

# JLBCREATIVE WORKSHOPS

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## PLAYTEST PATREON BLOG POST

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Making a Zine  
Art Journaling  
Whimsical Illustration

# G'DAY PATRONS!



For today's blog post I wanted to dive into the WORKSHOPS I held over the weekend, and chat about how I felt, how it all went down and my thoughts and feelings moving forward. A few months ago I had an email pop up asking if I do classes, and if I'd be interested in teaching up at The Island's Creative Escape, Los Gatos. Initially, I thought "no, I don't do classes but maybe one day in the future..." Then, much like Sarah Jessica Parker sitting at her New York City apartment window,

I got to thinking... yes, I could do classes, how different is it to teaching on YouTube? Very different. HAHAAHA! But all jokes aside, I had a long think about my direction for the business, the plans I already had in motion and the energy I had left to devote to such a project. My premature thoughts were that I would show up and teach some drawing? I don't know what I thought to be honest, all I remember was "here's an opportunity James, don't say no to an opportunity for growth".

Of course, it wasn't that simple, but once I collected my thoughts I began a dialogue with Laurie and Lexi about the types of classes I could teach, expectations and logistics (when, where, how, why? Haha).

We settled on 3 workshops

- **Making a Zine**
- **Art Journaling**
- **Whimsical Illustration**



These weren't the only ideas, but if I had to choose, these were the three I felt most comfortable moving forward with. Then I did what anyone else would do – Panic.

Actually, I got on the phone to Ali Brown and asked about her experiences with teaching and if she had any advice. As per usual, Ali was a fountain of wisdom and I was frantically scribbling notes with each new sentence. In hindsight, Ali's advice about having a "favorite supplies list" and taking merch/product to have available for purchase was SPOT ON!

Beyond that point, I'll be honest, I let the ideas swirl around in my head for a while so I could focus on other work and give them time to develop. Over those weeks I was able to take a deeper look at my teaching style on YouTube and my brand offerings to develop a better sense of the expectation's people might have arriving at my workshops. I also had to get an understanding of how to translate all of this to someone who is unfamiliar with it all, or someone who has never seen or heard of me before. Oh, and I had to deal with some imposter syndrome... That's always fun!



# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

# CLASS COMPANI ONS

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One fine day, God gifted me an idea – Class Companions! In thinking about the overall experience of an “in-person workshop”, I knew that going in there’s the excitement of learning, and in doing the workshop you’re enjoying the process and the class atmosphere, but what do people take away from it? What would I expect to take away from it? Now, I have some products, but I don’t believe people sign up to get access to product they can already purchase online. It’s nice when it’s included in the class, but it is also a factored into the fee you pay to attend, so I figured most people (like myself) didn’t want to come away with just a bunch of mandatory purchases. I rationalized that most people might want to leave with a fun learning experience and the confidence to apply that education at home. Hence, the class companions.

I am so thankful I embarked on that journey to create the booklets. They were so instrumental in being able to provide a reference and resource that was easily accessible and tangible. It was also a great way to run through different aspects of the lesson plans and get a better perspective on what to include. As a bonus, the class information is always with you, and accessible beyond the classroom.



**Formatting the 60 pages of the booklets was well worth the 17 hour work days, and I now can’t imagine building these mini curriculums for learning without these mini textbooks. Ok, “textbooks” is generous... “fun booklets of pretty pictures and class notes” HAHA!**



# CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

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In lightly touching on the setup, I'll just say that we were SO EXHAUSTED when we arrived (all the motels we tried to stop at were full) BUT the shop was absolutely gorgeous and more than equipped for everything I could ever need. Seriously, all I had to do was download an app to live stream my table from my phone onto a screen behind me. I am not-so-great with technology and it was insanely easy and all the women at the store were angels and more helpful than I could give them credit for. Thank you Ladies!!! If you get a chance to pop into The Island's Creative Escape Los Gatos take a fresh credit card; it's a slice of art supply paradise with a Starbucks 50 ft away... a recipe for financial disaster in my world!

Let's get to teaching. I did it! Hahaha, I am so relieved to say I did it, and I think I managed it quite well. Of course, I was nervous, but I really prepared myself well, which I think helped me calm down and know I would be OK even if I stumbled over my words. It's such a different experience teaching in person because I can't "cut, stop, record, say the sentence correctly and proceed". One valuable lesson I learnt was the need to PACE the lesson, and make sure I am active while I'm talking. I think that would help me to finish my demo pieces and not be left in a scramble towards the end of class. I wanted more time at the end of class to chat to people and take a short break, so I will remember that for next time.

I also don't think I was ready for a response to my talking, and LAUGHING! The banter was one of my favorite parts and the laughing was infectious! I suddenly felt like maybe I wasn't a crazy person for laughing all the time in my lonely studio (or maybe we are ALL crazy and we just found the right tribe HAHA).

Speaking of Tribe – YOU!

It was an incredibly surreal experience meeting so many of you and putting names to faces and Instagram handles. Even more so, getting to share in your stories! I never take for granted how so many of us connected and what was happening in our lives at the time. I shared a bit of my story and how I was drawn to Art Journaling in a time where I lost my dance career and wanted to avoid feelings of worthlessness and depression. Everyone had a different story and we all have unique connections because of that, and for some, Friday and Saturday was the start of a new journey between us.

I can't talk enough about how moving it was to Create with you in person. I am often so alone in my studio, even as I write this now, and it can be very hard to feel like any of this is real behind a computer screen. But it is SO real. And the connections extend beyond myself. Our community is all connected in their own ways, and there are special bonds I saw blossom and bloom over the weekend that had nothing to do with me, the brand, YouTube, Instagram... In fact, I think it is a miraculous thing to witness; the scope and spread of an encouraging community engaged in Creative pursuits.



# HIGHLIGHTS



And the art supplies! I don't think I've ever felt happier than when I was swatching out supplies in the Art Journaling Workshop, and had multitudes of art supplies flying at me to try. It was like I was 8 years old and I got to play in Toy's 'R Us [RIP] by myself at night. I also have to laugh that you were all the same people blaming me for enabling you and then throwing Caran d'Ache Neocolor II's in my face, and you KNOW I don't own anything like that! HAHAAAAHA

Other hilarious highlights to me were when Steve took a basket of washi tapes and shuffled his way around the room saying "Washi anyone?", like they were hors d'oeuvres.

- Anytime I made a mistake and it was being live fed to the screen behind me! Hahaha
- The fact that I didn't finish my Zine or Art journal pages from class! But I am really excited to finish them here and show you how they turned out!
- The donut and chocolate milk that stared at me all day and never got touched
- I think we only had one brave soul who tore anything out of the Class Companions! Haha, it's OK though, you were all more than helpful clearing my personal collage stash







The whole weekend was pretty amazing. I felt so drained at the end of it, but it was in that good way where you know you really gave it all you had. I felt so accepted and appreciated in class, and so honored to share in your stories and journeys. To have so many people flipping through my journals on display brought about so many fond memories of creating the pages and what they meant then, and what they mean now. I loved sharing those stories with you, and I loved sharing all that I know with you. You were so ready and willing to accept me for all that I am, and you made my dream come true before I even knew it was a dream I had.

**Thank you to everyone who attended the Workshops, and thank you to all who are with me outside of the classroom.**

**You are all a part of a much larger community that is responsible for bringing so much joy and good, positive light and change in this world. You inspire me to do more, to do better, to learn, share, fail and grow! I would do it all anyway, but it is so much sweeter to do it in community with you. I will continue to say a prayer of gratitude for all of you. You are truly a blessing to me,**

**- James**