, people that you love, you're the one that is going to be in charge, not that inner critic.

#### Day 24 - Second idea jar prompt

- Another day, another blank page, and so another jar challenge. I'm gonna reach in and pull out three things to get us going today, so let's see what we've got. First, loopy. Black. And ink. Hmm, okay, so for loopy, I'm going to grab a thicker brush to make wider loops, and because we're using ink, I really love how ink travels on water, so let's do some loops with water. Instead of a big bloom, I'll actually move the brush around like that and make a bunch of loops on the paper. So, it's hard to see, but as soon as you touch it with a bit of black ink, it travels and it follows all those little watery

roads. How satisfying is that? And there's our loops coming out of nowhere. If it's not traveling as fast or as far as you want it to, you can gently tip your paper, but not too much, otherwise you get little lines that pour down towards the other side of the page. Fill in our blanks there. Loop. Oh, I like that quite a bit. So, we're gonna let that dry. When we did the pink arc the other day, I had it just stashed away to be able to use in a future project, either for a background or to cut out, but I love this so much that I actually think I'm gonna keep on going and dive into my envelope filled with little people and see if I can't make a royal reacting to this beautiful, inky, loopy situation we've got going here. Here's my envelope fill with royals. We've used Diana, we've referenced Liz, Charles, yes, but how 'bout, I love, let's get the Queen Mum in there. This is what I like about using tiny people, because you can use the way that they're looking, if they're looking up, you can position them to be looking up, if they're looking sideways. So, you can make them react to the paint that you've already put down. So, I like that she's in awe of my loops. As am I. So, I'm just gonna put the Queen Mum right there looking up. Grab my tiny brush again. Again, she's got tiny little legs, tiny little arms, so I don't wanna use a very big brush. There's Liz on the other side. If you ever want to, sometimes the things on the other side are even more spectacular than the thing you cut out, so there's no harm in saying, well, actually, I'm gonna flip that over and use that instead. But in this case, we need the Queen Mother. We'll position her having a look. She loves it. See, this is what happens in my head. I will explain this right now. These stories just jump into my head. So, now, in my head, I'm thinking that the Queen Mum desperately wants this for the palace and she needs to have this piece, so she's bought it. I always go to my trusty neon red sold gouache. I'm just gonna press it down and use the circle that is the tube here instead of using a brush. There we go. Now my loopy black lines that was just supposed to be a fun prompt has turned into a final piece that I would actually be really proud to show, and that is the entire point of using the jars. I would've never come up with this piece if the jars hadn't told me to. Sometimes it won't go anywhere, but sometimes it's gonna lead you to something that you absolutely love. An entire series could be born from that.

#### Day 25 - Failure to genius

- We're gonna grab one of the pieces that we've already done together, and we're gonna look for hidden brilliance within it. Very often when you do a piece of work, you might not be entirely happy with everything, but that doesn't mean it needs to go to the garbage can. It means that you will probably find little bits of genius if you just do a bit of digging. So we're gonna go through one of these pieces and look for a two-inch by two-inch area. It might be on the corner, it might be directly in the middle, and we're gonna cut that piece of brilliance out and mount it, and give it some importance on its own matting. This was our piece from the grocery store. So there's lots of things I like about this, some things that I don't like so much about it. One thing I do love are the little leaves and the little droplets. So this might be an area to pull out. It's kind of nice where the paints cross over each other. So I'm just using a ruler to see what a two inch by two inch would look like, that's a bit messy. If we just did this leaf, it's a bit boring. That's not bad but I don't love the green and purple together. So just keep on looking around until you find a part that you really think is special and might be a place that you could start on a larger piece tomorrow. I actually really like this. You get all three colors. I get a little water droplet that I like and a leaf. So let's just use a ruler and a pencil, and lightly draw out a two-inch by two-inch square. And again you've learned by now I don't do things perfectly perfect, so we'll just wing it a little bit. Because I'm not in love with this piece, I'm not gonna worry about the fact that I'm tossing everything else just for this two-inch square, I am totally fine with that. Throwing out your work can be a very tricky thing for people. Some

