

## Pick the Perfect Art Journal

### Choices! Choices! Choices!

If you've taken more than two of my classes, I'm sure you've heard me say how much **I love books of all kinds**. I love art books, inspirational books, biographies, and how-to books. I love blank books, too, and I love making my own books. When considering the *perfect* art journal, for me, variety is the key because I can't seem to have just one. I love various kinds of paper and as I've explored my options, I've accumulated a collection of journals and I love them all!

The primary consideration when choosing an art journal is making your selection based on what you like to do.

Do you want to use your journal mostly for writing, with some added pencil or pen and ink sketches? Or, do you want to include wet media like watercolor or acrylic paint or markers? Or, do you want a journal in which you can glue ephemera or collage materials? Or, do you want a journal in which you can do everything?

Lots of questions. . .

#### Let's begin with ready-made journals:

- **Strathmore** makes quite an assortment of journals. My favorites are the **Mixed-Media** and **Visual Journals**. The paper varies in weight and smoothness, so open each journal and give it a feel! Run your fingers across the surface and see what you think. Lightly bend the page (don't crease it) to see the sturdiness of the paper.
- **Canson** also makes **Mixed-Media Journals** in a variety of sizes. The paper is a nice weight and stands up to quite a bit of wet media application, including paint and glue.
- **Moleskine Classic Sketchbook** (lavender band) has paper which will take a light application of watercolor and collage. Many people use "Molies" for everything. I have one and like it, although I think they're a bit pricey.

A regular Moleskine journaler says, "Spray the pages with a little water until evenly damp and then let dry. Doing this helps minimize blotchiness. Pitt and Zig pens are good to use on this paper and the paper can support many layers of stuff, including paper and paint. Sharpie and Copic markers, however, will show through the paper. Lots of erasing causes surface pilling."

- **Dyan Reaveley's Dylusions Creative Journal** is a combination of manila card stock and matte white heavy card stock ideal for the Dylusions Ink Sprays, and techniques using water, inks, paints and mediums. The journal cover is made from sturdy chipboard. This journal is filled with unlined pages. Although I really like this journal, my personal experience is that you can't "throw too much wet stuff at the paper" or it may begin to pill if you rub the surface. If you let the page dry between layers, results are much better.
- **Composition Notebooks** are inexpensive options for art journals. Anytime school supplies are available, composition notebooks are usually plentiful at a very reasonable cost. I like gluing sets of two pages together to "beef up" the paper. Then, I gesso the page which further reinforces the paper.

### Other options for journals:

- **Smash-type Books** - made by various companies. The paper in these journals is not meant for wet media such as paint, but it's great for gluing or taping ephemera, receipts, photos, and brochures. I think that smash-type books are the best for organizing your sources of inspiration including photos, magazine images, color combinations, quotes, etc.
- **Sketch books** are very unhappy if you put too much wet stuff on the pages as they tend to get wimpy very quickly. If you add gesso and build up layers slowly, you can get away with a lot more in a sketch book. Many of them have perforated pages which can be problematic.
- **Drawing paper** - Some drawing paper will accept a limited amount of wet media. The paper warps substantially with liquid inks, paint or glue. Dry between layers or use dry media like chalk, crayon, Gelatos, pencils or pens.
- **Recycled Books or Magazines** - Tear out some of the pages to allow for your additions in this style journal. If the pages are glossy, you'll probably have to sand them (if the paper is substantial enough to handle it) or apply gesso as a base coat for subsequent layers.
- **Gratitude Journal** - Any journal may be used for this purpose. My gratitude journal is one that I received as a gift. I've been embellishing the cover as I'm inspired to do so, but the paper is best suited for writing or adding ephemera with a bit of glue or tape.

### Create your own journal:

- **Water Color paper** is ideal for art journals.

Try cold press or hot press paper - feel the paper! Cold press paper usually has quite a lot of surface texture, but not always. Hot press is much smoother to the touch. Try them both and decide which you prefer.

- **Junk mail journals** - gesso the paper to add strength.

### **Considerations:**

1. Do you like perforated pages? If not, select your journal carefully or you'll be dealing with the perforations during the life of the journal.
2. Journal purpose.
3. What qualities do you prefer for your journal. Remember that you don't have to choose just one! **You can have a variety of art journals.** One might be perfect to collect and illustrate quotes. Another might be exactly what you need to explore color combinations. Another might be perfect for capturing special events or vacations. Your only limitation is your imagination.