

100 Ways for Artists to Get Great Ideas

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Wondering what to Paint?

**Jump-start your imagination and get your creative juices flowing.
I will show you how to get over 'artist's block' and creative dry spells.**



Introduction

For the past thirty-five years I've been an artist and a teacher of art to children and adults (and a mother, massage therapist, hiker, traveler, spiritual explorer, and communicator). One of the most asked questions is: What should I paint? This made me wonder about my own creative process and from this I created a series of questions and exercises to help open up the creative mind. What better way to have fun than to inspire? I hope these pages inspire your imagination, tantalize you to go paint, and allow a blossoming of your individual style. I hope you find yourself moved to get out your paints and excited to realize your visions. Right now open your mind and let it become spaciouly free. You are about to see the world in a new way.

I speak of art in terms of painting and drawing mostly here. That is just for ease in writing. Please insert your individual art form so you can relate to these ideas. Thank you.

Let's begin.



1. When you wake up in the morning and look on your wall what do you want to see?
2. When asked to close your eyes and go to a relaxing place, where do you go?
3. A memory of a very joyous experience you had?
4. Where is a place on earth you dream of going? What about it do you love?
5. What makes your heart sing?
6. Look through magazines and notice what images and colors your eyes linger on. These hold some keys about what you love. Cut out pictures.
7. Google images of what you love. Wander in cyberspace and notice where you are drawn.
8. Watch DVDs of other artists in your field and not in your field.
9. Pretend you are someone else what would they do to complete this project. What would they paint?
10. Use colors you never or rarely use.



11. See differently when looking at your subject. Is the sun on the water always yellow or white? Make everything a unique color.
12. Make a painting by always choosing to put complimentary colors next to each other. (Example: if you paint a green cactus, the sky around it must be red or have some red in it, or the ground around it, must be a reddish hue.)
13. Sit down with a pen a doodle without thinking while you are on the phone.
14. What are the core images or shapes that appear in your doodles? What about when you were a child or adolescent? Use these in your art.
15. Imagine you are walking down a street such as Canyon Road in Santa Fe, or Coast Highway in Laguna and you come to a gallery.....What do you see in it? What would you like to see in it? Begin by seeing a color or two.....then shapes or images.
16. If you have a painting you did and like, do it again in a new medium. Create a series of paintings inspired by it.
17. Play with cast shadows. Make them prominent in your next painting.
18. Bring science into your work. Study oceanography and plate tectonics if you're painting the sea; biology and botany, if you are painting living things; and astronomy if you are painting the sky.
19. See energy around and inside of living things and paint it.

20. Let your spiritual Knowing guide you.



21. Two ways to look for inspiration: within yourself (your imagination) or outside yourself (what you see).

22. Use the style of a famous artist that you like. Paint a painting using their style, for example, cubism, pointillism, impressionism, abstraction or like the 'old masters' of the renaissance.

23. If you've never painted a seascape, paint one.

24. Look at graffiti to get ideas for color, graphic design and abstract shape.

25. Go to the library and let yourself wander through the non-fiction section. See which books call to you.

26. Do a painting that's symmetrical. Both halves would be the same.

27. Look at your home to find color relationships you like and use them to inspire your next painting.

28. Paint or illustrate a poem you love.

29. Paint shapes forms or colors while listening to music. What is the music evoking?

30. Paint different times of day: twilight or daybreak. Notice the shadows.



31. If you always paint landscapes or pastoral scenes, try a cityscape.
32. Do a long, skinny vertical painting.
33. Make a painting of gratitude honoring what you love about life.
34. See the movies, *Pollack*, *Frieda*, and *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.
35. Make a painting about a concern in your life.
36. If you are generally bold, be soft. If you are generally timid, be bold.
37. Let go, paint like a child, make a mess, ignore all the rules and everything you ever learned. Don't behave.
38. Repeat a pattern at least three times; use a different color for each repetition.
39. Use textiles in your art. Paint them as part of a still life or include the actual fabric in your piece. Notice the colors, textures and repeated shapes in textile design.
40. Make a painting that shows the passing of time such as an archeological dig, strata of earth showing different ages, or a geologic time progression.



41. Try a different format: square, very vertical, very horizontal, round, arch shaped or a diptych or triptych.
42. Right now, stop and feel deeply grateful for your life. What are three specific things, people and events you feel gratitude.
43. Make a painting that may be healing or have that intention.
44. See the world or your subject like a camera with a zoom lens. Paint in terms of the microcosm or macrocosm.
45. Do you have a painting that you painted and you're not sure about? Crop it and make a new painting of part you like. Make more than one painting from it.
46. A painting is a window. What do you see when you look out of it? Paint that.
47. Think about painting a mural. Where would it be? Is there a need for this somewhere in your house, yard or community?
48. If you usually paint large, do some small paintings, and vice versa.
49. Make a collage of torn colored paper, then make a painting by looking at it.
50. Believe in yourself as an artist. Many of your negative thoughts have not helped you. Confidence is helpful. You are as equipped as anyone to make art. Everyone is artistic.



