

A new twist on journaling
with brushstrokes instead of words

Over 20
painting exercises
for nourishing your
creative soul

PAINTING YOUR WAY OUT OF A CORNER

*The Art of
Getting Unstuck*

BARBARA DIANE BARRY



“When you have a thought, the value of that thought depends upon how you interact with it. Barbara Diane Barry the author of *Painting Your Way Out of a Corner* discovered that her brain was censoring images and ideas so quickly as irrelevant or unrelated that her potential for creative ideas and solutions was crippled. By going through the motions of painting in her journal for six years she learned to focus on the process of painting rather than the outcome. The more times she went through the motions of painting in her journal the more she found herself interacting with her thoughts. This interaction primed her to explore creative new ways of thinking, living and reinventing herself.

There are two ways of spreading light . . . to be the candle, or the mirror that reflects it. This book combines both. When you paint in your journal, you are the candle that creates the light that shines on your inner thoughts and fears, and the journal reflects back this light to make you aware of the creative choices you must make to navigate through the difficulties of life. This discipline of painting in a journal will allow you to continually reinvent yourself and to learn how to embrace your hidden inner resources not only for art but for the challenges of life itself.”

—MICHAEL MICHALKO, AUTHOR OF *Thinkertoys* AND *Creative Thinkering*

“Barbara Barry has developed an amazing method for opening the creative flow for anyone who wants to dip in and draw from deep water. Writers, poets, painters, chefs, designers, or anyone who wants to work from a creative center can let her be the guide.”

—LINDA LEONARD, PH.D., AUTHOR OF *The Wounded Woman* AND *The Call to Create*

“Some of my most profound and powerful breakthroughs have happened with paintbrush in hand, standing in front of my own wild, intuitive paintings. That’s why I’m so delighted that creative souls now have Barbara Diane Barry’s *Painting Your Way Out of a Corner* to turn to for guidance on their own self-discovery journeys. Barbara’s insightful exercises will help you quiet the inner critic, ignite your intuition, and rev up your innovative problem-solving abilities. So pick up your paintbrush and give yourself full permission to play!”

—JENNIFER LEE, AUTHOR OF *The Right-Brain Business Plan*

“Barbara Barry provides a practical and workable solution to the most daunting problem for all those who yearn for self-expression through art: *How to get started*. Her prescriptions for painting as journal-keeping and her imaginative exercises show her

skills as a teacher and her respectful empathy for the beginner's fear of the blank page and the inner critic. So often, just getting going is the problem. This book will make you want to jump in."

—BETTY EDWARDS, AUTHOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*

"Much more than just a wonderful guide for learning to paint, this book is a glorious gift to anyone who yearns for a more creative life!"

—MICHAEL J GELB, AUTHOR OF *How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci*

"I love this book! It supports readers exploring themselves in a symbolic way that results in true transformation. I am already using it with myself and my clients."

—MJ RYAN, AUTHOR OF *This Year I Will . . .*



PAINTING YOUR WAY OUT OF A CORNER

The Art of Getting Unstuck

Barbara Diane Barry

JEREMY P. TARCHER/PENGUIN A MEMBER OF PENGUIN GROUP (USA) NEW YORK



JEREMY P. TARCHER/PENGUIN

Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Group (USA) LLC

375 Hudson Street

New York, New York 10014



USA • Canada • UK • Ireland • Australia • New Zealand • India • South Africa • China

penguin.com

A Penguin Random House Company

Copyright © 2013 by Barbara Diane Barry

Penguin supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin to continue to publish books for every reader.

Most Tarcher/Penguin books are available at special quantity discounts for bulk purchases for sales promotions, premiums, fund-raising, and educational needs. Special books or book excerpts also can be created to fit specific needs. For details, write: Special.Markets@us.penguin.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Barry, Barbara Diane.

