

Dina Brodsky on Sketchbooks and Instagram

Hello and welcome to Down To Art. I'm your host Kristy Gordon, and today I'm joined by Dina Brodsky, an amazing artist and also an Instagram wizard. So welcome Dina. It's so good to have you, Christie. Thank you so much for inviting me. Hmm. It's so good to have you. And so, Dina Brodsky is a contemporary realist, miniaturist painter and curator. She was educated at the University of Massachusetts and the New York Academy of Art where she received her mfa. She lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts. So yeah, I thought maybe we could just briefly start with like a little bit of biographical information, like where you grew up, where you got your education, and just some of the basics.

I grew up five minutes away from where, where, where, where, I'm recording this right now. I grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts. So I was born in Belarus and we, my family and I left as kind of probably the last wave of Eastern European refugees to get out of the Soviet Union before it collapsed the, and then we ended up in Brookline, which at that point I believe it had a lot of rent control housing where every single Russian immigrant moved, you know, moved into. And then my family just stuck around. Oh, that's interesting. And then I know you like went to the New York Academy of Art for your mfa, and then you got your, your bf, was it a BFA at the University of Massachusetts?

Yeah, Yeah, yeah. And I forget, when did you graduate from the academy? The New York Academy of Art? 2006. Oh my god. It was forever ago. Well, I know time's like, totally playing. Yeah. Well, yeah. And I just like, love your, your paintings. You have like a few different bodies of work and you're like,

you know, miniature oil paintings. I'm really struck by like the, just the magic of the landscapes and the birds and the trees. And I was reading like a bit about what you are writing about them too, like the symbiosis of nature. Do you wanna talk just a little bit about what you're trying to capture when you're like selecting a landscape or something to paint?

You know, honestly, I believe I, the, like, I believe whatever is written out there is mostly written by, by other people. Hmm. Some of the stuff on my website, which, which I couldn't handle writing myself that. So the, so yeah, honestly, like I, I guess by different bodies of work all means is that I'm kind of all over the place that,

so I'm simultaneously all over the place. I want to paint everything. I want to use every single medium. But everything I do takes me a long time. And I feel like each body of work never quite gets finished. So, so I just keep going like, like I think the tree series, I started when, I believe I started when I was pregnant with my,

my first boy. And it was supposed to be, I mean, I stopped oil painting because I was pregnant and I was becoming progressively less and less mobile and couldn't, you know, bicycle and sleep intense in foreign countries, which is what I was doing before that. So I just drew trees and at first I drew the trees immediately around me. And then once,

once he was born, I drew trees from photographs of people on Instagram sent me because I felt like I was completely housebound. The, and, and then in, and then theoretically I finished the series. It was supposed to be 126 drawings that were kind of commemorating the first year of his life, but I never really finished drawing trees, so I still do it.

And then the miniatures were kind of the same saying there was supposed to be enough for one show and that was supposed to be it. And then there was a second show and I'm still doing them.

So I keep picking up new things without ever actually finishing any given series. I don't know if that makes sense. No, that like totally makes sense.

And then like I, in your sketchbooks too, you're able to kind of like explore a lot of different subjects and just like play around with like all of your ideas. I like that like, aspect of exploration to your work and your sketchbooks are so gorgeous. How did the sketchbooks get started? Like when did you start doing them? So Christie, by the way,

your sketchbooks are absolutely beautiful also, So, Aw, well you're totally the inspiration behind me starting them. Yes. But you know, yours doesn't look like mine and it looks stunning. Like, and I was looking at it the other day on Instagram and being like, oh my God, there's so much like cool idiosyncratic stuff in here. Aww. So I,

that's so sweet. Next time I see you, I would love to see that in person. Oh, and I'm dying to see your sketchbook. Like I, so like the one you're working on, it's like a treasure, it's so gorgeous.

Oh yeah. Well I think I just finished that one and started a new one and it doesn't have anything.

And the stuff That ah, yes, The stuff it does have, I feel like is clumsy and awkward. I highly doubt that. But to answer your question, I actually remember exactly what, like, I remember like two a day when I started keeping a sketchbook. But so I, so I was always a keeper of journals.

Like I always wrote,

you know, just as like a, as a child basically. Like I think I started at 13, which seemed really adult back then, but, and then I continued all through, well, you know, all, all through high school and it was just kind of where I would resolve the many dramatic things that were happening in my head of them.

