

SKETCHBOOK ADVENTURES

Prompt 26: Collaboration – Artful connection with friends

A few times a year my husband and I rent a cabin on the river. Even though it's only a 20-minute drive from our house and we're usually only there for a night or two, I feel like I'm officially on vacation the second I walk into the cabin. The cabins are old, with chipping paint, bad art and ugly bedspreads, but I don't care. We spend most of our time on the small wooden deck with an awesome view of redwoods and the river. I always bring my sketchbook and relish in every moment on that patio, drawing, drinking wine and taking in the view. The last time we were there, I thought about the notion of active vs. passive fun that I'd read about in Gretchen Rubin's book *The Happiness Project*. Active fun is the kind of fun you have when you're doing something like playing a game or a sport. Passive fun is the kind of fun you have when you're less engaged but still doing something, like watching television or a movie.

My husband and I used to have lots of active fun together. When we first met we played guitar and wrote songs together several times a week, but it had been a while. We didn't have our guitars with us at the river but I remembered this exercise I did with a few other artists when I lived in San Francisco. We'd take a blank canvas and each work on it on for 15 minutes and then pass it to the next person. There were no rules. You could paint over or add anything to what the person before had done. You could use any colors or imagery and there was no theme to the painting. I learned a lot about letting go of the idea I had in my mind for how the painting would turn out when we did this. I also realized how awesome and inspiring it was to have someone else's creativity influence your work.

With all of that in mind I asked my husband if he wanted to try collaborating on a page in my sketchbook. This time we stuck to a theme, our trip to the river. Since the page was so much smaller than the canvas, we each took 5 minutes with it then passed it to the other person. I got a little annoyed when he added things that I felt didn't fit with the aesthetic I was going for BUT I had to let it go. In the end, we had a good time and ended up with something we'd created together.

For this prompt you can work with a friend on a page in person or if that's not an option you can send the page back and forth in the mail. If you want, set a time limit and rules around theme, color, materials, etc. When it's finished, you can make a photocopy so you can each have one and then paste it into your sketchbook.

*When I told a friend about this prompt she mentioned that it was similar to an old surrealist parlor game called *Exquisite Corpse*. I hadn't heard of it before but here's a bit about it if you want to check it out.