Painting your way out of a corner : the art of getting unstuck / Barbara Diane Barry.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-101-61003-9

1. Painting—Technique. 2. Painting—Psychological aspects. 3. Artist's block. I. Title.

ND1500. B225 2014 2013030407

751.4—dc23

Version_1

To Katherine, who never stopped believing in me

[Praise for *Painting Your Way Out of a Corner*](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Epigraph](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Part I](#)

[THE TOOLS](#)

[1. KEEPING A VISUAL JOURNAL](#)

[2. THE MIND-SET: “I” IS FOR IMPROVISE](#)

[3. GETTING STARTED](#)

[4. COLORING 101](#)

[Part II](#)

[THE PRACTICE](#)

[5. THE UNPLANNED PAINTING](#)

[6. THE LANGUAGE OF IMAGES](#)

[7. OOPS, OUCH, AND AHA!](#)

[8. LETTING GO](#)

[9. MYTH, MAGIC, AND PSYCHE](#)

[10. WORKING THE EDGE](#)

[11. IT’S OVER WHEN IT’S OVER](#)

[Resources](#)

[Materials](#)

[Asking More Questions](#)

[Additional Exercises and Prompts](#)

[Notes](#)

[Suggested Reading](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Index](#)

It may be that when we no longer know what to do we have come to our real work and that when we no longer know which way to go we have begun our real journey.

—WENDELL BERRY

The Genesis of Journal Painting

It was at the midpoint in my career as an artist and art educator when I completely stopped painting and drawing for a time. It was after a New Jersey women's art collective rejected my membership application because they felt my work did not show a unified style. I was crushed and couldn't even look at a brush. I wondered if perhaps the women's collective was right. It seemed that I just didn't know how to go deeper into my work. I had always been fearful of making mistakes. I would reach a certain level and then back away.

This wasn't the first time in my life when I'd felt stuck. In fact, it had been something of a recurring theme for me for quite some time. At the age of five, I contracted poliovirus, which caused the paralysis of my left hand. That is my first memory of feeling stuck. Not only was I unable to tie my shoes or cut my meat like most kids, for a long time I couldn't even open my hand. I see now how this became a metaphor for me later in life when I couldn't move ahead with a decision or get past some emotional upheaval. As I grew up and became an adult, this pattern played out over and over whenever I approached any task I anticipated as huge. I couldn't get myself to move.

In my artwork I often did not trust the worth of the ideas or images that came to me. I would feel myself freeze up, unable to risk anything. At these moments I imagined myself to be hollow inside, just a big, blank page. When and if some vision arose, I found myself paralyzed with indecision, unable to move forward or backward. If I was working in oils, I'd start scraping away at the images and color, effectively erasing or destroying what I'd done.

The amazing paradox was that even with this kind of self-doubt, I sensed that I had so much more inside me. In my fantasies I wasn't tied to an accurate representation of what I saw or some artistic ideal. Instead I was painting new forms with bold colors and strokes. In truth, I had more to say artistically but did not know how to set it free or even understand what the "it" might be. I was very frustrated and in despair much of the time and, as I was to discover, this was an immense drain of valuable energy.

Eventually, wanting to keep my hand at some kind of art, I began doodling in a spiral-bound drawing book as something only for myself. I had no plan for any page but used each as a space to let my mind work in a purely spontaneous way, a sort of nonverbal stream of consciousness. I intended the drawing to feel like play, but at first it was more like a tug-of-war as I fought between putting something down on the page and just staring at it.

While I struggled with this on my own, I began to look around to find out what others knew about creative blocks. A fellow searcher recommended a book about creativity and improvisation titled *Free Play*, by violinist Stephen Nachmanovitch. I took expressive painting workshops with Michele Cassou and Stewart Cubley in California, where I discovered the joys of squirrel-hair brushes and reconnected with the thick tempera paint of my childhood. I was inspired by the writings of Joseph Campbell, who urges you to “follow your bliss,” and by Carl Jung’s ideas about the power of the image. A seminar I attended at the C. G. Jung Foundation of New York called “Creativity: From Process to Transformation” encouraged me to explore active imagination, a process conducive to talking with the images I was painting.

All these experiences I brought back to my painting journal. It was a six-year journey, and at its end, I came to identify a part of my thinking brain that was judging images and ideas so quickly that I didn’t even get a chance to mull them over. As I began to recognize and interrupt this “gatekeeper” operation, I was able very slowly to loosen the mind’s grip and interrupt an old childhood inner defense system.