And I started keeping a sketchbook. It was my second semester at university and it was just this after a week where nothing I was doing in the studio. I was in a foundations program and I took it very, very seriously. And I was competitive and a perfectionist and like all of the things that I feel like you get better at letting go of as an adult,

but, you know, met her a lot that, you know, at, at, at, at that age. And so I think I would get legitimately upset when my paintings weren't going according to plan. And I started talking to the model for, for that class. She, she was actually the model for all my classes. I was painting her and drawing her and sculpting her and,

you know, nothing was going well. And I, I was apologizing to her for, you know, for that. And she was like, you know, why don't you just like relax a little bit? And she's like, you know, I got

these two sketchbooks and she gave me one. She's like, why don't you just try, you know, just drawing in your sketchbook for a weekend because that way there'll be no pressure to make something finished and you won't be so frustrated. And I did, and I didn't make anything finished and I didn't make anything particularly good, but it took some pressure off and I just spent a

weekend, it was May, I was wandering around the university campus, you know,

drawing stuff and I, I guess I just never stopped. Aw. It's like so sweet to hear about that. Like yeah, just finding some way to take the pressure off and just like sort of have a chance to like, explore whatever we want. And I don't know, I know you say it wasn't like that amazing, but it's hard to imagine cuz your sketchbooks are absolutely utterly amazing now.

But you, you know, Cause we change the sketchbook class. I dug up that first sketchbook to show my students. Oh, really? Yeah. And it's legitimately very, very bad. You know? I mean, totally. Like we can, we can improve, right? Yeah. There's really nowhere I have to go but up. Ah, yeah.

And, and like, but you were still giving yourself permission to just do it like all the time, like for fun. And I love that. What, what sort of like, explorations, I don't know, sometimes it's hard to

even like remember or put your words on it, but can you think of anything specific about like places where you found like experimentation in your sketchbooks?

I know with gang and things like that? Experimentation or kind of adventures because I, I, I feel like, you know, I got into sketchbooks. Like I, I started keeping them back then, but then I, you know, I started traveling and for a while I was, I don't know, I was hitchhiking a lot. I covered a lot of ground.

I dunno, not necessarily in a good way, but I covered a lot of ground. And as, and then I started taking these long distance cycling trips and that was kind of what I would do when I wasn't bicycling or looking for a place to sleep in the forest. So, so I remember those very, very clearly. And I think the sketchbooks kind of helped me,

you know, it helped me remember what was going on and it also kind of gave a structure to my day in a way that I probably wouldn't have had if I was just bicycling across the country where I didn't really know the language. I, I can totally see that and it's like, oh, that like, sounds so, like, such an amazing experience.

And just because you were pretty like solo for a lot of your trips too, so it's just like as, as far as I remember, tell me if I'm wrong, but, so it's just like really introspective and then with the sketchbook and the journaling too, like, that sounds so powerful. I Was solo for almost all my trips. I, I just recently took my first trip,

I think ever with, with a person was was a person that I met online. No way. It was with this amazing mini, her name is Lorraine Luz for, I don't know, those of cool, Oh, Into mini and don't know her work yet. You, you should, she's wonderful. But I think I interviewed her for my podcast and I was like,

this is exactly my kind of person. And we started talking about something totally different and very practical. And what that conversation turned into was why don't we meet up in Rome in like three weeks and, you know, like, like, and explore and then paint a bunch of miniatures of Rome. Wow. That sounds amazing. And I love that you like,

met her online too and just found like a connection And she was like every bit of school as as I imagined her. No, That, that's really cool. Yeah, I'm just, oh, and then, because your sketchbooks too have like a lot of words. And actually I have a question I posted on Instagram like that I was gonna have you on my podcast and got a few questions for you.

But while we're on the sketchbook topic Yeah. Someone was wondering, let me just find the exact question here. Yeah. What, what do you write about in your sketchbooks if you, if I get the sense that it's a bit like a journal, but so if it's not too private and, and do you write first and then draw later or the opposite?

No, I draw and then like a few days or weeks or months later, I, I write, oh, kind of a record drawing. And then I sometimes put ink on it and sometimes, you know, and then I eventually add color. But that's that whole, like, it never happens at the same time. So the question I get on Instagram,

by the way is, is are those real words or is it just squiggles? And I am actually very, very impressed by the facts that someone thinks that I would just write gibberish for like, like that, that seems like so much work. Totally. Like really specific gibberish. Well, like, in a way it would be easier to, to,

you know, like write something real than to write gibberish for, you know, the, for that whole amount of time. So not gibberish. It is my journal. So some of the time I just sort of write about whatever's going on in my life. Sometimes it's whatever's going on in my head, the stuff that's going on in my head. I never,

ever reread. Like I tend to be mortified when I, you know, go back to them and I'm like, God, that's what I was worried about. So it's terrible that, but, but sometimes, you know, if I'm really sad or overwhelmed, I write about that and it tends to kind of organize the world around me in a way that helps me work through it.

Totally. And if, you know, if I'm really happy then I'll write just to kind of, just to catch the moment. Just, just because I don't know, we have all these moments in a day and a week where we're happier sometimes even like euphoric to be alive and then we just forget about it the next time we get frustrated with something them.

So yeah. Yeah, yeah. Just, just that though, sometimes I write really bad poetry That that's cool. And yeah, I think that's like so powerful that you, I mean, I journal too, but it's, yeah, it feels so personal when I journal that it would like scare me to dance, to write it in my, but, and, And, and the reason no one understands it is because it's in Russian cursive and, and it's very, and my handwriting is very, very tiny. That yeah, that I love that. Like, I love that it's actually very personal and very deep and then that you have it like it's, you know, not totally readable for like most people or whatever.

