

# JOURNAL

PAGES I  
CAN'T  
STAND!



PLAYTEST PATREON

jibcreative

Blog Post III





We all have them, right?! Pages that we look at and think "ugh WHY?!!!" hahaha. Well, I have a lot, and today I'm going to share them...

Learning is a lot about failing. When trying something new there's no guarantee for success, it just is what it is. As humans I think there's an innate sense of WANTING to grow, but also an inner saboteur that tells us it's not worth the hassle.

I try new things all the time. I have Obsessive Creating Disorder and feel a compulsion to try anything and everything that takes my fancy. Consequently, I fail a lot. Sometimes it's a total write-off, and other times it's a minor stumble and I can jump the hurdle with my second attempt. I know I'm not alone in this, but often I see people give up when they start to feel defeated. I am on a mission to DESTROY THAT! Haha

In art, when we have these moments of "failure", I find people take one of two approaches -

- Accept defeat and quit
- Chalk it up to practice and try again

Technically it could be a little more complicated than that, but if you break it down people will either choose to stop or go and it's usually pretty easy to see people's choices in what they do next. As artists, our portfolio is a reflection of the commitment we have to our work, and in this modern age of Social media, a quick scroll through an Instagram feed will show you all you need to know about how someone navigates their Creative Journey.

Please don't get me wrong, learning at ANY PACE is a good thing, and you should NEVER compare your journey to someone else's. Forward movement is the goal, and the only real option for getting better. You know what, the more I keep writing the more I think I'm confusing this so I'm going to keep it really simple.

- **LEARNING IS HARD**
- **IT IS GOOD**
- **YOU WILL BE ANGRY WHEN YOU FAIL**
- **YOU WON'T GROW IF YOU LET IT DEFEAT YOU!**

Was that simple enough? hahaha

So, I don't just want to yell words at you, I want to give you a practical solution; SELF CRITIQUE.

There is a common misconception that to pick apart your work is bad for you, or that it means you hate your work or you're disappointed in yourself. On the contrary, people invested in their work (in any field) analyze their problems/failures to know how best to proceed. Even when I say "failure" I am not giving it the weight of a thousand burdens, I'm just identifying that I didn't meet the goal I set out to achieve. We hear it when we're kids: "learn from your mistakes", but it is sometimes easier said than done.

So when you're critiquing your work, be gentle, but be clear and honest with yourself. If you have a personality that handles criticism well, or an absurd amount of confidence, this shouldn't be all that difficult. But for those who are more sensitive to this idea, I hope this post encourages you to see the benefits of doing so.

I started Art Journaling late 2015 and at EVERY moment of failure I analyzed my issues with the piece and discerned a way to MOVE FORWARD. I am also not shy about saying what I don't like about my work, but sometimes a little apprehensive to share that. So here goes nothing - this is a breakdown of a ton of journal pages I can't stand, and my thought processes for each of them. This is my process and please don't think I hate my work, I LOVE it. But I wouldn't have grown had I not taken each of these pages as an opportunity to learn something.

In no particular order, and with no filter, please enjoy this self-critique...



I like individual parts of this because some of the illustrations carry great memories, but I went SO FAR with the background and inks that it put me off ever trying to finish it. I learnt that ink will reactivate with whatever you put on top of it, so it was hard for me to cover the parts I wanted work out of the spread, adding more and more and more ink until I thought "you're done now".

**What I take away from this: INK IS REACTIVE! Don't expect to layer it and be able to conceal it very well.**



A Toy Story spread gone wrong. I added the image on the right on that weird angle thinking it would be interesting but it just proved to be challenging. I thought adding bits of paper would help, because somehow, I keep thinking I haven't added ENOUGH, but it just confused my eyes to look at. I saw no way out of this one and left it for inspiration to come back. It hasn't come back yet...

**What I take away from this: More isn't always More... Although I am still learning that to this day. Some of these lessons don't stick the first [or twentieth] time you learn them HAHAHA!**



Patterns on Patterns on Patterns. I had just discovered stencils, don't judge! hahaha. I didn't mind the background actually, it had good 70's Autumn vibes, but I stuck my illustration of Patsy Stone on there and I felt like it didn't make any sense for me to do that. I saw the orange background of the illustration and thought "this Orange goes with this Orange..."

