



TERRA KIND STUDIO CO.

ST. PAUL MN / EST. 2020

WHAT'S ON MY NIGHTSTAND

27 Books

on creativity, art, artists,
and the natural world

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terrakindstudio.com

Thank you so much for downloading 27 Books about creativity, art, artists, and nature. I hope you find inspiration, motivation, the know-how you have been looking for, and lots of bits to nurture your curiosity.

Books come to me serendipitously. Perusing the stacks at the local library, visiting my favorite independent booksellers, or reading a favorite author's recommendation, an unexpected title lands in my hand like magic.

As an artist and life-long learner, books are my continuing education. Books are inspiration, teacher, motivation, peak curiosity, and build on my knowledge about the natural world.

One my favorite segments to include in **STUDIO TIMES** is something I call "What's On My Nightstand" where I feature the latest good read I've discovered. It's just one small way I can nurture this community. Now you know — this is an ever growing list.

On this list, books fall under the categories: CREATIVE PROCESS (techniques, mediums, and how-to's), ON THE NATURAL WORLD (books that inform and inspire my work as an artist), ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES & MEMOIRS, ON CREATIVITY (building positive mindsets, on artist practices, and overcoming obstacles) and PRACTICAL ART BUSINESS books.

If you have a book recommendation or would like to send comment on this list, I am open to all and any you might have! You can reach me at kristin@terrakindstudio.com. I respond to all.

ON THE NATURAL WORLD

1. BRAIDING SWEETGRASS *Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. This book has left a lasting impression on many, and on many artists. I recommend checking out the audio version (you can get it through the public library using the Libby or Hoopla app). Read by the author, Robin's voice is both beautiful and calming. Honestly, I don't know an artist who has not read this book. It found me through an artist and like that artist, *Braiding Sweetgrass* has profoundly influenced my perspectives on the natural world forever.

2. THE MOTH SNOWSTORM *Nature and Joy* by Michael McCarthy. Part memoir, part about the environment and climate change, McCarthy writes of the intense delight we can take in the natural world, in its beauty, in the wonder and peace it can provide. I can shy away from books that addressing climate change because there are times I feel such despair on how we treat the planet. Books like *The Moth Snowstorm* is a remedy for that and gives me hope.

3. THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES *What They Feel, How They Communicate – Discoveries from A Secret World* by Peter Wohlleben. A powerful, approachable book I read while working with the MN DNR on their "Health Benefits of Trees" arbor project. Understanding trees are social, sentient beings, I cannot look at trees the same way again. (Yes, it's like how it is in the movie *Avatar*).

4. FINDING THE MOTHER TREE *Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* by Suzanne Simard. As a leading forest ecologist, Simard tells of the intimate world of trees. Her hard won discovery on the cooperation between tree species, specifically Douglas Fir and Paper Birch is fascinating. As Simard tells us, trees are complex, cooperative, with a level of sophistication and intelligence, the very traits that are the essence of civil societies. Now I really can't look at trees the same way again.

5. SCIENTIST E.O. Wilson *A Life in Nature* by Richard Rhodes. Biography of the great and hugely influential biologist and naturalist of our times, E.O. Wilson who passed away at age 92 in 2021. It's on my must-reads list. If Ann Patchett recommends it, I'll definitely want to read it. His 1975 book *Sociobiology* is also on my list. Wilson, you will be missed.

ON THE NATURAL WORLD (continued)

6. THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT *Insects and the Making of the Modern World* by Edward D. Melillo. Not to be confused by the movie of the same name, this is a fascinating and entertaining read about a few star insects, Cochineal, Silkworms, and Lac bugs that shaped the world's economies for centuries. Combined with adventure, intrigue, and piracy, Melillo reveals how humans have been involved with insects, from the above mentioned to crickets as a food source for a hungry planet to the contributions of fruit flies and cracking the human genome. **Spoiler alert:** Cockroaches will not survive a nuclear holocaust. They succumb to radiation like every living creature does.

7. THE HIDDEN WORLD OF THE FOX by Adele Brand. For thousands of years foxes have played a role in myth and folklore. Today, the red fox is the most populous carnivore, a common sight in backyards and even in the streets of London. Brand has studied foxes for twenty years across four continents and weaves a story of science, cultural anthropology, and intimate personal stories drawn from her own remarkable fieldwork. Having marvel at foxes leaping high into the air to pounce on their prey, I had to pick up this book. If you are the least bit curious about foxes, you'll want to read it, too.

8. THE HONEYBEE HEART HAS FIVE OPENINGS *A Year of Keeping Bees* by Helen Jukes. Part beekeeping, part memoir, Jukes is entering her thirties, uncertain about her future and struggling to settling into her new home in Oxford with its small garden out back. Through a friend, she embarks on the rewarding and perilous journey of becoming a beekeeper. Jukes dives into the history of beekeeping (fascinating) and wrestles with the concept of what it means to "keep" a wild creature. If your thirties were a trial, this book is so relatable regardless of your feelings for bees.