51. Look at a blank piece of handmade paper, canvas, or a wall. A painting is in there wanting to get out. What does it look like?
52. Breathe and relax. Take the day off from creating.
53. Sit at your table and stay there until something comes out on paper or canvas. Sit everyday for a period of time (one hour) and eventually you will create something.
54. Let your favorite color be the inspiration for a painting.
55. Draw with your non-dominant hand.
56. If you're stuck mid-painting, sit back and look at it. Write ten or more things you could do or ways you could go with it. Brainstorm freely and write down everything without censoring.
57. Try natural gemstone pigments or other exotic mediums.
58. Paint the *negative space* (the space around an object). This allows for a different way of seeing.
59. Write every day a free-flowing expression without censoring.
60. Express yourself by taking an acting class. Join an improvisational group - dance and sing. All of it will release energy making way for your creative voice.



61. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What do I love?
2. What were three things I noticed when I woke up and went outside this morning?
3. What is my favorite color, bird, and flower?
4. A place that brings me joy is?
5. What is my favorite tree?
6. When I close my eyes and feel love, what does it look like right now?
7. What is my favorite time of day?

62. Write a poem using some of the answers from the above questions.

63. Who or what inspires you?

64. Watch some DVDs about traveling to other countries. Be aware of color, texture and patterns. Use them in your work.

65. Have a notebook, journal, or sketchbook that you take wherever you go. Begin to see yourself as an artist. Ideas come unbidden, day or night. Be ready to write them down and sketch them. It's easy to forget them especially when another one comes along and then another.

66. Watch DVDs of artists working in mediums that you're not familiar with such as glass blowers, knitters, embroiders, wood carvers, jewelry makers, textile designers or sculptors.

67. Ask for help from friends that you trust. If you're stuck, brainstorming is really fun. Ask yourself and them - what does this painting need?

68. Use some new mediums such as pastels, acrylics, oils, watercolor, pencil, charcoal, conte crayon, prisma color pencils, oil pastels, scratchboard, pen and ink, or watercolor pencils.

69. Paint the four seasons in your style. If you have a painting you love, paint it in a different season. What are the colors of summer, autumn, winter, and spring to you?

70. Change the perspective of the way you usually paint a painting. Try seeing something from far below or above it. See from extremely different angles.



71. Put something on a glass shelf and paint it from below looking through the glass.

72. Paint the silhouettes of people, trees, rock formations, boats, or things you paint. Are the silhouettes black, blue-black, brownish black or?

73. If you are a controlled artist, try being spontaneous (ex. Jackson Pollack); if you are free, try being a more detailed painter (ex. photo realism).

74. Make a painting about a concern in your life.

75. Feel gratitude for the way art came into your life. Was it from a class, artistic friends, a parent or grandparent? Experience the joy of being an artist.

76. Remember how you would draw and paint as a child? Do you have a memory of the smell of crayons, or tempera, glue or construction paper? Become like a child in the way you feel your brushes and dive into your paints.

77. Look around you and notice ten ways you create beauty and intrigue. Your

imagination has brought you here. See yourself as the creative force that you are. Begin to notice all the ways you create. The way you make food and present it, the colors you wear, your home décor, the way you wear your hair, and influence your outdoor surroundings, the words you choose to use and the friendships you cultivate and much more.

78. Let music evoke a scene. See it in your mind's eye and paint it.

79. Stay focused on your desire to be creative. Stick with it and you will end up creating something.

80. Stretch yourself. It feels good and scary too. Challenge your own status quo. Choose images that require a high level of risk, creativity, flexibility and energy.



81. Allow your eyes to be soft-focused and see people's faces and landscapes in the patterns of old wallpaper, linoleum, and textile designs. Be like a child in the way you see. (Leonardo Da Vinci used rain soaked weathered walls to reveal landscapes to him).

82. Pretend you are a cave person picking up a piece of chalky stone for the first time. What marks do *you* make?

83. If you always paint still-life, now paint living things like animals, birds, fish, and people. Or incorporate them into your still life.

84. Study. Get books and DVDs about your medium and learn new techniques. Incorporate them into a piece of art. Look at my DVD and E-book, *Enchanting Watercolor*.

85. Have you ever painted a portrait? Here are three ways to begin right now. Get a mirror and paint yourself. Get a photograph of a face you are drawn to or ask someone to sit for you (photograph them also so you can continue working after they leave).