Imagine maybe someone who speaks Russian might be able to read it, but not too many people around here anyways can read it. Isn't that like Leonardo da Vinci writing backwards? Is, is that who it was? Yes, yes. So I have my own Leonardo da Vinci code and generally nobody would bother deciphering, you know, a a anything I wrote.

But at some point I got, it's kind of embarrassing, but I, I played with TikTok for long enough to figure out the algorithm there. Yep. And, and I made my first TikTok post, so that went viral. And because it went viral, it got, you know, I guess when things go viral there, they really get shown to a ton of people.

Yeah. And some of those people were Russian or in like, oh, countries and there was this group of them that kind of like got together and tried to dec decide words and they actually got some of them and it was like, oh my, so me talking about my relationship with my ex-husband and I was like, no, no, That's like such a surprise Public thinking, no, nobody would care enough to do this. Oh, that's like very like, interesting that it's like cute that that happened on TikTok. Yeah. And your TikTok account's like looking really good. I've noticed. How, how do you balance, cuz you're like a total like Instagram and TikTok wizard, how do you balance like the introspection of your practice with the like need to like make, you know, short little videos for these social media platforms? I mean, TikTok I play with, so I don't feel anything about it. I'm just trying, sort of trying to figure out what makes a tick. Got this, yeah. Terrible pun. But the Instagram I has been kind of career-wise has been a total game changer. And it is what it's currently requiring amongst the many other new things that it's requiring of people is short.

You know, like short catchy videos, you know, I think like, you know, it is, I actually really enjoy making them so there's no, you know, like there's keeping the sketchbooks, which are one part of my life, which I really kind of cherish. And then there's kind of documenting my work in a way that works with these platforms and I don't mind doing it.

And then when it comes time to put the stuff together, I legitimately enjoy putting it together. So I, I I don't feel, Yeah, I don't feel much of a disconnect to them. Yeah, that makes sense to me. And cuz it's not that much like, it's just short little videos and so you just like pull out your phone record like a few seconds here and there or whatever.

And, and then you can still kind of go inward as you do your art. Like Yeah, I tend not to record while drawing because I feel like I want my full attention, but like, I won't be in the place that I'm in the place sediment and not seeing it through, it's a lens of my phone. Yeah. Like, like I, I guess I record things while drawing. If I'm doing, I, I, I don't know, like I've done some brand collaborations and I'll, I'll record for that, but if I'm just drawing for myself, I don't want the phone anywhere near me actually when I'm starting a painting, I tend to also not want the phone anywhere near me, but there's some things that are,

you're right, more exploratory and less, you know, like I'm, you know, like, like, like just playing with color and I totally don't, don't mind recording, like recording at that moment because I feel like there's, you know, like I, I feel like it's not like I'm gonna mess up the perspective. I might get the color wrong,

but then color is easier and you can always bring it back though That Yeah, that's smart. And I mean, it looks good on Instagram too, like the color moments or whatever. I like how you kind of have like a nice drawing and then you kind of drip some ink on and, and it like, it just looks really cool. But that's really smart that you've kind of figured out where in your, in your practice you like, don't wanna be having your phone around or whatever. And then where, where you do, I think that like works really well. I don't have a phone that doesn't have a sim card in it. And so I have have like a very, very old phone I use as a phone and then at some point I got a you or one and I never switched the sim cards.

So I just basically just have the thing that connects to wifi but doesn't have like email or, you know, social media. Yeah. Oh, smart Distractions. So it'll play music or, and it'll play audiobooks and it'll take photos and, and that's it. So it's like, it's not like picking up the phone like the real phone, which has just like these rules of smart of distraction.

Oh that's like really smart. Yeah, I have, I have one of those too, but I actually haven't used it for that purpose. That's really smart. Cuz if it doesn't have the internet, it's not got such a like, oh pull. It's not a problem if it doesn't. Yeah. It's just like a camera. Yeah, that's, that's Interesting and cheap than buying a really nice camera.

And the camera phones are really nice these days. Oh, totally. They're like so good. They actually seem to adjust color like almost better than some cameras. Like they pick up colors better. I don't know. They, they have Professional photographers listening to this because z Zay will come strang us in their sleep. Yeah, you're right. Yeah. I guess we like touched a little bit on Instagram.