**What I take away from this: Sometimes it's not enough just to "color-match" ephemera, it helps to match the mood or the vision you have for the piece as well.**





Space. Need I say more? How did I accidentally do Space?! Haha. I used a digistamp and then it was "mermaid in space"... My solution was to add another mermaid... using a white acrylic base and then layering watercolor + ink over the top of it, I got part way through this tail and learnt that it didn't act like normal watercolor anymore.

**What I take away from this: Watercolor is a magical medium and it will work differently applied to different surfaces. I don't LOVE how it applies to acrylic, or gesso really, but I know that I can achieve that effect if I ever need to.**



Patterns on Patterns AGAIN! You can tell I was really practicing with my stencils! Haha. A mix of illustration and background that don't sell a clear idea. I also don't enjoy the hectic background, but I did learn a lot about how Dylusions paints layer.

**What I take away from this: Dylusions paints layer well and are highly pigmented but also not opaque. This ultimately led to me experimenting with the "veiling" technique I showed last month.**



This one had a lot of promise. I still think it does. I was going for a Japanese "Alice in Wonderland" piece, collaged together from different sentimental scraps. I practiced my lettering which was a bonus, but ultimately, I felt like the mix of pieces weren't cohesive. I believe it has to do with so many different styles of artwork being represented – you have a detailed print of a Geisha, then a scribbled mockup of a design on lined paper, digistamps printed on manila cardstock and a bad loose watercolor painting cut up and stuck on. I tried to pull it all together with a brush stroke motif but it didn't save the day.

**What I take away from this: Find cohesion in your collage elements if you're trying to build a clear narrative.**



This is a hot mess. HAHAAHAAAHA! I was half having a joke with myself, but it's in here because I'm kind of considering pages I "lost motivation" for a bit of a failure. I don't enjoy having half finished pages if I don't have ideas for them.

**What I take away from this: Get your ideas, no matter how ridiculous, out of your head and onto the page. At worst, you'll find out what you don't like.**





The proportions on this were all over the place for me and I was more just experimenting with adding napkins for texture. This was partly so I could learn about using the JDM collage tissue when I designed for the "Davenport". I actually really don't like looking at this in my journal knowing that I could do it more effectively now.

**What I take away from this:** Just because you have texture doesn't make it interesting. Napkins are very difficult to work for me, and painting intuitively was a big area I could learn a lot more about.



Watercolor backgrounds. Look, I don't think this is a total fail, but I am at a COMPLETE loss as to how it should come together. I like the collaged lady (page right) but I can't get over seeing lots of coffee cup stains page left! I'm pretty sure that rectangle scrap of paper was supposed to be a skyscraper of some sort... reminiscent of the washi tape city scape idea. Perhaps I was destined to just make that a de-stash tutorial for scrap papers?

**What I take away from this:** Mix collage with illustration. I like grounding the collage into the page and I think a great way to do that is to illustrate over it and bring those lines onto the page. It's like you're pulling out more of the piece into existence.



This was the stage where I started adding anything and everything to my journals; ticket stubs, receipts, photos, scrap papers, illustrations, stencils, magazine cutouts. I tried to challenge myself to bring lots of random bits and pieces together, and find a common thread, but I had the same issue as I did before and found that "red" and "flowers" isn't enough of a common thread. I do like a lot of these individual parts though.

**What I take away from this:** I really like things emerging from the spine of my journals. I've done that numerous times since this spread.



Love page right, so much it became a washi, hate page left because it's scraps of paper and an illustration I'm not thrilled by.

**What I take away from this:** I am good illustrator, and I love to do it, but my drawings don't always satisfy me and it's ok to let them go. I loved the vine wrapping around her body and it has featured in many illustrations since.





Same as above. Literally. Also, why is there a fairy emerging from that mermaid's head?