professionals hoard everything, others throw them out when they know that it's going nowhere. And so it's up to you. I always like to save a few gems because of projects like this. Here we go. Now I've got this little two-inch by two-inch jewel, and all of the bits I don't really like can get tossed on the floor, so off that goes. Now, this is just a little, black artist tile. You could use white, you could use whatever you like. But black just sort of makes it feel a little bit more important. And I'm just gonna mount this with glue right in the middle, and you could hang this up in your studio right beside your positive opposite that you wrote about your inner critic, again, just as a reminder that there is brilliance in what you do. And this little two-inch by two-inch square is in fact proof that there is brilliance even when you're just playing around.

Day 26 - A small series about being small

- This project is all about capturing your childhood. Remember that great time when you just played with toys and had great friends over for sleepovers? If we can harness that and then incorporate it into our art now as grownups it adds a little bit of magic that we might've forgotten about. So, this is from my latest book, *A Big Important Art Book (Now With Women)*, from a chapter about capturing childhood with artists that actually use that in their work today. So we are gonna do that as well. We are gonna start with a list. So, let's begin with favorite toy. My favorite toy was a spirograph. I loved spirographs so much. Let's jot that down. Favorite game. Twister was the favorite game in our house. Holiday? Okay well I loved Christmas and Easter but honestly my favorite holiday is my birthday. I don't think that's actually a holiday, but in my world it is okay (laughs)? So birthday. Best friend? Well I had lots of amazing friends, but Tama. She had the best sleepovers. And then if I could've eaten anything everyday forever it would've been fruit loops and I wasn't allowed to eat fruit loops so, that's the one I want. Because this project is about being small, we're gonna work small. So I've got five small squares. You could use Post-It Notes if you like, or just cut five small pieces of paper to work on. First thing on my list is spirograph. So for you this might be something else, whatever your favorite toy was, but for me, oo spirograph. How many of you remember this? I loved this so much. Okay. So, I'm just gonna place my little guy down here. I can never really remember what all of these things do so it's always a bit of a surprise, okay. And I've got a super sharp pencil so I can get into my little spirograph hole here, and I'm just gonna wing it. Oh yeah, a good one. Seriously I could just do this all day long. I won't but I could. Oh yeah. There we go. Now I belonged to a club that my friend Michelle and I started called The Rainbow Girls. So I'm gonna add a little bit of rainbow to this because it's too quiet right now for me. The kid in me needs a rainbow. But I'm just gonna go in and fill in a few of these little spots. The Rainbow Girls were a bit of a rocket. We would charge 25 cents to come to the meetings, and that money was supposed to be spent on rainbow things, but Michelle and I spent it on candy from the candy store. Don't tell anybody. The other Rainbow Girls wouldn't have appreciated that very much. (pencils clattering) There. A rainbow-y spirograph to take me back. The next one on our list is our favorite game. Mine was Twister. I have a brother and a sister and we used to get all over that thing. So, let's see how I can turn a tiny little square into a Twister board. I'm going to use the paint straight from the tube to recreate the Twister mat. So I actually had to Google this I couldn't remember, but here's the four colors kind of updated and the nice thing about these wash tubes is that they are perfect circles. So you can use them to make dots. Give it a little squeeze and lift it off. And I'm just gonna make a grid of four by four. And for my next row I don't wanna do the same color combination because that's now how Twister works. So, and while I've got the blue out I'll just do a blue dot here and here. Just make my whole board now. And then I'll just fill in the other colors to