Do you have any tips for artists who are struggling with the new algorithm, Which is everyone everyone's struggling with? Yeah. And it's because the new algorithm is, it's hard. Like, and I never actually felt this way about any of the previous incarnations of it, but they added a bunch of different parameters, so it's still manageable. The upside is you still don't need to like, pay for ads or pay for followers. In fact, don't do that. That's my first step. It's your account. Don't, don't, don't pay for stu. You know, like, like other than influencer marketing, which also became much harder. Yeah. But, But, but yeah, don't, you know, pay for reach the, it's, it's not gonna get you anywhere. So the upside is it's still manageable. The downside is that they seem to be scrambling, I think to basically prevent, you know, their target demographic from jumping to TikTok. Yeah. The target demographic is not professional artists and it's not galleries and it's not curators, it's not any of the people that, you know, like would, would, you know, we think of as associated with our career as an artist. It's, you know, very young kids. It's like 12 to 15 year olds because they're leaving for TikTok in droves and they're not the peoples that will buy art, show art, et cetera. But they are, they're what's

driving the algorithm and, and they're actually what Instagram is adopting that algorithm towards.

Yeah. The, The, so one tip has is God, if you have a 12 year old at home, just let them make all of your videos. Yeah. That, that's good. I wish I had one of those Because I feel like they all understand it intuitively, but upside to all this is actually, if you so listen to what, you know, algorithm is an ai listen to what it's telling you, right? Like, so every time your post, you know, completely flopped, right. Your post, your reel, whatever it is. So a, you do have to learn how to make reels, right? Oh yeah, Yeah. That's, that's like the first thing. Like, like I feel like a year ago you could maybe sort of get by without them and now Instagram is, it's trying to tell you something, right? Like the a you know, say AI is trying to communicate with you. And so when your post flops, what it's trying to tell you is the things that worked very well two years ago and doesn't work anymore.

Like it's because it's not what, you know, like it's, it's not what the AI wants, it wants something else. So listen to what it's actually saying. That's What The, like, if you want to sort of, oh God, I sound like such a, you know, dork. The No. Oh, I love it. I I love this stuff actually.

I think it's interesting. So I, I teach, I teach this class. Yeah. Oh, everyone should take your class. You've helped. So artists, The reason I brought it up is when you took it, it was like three hours long. Now it's like five hours long because the algorithm keeps evolving. So maybe you guys shouldn't Wow. Really, really long now that, but I caught myself the other day like, like trying to explain all this to people and just being like, oh my god, I sound like one of these like sci-fi books. That's also me. I dunno. For me, I just love it. I'm like interested genuinely, kinda like you were talking about how you like making the videos.

I do too. But I also like trying to figure out this Instagram like figure it out. I'm trying to figure it out. So, so it's communicating with you, you're communicating with it by, you're making posts, that's your way of ba basically like communicating with algorithm and then it's talking back and talking back by being like, okay, like we're gonna show this to a ton of people or almost no people at all.

Yep. That's what happens. Yeah, that's a good way of looking at it, that it's talking to us though. It's smart. So the main thing that changed actually is that even like, I don't know, a year ago, a few months ago, Instagram, like when you made a post, Instagram would show it to a group of like between seven and 10% of the people who are following you.

Oh. And based on their reaction, they would either show it to more people or, you know, like, like or kind of buried in the feed. Right. And now I think they changed that number from about 10% to about 1%. So, whoa, it's actually showing it to a teeny tiny target group, and based on how that teeny tiny group reacts,

it'll kind of open up the funnel and show it to more people. Oh wow. I didn't realize that at all.

That is interesting. I really only noticed that it doesn't seem at all to like, it. If I repost the same video, like I used to pretty much be, it'd be fine if I like made a video, posted it, and like a couple weeks later posted it again, you know? But now it absolutely hates that. Yeah. Yeah. So, so that's one of the parameters, the changed basically doesn't want the say, you know, like, so I think the way the TikTok algorithm works is that the same video won't, you know, they're trying to make sure people are only seeing original content.

Yeah. So, so the same video won't come up on, you know, any, any users feed more than once. So someone reposted it, even if you reposted your, you know, your, your own video. They don't

want, they basically don't want people getting bored. Now I think Instagram is kind of leaning into the same thing though.

Yeah. That, that was like the main thing that I noticed in that like, sucks. But it's interesting to like kind of know more about how Yeah. Instagram's trying to kind of mold itself to be a bit more like TikTok. Yeah. Well I, you know, I, I have very mixed feelings about it and partially it's because we, you know,

we were trained, me and you and presumably a lot of the people listening, we were trained. So I like reels. I like using them. They're fun. But we were trained to be artists and sculptors and, you know, videography, you know, like the, like, you know, like who made real movies and photographers and all stuff.

And now it's basically demanding that we become creators of short form video. Like it's, it, it, it's totally forcing everyone to pick up a new skill That Yeah, that's totally true. Yeah. That's what it feels like is like learning a new art form it. Like, luckily I'm kind of into it, but, but I know some artists are not feeling it.

People are really, really hate it. Yeah. Yeah. I think it like, I don't know, I think it gets more fun once you kind of figure out how to do it in a way that's not like totally invasive to your practice And it doesn't feel like it's taking up a huge amount of time or killing your soul. Yeah, yeah.

Totally.