9. A STING IN THE TALE *My Adventures with Bumblebees* by Dave Goulson, founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. My family knows I adore bumblebees and can watch them endlessly in my garden. So for my birthday one year, this book was given to me. Yes, it's about bumblebee species as much as it is about the author becoming a naturalist. A well-written, entertaining story, and informative read on bumblebees, their ecosystems, and conservation. You also get a first hand account of the English countryside. Makes me want to book a flight and wander those same landscapes.

ON THE NATURAL WORLD (continued)

10. HOW TO READ NATURE *Awaken Your Senses to the Outdoors* by Tristan Gooley, best selling authors of *How To Read Water*. This is a book full of easy exercises designed to expand your awareness of the natural world as well as exercise your senses. Both illuminating and empowering for those who only venture out when they have time on the weekends. The more we know of our outdoor surroundings, the more we understand we are nature — a precept to saving all that we can save in our world's ever changing climate. If you've got kids, experience *How To Read Nature* with them, too.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

11. PAINTING GREAT PICTURES FROM PHOTOGRAPHS by Hazel Harrison. She starts out stating "Capture a fleeting moment on film (yes, this book is pre-iPhone) and preserve it to paint at your leisure!" I'm already thinking of the Impressionist artists who were influenced by the early days of photography. They wanted to capture action and the moment, particularity the light. Harrison provides pages of tips and techniques on how to arrive at a pleasing composition, use a series of photos to build out a landscape, and much more. Given I take my own reference photos to bring back to the studio and using photos for creating color palettes, Harrison's book is a go-to resource for me.

12. COLOR HARMONY FOR ARTISTS *How to Transform Inspiration into Beautiful Watercolor Palettes and Paintings* by Ana Victoria Calderon. I would say this is pure eye candy but it's not. Shortly in, Calderon takes us around the world, to different cultures, where she picks up inspiration for her watercolors. Each page talks about a specific muse, be it Portuguese Azulejos, African Textiles, Exotic Macaws, or Springtime in Kyoto, with photography, color notes, a color palette, and Calderon's own watercolor inspired by each subject. Ahh, the harmony. I love flipping through her pages when I feel my color palettes feel stale and need a spark.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS (continued)

13. MORNING ALTARS *A 7-Step Practice to Nourishing Your Spirit through Nature, Art, and Ritual* by Day Schildkret. Right of the bat, this book speaks to me as an artist and wanting to connect myself and people with nature. The beauty of this practice is that it uses found natural objects to form a work of art. You don't need any tools except maybe a day pack and a good pair of hiking boots. Slow, curious, and meditative, this is a book about slowing down, observing, and patience. If you are wrestling to gain a relationship with nature (nature can be a hard boyfriend to deal with at times) this book is a course on rekindling that relationship. Beautifully written with every spread photo documenting Schildkret's stunning and surprising altars.

14. MAKE INK *A Forager's Guide to Natural Ink Making* by Jason Logan. Both lyrical and logical, this book is a delight to read with rock solid ink making recipes. I made my first black walnut ink after scavenging a couple of thrift shops and garage sales for items I could dedicate to ink making (old pot, big bowl, strainer, colander, and small bottles to store my newly made ink). You can make ink out of just about any natural substance, like rust, for example. Logan gives you the ground work. Let your imagination run loose on what you could use to make ink.

15. KITCHEN LITHOGRAPHY *Hand Printing at Home From Buttons and Bags to Postcards to Pillowcases* by Laura Sofie Hantke and Lucas Grassmann. I have been searching for a way to get back into printmaking despite not having access to a press and all the equipment I had when studying printmaking in college. Turns out printmaking is not that hard to come by with a few basic materials. Not only is Laura and Lucas' book charmingly filled with their own printmaking projects, they outline everything you need and illustrate the process. There are sections on troubleshooting and ideas for moving towards larger projects — all in the comforts of your kitchen.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

16. THE FORGOTTEN BOTANIST *Sara Plummer Lemmon's Life of Science and Art.* By Wynne Brown. This is an extraordinary account of a woman who in 1870, driven by poor health, leaves the comforts of life on the East Coast for a new one out West — alone. She settles in Santa Barbara, teaches herself botany, sets up the town's first library, and eventually marries a fellow botanist, J.G. Lemmon. Together they discover new plant species (Sara creates beautiful watercolors of their plant findings) in Arizona, California, Oregon and Mexico. If Sara's life wasn't full enough, she goes on to work as a journalist, an activist in women's suffrage, and forest conservation. I'm truly humbled how much Sara packed into her days as she continued to have debilitating health issues throughout her life.

17. BEATRIX POTTER *A Life in Nature* by Linda Lear. This is a thicker than normal book that I would pick up but I am a big fan of Beatrix beyond her Peter Rabbit (I have all her children's books, BTW). While I found it heavy to get through some of the chapters' details, I did learn more about the artist and environmentalist than I have from any other source. Still, worth the read and it has plenty of illustrations and photos.

I am seriously looking for artist biographies to read as this is a super short selection.

ARTIST MEMORIES

When it comes to artist memoirs, I've wandered into the music section. I find books by artists who don't practice the same art as I do heartening. I'm exposed to a different way of life that surrounds making that art. Musicians, oh, my, god. It's not all glamor and moolah. I also learn how it feels dealing with identity, racial, and gender issues. I gain empathy and insight from reading these books. No blurb from me is necessary. These are that good.