Growing up with an alcoholic parent, I’d learned early to freeze in place, never knowing which way the wind would blow from day to day. The bout with polio also undermined my confidence and ability to know what my body was actually feeling. Both conditions led to a kind of numbness—in both body and mind. Perhaps this gatekeeper had evolved to ensure I was safe—safe from intrusion or from making mistakes, which might cause unanticipated repercussions. Unfortunately, it was an overzealous guard, blocking the way for anything innovative along with the potential threats.

As I continued to paint in my journal, I discovered that the more I learned to focus on the process of art making rather than the outcome, the more I began to see an increased flexibility that affected other areas of my life. It was as if the journal offered me a safe space in which I could explore new ways of thinking, try out ideas and even definitions of who I was, and, of course, work through feelings that were getting in my way. And once I was able to do such things on the page, I found they felt less risky in my everyday life. I was better able to look at alternative career options, for example. I began to risk exploring how I wanted my life and my relationships to proceed. There was a new willingness to put myself on the line, to lean on myself. Even though putting myself forward would always call for greater effort, this emphasis on process over end result gave me the power to stay with something even if there was uncertainty. I had new ways to ride it out, to keep going, to listen for and follow what might come next. I learned to talk to myself and suspend the need to find an answer, any answer to fill the void. And with each successive experience, the next uncertainty became a little easier. I’d found what I’d been looking for. This time, the images, the colors and inventiveness I

discovered were not a dream. I'd found the space and the tools I could use to release them into reality. I also learned that this creative process called for a continuous rhythm of reinventing oneself. There was no one, final reality to find. I had to let go of how I defined myself over and over again in order to discover and embrace some hidden resource within myself, not only for art but in order to meet the demands and adapt to the changes that life throws at us every day. Painting in a journal has remained a discipline I continue to this day.

The Payoff

The answers I've found on my own journey of improvisational painting, as I've learned to transform blocked energy into concrete images, sparked my passion to share the process with others. I wanted to make it available to people who might be searching, as I was. This isn't just about creativity in the arts; it's part of something larger. It's about living and working creatively every day. The creative process exists in all of us, whether we're planning a garden or designing a system at work. Creativity is inherently human and not just for the "artistic," and if nurtured and exercised regularly, it's an incredible tool. While I have been providing art instruction to all ages for over thirty years, I developed and began to teach journaling in images for the rewards of self-discovery it engenders. My hope is that this book will help the reader to navigate the difficult as well as the everyday life choices we all face, as I've seen it do for the students in my classes.

For fifteen years, I've been teaching how to use improvisation and meditation to play with painted images in a very simple and direct way. In that time I've worked with everyone from corporate executives looking to become more innovative and gain a competitive edge to new mothers trying to adjust to an unfamiliar role. Anyone who has left one career for another, become a first-time parent, or lost someone dear to them knows what it means to find oneself at sea, often accompanied by nagging self-doubt and a sense of being frozen in time. Navigating transitions is one of the toughest tests of human resiliency. Our ability to handle change and adapt to new situations requires a skill set not taught in school. Flexibility, risk taking, and an ability to find options are all things that are necessary for a lifetime of continuous change.

The transitions I have witnessed from my students range from everyday to seismic, including writers and artists conquering their blocks, as well as people making career changes, battling illness or dealing with loss, and going through rites of passage, such as graduations, marriages, divorces, and retirements. I've watched clients at a center for battered women paint with such courage and compassion for others. Still others have used the process simply to get in touch with their creative sides and learn more about themselves and what makes them tick.

As students paint in my class, I am not privy to, nor do I seek to know, the history behind their struggles with perfection, fear, sadness, or whatever limitation may arise on paper. It's enough that we find ways to paint through the feelings and not be blocked by them. Still, sometimes long after the fact, I hear how they have used the painting process to move ahead in their lives.