**What I take away from this: I REEEAAAALLLLYYY loved the hair on page right. Letting the background show through and the contrast of Orange and Blue. What I learnt from page left? Consider how a fairy shooting out of a mermaid head might not be the look you're going for! Hahaha**



This is classic me. Stick a few things down. Cover it up. Hahaha. This actually started as a Davenport project where I incorporated washi tape into a painting and built a face, but I ended up building a monster! It was entirely random of me to glue that photocopy over the top and it obviously makes no sense. Perhaps it's redundant for me to show you a fail that I covered up, but this was important for me because I finally felt NO SHAME for doing it.

**What I take away from this: I am allowed to cover it up! I didn't like it, in fact I HATED looking at it, why should I subject myself to that annoyance every time I open my journal? I shouldn't! I felt so much pressure to do amazing things for the Design Team that when I produced something like this I felt so ashamed and not worth being in it. Once I had worked through that, and reassured myself I was worthy, I felt happy to get rid of this piece, not out of shame, but out of care for myself and my joy flipping through this journal.**



Ok, I actually love this idea, but it frustrated me so much that I left it! The paint markers chewed up the paper and it became a nightmare to work on, so it was more of a "mix of supplies" fail. I get upset looking at it because I want it to be finished but I don't have the patience to make that messed up paper work! Hahaa. I could just stick faces on I guess.

**What I take away from this: I learnt just now that I could collage the faces on! HAHAHAHA**  
\*leaves blog post to go journal, BRB!



Intuitive painting back to haunt me! Hahahaa, no, just me in my learning and growing pains. I don't like how this looks, but I learnt a lot about tone on tone painting.

**What I take away from this: When approaching tone on tone pieces, make sure there is contrast in your values. Make your lights really light and your darks really dark so that it all doesn't fall flat and become a piece of midtones**





I was cleaning my watercolor palette off and painting strokes onto this page. I think the photo makes it seem more interesting than it is, it's quite bland in real life.

**What I take away from this: Muddy watercolor is different to Muted watercolor. I prefer muted.**



Um. This is so obvious. I just. Cannot even. HAHAHAAAAHA

**What I take away from this: Settle. HAHAHAAAA!**



Well, you have eyes so you can see where this was going and you can probably see why I stopped. I loved the colors but it all just got so messy! Another test for a JDM project, I didn't really see how I could enjoy the stamp at the time (this is before all the experimenting, using them as blueprints and altering them to reflect my own tastes). I think it was my first time using Mermaid Markers as well, or one of the first times, and I found them a little impractical until I knew what to use them for.

**What I take away from this: Eventually I learnt to alter the stamps and use them as jumping off points. That led me to create my own stamp sets and film a whole YouTube series on how to enjoy personalizing them in your own work. This was a moment of struggle that's chain reaction had significant impact ☐**



Six Alice's (and there's probably some hidden under the tip ins!). I was using up excess grey paint I had and it annoyed me that I put it on this page. That was kind of the end of this spread for me, I lost my spark for it when I carelessly introduced that paint.

**What I take away from this: THINK... sometimes... It's ok to trial it on a photocopy, or plan something out. Working intuitively and carefree is great, but that doesn't mean you can't put time, care and thought into a piece as well. I'm so Black and white, it's either meticulously planned, or WILD AND FREE! I am still working on that balance and trying to find a happy middle ground; where I care enough to think about what I want to do and achieve, and enjoy an organic, free flowing process to get there.**





I don't hate this, but I have tried this a few times now and I think it has become clear that just placing illustrations on pages will not bring them together. I don't necessarily think this is a "fail" because I just wanted to find homes for these pieces, but I kind of regret not saving them for journal spreads where they actually work.

**What I take away from this:** It's not hoarding if it ends up in a journal... But you're allowed to hoard it UNTIL you can find a respectable place for it in your journal.



I wish I kept this simpler. The Octo-witch-digistamp on the left didn't need to be there and I might have been tempted to finish the spread if it were just the elements on the right. I appreciate the bold move I took to place that image on the left, and I think it's good to experiment with confidence.

**What I take away from this:** Go strong and wrong. It didn't work this time, but sometimes you can get really great accidents.



