

Allow Yourself What Brings You Joy



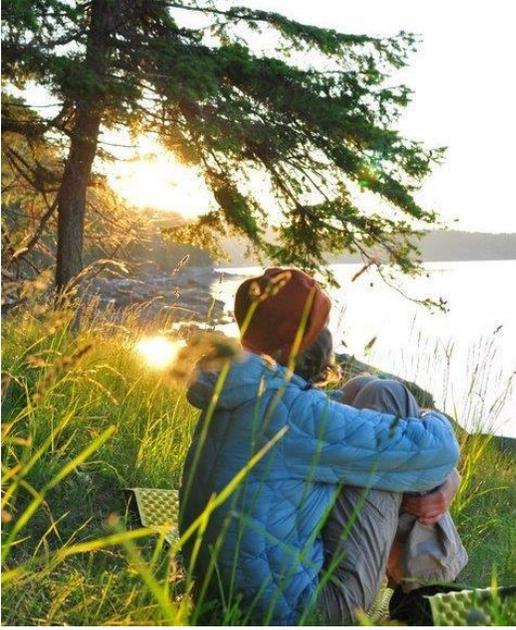
On the weekend, I did a little spring cleaning. I tried the “KonMari” method: holding every single item and asking ‘does this bring me joy?’

This was both easier and much harder than I thought.

I started with my bookshelf. It was easy at first, choosing the books I love. Quickly, though, I got stuck. I’d hold a book in my hand and WANT it to bring me joy – but no. I learned that nearly two-thirds of my books are guilt-inducing bricks, mostly acquired in the hopes that owning them would make me smarter or more employable or otherwise more impressive. Ouch.

I really did try to read those books. In the end I couldn’t force it. So I’ve finally given myself permission to let them go.

Now, when I look at my bookshelf, it almost hums with positive energy – it is a true reflection of my spirit.



Wait a minute, isn't this an art blog?

Here's the connection. For a long time, I tried to be an oil painter. I really tried. I read blogs and books about painting. I made 1200 swatches of practice colour mixes. I painted still life and landscape. I thought a "real artist" paints. After all, the most beautiful, prestigious and pricey works in my favourite galleries were all oil paintings.

Despite my efforts, I could not make myself love it. I resented cleaning my brushes and could hardly force myself into my workspace.

One day, on a whim, I bought some rubber, a cheap carving tool, and some black ink. I came home and carved a little silhouette of a spruce tree.

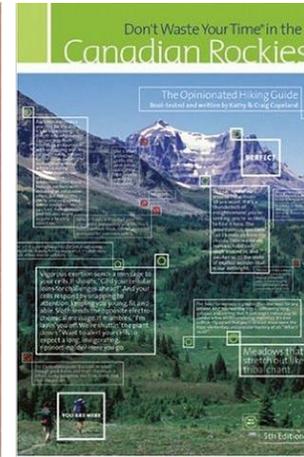
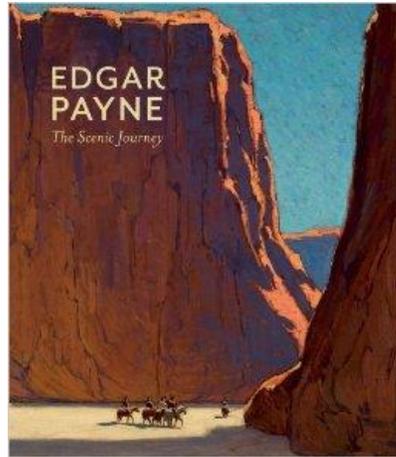
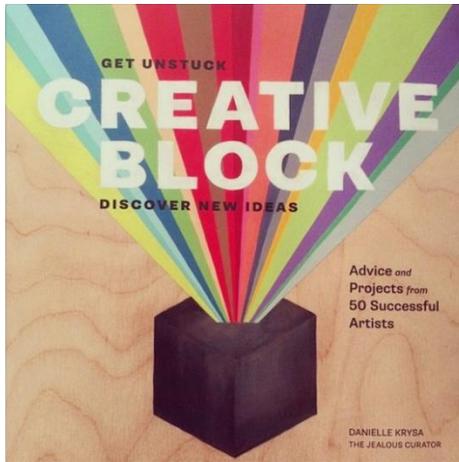
This felt different. It felt resonant and alive. There was something joyful about moving the carving tool carefully through butter-soft rubber, even before the thrill of seeing the final print. So I let myself love it and (eventually) made peace with giving away most of my paints.

I am finally making things that I love, and finding deep happiness through the whole process. I rarely have to force myself into the studio anymore – much more often, I go to sleep wishing the night was just a little longer.

Seeking joy has created its own positive momentum in my artistic life. By accepting where my heart led and avoiding the rabbit holes of "should" and "must", more room has been created for joy to come swirling in.

What about you? What are you doing because you think you should? What joy are you not allowing yourself?

How much more beautiful and alive could you feel if you let that source of joy in?



If you're curious, here's a selection of those that made the "love" list:

- [A Writer's San Francisco](#) – Eric Maisel, illustrated by Paul Madonna
- [Edgar Payne, The Scenic Journey](#) – Scott Shields, Patricia Trenton
- [Sierra High Route](#) – Steve Roper
- [William S. Rice, Art & Life](#) – Ellen Treseder Sexauer
- [Creative Block](#) – Danielle Krysa
- [The Moonlight Chronicles, A Wandering Artist's Journals](#) – Dan Price
- [Hyperbole and a Half](#) – Allie Brosh
- [Don't Waste Your Time in the Canadian Rockies](#) – Craig and Kathy Copeland

Thank you for reading, and may all that you own bring you pleasure and joy!

Sophie