

Honest Reviews

essential books
on journaling

The Decorated Page - Journals, Scrapbooks - Albums Made Simply Beautiful

by Gwen Diehn, 2002, published by Lark Books. 128 pages, full color. Reviewed by Scott.

The title, or rather the sub-title of this book is a bit misleading. Its not that it won't help you make you journal pages beautiful, but it is about more than just prettying up your journal for the sake of beauty. As a whole it is about how to incorporated simple techniques into your journaling to help you capture what you want to capture and record it in your journal.

The Decorated Page is logically organized into four sections that lead from choosing a journal and art supplies to creating pages and layouts in tune with your content. Diehn sprinkles sample journal pages throughout the book from a variety of artists including Nina Bagley, Mary Ellen Long and Jenny Taliadoros. I have to admit my favorite journal pages are done by Bruce Kermer, who is not afraid to use whatever is at hand, including ruled spiral bound notebooks, to chronicle the events in his life. The best thing about the sample pages is that most appear to be from real working journals rather than art journals made more for show than serious journaling.

The first section of the book, Materials, guides you through evaluating types of journals, looking at paper, and bindings to determine what is best for your application. Are you making a nature journal, a scrapbook or a record of people you meet? Each application could lead you to choose a different kind of journal. In this section, Diehn also introduces a variety of art supplies and basic applications. She finishes up with some ideas for creating a work area and travel kits to facilitate your journaling.

Techniques, the next section of the book, begins with an introduction on how to prepare your journal for what you want to record in its pages. Techniques such as lamination, removing pages and altering the binding are explored and well illustrated with photographic examples. The author then launches into the beginning of the heart of the book: decorating your journal pages. She starts with techniques to customize your covers and leaps into preparing pages and techniques to inspire you to apply texture and color to your journal.

I'm not sure why she separates the next section, Layouts, from Techniques, because it is really a continuation of the third section but concentrating on laying out your content and ideas using the things you have learned throughout the book. This section is full of ideas that you don't necessarily want to copy but you can incorporate into making the most of recording your content into your journal.

Diehn ends the book with 10 sample pages, tying together the techniques shown throughout the book and how they can be applied to express ideas. They show how to choose the appropriate technique and look to match what you had in mind to record.

The best way to sum up *The Decorated Page* is to go back to the beginning. The author begins the book with a wonderful introduction about how she was drawn into keeping journals; not to create art but to actually record something for a class. It is a good reminder that journals are ultimately supposed to be a personal record. This sometimes gets lost in the technique heavy trend that currently permeates the paper arts world. *The Decorated Page* ties in technique as a reflection of content rather than the driving force for creating the page in the first place. Although this book is a couple of years old, practically ancient by current publishing trends, it should not be missed by anyone serious about chronicling their lives in the pages of a journal.

Artists' Journals and Sketchbooks

by Lynne Perrella, 2004, published by Quarry Books, Rockport Publishers, 128 pages, full color. Reviewed by Kerrie.

The book of the year in the paper arts world seems to be *Artists' Journals & Sketchbooks* by Lynne Perrella. You may have missed it when it was first published early this year, because the first printing sold out almost instantly. But copies are available again, waiting for all but the most cynical mixed-media artists, journal-keepers and sketchbook fillers to snatch up like a loaf of bread before a snowstorm.

Lynne has been filling journals with art for several years, and has been published in numerous books and magazines, as well as teaching a steady stream of successful classes. As a result, Lynne has become a very imitated artist, as wannabe Lynnes strive to create the Lynne Perrella style. The art she shows in this book