



An Illustrated Life: Drawing Inspiration From The Private Sketchbooks Of Artists, Illustrators And Designers

Danny Gregory

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Find Insight and Inspiration for Your Creative Life

An artist's journal is packed with sketches and captions; some rough, some polished. The margins sometimes spill over with hurriedly scrawled shopping lists and phone numbers. The cover may be travel-worn and the pages warped from watercolors. Open the book, and raw creativity seeps from each color and line. The intimacy and freedom on its pages are almost like being inside the artist's mind: You get a direct window into risks, lessons, mistakes, and dreams.

The private worlds of these visual journals are exactly what you'll find inside *An Illustrated Life*. This book offers a sneak peak into the wildly creative imaginations of 50 top illustrators, designers and artists. Included are sketchbook pages from R. Crumb, Chris Ware, James Jean, James Kochalka, and many others. In addition, author **Danny Gregory** has interviewed each artist and shares their thoughts on living the artistic life through journaling.

Watch artists—through words and images—record the world they see and craft the world as they want it to be. The pages of *An Illustrated Life* are sometimes startling, sometimes endearing, but always inspiring. Whether you're an illustrator, designer, or simply someone searching for inspiration, these pages will open a whole new world to you.

An Illustrated Life: Drawing Inspiration From The Private Sketchbooks Of Artists, Illustrators And Designers Details

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Bonny says

I wasn't going to buy or read this book. I thought that a compilation of several artist's work would be somewhat chaotic. I knew too, that not all the styles of journaling or sketching/drawing would appeal to me, and I thought there would be more of the unappealing genres that I could not justify getting the book. When favourable reviews started coming through from friends and artists on the internet I was impressed enough to want to look at the book and decide for myself. I had to wait until it arrived in our local store because I was hesitant to order it unseen online.

One quick look and a dip into a few pages had me convinced! I bought the book on Tuesday and finished it late on Wednesday!!! Yes, there are styles of artwork I don't identify with, but more that I do. I can at least appreciate the diversity and creativity of various artists. That in itself is educational and reason enough for buying the book.

The book is more cohesive than I thought it would be because Danny's style of his interviews add a continuity to each section of featured artists. He does a remarkable job of pulling it all together into a book that is enjoyable to read. The book is at times funny and sad and always revealing. My only gripe would be that some of the artists I know and admire didn't make it into the book. Maybe there is a possibility for a second volume?

Sherry (sethurner) says

I'm a big fan of Danny Gregory, a real cheerleader encouraging people to stop being so hard on themselves and get out there and sketch. His previous books, Creative License and Everyday Matters have inspired hundreds of folks. This book is different. It's a collection of sketchbooks from illustrators, everyone from R. Crumb to a French teacher in New Jersey. There is an interview and a selection of pages from that person's sketch books. It's a beautiful and inspiring collection. My only gripe is that some of the reproduced pages are very small, so small that I couldn't read the entries even with a magnifying glass. Luckily he provides web addresses for each artist, and on my computer screen I can see them all.

Mel says

It is always interesting to me to see how other artist's think and work and there is no better way to do that than to be allowed to peer into their sketch journals. This book is an invitation to do that. I just wish the artists that were chosen were a little more interesting. That being said, there are some real gems in here, like James Jean, Bryce Wymer and of course, Robert Crumb. I actually bought this and I almost wish I would have just gotten it from the library. It was definitely worth a peruse though and there really is not much reading involved but more looking. I am sure I will look through this again when I am feeling like I need some motivation and inspiration.

Douglas Gorney says

Hard to really ever say you've "Read" this kind of book, as it's the sort of thing you keep picking up, leafing through and finding new things in.

Maybe it has something to do with the coming of age of the graphic novel, maybe it's that it's a tactile, analog antidote to our digital moment, but the sketchbook has graduated from a preparatory medium to finished art object. There's even a museum devoted to them (the Sketchbook Project collection in the Brooklyn Art Library).