Pumpkin Spice CATASTROPHE. Theme: CHECK. Illustrations: CHECK. Color Palette: CHECK. All the parts were here for it to work, but it is so hectic.

**What I take away from this:** If your background is crazy, keep the foreground simpler. If your background is simple, go nuts on top of it. Doing both at the same time is tricky.



I don't really like this because it's not my aesthetic. I like to try new things and maybe take parts of it into future works, but I'm not always going to enjoy the first pieces. This venture into decorating bodies with tattoo illustrations led to the stamping tattoos idea.

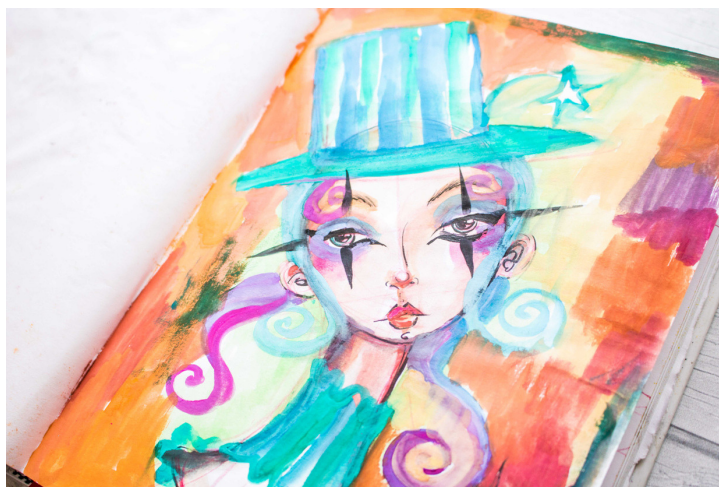
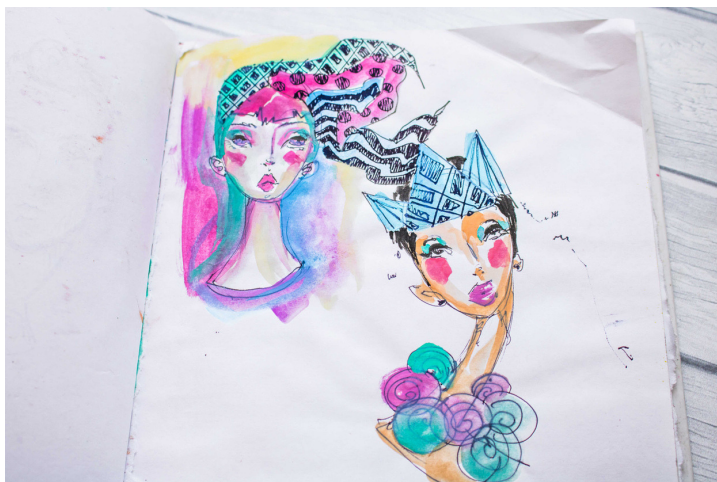
**What I take away from this:** Stamping over bodies make great tattoos. I don't really do that often but it was a fun tutorial to share early on in my career. since.





This spread has the same issue as the one above, with the added bonus of MORE problems in the tip in! The dog illustration was a mockup for a commissioned piece and the lady on the left I did when I was 16. There are parts of this that I could see working in other ideas, but this mix is too much for me to process.

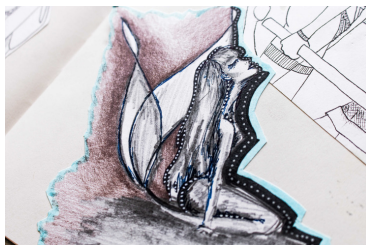
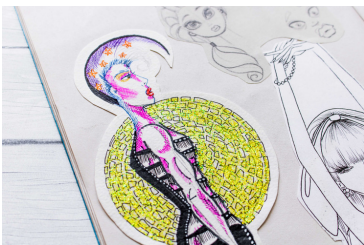
**What I take away from this: see above.**