Lorraine provides art experiences for underprivileged children through a state-funded program. Always looking for new ways to engage them at a deeper, less judgmental level, she decided to take my course to discover her own blocks and felt this would benefit her teaching as well. While we worked on the critical voice that kept her from taking risks on paper, she was working herself toward taking a risk outside the classroom. This painting process helped her find the courage she needed to finally be screened for dyslexia and accommodative and convergence dysfunction. While the vision therapy that followed is physically and emotionally challenging, she finds the best way to release her feelings about it is to go to her journal with a paintbrush and give that frightened little girl she discovered inside herself “everything that she needs.”

Carla, a book editor, turned to her journal when wedding planning angst threatened to undermine the coming joyful occasion. Rather than shut down, she painted her way through her negative feelings. At work, she found it helped her jump-start new book projects when she didn't know where or how to begin. The act of painting loosens up her thinking.

Two scientists who came through my studio used the process to “get out of their heads” and find where blocks were holding them back. Jeff learned to breathe his way through blocks and created his own distinctive mantra—“Whatever,” always accompanied by a shrug of his shoulders—to help him dive back into a painting when uncertainty kept tripping him up. Doris took the process back to work and used the storytelling aspect of painting to help teach her staff how to explain large and difficult concepts in a narrative way that made them more easily understood.

Diana, an artist and designer, used the painting process to help her cope with a difficult boss while trying to make it to retirement. Later, she used the skills acquired in the studio as she sought a means of survival in retirement. Opportunities were placed in front of her that she thought beyond her abilities. In her own words:

The experiences in the class became examples to remember, not intellectually, but in my body and spirit. I remembered what it felt like to be fearful to continue to paint on a page that I “really liked.” What would happen if I ruined the part I just did that I liked so much? What if leaving my job ruined my life? But as I forged ahead with the painting, I felt such exhilaration when a new and exciting image appeared. In the same manner, I

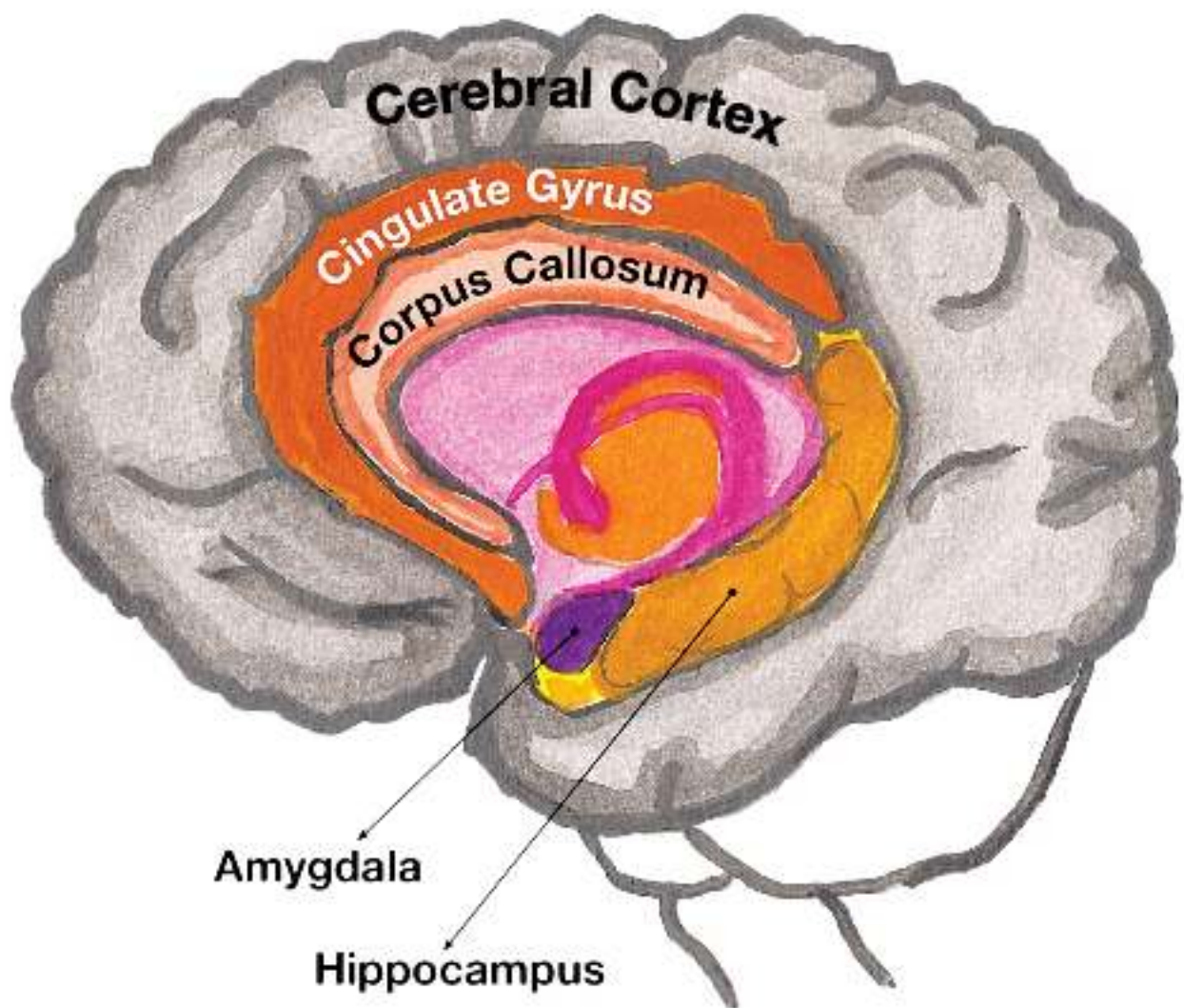
find victorious moments occurring daily as I explore the “process” of this new stage of my life as a blank page on which I have the freedom to make mistakes, and turn them into something wonderful that I could never have foreseen as possibilities.