If like me you are enough of an artist or doodler to have a sketchbook, you might also be excited by the possibilities opened up by this graphic renaissance. While my sketchbooks are working tableaux for studies, paint color tests and warmups, I've always wanted them to be something more: journals, records of a place and time, maybe even narratives. Danny Gregory has done a great service by giving you a peek inside the, ah, *Private Sketchbooks Of Artists, Illustrators And Designers* to show you the many ways, well, some of the ways, anyways, that you can make your sketchbook into something special—something greater than the sum of its parts.

Gregory got artists from around the country to give him not only images from their sketchbooks, but carefully considered thoughts on how they approach their sketchbooks and illustrated journals. Massively mixed media, notation and journaling, collage, panel framing are just a few of the spaces in which they've showed you can play.

I also recommend "An Illustrated Journey: Inspiration From the Private Art Journals of Traveling Artists, Illustrators and Designers," which takes the sketchbook on the road. A real inspiration to keep a journal while traveling, and train the eye to see new places in a whole new way. "The Sketchbook Project World Tour," assembled from above-mentioned collection at the Brooklyn Art Library, has a more international (and non-professional-artist) focus, with amazing submissions from every continent except Antarctica.

Enid says

A great collection of pages from artists' sketchbooks. it was interesting to not only see some pages but to read about how and where they use their sketchbook. very nice!

Rachel Kopel says

I am a great fan of Danny Gregory, but I was somewhat disappointed by this eagerly awaited book. While there are some really lovely examples, such as those of Jane LaFazio and Gay Kreger, and a few others, mostly women, I found that too many of the sketchbooks were simply ugly juvenile cartoons, mostly by

men. I had the desire to use sticky notes and calculate how many were illustrations and how many these cartoons and how many by men and how many by women. And I decided I really didn't want to spend the time. It won't change the content of the book. I will go back and tag the ones I want to find easily again, but for now the book is on the shelf and not the coffee table.

Redshirt Knitting says

If you like looking through other artists' sketchbooks, then this is the book for you. 266 pages, 50 artists, sketches and text - wonderful!

I'm actually still working my way through it, because I can only pore over two or three artists at a time before I have to set the book down and think over it for a while.

Michelle Young says

I love seeing people's illustrated journals! My favorites are the ink sketches of cityscapes with splashes of watercolor. Also the ones that look like they're from children's picture books. Wish I could draw like that...

Splendy says

If I were smart, I would start a business making spiral-bound sketchbooks with high-quality paper for artists. A frequent complaint among artists in this book is that it's impossible to find really good, useful sketchbooks. Many make their own by selecting paper and having them custom bound. There's goldmine here, but I'm just too lazy to dig it.

The sketchbooks in *An Illustrated Life* are gorgeous, inviting, varied and worthwhile. The interviews, however, are not entirely impressive. They definitely take a backseat in comparison to the visual content. Most of the stories focus on the use of sketchbooks in artists personal and professional lives, and how each artist got started in drawing. The problem is, they all pretty much say the same thing. And each artist shares their favorite tools: namedropping pens, sketchbooks and paper manufacturers is borderline advertising and takes the focus away from the beauty and inspiration of creative work. Just because you own a fancy pen doesn't mean you're able to create anything interesting.

Some of my favorite artists in the book are Christoph Mueller, Maha Shivarathri, and Gay Kraeger. More famous artist like R. Crumb and Stefan Sagmeister are featured too.

Once in a while, artists offer advice, but the real inspiration is in the images. And even though there is room for improvement in the book's content, it didn't stop me from renewing it twice and then returning it late to the library! Give yourself some time to pour over the hundreds of illustrations in these amazing sketchbooks.

M says

I wonderful little book about the sketchbooks of artists and writers many of us love. It's fatal flaw however is the lack of humility it gives the subject matter as the author treats each subject as if they sketchbooks are sacred texts. The reality that most won't admit is that these works were created to show people, and those that weren't won't be seen. Artists are fickle and vain and very strategic in the way they let people view their work especially their notebooks. Where this book succeeds it also fails perpetuating the myth that artists only ever produce good work.