So, So, so, so basically the thing that I tell my, you're not gonna get better at this by, it's, it's not like running it or the more you run, you know, the better you're gonna get it running. It's like you need to understand it, but after that you don't actually need to be on Instagram all the time and you,

you definitely, you don't, like, you need to get how it works and after that, the less time you spend on Instagram probably is a better off everyone is. Totally, yeah. I think, I mean that's still my goal too. It's not like totally achieved yet, but my goal is to like, do it, post it, get off, and then like respond to comments the next day or something. Ye yes, yes. And you're right, not totally achieved Ether, but I have this magic app that turns off, you know, like, like turns off my internet on the phone that actually has, you know, has internet basically says that I leave things alone. Oh, that's great.

What app is that? That's really useful. It's called Opal. Oh, I might check that out. I had a friend actually put parental controls on my phone to lock me out of certain apps after like 15 minutes. Yeah, that's great. Yeah, it was pretty good, but it actually had a little bit of glitches that was like making it kind of difficult.

Yeah. So sometimes you actually need it, but like no one needs, you know how like the, like like the iPhone tracks your screen time? Yeah, At some point, you know, it told me that I was spending like something like four or five hours a day, you know, doing stuff on my phone and you know, part of it was like listening to audiobooks counts as doing stuff on your phone, right? Yeah, yeah. Part of it was driving, but part of it's like, whatever I'm doing on it, I'm sure I'm not working that whole time. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Totally. When my friend like sent the like 15 minute limit on Instagram on my phone, I was just like kind of shocked at how quickly that would come in to think of how many,

how much longer I used to like spend on it. Yeah. Let's see, I think we have a couple other questions. Oh, this is actually a really good one. Like in terms of your supplies, like what are some of your go-to supplies? Actually the question is what are your go-to supplies for teaching? But I would actually also like to ask more about your sketchbook supplies.

So let's do both. What are, what the question from Debbie Laney Macal is, what are your go-to supplies for teaching? You know, God, I, I teach online these days so that like I am, I only teach two classes, right? I teach this Instagram for artist class, which takes forever and it's like pretty dry and analytical, but I guess practical.

And then I've been teaching the sketchbook class re recently, which I abso, which is much less dry, but on the other hand, I'm much less certain and I feel like I'm still, I'm learning along with my students and from my students and you know, like, like sketchbooks are a much less specific thing, right. There's no algorithm to Yeah.

To that. But because I teach online, I put together, I probably spent about two years putting together the, the curriculum for this sketchbook class that, so I obviously overthink it, but then I just, you know, I teach it online. So I guess my, my teaching supply is really the computer.

Right? Your sketchbook class looks amazing.

I was just reading about it actually, and I like, love how you've laid it out. It like sounds super good. I wanted to, I mean it seems so valuable. You Have a beautiful sketchbook. I love teaching it, but also putting it together was probably the most fun I've had. Like all of this That's so, well also I had covid all winter,

so like I didn't have, like, I didn't have all that much fun and the bar was a little bit, whoa. But that being said, getting to go into rabbit holes of like historical sketchbooks, contemporary sketchbook psychology, how to maintain, how to like start a habit and maintain a habit so it sticks. Oh, I loved all of this so much.

Yeah, that is fascinating. So you kind of look at some like sketchbooks from history and stuff too in your class. So Yes, so the class is mostly about starting a habit and making it stick. And then I just, people, because you can't really, you know, it's a month long class and it's only three sessions and so you can't teach someone how to draw Right.

And in a month, but you can kind of create the foundation of a habit and then getting better at drawing if feel like it's just something that happens. It's a byproduct Totally. Of having a habit rather, like, rather, yeah. It's not even like it's a goal. The goal is just people do it. I feel like it makes, I obviously drank my own Kool-aid with this class.

I think keeping a sketchbook will like solve everyone's life. Oh, I've like totally convinced I need to get back to my sketchbook. I had so much fun when I was doing it and I haven't done too much of it for a little while, but it was exactly like you described just like a place to try out ideas. Like, you know, just like actually experiment without like so much pressure and it was so freeing and then it like fed into my work,

you know, giving me ideas. I don't know, it was like so fruitful. I need to get back to it. I think I just realized it because I've had moments in my life where I haven't kept a sketchbook and I think I just like my myself, like it's the first thing that you let go of when life gets busy because it's not lucrative.

You generally like, you know, you're not gonna exhibit it in a gallery, you're not gonna sell it. It's something that you're doing just for yourself. And I feel like you yeah. Let go of those things first. Sure. And then, because like, well it's not making any money and it's not, you know, like, like directly,

you know, like Yeah. Like There's nothing straightforward about it. But I find that I like myself as a human being and I function a lot better in every part of life when I have. Yeah. You Know? Yeah, me too. And that's true. I think it's also because it's not gonna be like for sale or something that you can like really go into like exploration and just have some freedom.

