

I joined an art teacher group on Facebook (maybe a year ago?) and it has really helped me to get ideas, vent, celebrate and network with other art teachers.

I recently posted a short video from my Instagram showing one of my daily art pieces and had a teacher ask me to comment about the whole 'art every day' thing. I knew that it would take much more than just a comment...so here I am, writing a full on blog post.

You know, you go to school for art...then school ends...and sometimes so does the discipline to keep making work. I am just speaking for myself- that's all I can do. John and I had this amazing apartment in 2005-2006; I had the whole third floor as a studio. There were bookshelves lining all the walls, filled with clear shoe boxes full of art supplies, all sorted and labeled. But I really didn't go up there much. And I wasn't making anything to speak of.

Then we moved to California for a year...again, nothing. Now, granted, we just packed up our two cars and put everything in storage and just headed west...so I only had one clear box of supplies. I remember making some jewelry...maybe some ornaments...but besides that not much else.

Side note...during both of these times I was not teaching art. This was during a hiatus period for me...John's mom had died so we moved back home. I was a leasing agent, then assistant property manager. In California I didn't teach- I worked for a corporate office. I think that being away from the creativity and buzz of my own art classroom helped to 'normalize' the absence of art-making. Just a thought.

2007-2009...Then back in Greenville and finally I started to 'make' again. I was taking graduate classes at ECU, on-line Art Education classes and face-to-face studio classes with my beloved textile professor, Christine Zoller. I was in heaven, dying fabric, beading, fusing...I had a great final show at the Greenville Museum of Art, my work in one small gallery and my K-2 students' work in the adjacent gallery. I had just felt like I had 'found' my voice with some mixed media pieces that I created. Things were looking up.

And then...we moved to Florida for John to pursue his doctoral degree...and things changed. He was on campus all of the time, and when he wasn't he was studying...our place was like a library, except with cats. I had not really made any friends yet, and most of the folks that were close to me were in NC or other places. So I started to write grants for school...not just because I was working at a rural Title 1 school and desperately needed art supplies. I was also trying to establish myself in this new state...which led me to look for professional development opportunities...like the Florida Humanities Council seminar for Zora Neale Hurston. I was so inspired by this seminar, even though it was really more geared toward literary...when I returned home I started about 16 paintings simultaneously.

Another event, attending the SDA Confluence in Minneapolis as an SDA Scholar awakened my creative side, I came home from that event and began working on thirty 18x24 inch tree drawings in the style of Alphonse Mucha and Gustav Klimt. I also met Jessie Prugh that summer while teaching at the Armory. We met over a sparkly phone case and a bag of pretzels and the rest is history...next thing I knew we were having girls art nights and even signing up for group art shows that lasted til 2am- on school nights!

So this flurry of activity, both academic and artistic is definitely what led me to find out about the Creative Every Day Challenge. So in January of 2012- I started the challenge. Now it is almost January 2015...and I have been making art all the days in between. Yep, every day.

I didn't know how I wanted to start at first. There is a suggested theme so definitely for that first year and even some of the second year I would create based on the suggested monthly theme. My first series started off as 'shoes' and by the end of the series my love of faces had snuck in, evident in my combinations of women's faces seemingly enthralled by shoes. That second month, February, I again attempted to work with a motif- hearts. But I soon found myself engaged in a side series of woman, their hair tangled up with hearts.

So I decided to keep on drawing faces.

It wasn't hard for me to commit to this new way of working. By nature I love structure and organization, so working within a monthly art series where I explored one theme or motif each day came naturally. I work at night, most of the time. Waking up early or staying up late, even sitting alongside my husband while we watch our 'shows' ...half paying attention because I am working on art.

I would work sometimes work on my lunch and/or planning. The more time I made for my artwork...the more time I wanted to spend making art. I would make sure to have materials with me at all times, at school, in my car...everywhere, just in case I felt the urge to create.

And I would allow myself to get distracted, to venture off into what I call a 'side series'...works created for specific shows...themes I thought were interesting...commissions...and even fashion illustrations.

I was amazed to find myself that first year with over 500 works of art. All made that year- by me.

I remember back when I was teaching Legislator's School I read something in the 'Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens' about habits. Good or bad, it is possible to alter your habits. In fact, the whole book is set up on that idea, each section focusing on a different 'habit' that, if learned and put into practice can lead to a more effective...well. Everything. Really. (I know that there are other versions out there, I am most familiar with the one for teens, since that it what I taught...but it is still applicable to adults!)

So I made art my habit. I didn't FIND the time to make my art, I MADE it. Every single day.

Disclaimer here...not everyone that participates in the CED Challenge makes a complete piece of art each day-that is something I put on myself. I work best if I can set up some perimeters for myself. I made up my own rule that I would complete a piece each day, within a monthly themed series. I have even gone as far as to fret over paper sizes not being exactly the same or switching media mid-series...which are trivial I know, but these are things that stress me out.

...and that is all I finished writing...it's a jumbled...but somewhere in all that is just me saying that I needed a kick in the butt to be more productive...and making the commitment to make art every day made that happen for me. I decided to go ahead and post what I had started writing...just 'cause I did take the time to write it. If you are out there and you read this and you have any questions about what I have written, or need some encouragement please feel free to contact me! (jenniferloveqironda@gmail.com)