Will Simpson says

This book is great. The reason I rated it a 4 rather then a 5 is because it seemed full of professional designers who were in a ways showing off. All the jounalers seemed to responding to a questionnaire in the text which got old and predictable. A couple of nuggets I got were, alternative styles of drawing are from reality and from imagination. One requires drawing in public, in the wild and the other is more private and is usually done in the studio. Cartooning or telling a story in frames is an technique to explore. How a page is filled effects the work. Some fill the entire page with a single drawing and some leave lots of white space. A couple of people used the simplest of ballpoint pens, pens swiped from the bank or doctors office and 2H pencils.

I guess I should have known that this book was full of professionals by the subtitle "Drawing Inspiration From The Private Sketchbooks Of Artists, Illustrators And Designers".

Kay says

I've been listening to Danny's podcast, in which he interviews different artists featured in this book. It's got me very excited for the book's publication.

David Schaafsma says

Danny Gregory curated this collection of excerpts from various artists' journals, artists from all over the world. We got insights into the artists as they share their art, their sketches, their works in progress, their thinking on the page in visual form. So everyone does it differently, of course. It's mixed media, it's collage, it's visual playground. Oh, and it's from these artists on the road, too, done while traveling, so it's a view of places, too, on how to convery their experience of places. This is based on an exhibition at the Brooklyn Art Library. Gorgeous and inspirational. I used it for my comics class, and they loved it.

Chris says

3.5 stars. Good look at the journals/sketchbooks of 50 different artistically minded people, including (in their own words) how long they've been keeping a journal, why they keep up the habit, and their preferred

materials.

Luis Molina says

This book is not good really boring for me

R.M. says

I bought An Illustrated Life initially thinking I was going to plow right through. To me, it's much better in small doses. With as many varying personalities, ideas and "art," it was a little daunting to continually read for longer than 15 minutes. The more I read at one sitting the more the people in the book would blend into one another. I guess I have a really short attention span. Either that, or can't handle the idea of being jolted from one artist to the next. Once I started to get into an artist, it was over.

The features ranged from anywhere to somewhat boring to downright amusing. Robert Crumb's was great with his unabashed straight-up honesty (at least I think he was being honest). The nice thing about featuring so many artists is that if you didn't like one you could move right onto the next.

I wish the format was a little larger so the images and text could be easier to view and read. Having said this I still think it's pretty well executed and presents the artists in a very attractive manner. I think it's a great coffee table book to pick up every now and again. It would certainly make a great gift to aspiring artists or to anyone who enjoys art or its process.

Raychel says

This book is very inspiring. It is true that it is not purely a Danny Gregory book, but as long as you don't go into the book thinking it is going to be purely Danny, it's a wonderful read. I loved having a book full of all these artists and pages of their sketchbooks. I also like that we get to read the artists' thoughts and ideas about their own art and sketchbooks.

I like to flip through this book and read in small sections. I did read the whole thing though, but in small segments so I could focus on just one artist and their work at a time.

I loved reading this, especially while I was in a drawing class. It helped keep me focused sometimes and it helped me remember that not every drawing is going to be amazing.

Adriana says

It's interesting to see how each artist views the sketchbook as a medium. The texts are explanations by each artist of how they work and why they keep a sketchbook. Some aren't that interesting, but it works as a glimpse into a wide array of creative minds.

It made me want to start my own sketchbook.

Becca says

It's a relief that even many of these very talented artists are afraid of a blank page!

kimberly says

Not a book to pick up and read, but more for perusing, to read an interview at a time. A good source of inspiration, especially for those who like to peek into the more secret lives of artists.

A bit of a downer in a sense that almost all of these sketchbooks are amazing on their own - seems that many artists suffer from a perfectionist predilection for making everything look good all the time. It was refreshing to see the few sketchbooks that were kind of crappy (LIKE MINE).