complete the map. Those dots are gonna take a little while to dry, so while they're doing that I'm going to move on to my favorite holiday, my birthday. For me my birthday is all about the cake. I always wanted the big icing flowers on mine just because I was the birthday girl and so I cut this out ahead of time. This is from a fantastic 1960 something cookbook. They have the best photographs of cakes and I love pink so I found this one with all these pink candles. Look only one left, that means I have a boyfriend. So I cut it down so that it would fit the square perfectly and I'll just grab my brush and some white glue and glue this into place. I left a small edge on my cut out so that I could fold it over and have it be really really clean on the other side just so that I would be able to match up with the edge of my paper. And I'll just gently place my candles down. And there we go. The icingest floweriest pinkest birthday cake ever. Next on our list is our best friend. My friend Tama was the best. She was also the best drawer in our class. So, we spent a lot of time writing our name, she had a patented sun that she drew that you were not allowed to copy and so (laughs) I'm going to do a little name game that we used to do and I'm gonna start with Tama's name. We always started with a big fat marker and we would write each other's names. So let's start with Tama. There we go. Now to not lose the rainbow theme (laughs), we would then take pencil crayons. I don't know if you remember doing this. We did this all the time though, and would outline the name like this. Just sort of loosely following. Is this all coming back to you now? And you'd almost make these bubble letters that would go around it. I don't know how many times we did this. I did this for all the covers of all of my book reports and I haven't done this in years but this project brought it all back. And move on to the next color in the rainbow and it just goes from there all the way until you get to the edge of your little page. Last on our list is anything that you would love to eat on repeat forever. Fruit loops was on my list. So I am going to do what we did with ink in the past few days. I'm just gonna get a really watery brush, make a bunch of circles and just touch some paint down to get those fruit loopy colors. Just start by making a few wet circles. Might have to come back and make more so they don't dry out. Start with those four and I'll just take a tiny bit of paint on the tip of my brush, and touch it down on my first fruit loop. (liquid sloshing) Mm. I was never allowed to have these. My dad's a food scientist. It was all very healthy cereals for us which was no fun. There we go. And I like doing these watery because it sort of reminds me of the milk and when they get a little bit squishy at the bottom of the bowl. And when they dry they don't dry solid. They dry very washy. (liquid sloshing) And there we have a little bowl of fruit loops. You can interpret this small series about being small any way you like. You can create your own list, feel free to come up with 10 if you like but these were just sort of the first things that I thought of. I think it's so important as an artist just to remember who you were when you were little and all of the things that you loved. Because I loved rainbows so much, maybe I should be bringing them back into my contemporary work. There is obviously something there. So take a little bit of time, think about that list and really explore what it meant to be little and see if you can bring it into your work today.

#### Day 27 - Working with movie stills

- I've taken this project from my latest book as well, a big important art book now with women. This is about capturing a moment, a still. So, we are going to take this from our very favorite movie. You can Google whichever movie is your favorite, find an image that you like, and print it out several times again so you're not being precious. I, of course, am going to go with a still from Dirty Dancing. Here we have Baby carrying a watermelon. (chuckles) Classic moment from Dirty Dancing. So, I have several printed out. And again, it's like Frida project, alter it as many ways as you can. In this scenario I'm just gonna do it once. And I've chosen just to, I'm not gonna collage, I'm not gonna do