I kind of love these first ones, ish, the clown page NO, but you can SEE the powdery residue of the watercolor paint [colored chalk... no joke]. I hate flipping these pages because it gets everywhere. I do believe that you can make almost anything work when you're journaling, but I don't enjoy recommending kids supplies because it makes the work harder and the experience less enjoyable. I wish everyone could start with good supplies, but I went through this stage and eventually upgraded, so I have hope that others will get through it too ☐

**What I take away from this: Artists Loft watercolor paints are difficult. More than that, I learnt that quality materials actually improve the quality of your artistic experience. I would recommend not buying 3 sets of cheap pencils and use that money to buy 1 small set of good ones. Student grade watercolor sets are very affordable these days and you won't be sorry you invested in better supplies when you start seeing how they change your pieces and process.**





These are illustrations I did about 5 years ago. I am proud of my growth, but it is hard to look back on them. Before I created **CONSTANSTLY** (and for work) my pieces were very hit and miss. I had moments where I **LOVED** what I did, and then moments where I thought it looked like I couldn't hold a pencil.

**What I take away from this: The more you do, the better you get. One Hundred Percent.**



HAHA! This idea I had to do a "you are what you eat" thing, and I was going to put little foods in the circles that connect their torsos to their bottom halves. Once I realized what I was doing and how weird it was I stopped, ahaha. This kind of disturbs me to be honest.

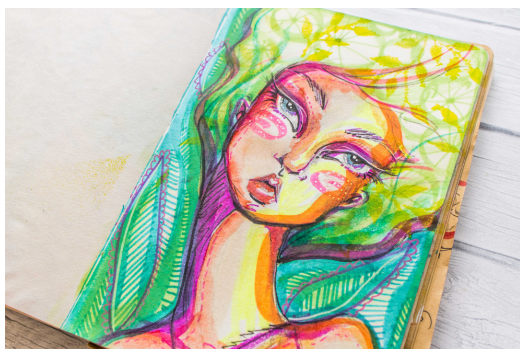
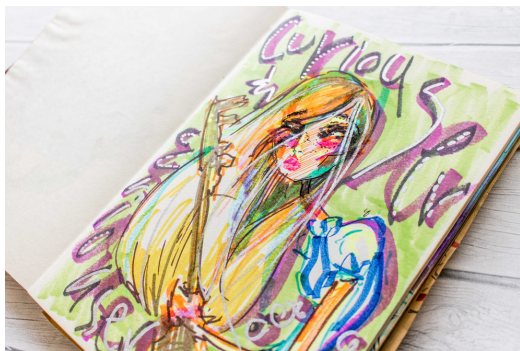
**What I take away from this: It wasn't really a bad idea, it's just maybe an idea that was meant to land in someone else's imagination, not mine.**



I really enjoy the right page in this spread, but not the left. I was happy with how I incorporated the pieces but I don't love the illustrations in it.

**What I take away from this: This echoes what I mentioned before, about grounding collaged elements into your work by illustrating over and through them. Actually, I am really into this at the moment after finding @bybun on Instagram, she is incredible at incorporating collage with this technique.**





These were some of my EARLY journal pages. Like, some of the FIRST, when I fell deep into a vortex of YouTube videos. I was introduced to journaling by Dyan Reaveley and Jane Davenport, discovering Tim Holtz, Dina Wakley, Teesha Moore and Tam Laporte in the process. I soaked in all the knowledge I could from their public offerings and was so inspired to find out all I could about art journaling (and how to do it). I starting mixing my media and seeing what I could achieve, but I have a lot of very humbling spreads from this period.

**What I take away from this: Just keep going. Even at this stage I thought "one day these will make a great throwback". Cue today ☐**



I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THAT PRESENTATION HAHA! IF  
I CAN LEAVE YOU WITH ANYTHING IT'S THAT

YOU'RE  
ON  
YOUR  
WAY!

*Nothing you create is done in vain. You might not know now why you needed to stumble through some of these struggles now, but in the problem solving and self-critiquing you're building a skill set that will help you grow. You NEED to know what you don't like, to steer you into the direction of what you do.*

*Look at your work. Look at your progress. Be proud of how far you've already come, and rest in the knowledge that your best piece right now is a stepping stone to something even greater!*

- J