Like in it it, cuz you're like, well I could like definitely just try this out. Like it's really not a big deal, you know, like Yeah. And, and sometimes you sell your prints of your sketchbook and stuff though too, right? Like that's, You know, I don't, I did for a bit and I don't anymore. Oh, okay. Oh yeah. Have you ever exhibited your sketchbooks that would make an amazing show? Like somehow with the page open from each one or something? I, no, I've exhibited them like well in shows that I would put together myself because that's the only place where I really have control over, you know, so, but I've curated shows where I would, you know, so it's a, having already sketchbook would be a component. And then my favorite show that I ever put together was actually something I did that was just artist sketchbooks. And I don't think it's gonna happen again because it didn't make any money because you know, for All Right, right, right. Yeah. But, but, but so we would give people kind of surgical gloves pre covid, right? We'd give people white gloves and gallery packed and people could just go through them and I think textbook and there'd be like clusters of people around each one. Aw, That sounds like so much Fun around. And I, it was great. And people would like, it was like exactly what I've always wanted from putting a show together. People would like give each, you know, I saw people like passing a sketchbook around exchanging contact information, like whipping out their own sketchbooks. Oh. So That sounds actually so fun. I wish I saw that, that like, I would love to like flip through all those sketchbooks. Well if I ever do it again, I'll include your sketchbook And Ooh, that would be amazing.

That would be amazing. And yeah, and I guess like, as far as the questions about supplies, I mean it was really, it's more my question I guess because I've gotten to paint with you and I'm like, I was kind of immediately intrigued by the specific supplies you're working cuz you're actually using like a very nice guestbook, which is handmade by by someone.

Do you wanna tell us about the, you know, the sketchbook itself that you have found that you like a lot? Yes, because it's magical. It is magical Because I think I've that because I've been looking for the perfect sketchbook for, I don't know, since like 20 years now. And, and I thought I've come, you know, I've come clo like I,

I try once and I try another, there's a lot of sketchbooks that are pretty good and they're not very expensive and I've tried them all. And then I tried this one and it's like the Cadillac of sketchbooks. Like I I, or roll Rolls Royce some, I don't know, some, I dunno, some fancy it Is Where if there's no company,

there's one gentleman in the UK that makes them and he sells them on Etsy. His name is Will j Bailey. And so he uses Fabriio paper, which, you know, 300 GSM hot press. So it's basically, it's this beautiful paper that's smooth enough to draw on with like, you know, a ball point or graphite and rough enough like, like,

like basically the heavy enough weight to hold almost any amount of water media. It's like amazing. It's like the perfect paper. And you saved me a lot of time cuz I like just talked to you about sketchbooks and just bought that one. And I'm like, this is the most amazing sketchbook giver. I, I know. I feel very like, so,

so I've been teaching and I started off with, you don't need, you know, I have this long list of supplies. You don't need this long, you know, long. Yeah, yeah. Get a sketchbook that you love and a pen and a little cheap watercolor set and you're fine. And then I'm like, but It's worth it. Like it's really worth it To start a sketchbook.

You don't have to get this expensive handmade sketchbook from, you know, by this one guy in England, but get a sketchbook that you love because I feel like you don't have a sketchbook that

you love. You're, you're like, you're gonna drop the habit and Yeah. And, and, and for god's sake don't use moleskins. I, it's very controversial thing and I, I I see moleskins are terrible. Oh yeah. That, that's true. And yeah, I mean the, the, I think I like the sketchbook that we have, which I totally copied from you. It's so beautiful that it just inspires me to just like, want to make something. Of course it's like I can explore and try stuff and experiment, but I kind of still want it to be like, pretty good to like match the quality of my sketchbook and that's good. You know, like, So I carried it around as me for like two weeks when I first got it because I was afraid to mess up the beautiful white paper. Yeah. I did it like it is guaranteed to be worse than the paper. But then after I started and the first few pages definitely felt like that as like I am just messing up the really beautiful sketchbook. But once I got into it, I basically, it's exactly what you said, I felt like I needed to live up to how good the sketchbook was. So I feel I ended up making better paintings and better drawings and it Yeah, yeah, exactly. And oh wow, you definitely like live up to that. They're like so absolutely gorgeous. They're really magical. And then like, as far as, so you have kind of a little travel, like you can kind of go anywhere with your little travel pack of supplies for your sketchbook. So do you wanna describe the other things that you kind of bring like along with you? It's funny, I just started like a recorded version of the sketchbook class because it's over, over like, it, like it's over, like it fills up in like two hours and Wow. I'm not surprised. And then I feel like the people in the waiting list will just lose all, you know, like, like, like they might wanna do this now, but they're, you know, they're gonna lose their attention span for this in like three months. So it's like, I'll make a recorded version. So I spent, and for me recording something just takes forever. I just talk into garage band and race over and over again. But I did the material section so Perfect. You know. Well, Well, we'll, so I have my mic still set up from this morning. Wow. I Actually have the little kit like, spread out in front of me because I spent all day trying to like, Oh perfect. This is like so lucky for us. So, so I, it's like this little green, I don't know like, like, like packagey thing, right? So I, so what, what, what I have, so I have this little washer and it's just, I think you might have either the same one or similar one. I, I admit I actually like found one one at you that looked like yours cuz I was like, you know, I think it's cute and pretty. I want it to be pretty like Dinos No, yours may be cute and pretty, mine is no longer cute and pretty Because Oh, mine's getting crusty. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Like I, I've used it so much that it, like, it, it's stopped cute. I I still think yours as cute too. Mine is getting a bit crusty as it clean it. I think I, because I kept spraying down the gush. I think it's, it like, I just basically, I think the wood is warping from my, having subjected it to too much water. Well it, well it's gotten good use, You know, so I fill it up when, you know, like, like I I, I fill it up before I go out painting. Yeah. So I have that, I have two or three pens. I like zebra 3 0 1 f I like big crystals. I have some binder clips because you know, you always need binder clips. Yeah. And a little kind of a spray bottle thing. Like I, I, I just got, it's a perfume atomizer bottle got for like, I dunno, six of them for 10 bucks or something. And it's small. It doesn't take up, you know, all that much space. And you just, since I've been using that to either clean my mixing area or reactivate the gush and then we have a few brushes