anything else, I'm just gonna paint over top of this still. Which is why I print them out in black and white because then you can add your own color palate to it. So, first of all, I always loved this sweater. I think in the movie it's light blue, but because I'm me I'm going to make it light pink. I have not quite the right pink in my palate, so I'm gonna make my own from this peach and the neon pink that I use. It'll just warm that peach up a little bit. So I'll just give that a mix. There we go. Now it's baby pink. Get it? Baby. Anyway, okay. (chuckles) And so I'm just gonna go in, and because it's a fuzzy sweater, I'm gonna sorta paint it in a fuzzy way. And see how nicely that pops off that black and white printout? And you can see there's little lines in the printout, too, I just did it in draft quality because we are not gonna get precious and worried about this, it's just for fun and to get some ideas going. Okay, she's got her fluffy pink sweater. Now I'm gonna move on to the watermelon. Again, I didn't have quite the right color in my palate for the watermelon I wanted to make, so I made my own. I just combined a little bit of this yellowy green with a bit of the aqua that I often use. And it's just a little more watermelony and still works with my pink for her sweater. There we go, Baby's got her watermelon now. I could've used a smaller brush to get around her fingers and be more perfect, but because this is just experimenting and fun, say it with me, I'm not being precious. Now, though, it kinda just looks like a great big green blob so I am going to use my limey green just to give, put some of those watermelon lines back in. And what I sort of like about this is I don't think I've ever used these three colors together ever before and I quite like them. So, that's what I will take from this and put into another piece down the road. I have seen this movie over 100 times, I'm not even embarrassed to say that. And I always thought this was the biggest watermelon I had ever seen in my entire life. And I couldn't help think that it looked like Baby was carrying a baby. So I'm gonna take it upon myself to add a little face. (chuckles) My son draws faces like this and I think they're so cute and hilarious. I really should wait for this to dry but I'm just gonna use a pencil to do it anyway. Let's give Baby's baby a little face. Little eye and a little eye. And then Charlie always does these long mouths. There. (chuckles) Baby with her baby.

#### Day 28 - Three stripe landscapes

- I like to challenge myself to think about common things in different ways. So this one is gonna be all about landscapes. As soon as I say landscape, you probably have something jump into your mind. It might be a scene that your grandmother had over her couch with a sailboat or it might be a Rothko painting with just bands of color. So there's lots of different ways that you can approach work. So in this project, we're gonna do three landscapes three different ways. We're gonna do one with found photos, one with words and one with simple colors. Let's start with paint. I've decided to do a sky ocean land color combination but you could really do anything. It could be a landscape at sunset, early morning, mountain, whatever you like. I'm just gonna do three bands of color and much like we did with the fruit loops, I'm just gonna give myself a stripe of water and add a touch of light blue to the top. That will be my sky. I like usually just putting the paint at one end and letting the water do the rest of the work for me. That way you get a washier band. Okay, there's my dreamy sky. Let's add some dark water. I'm gonna keep these bars of water separate so that the colors don't run together but you could try letting them run together and see what happens as well. That's why I'm just doing this on little scraps of watercolor paper so that I don't feel like this needs to be a masterpiece and if I do let the colors run together and it doesn't work, no big deal, I'll just grab another scrap and try it again and not let them run together and finally, I'm going to need a little bit of land. This could be a beach. I could have done it in gold or a peachy sand color but I'm gonna do it in this grass green. Let the water do some work for me. You'll get these really beautiful bands

especially for the water layer, that's quite nice. Sometimes I even prop things up under it on one side to let it dry that way 'cause if it's flat on your desk, you can see it starts to move back. So you can always prop it up. So this is really just about playing around and there we go, we have our watercolor version of a landscape. For this one, we're gonna use words cut from one of our thrift shop books. So it's gonna be almost like our ransom note. I have found a bunch of words that are landscapish. So I have beautiful water, jungles of Brazil, bright blue and billowy clouds. So I'm just gonna cut them out like I would the ransom note letters and I'm gonna glue them in a little stack just like our stack of colors that we did. It's very convenient that I just cut out the word water. I don't know if you can hear that but it is pouring rain here in San Francisco today. Maybe I'm willing it. I should cut out the word sunshine. Anyway, now I have a unique landscape but it's all done with words. Billowy clouds, the jungles of Brazil are the next band and then we finish with bright blue water. So I'll just glue these into place and I'll have a finished mini landscape collage. For our final landscape, I'm going to use collaged images from one of our other thrift shop books. Now, this is a really interesting way of looking at collage because a lot of people will just cut exactly what they see. If there's a flower, they cut out the flower. If there's a shoe, they cut out the shoe. I have actual images but we're gonna just take the textures from them and create a landscape from that. So here we have some images from our Royals book but instead of cutting them out, I'm going to use Diana's dress as our sunset. I will use these mountains as mountains and then little baby Will, I'm going to use this grassy background as our grass and I'm not even gonna cut. I'm just gonna rip this up into strips and then build my own little landscape from this. There's the sunset. I will use my scissors to cut out this mountain. That way I can layer them over top of each other and then I need some grass. There we go, so I've got my three bands and I'm just gonna glue those into place. What I think is so important about this project is just getting out of the box that you might be in and thinking about things in a different way. Feel free to rip instead of cut. Think about texture instead of realistic images. You can use words, you can use bands of color, whatever works for you. Just keep on playing until something feels really great and then push yourself out of that box the next time.