A NEW TAKE ON THE BRAIN

On my journey to develop this painting-journal process, to validate what I was doing, I found myself delving into the new research on the brain and how it works for inspiration. I pored through everything written by neurologist Oliver Sacks, whose work focuses on the strange interplay between body and mind. Over the past ten years, neurological research has done much to shape a different vision of our brains at work. I have included some of these findings in the book where I think they parallel discussion of the creative process. What follows is background material that will be helpful as you read these science boxes.

Cerebrum

The largest of the brain's three main structures



Cerebrum and limbic system

The old understanding of the human adult brain as a static and unchanging organ has shifted due to new research. The advent of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which pinpoints activity in the brain, has provided a picture of a more plastic entity able to create new neural pathways. Neuroscience deals with the anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, and molecular biology of nerves and nervous tissue. Their relationship to behavior and learning is creating a more contemporary story, to which the ensuing boxes will attest. But first, some brain basics.

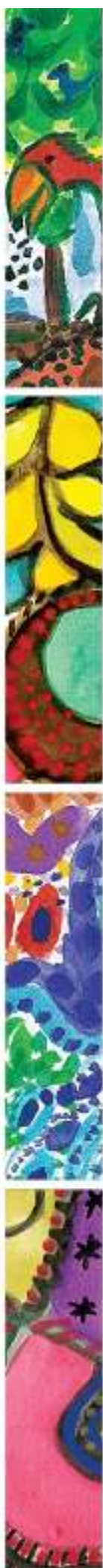
Of the three main structures of the brain, the cerebrum, the cerebellum, and the brainstem, the cerebrum is the largest and the one these boxes are concerned with. This structure is divided into two major hemispheres that work together. The two sides connect and communicate information with each other through a pathway called the

corpus callosum. The old story of the brain originally assigned creativity to the right hemisphere alone, leaving the left responsible for logical and symbolic thinking. Through modern functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), researchers are beginning to determine which neurons are operating during some of these brain functions. No longer is creativity assigned solely a right-brain function; rather, it involves the participation of both sides of the brain.