and a little pallet cup and I think that's, that's, that's about it. Nice. And I think I remember that you sometimes use like a musical stand too, right? When you're outside, if you wanna put some, like your sketchbook on it is that, You're right, it does look like a musical stand. It's actually a watercolor evil. Oh. Which is a thing. Oh no, that's interesting cuz it was perfect for the purpose. It, it works well with the sketchbook. The, because you can kind of just clip it there.

And the, so it's funny, I used to, when I traveled I take just the, you know, like my sketchbook a ballpoint pen and a tiny little watercolor set. Now when I go, I, you know, like the last time I brought this whole ginormous plan painting set up and I feel like I've just quadrupled the weight. But I,

I, I think that company's called the Plan Pro or the Plan pro easel. I can't remember what the company's called the, but, but it's, you know, it's a great sketchbook, you know, sketchbook easel That Yeah, it looks like cool. And that's cool about the zebra pens cuz actually, well I'm like such a coffee cat. I was trying to learn how to draw on ballpoint pen cuz I was so inspired by your tree drawings.

And it's really hard, first of all. And secondly, the pens that I was using kept blotting. Like I'd be doing a perfectly fine drawing and then I would get a little blot of ink like It's blotting because it's really, really hot. Oh, does that ever happen to you? It doesn't look like it does. What do you do to prevent that all The time?

So, so the zebra pens, which I love are probably not the best pen for like over 75, 80 degrees. Oh really? So ballpoint pen ink is, you know, it's, it's like, it's a liquid, right? And when it's cold out, it actually becomes kind of hard to draw with. If you've ever tried doing ballpoint pen drawing in the winter because the liquid kind of freezes and solidifies and it gets really, really hot. It melts and it blotches. Oh, well that's interesting. That being said is a big crystal pen, which I don't like the weight of as much as I like the zebra, but it seems to like, it'll still blo like when it says hot at any single blot. But I feel like the temperature, like it holds up under higher temperatures than zebra.

Oh, and it's the, just the bl crystal pen. Is there different numbers? I don't know anything about ballpoint pens like a Big crystal 0.7, which is like their fine point. Oh, I'll have to try that. That's interesting. Yeah. And then I guess our last question that we've got here is from Debbie Lemi McDonald. What old masters inspire your sketching habits?

Well, oh my god. All of them. Yes. Okay. So, so there's the obvious ones, right? There's, you know, like, like you can't really talk about sketchbooks without mentioning like DaVinci and Deco at least. Yeah. But when I was doing research for this class, I, oh my God, I found so many. There's a guy named George Ere and he made, you know, so he studied taxonomy under Carus and he had these sketchbooks full of like the most beautiful compulsive botanical studies that you'll ever see. Wow. So then there's the Conrad Martins and he traveled with, he traveled with Charles Darwin on the Beagle. He was, you know, Charles Darwin's sketchbook. Sketchbook man. And he made these beautiful cereal watercolors that are,

you know, I think hugely underrated and absolutely amazing. Hopper had these like spectacular sketchbooks. So did Andrew Wise, just that, you know, very different from like, someone as tight as you're, you're where he, where, where, you know, like he was just sort of like sketching it, you know, like, like very Yeah. Thick,

very media sketches of anything in front of him. And they're gorgeous. Whoa. Oh, that's interesting. I wanna see some of these. I actually just saw some, a sketchbook that a friend had of

Carol Walker, like a book that was printed of her sketchbook. And I like, I like that too about like, it's, it was like loose and sketchy.

Not like her, you know, the work that I'm so familiar with. And that's neat about sketchbooks of artists. She okay now, now I've gotta look up her sketchbook too. Yeah. I wanna see all the sketchbooks you have. That lake is so interesting. Actually, I, it also, I, I forgot to ask about cuz when I was painting with you outside in Central Park and I was getting to see how you work more and,

and how you're designing what you're painting so much, like, I didn't know that when I was just looking at your finished product, but when I was there in nature, seeing you interpret it and put in your sketchbook, it was like, whoa, it's really well thought out and really designing and stuff.

