

HYPERALLERGIC

Art

A View From the Easel During Times of Quarantine

This week, artists reflect on quarantining from their studios in Illinois, New York, and Connecticut.



by Elisa Wouk Almino
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This is the 198th installment of [a series](#) in which artists send in a photo and a description of their workspace. In light of COVID-19, we've asked participants to reflect on how the pandemic has

impacted their studio space and/or if their work process has changed while quarantining. Want to take part? Please submit your studio! Just [check out the submission guidelines](#).

Ana Zanic, Geneva, Illinois



My art practice during the pandemic became complicated by the lack of studio time, as my once-standard working hours got exchanged with taking care of the kids. Simultaneously, my need to create got heightened; the need to express and react to this new strange state of affairs felt full of urgency.

Slowly I found fulfillment in the small marks I added to my sketchbooks. Sometimes the opportunity would come while my

kids were playing in the yard, sometimes while sitting by my kindergartner during his online school meetings. The daily routines became more fluid. There was more time, and yet less rest for the mind. I started getting up at 5am to make up for the lost studio time. I became more prolific. Small sketches turned into large paintings. Lately, I often wonder if I will remember this period of togetherness and reflect on it even with a sense of nostalgia, once my studio resumes being again just that — a studio. No longer a makeshift classroom for my five-year-old brother-in-arms.

Amanda Oglesbee, Wellsville, New York



The quarantine has helped me to become an artist, once again. Before teaching art for 30 years and before having children, I thought of myself as an artist. Later I became more of an artist-in-waiting. The beginning of the pandemic found me in a web of obligations which the quarantine released me from. What remained was so simple; daily walks in the woods and painting. I took pictures of trees on almost every walk and now feel that I have a lifetime of visual inspiration and a deeper connection to nature. I have quieted down and am able to hear myself better and understand more of where my artistic ideas come from. My studio has become the focus of my days and my life.

Each tree portrait has coincidentally taken about a month to complete, so these paintings also represent a passage of quarantine time. Happily, I do not see an end to this artistic exploration. As the vaccinations make social gathering possible I will strive to remember what I have learned by keeping my life simple and art a priority ... as an artist should.

**Mike Sweeney, Middletown,
Connecticut**



I'm messy while I work; you'll find stacks and fragments on my table. This is a split shot of two work areas at my home that have shifted only a little during the pandemic. My studio spaces can't easily generate romanticized mental images of the artist, nor are they segregated greatly from the daily activity of home life. That has been my long-standing practice — I value recognizing the mundane and “everyday” as significant to my practice. That recognition grew this year.

On the left is a small printing press, stacks of handwoven paper (waiting for chine-collé images, paper-cut silhouettes, or to be cut into sculpture parts), my clothing iron to heat-press paper, various knives, a linoleum-cut gouge, pens, and other tools. On the right is a table saw placed underneath the overhang of my house. I use it year-round to mill cedar and other logs for bent-wood lamination. The rug on top protects the saw and allows for sanding and staining surfaces for the bent pieces that you can see stacked on top. I'm currently building a predator bird in fancy feathers.

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