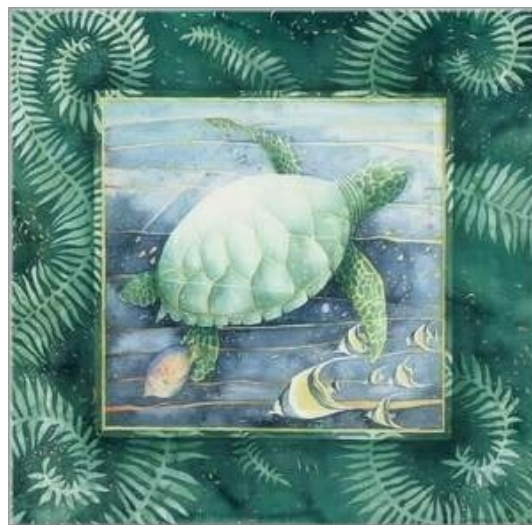
86. If someone came to you wanting to find fresh ideas, what would you tell them?

87. Some moments are gushing with ideas. Write them down or draw them so they will be remembered.

88. Notice that creativity is scary and exciting. Feel the feelings you're having. Write them down. Lie down and experience them fully. Take time for this when life seems overwhelming. See what happens.

89. Once you have an idea in mind, do *one* thing to bring it closer to being reality. It may be buying a canvas, finding reference photos and materials, ordering paints and brushes or making sketches. I ask myself 'what can I do?' and then do that one thing.

90. Talk to yourself. Do you have a question? Ask your intuition and see if the answer comes in an image. Paint the answer.





91. Pretend that you have never painted before. See colors as brand new. Bring curiosity and wonder into your painting.

92. When you have an idea for a painting and as you are painting it, there are many decisions to make about color, form and everything. In each decision there are many different paths you can take. This is how a 'series' of works of art are born. Write down all the new ideas that come from painting the first painting and then paint the others.

93. Be patient with yourself. Enjoy this moment right now. The journey, the process is what it is all about.



94. Focus on how you'll feel when creativity is flowing through you. Visualize this, feel this deeply and bathe yourself in this creative juice. Stay with the feelings because they will take you to your next work of art.

95. See a gallery full of your work. Experience the awe and joy, the elation and excitement of your show. Let this feeling guide you.

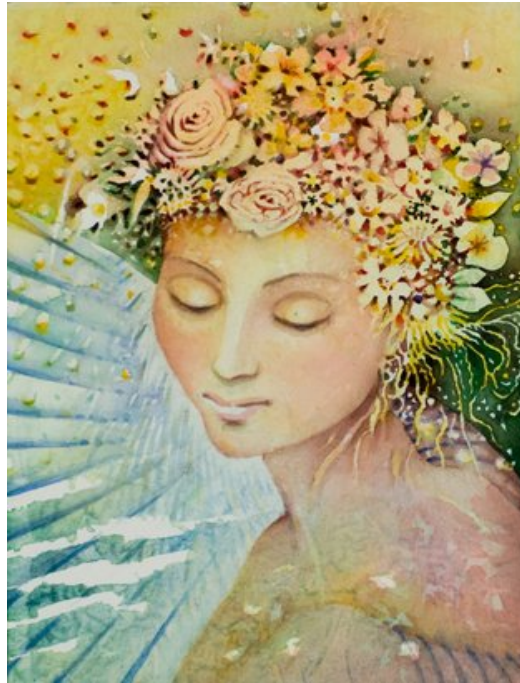
96. Remember your dreams. Often there will be images available to us upon awaking. Sketch them remember the colors and feeling tone of them.

97. Take time out to rest and go inward every day. Often during relaxation, colors turn into shapes and forms in our mind's eye. Notice when you have days or times of vibrant spontaneous imagery. These seem to come and go and are gifts for us.

98. Use a camera. Take it to a place close by, or to a distant land. Be guided by the environment. It may be beauty that's your guide, or color, texture, shape or emotions on people's faces, or in their eyes.

99. Make sure you have a good place to paint with really good light and a comfortable table and chair, or easel that fits your height.

100. Relax and enjoy your beautiful artistic self. Go easy on yourself. Be gentle with your precious creative expression. Celebrate all of your creations.



Afterward

You're ready to create! Go for it with all the help from all artists that have made this leap into the wonderful unknown. You know what to do. Trust and jump!

Sometimes the most powerful creative times are when we let go of control and let go of wanting anything to happen. It's fun when I let myself be guided. My best art happens when I end up saying "Wow where did that come from?" Most of my paintings seem to arrive in a mysterious fashion.



For more information about art, teaching tools for watercolor painting, to order more e-books, and see many beautiful images, please go to my website:

www.meganneforbes.com.

Questions may be sent to meggidev@yahoo.com.

Thank you.