The outer layer of the cerebrum, the cerebral cortex, is also known as gray matter and covers a second layer consisting of nuclei, or white matter. The outer layer is twice the thickness of the inner and is filled with neurons that are particular to humans and give us our ability to think linearly and in abstract systems, such as mathematics. This convoluted layer contains some one hundred billion cells, each with one thousand to ten thousand synapses, and has roughly one hundred million meters of wiring, all packed into a structure the size and thickness of a “formal dinner napkin.”¹

The deeper layer is the part we share with other mammals and is the older part of the brain. These cortical cells make up the limbic system and are often referred to as the emotional or reptilian brain. As information comes in through our senses, the limbic system assigns an emotion to that incoming data. It might not come as a surprise that these emotional functions do not mature as we age. At the limbic level we react to certain stimuli in much the same way we did when we were young.

Three areas of the limbic mind are the cingulate gyrus, which controls our ability to pay attention, the hippocampus, responsible for our ability to retrieve and store memories, and the amygdala. The amygdala, the part you may be most familiar with, is responsible for scanning all incoming stimuli to determine our level of safety (the fight-or-flight response).



Part I



THE TOOLS



KEEPING A VISUAL JOURNAL

Inspiration does not come like a bolt, nor is it kinetic, energetic, striving, but it comes to us slowly and quietly and all the time, though we must regularly and every day give it a little chance to start flowing, prime it with a little solitude and idleness.

—BRENDA UELAND¹

Painting resuscitated me.

When my second marriage ended eight years ago, I felt as though my life in the suburbs was over too. My children were grown and had already left home. Reminders of a past way of life lay around every corner. I wanted something new with a different kind of energy. I decided to move to Manhattan.

I thought the move would be freeing, but it only made things harder. I suddenly felt adrift. No longer wife or mother of small children, I wasn't sure how to navigate my new status. Even simple decisions challenged me. I found myself paralyzed with fear over the expense of purchasing two large air conditioners for my new apartment. What if I measured wrong and they didn't fit in my windows? What if I couldn't return them and lost money? Decisions now began and ended with me, and I was petrified I'd make the wrong ones. I was stuck.

And the challenges just kept coming—navigating the subway throng, endless waiting for the bus, and then I discovered the law of the urban laundromat. One morning I had just finished doing two loads in my building's machines when I found that none of the dryers worked. "No problem," I thought and set off for the corner laundromat. But as I threw my wet things into an available tumbler, the manager hurried over, shaking her head. "No, no—only for customer who does wash too." I was dumbstruck. Why such a strict and unyielding rule for something so simple as doing laundry? It wasn't like there weren't empty machines. It wasn't like I wasn't going to pay for the drying.

It made no sense to me, but I gathered up my wet things and returned home all the same. Minutes later, as I draped my heavy sheets around the apartment, I couldn't believe the amount of rage I felt. Unlike in the past when I might have carried the feeling around all day, I took it to my painting journal instead.

I began by painting the forbidden dryers standing on the avenue. I then surrounded them with the soggy garments I had hanging quite literally all around me. When I didn't know what to do next, I put in a few of the trees I noticed out my window. I turned a red drip mark into a large bird only to find him "laughing" at my predicament. Then there I was too, chasing him away. With each new thing I painted, the anger subsided a little more. As I looked to the dirt mound I'd painted underneath the bird, I "found" seeds and out of my brush just the edge of an embryonic shape appeared. Suddenly I began to feel more hopeful. I hadn't lost the day. I wasn't a hostage to my feelings after all.

The process of being creative is a basic means of learning, from playpen to adulthood. As children, we naturally use trial and error to become acquainted with the world around us. As we become adults (and even sooner), we stop seeing "errors" as opportunities for discovery or for the clarity they can bring. Taking chances and making decisions gets complicated by overthinking or trying too hard. Sometimes getting blocked is simply a result of being overwhelmed by too many choices. Logic tells us to sort it out, but just the contemplation of such a task can freeze us into a state of paralysis. What we need is a way to clear the interior clutter of whatever is blocking us from taking that first step.



Painting my laundry angst

How do we regain that earlier spontaneity and loosen the restrictive judgment that keeps us immobile? How can we release the mind and begin the process that leads to creative solutions? Like a muscle, the creative mind needs to get in shape, be activated and exercised. Because the act of painting is nonverbal and wet, it provides a tool that by nature is limber and direct. Take away the need to make a complete “picture” or any kind of polished result, and you have what I call the unplanned painting, which is a vehicle for improvisation and play, two vital elements of early human development.