And, and so like I was also talking to you a bit about like the influence of Persian miniatures on your work and stuff too.

Ha. Have you, I, I guess I don't exactly know what to ask, but do you wanna say anything about that? So I studied Islamic art for a bunch of years. Wow. I had this incredible teacher in undergrad. His name was Walter Denny. And later he went on, I think he was, was one of the people that redesigned the Islamic art wing at the Met.

Oh my gosh. But, which is like one of my favorite. Me too. Love it. But he a he knew like every single thing about Islamic art was to know, but b he had these collections of like, you know, like, you know, mu like the, like, you know, that's the part that's now India and, and like, and Persian miniatures. And he would bring them into class and he would let us touch it with a, touch them with our grubby little undergrad fingers. And we had a chance to look at it really close up. It was amazing. Whoa. Wow. That's interesting. Yeah. I, I love like how designy they are. Like they're really Yeah.

Composed and they've got like a real design quality. And I like when I look at like Holbein or something too, I can see him doing that too. Like it looks realistic, but he's just, it's like got a certain design equality to it, which is what I like started to notice in your work too. That's really cool. Just for the record,

the one that we worked on, you know, like, like when we painted together in Central Park, I think that one, it was such a weird color background and I think a lot of the designee element, like it doesn't happen all the time, but in that one, because I was like working with or against this crazy church Hmm. Everything else needed to be better planned than,

you know, than my normal like, like, like normally I'm not much of a planner. Hmm. That, that's interesting. Well, I'm glad I got to see, see it in the, in that, yeah. In the planning, designing stage. I don't know, it was cool. Yeah. Oh, well this has been so great to talk to you.

Thank you so much for chatting with me, Dina. And yeah, where can people find out more about your work and the classes that you teach? Okay, So I have this really disorganized website. So there's dina broski.com where I, at Keisha, which I rarely update, but I do have submission forms. So I wanna look at the Instagram account of everyone who takes the class Cool.

To become more familiar with their work. So instead of just letting people register, I have this really roundabout process where they need to submit first and then and I check out their work and then get back to them. Oh cool. But, but then if anyone ever wanted to bypass that and just submit their work on Instagram, so insights for artists.com is where I keep my, keep my classes. So the sketchbook one is closed because, well, I don't know because it overfills and I have a huge waiting list, but it's a, the say Instagram one is open and tends to fill up like five minutes before the class. And, and I highly, highly recommend anyone listening who hasn't taken your Instagram class that everyone, every artist really needs to take this class.

Actually you've helped like all of us so much and I wanna take your sketchbook class. I think everyone should take that few and it sounds like they'll be lucky if they do, cuz it's got a long waiting list. And I'll definitely include the links to those in the notes from this episode, the record And that, that has never ever happened to me before.

I've never had a waiting list for a class, So, wow. Me neither. It feels really good, you know, it feels really good, but also I feel like now it has to be like, it's the best class ever because like what if you know like, like, like I can't disappoint people. I'm sure it will be, I'm sure it is. It sounds amazing and like you say, it's also really like about, you know, building the habit and like I Yeah, just like leaving it open to like what'll happen for the person and the sketching. It sounds amazing and so valuable. I think you're just offering like so much to artists with like both of the things that you're, you know, offering now with the sketchbook class and Yeah.

And again, I can't say enough about the Instagram. I never would've figured out Instagram without you and it's made such a big difference in my life. But it But it worked for you, right? Because I took your class and Yeah, and it did and it's a miracle and it's changed my life, so yeah. So yeah, you're like one of, one of the people that like did all the right things and it was like, it was very quick. It was the very, like, I, I don't know, you took it and then like two weeks later I saw one of your videos and I was like, this is really good. Aw. It did turn around pretty fast. I'd been stuck at the same number,

which was like 8,000 for about 10 years. Like it wouldn't budge. And then I took your class and it just started to go up like immediately. Oh, well that, it makes me feel good, but it also makes me feel like I, you know, did something right at least once And Oh definitely you've helped like so many of us, like our whole group of artists,

we're all like benefiting from all, all the, you seem to just understand these things. I don't know. So yeah, thank you so much for that and for everything and I can't wait to talk to you again soon. Thank you for talking to me, Christie, and yeah, good luck with everything. Thank you, you too. Talk to you soon.

All Right, bye bye. I hope you've enjoyed this episode of Down To Art and if you're interested in any of my classes or seeing my paintings, you can check out my work at [Kristy Gordon dot com](http://KristyGordon.com) or look at the online classes I have at [Kristy Gordon courses.com](http://KristyGordon.com/courses) where you can learn about my online art mentoring program as well as the different streamed online classes that I have.

If you've never taken any of my classes, I would suggest you start with the self-portrait class. So thank you for joining us today.