

How to Stay Creative in a Pandemic

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by Barbara Salsberg Matthews

GAC Volunteer



Christopher Cape

Photo credit: Telly Topakas

How does one stay creative in a pandemic? Being creative during these unusual times can be challenging. For some, all their time and energy may need to be focused on surviving. Others may discover a new creative vein as a result of living a different routine. This got me wondering how other Guelph artists stay creative in a pandemic. So I asked this question of six local artists from various disciplines, to learn what worked for them.

Lauren Stein, an actor, writer and therapist keeps creative with daily routines and writes a lot. "I'm still editing the book I'm about to publish. I also have a daily writing practice that I send out by e-mail. I'm counting the Omer, and for each day I look at a pair of Tarot cards, journal and share about it." Stein writes that having a schedule is helpful. For example, she goes for her daily walk at 4pm. Each morning she avoids all screens, and does reading



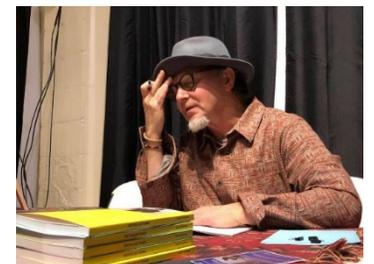
Lauren Stein

Photo by Gili Getz

To boost his creativity, Artist/Instructor Christopher Cape found it helpful to look at his immediate surroundings in new ways. For example he would watch Netflix movies and use the actors as models, picking up a sketchbook and drawing them in action. He also found drawing houseplants stimulates his creativity, describing how each drawing of a houseplant differs from the last. Regardless whether it was a subtle or gross shift in light, or the movement of leaves, the change from still life to plant portrait happens quickly."

<https://www.christophercape.com/>

Some people find their creativity by going inward. Gary Diggins, a musician and expressive arts therapist, writes: "I was reminded of the spiritual tradition of retreating from the busy world. Moving into a quieter and less hyper space, I discovered a story waiting for me. I had yearned to write a novel for years but couldn't find a sustained state of solitude to bring the tale forward.



Gary Diggins

Photo by Dawn Bowman

The focus needed for writing felt like a meditation.”

<https://www.garydiggins.com/>



Laurie Skantzos

Image provided by the artist

Laurie Skantzos, a visual artist, described how the first several weeks of the pandemic were not conducive to art making:

“Between checking news, social media, and touching base with [others], I felt the need to hone my cooking/baking skills and plan the largest vegetable garden possible in our shady backyard. I’m now able to focus on smaller art works, in the form of painted, wooden wall sculptures. The intimate size of these pieces helps me to focus. I’m still not feeling very “expansive” in the way that allows for creation of large, abstract paintings. Like others, all of my shows and workshops have been cancelled, postponed or switched to an online format. It will be interesting to see how that goes, but it definitely shakes things up for artists and crafters used to working toward deadlines.”

www.laurieskantzos.com

Writer, Clifford Jackman explained that staying inspired is about discipline in daily creative efforts. He adds “However hard your circumstances, others have been incredibly creative in

circumstances that were harder...It is about making sure it happens a little bit, no matter how you feel, and no matter what else is going on. We overestimate what we can do in a month, or a year. If you carve out time every day, then it will happen for you, the same as for anyone else.”

Jenny Mitchell, a musician, has a few strategies for staying creative. She explains:

“I have A.D.D., so often I feel like playing music when I should be doing something like housework, taxes, or stuff for my job. I usually find ways to work creative endeavours into my day as deserved breaks. If I left creative activities to the end of my day as the reward for working on other things, I’d often be too tired to enjoy the activity. So I think my best hours should include fun too. I also share my goals and ideas with a friend, which helps me create a type of accountability. Sometimes I’m more motivated to finish something so I can share it with folks who’ve been watching the progress along the way.”



Jenny Mitchell

Image provided by the artist

There are countless ways one can be creative during a pandemic. What works for you?