The unplanned-painting process described in this book begins with dots and strokes, making a game out of seeing recognizable objects in the shapes you’ve made. It uses spontaneous painting, that is, making things up as we go along, to access a deeper understanding of our thought processes and actions through visual language. Painting from the imagination evokes thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that block us in day-to-day experience. Translating them into images on paper tells a story that changes us while also recording the journey. Transformation occurs through the sheer risk of making each dot, shape, or line, and then embracing the result however it manifests.

What I’ve done is to pair that unplanned approach to painting with the discipline of keeping a journal. The practice of keeping a journal or diary has been the province of kings, presidents, writers, travelers, and rock stars alike. Writing in a journal not only records events, it helps us reflect on feelings and memories. More significant is its

potential to prompt users toward new ideas. But, what if words are not your strong suit? Or, what if the workday is already filled with language-driven activities, such as writing, reading, and talking? Visual artists throughout history from Leonardo da Vinci to Marc Chagall have known how to use sketchbooks to play with ideas. The artist Frida Kahlo kept a diary that is similar in spirit to the improvisational process described in this book. In it, she recorded very private thoughts and feelings in both words and imagery. The sketchbooks of filmmaker Tim Burton are a more contemporary example of image making for play, invention, and transformation.

An important aspect of a journal is that it's both accessible and portable so that you can do this anytime, anyplace, and hopefully with regularity, for that is how transformational work occurs best. Like the "morning pages" that Julia Cameron advises writing in her book *The Artist's Way*, the practice of painting on a daily basis opens an inner dialogue necessary for reflection. With painting, this development happens not in a plodding or pedantic way, but almost in spite of itself. By building a habit of playing with paint on paper, we can get at difficult issues that can't be resolved simply by thought and analysis. Each journal page becomes a container, not only for creative exploration, but for release and resolution. Writer Henry Miller, for example, discovered that painting gave him another voice and, at one point, used the process to work through a period of insomnia.

And here's something unique to a painting journal—it's permanent. There's no hiding what's been made, no erasing, and we are encouraged to never paint over anything we don't like. This gives us a visual record of what occurred during the process—where we were stuck and how we got unstuck—that we can refer to and reflect back on.

How to Use This Book and Optimize Your Experience

This book had been organized to serve two functions. The first is to teach you enough painting technique to attain a certain comfort level with the materials. That means learning a direct and simple use of the brushes and the paints that will invite experimentation. As with any discipline, your level of dexterity will improve with practice. It is not the intention here, however, to achieve mastery of watercolor technique.

The second function is to learn how to access and express personal imagery without censoring yourself. In order to do this, there are several key concepts to keep in mind.

"No Fault" Painting

The first concept under consideration is what I call "no fault" painting—whatever comes out of the brush is good enough. In this process we take the idea of a mistake and turn it on its head. What might once have been viewed as a mistake is now seen as the whimsy

of the brush, an experiment or an opportunity to see a mark made on the page from a different perspective.

Self-censorship, whether of ideas or the quality of their expression, is a creativity killer. Innovation doesn't happen in a vacuum; it needs permission to leap about, fall on its face, get dirty, and "keep on truckin'." I'll demonstrate how the inner critic visits in different guises, giving us the chance to practice and fine-tune ways of engaging and moving past it.

Choosing Process over Outcome

Not only are there no mistakes during the act of painting, doing these journal pages will require a commitment toward letting go of the final results. Nurturing a gentler attitude toward our efforts is important as we become familiar with a process in which the gain is not measured by how perfect the product is. The gains are to be found in the experience itself—working every day or as often as possible.