#### Day 29 - Creative excuses

- There's always an excuse not to make art and you know right now what your excuse is. I bet it's in your head right now. I reached out to my Facebook and Instagram crowd just to see if they were as clever as I am about coming up with excuses and boy were they. I think I got about 1,000 excuses back within an hour, and I would say the most common one involved cats. (laughs) So if you have a cat, you might want to move it out of the way or close your door, or get a dog. There was all sorts of hilarious things like my Nespresso machine is out of pods. Paint smells weird. All sorts of crazy things. For my book, *Your Inner Critic Is A Big Jerk* Martha Rich who's an amazing artist and illustrator put all of these excuses into one poster that we actually have in the book and that people can buy. It's hilarious and ridiculously true. So, the go to excuse that I always come up with and this is true, is about light. My studio is either too bright or too dark (laughs). There's about an hour and a half in the day where I consider it perfect lighting. And so I've had to get over that fact and not only work in there for an hour and a half but actually be in there when I believe it's too bright and be in there when I believe it's too dark. You just have to get a lamp. So, I am gonna create a piece, a little tiny collage that reminds myself of this ridiculous excuse, make it into art and put it up in my studio so that when I walk in I remember that I'm making excuses and don't make that particular one. I'm gonna use Martha's speech bubbles as a queue to get started and this is my inner talk that always

happens with me. So I'm gonna use my paper mounds from the other day and make a couple of speech bubbles, talking to myself. This will be, it's too bright and this one will be, it's too dark. And these are just fun ways, instead of having this in your head and knowing that this is an excuse, we're artists right? Mine as well turn this into art and remind ourselves. So I'll just make a little piece on a black sheet so it really pops. I've got a felt tip pen here and this is just too bright. And this one is just too dark. Isn't that ridiculous? But I buy into it all the time. And I'm just gonna glue those into place and then this can be in my studio as a little reminder. Too bright, too dark. Done.

### Day 30 - Labels

- People put labels on themselves all the time. But labels aren't for people, they are for canned peaches and for soup. So we need to rewrite our labels and realize that we are more than just a whatever. A lot of people will consider themselves just a mom, or just a photographer, which means they can't paint, or just a writer, which means they can't do visual art. So you need to think about your label, rewrite the ingredients, and really own everything that's in your can. (rain pattering) I have this photo of me, (chuckles) from Venice, looking quite fabulous in my glasses, that I've cut down to the size of a soup label. So this is about three and three quarters by eight and a quarter. But you can just grab any label from your pantry and just cut it down to the size you like. I'm going to flip this over and write down the ingredients that make up who I am, and then I'll decorate the front. So let's begin with the obvious. I am a mother, but I'm more than that. I'm also an artist, which was really hard to say for a long time. You know what, let's make that a capital A. Author, again that felt weird to say for a long time but I practice and I say it all the time. Let's see, I'm a sister, and a daughter, and a wife. I'm a pretty good cook. Not bad at photography. Um, let's see, I love reality TV. Ooh, and I love chips. I'm not a health-food person, I love chips. Okay let's see, I'm a runner. I just did a half marathon, I've done a couple of triathlons so let's throw that on there too, triathlete. Um and let's see, I'm a collage artist, and I'm smart. So fill your label with everything that you are. And take time, really think about it. Fill in all the tiny nooks and crannies, your list can go on, and on, and on. And anytime you find yourself saying, oh I'm just a this, or I just work in a cubicle or, I am just an at-home mom, you are not, there is so much more to you, and your label needs to reflect that. So now comes the fun part, decorating your label. There's no way that we can ignore these glasses. (chuckles) So I'm going to add glue and glitter and make these even more fabulous than they already are. First things first, glue. The glitter is just so fun. It always reminds me of being a kid. When do you ever get to use glitter anymore? I've actually started bringing it into a lot of my work because, why not? Glitter, pom poms, there's something really fun about bringing these low materials they're considered into fine art because it's fun and art should be fun. All right let's do this side first. Just choose a glitter here, I've got a rainbowy one, gold. I think I like this silver one, it looks sort of more like the diamonds. So this, I've got a sheet underneath because if you've used glitter, you know that as soon as you (chuckling) pour it anywhere, it gets on everything. So I'm just gonna give this, well here, let's see if I can pinch it out. Keep the mess to a minimum. I'm just gonna put it right on my glue. And once this glue dries, all of the extra, we'll just tap away and I can put it right back into the glitter jar to be used another day. Clear off this side, give that some glue and do the exact same thing. Once the glue is dry you can shake off the excess glitter, and then it will look like this. Your image and your list can be anything, glitter, or paint, or collage, or whatever you like. But just truly express who you are and remember that you are so much more than just a something.