Valuing the process of creating over the product that is created is important because it helps us to see what is happening in the moment by:

- Showing us how we make decisions
- Revealing what stops us or stands in the way of making the next move
- Opening up options and stretching us
- Enlivening the imagination

What You Need Is Already Inside You

The only necessary materials are a few basics like paint and paper; there is no artistic training required to keep an unplanned painting journal and no need to study and draw from objects or living subjects. All the imagery we need has been stored within the intricate workings of the human psyche without any effort on our part. (We'll discuss this further in chapter 9.) From the moment of birth we are drinking in the visual world, and as living, breathing beings we already possess an arsenal of experiences and the sense memories that go with them. Most people only touch upon a fraction of this rich resource in their daily lives. This book will introduce ways to engage with and know your own abundance. When we give ourselves permission to paint from the inside and not for results, as mentioned above, we can access this personal image "library" and take a trip solely on imagination. It is a powerful and healing journey.

Make the Experience Your Own

Everyone will come to this discipline with his or her own level of experience. Some may not have painted since grade school; others may be artists or teachers. While there is a progression of sophistication built in over the course of this book, from simple to more complex, if one chapter or painting exercise inspires you more, start with that. Make the experience your own.

As unique as each person is, there are qualities that equalize the experience no matter who begins this journal work for the first time. If you have bought this book, you are most likely in search of a freer, more spontaneous outlook. You want a tool to assist you along life's journey in a way that moves you forward. That is why I have created this approach and, as I hope you will discover, there is a philosophy behind it that goes beyond the marks made on any one page.

PRACTICE MAKES CORTEX

Studies are showing that practice changes the brain. When we do something over and over, the neurons that control that action fire repeatedly. As they do this, they grow and extend themselves, making connections. These connections or synapses change isolated neurons into networks of intense activity. Not only are new connections possible, but connections that are used less can disappear.² How freeing to know that we need not be prisoner to our old habits.

Practicing in your journal doesn't just improve your ability to paint with a brush, take chances, trust your ideas, and increase your playfulness; now science is proving it increases the amount of brain matter you have as well. Researcher Bogdan Draganski and his colleagues at the University of Regensburg in Germany conducted an experiment that demonstrates for the first time that acquiring new skills changes the anatomical structure of the brain.³ For this study, Draganski chose a skill that anyone can learn but not easily forget—juggling, specifically, to learn a three-ball cascade. The subjects used in the study were scanned three times to look for changes in brain matter. The first scan occurred at the beginning as a baseline before they were given three months to practice. The second came after they'd learned how to keep the balls in the air for at least sixty seconds. The last MRI screening occurred after the new jugglers were asked to refrain from practicing for another three-month stretch.

The results were surprising. The second scan showed a measurable increase in the density of their gray matter (those outer cortical bumps), which was not in the area the researchers had predicted. Instead of an increase in an area linked with motor skills, the change appeared in "V7," an area associated with visual movement. This still made sense to the research team, as the very skill a juggler needs is to be able to predict where the ball will go after it leaves his hand.

- [read online Supreme Commander: MacArthur's Triumph in Japan](#)
- [download Beyond Bodies: Gender, Literature and the Enigma of Consciousness \(Consciousness, Literature and the Arts, Volume 38\)](#)
- [click Evolutionary Phonology](#)
- [Michel Foucault \(Critical Lives\) for free](#)
- [download online Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd \(The Library of Second Temple Studies\) for free](#)
- [read online Professional Commercial Photography: Techniques and Images from Master Digital Photographers pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub, doc, mobi](#)

- <http://sidenoter.com/?ebooks/Melting-Ice.pdf>
- <http://interactmg.com/ebooks/Beyond-Bodies--Gender--Literature-and-the-Enigma-of-Consciousness--Consciousness--Literature-and-the-Arts--Volum>
- <http://sidenoter.com/?ebooks/America--You-Sexy-Bitch--A-Love-Letter-to-Freedom.pdf>
- <http://drmurphreesnewsletters.com/library/British-English-from-A-to-Zed--A-Definitive-Guide-to-the-Queen-s-English.pdf>
- <http://tuscalaural.com/library/Fallout-3-Game-of-the-Year-Edition--Prima-Official-Game-Guide-.pdf>
- <http://diy-chirol.com/lib/Professional-Commercial-Photography--Techniques-and-Images-from-Master-Digital-Photographers.pdf>