### Bonus - Creative rituals

- The last project of our month, of getting through these blogs, we're gonna talk about creative rituals. Lots and lots of amazing artists use a creative ritual to begin their day in the studio. I have just started doing this and I'll tell you, it is a game changer. These creative rituals can be whatever works for you. You don't have to do what I'm about to say. You can Google them and see what other artists do, but you don't have to do that either. It's anything that you can do to get yourself into the studio and get your mind into a space where you're ready to make. Because you know, when your house is busy and you've been running around and going to the grocery store and doing all these different things, sometimes it's really hard to just get into your studio and start making out of nowhere. So, this gives you the time and space to have a step-by-step process that you go through every single time, in the same order, so that it trains your brain to know that now is the time to get creative. So, I'm just going to list this out on a pretty piece of scrap paper, again, to put up in my studio as a reminder, and I'm just gonna share with you what I do to get ready to make. The first thing on my personal creative ritual is to light a candle. I found a peony scented candle that I really love and I go into my studio and I light that candle so that it just creates a smell that I really love. The next thing that I do is I grab this little Avon jar. This belonged to my grandmother and I open it up and I smell the inside of it. It's empty, but it holds the smell so much and it smells exactly like my grandmother and just, I don't know, it helps relax me and put me in a different mindset, so I smell the Avon bottle. Next revolves around singing and dancing. I put on one song, really loud, and I dance around in my studio for the entire song. It takes about three or four minutes and I would never just dance around in my living room for three minutes to a full song, but in my studio I do. I've got my candle going. I've just smelled the Avon and now, I'm singing and dancing and it's just disconnecting me from my daily routine and putting me into a new creative place. The next one for me is my apron. I have a denim apron that is covered in paint that I love so much and putting that on makes me feel like an artist. I don't wear that apron for anything else. I don't wear it for cooking. I don't wear it for anything. It's only when I'm being an artist. So, I put that on and I get to change personalities and change who I am in that moment. Next for me is cutting. My trusty scissors are there always. For me, sometimes I'm not in the mood to make things, but if I just sit and cut stuff for 15 minutes my day is left behind. I am lost in the images that I'm cutting up. I'm finding weird things that I might not have ever thought about using, like I might find a cactus and a donut and once I cut those out, whether I'm in a creative mood or not, suddenly I am creative because I have a donut and a cactus that I can do something with. And finally, it's time to sit down and make some magic. When you finish your list, sign it. It's an agreement with yourself that this is what you're gonna do. It's a contract. When you come in you're going to follow all of these steps in this order, enjoy yourself and get lost in what it means to be a creative person.