18. BROKEN HORSES by Brandi Carlile.

19. MORE MYSELF *A Journey* by Alicia Keys.

ON CREATIVITY

20. THE CREATIVE HABIT *Learn It and Use It For Life* by Twyla Tharp. We've all heard of morning routines and that successful people swear by theirs. It's no different for creatives. And we are all creative. It's how we plan our days and limit distractions that make us the most productive and see our biggest, bright projects come to life. If you only read one book on creativity, let it be Twyla's.

21. BIG MAGIC *Creative Living Beyond Fear* by Elizabeth Gilbert. Ok, if you read only one book on creativity, let this be the one. Or better yet, read Twyla's and then Liz's. Both are essential for creating the vital mindsets we need as artists and creative people. I have been afraid all my life and this book gave me the tools to over ride them.

22. THE ARTIST'S WAY *A Course in Discovering and Recovering Your Creative Self* by Julia Cameron. It's a classic, practically a bible for some artists. When I read it, it felt like it was written for the artist recovering from addiction. If you can look beyond that, *The Artist's Way* is about getting out of your own way and come back to your true nature as a creative person. I practice morning pages now and then and this book got me back into journaling most mornings. I also love Cameron's idea of going on "artist dates" to keep things fresh and interesting.

23. STEAL LIKE AN ARTIST *10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative* by Austin Kleon. Of all places for a book to leap out at me, this one found its way into my hands as I was waiting in line at a UPS store ready to ship artwork I was showing out-of-state. Don't worry about the stealing part. Austin covers this in straight-talk humor that's truth. Never mind its small square size, this book is packed with real practical steps on getting down to the business of creativity. You can sit down and read it in an hour. Or if you're a slow reader like me, make it two. Still, an excellent way to spend an afternoon.

ON CREATIVITY (continued)

24. THE RISE *Creativity, The Gift of Failure, and the Search for Mastery* by Sarah Lewis. By the subtitle, you know this is going to be an intriguing read. *The Rise* does not fail. I loved the chapter on *The Deliberate Amateur*. These are the people who spend their spare time in the lab, with Friday night experiments at play, working on a problem that keeps them up at night. Because they are amateurs, they are left alone to do this work. Better to stay the amateur instead of the expert. Another striking chapter, *Beauty, Error, and Justice* shows how art plays a pivotal role in exposing social injustice. With the precision of an architect's drawing, "Description of a Slave Ship" illustrates how many souls are packed inhumanely in a ship's cargo hold. No words could have such power or persuasion.

PRACTICAL ART BUSINESS BOOKS

25. I'D RATHER BE IN THE STUDIO *The Artist's No-Excuse Guide to Self-Promotion* by Alyson B. Stanfield. I have the 10th anniversary edition but this book never goes out of date. It's full of practical, actionable steps to marketing your art. I know I procrastinate about promoting my work (do they really want to hear from me — *again!*?) and Alyson gives you customizable formulas to get past the critic in your head and get down to business. Alyson also has a podcast called *The Art Biz* where she stays on top of what artists are dealing with in today's art world with artists' interviews about their art and art businesses.

26. THE PROFITABLE ARTIST *A Handbook for All Artists in the Performing Arts, Literary, and Visual Arts* released by the New York Foundation for the Arts. Rosanne Somerson, president of Rhode Island School of Design calls this book "an indispensable, user-friendly guide to developing a successful artistic practice." Indeed. The Profitable Artist covers the business side of things they NEVER teach you in college as an art student. There's how to write a business plan (I'm currently working on mine), financial planning and budgeting, business entities (I am an S-corp., for example), pricing your art, fundraising, grants, and marketing.

AN ART BOOK ABOUT WOMEN ARTISTS

I wasn't certain what section this book falls into, it's still so worth listing and there should be more books like this one. If you are a woman artist, you know how pathetic the numbers are when it comes to representation in the art world, from galleries, museums, to collectors. This book is all about amazing women artists who are breaking that art world ceiling.

27. A BIG IMPORTANT ART BOOK NOW WITH WOMEN! *Profiles of Unstoppable Female Artists – and Projects to Help You Become One* by Danielle Krysa, founder of the Jealous Curator. Danielle can be found lots of places online and I especially like her articles on Substack. This book was eye-opening with the diversity of women and the art they make. It makes me proud to be an artist who happens to be a woman.

Some of these titles you may have heard of many times before or have read yourself. You are in good company then. I did try to include a blend of what I think of as more mainstream with eclectic books. I did not include links to where you can find or purchase these books on purpose. Links often change and I encourage you to find them in your local library or an independent bookseller. If you live in southeast Minnesota, venture down to Stillwater and check out [Black Letter Books](#). I like to buy books because I practice marginalia (writing notes in the margins), make doodles and mini-drawings.

Many of these books are available as audio books. I usually can find them on a free library app, such as Hoopla or Libby. If you're like me, you like to listen to a book while working on something else. I often listen to a book while working on part of a watercolor that don't need my complete focus.

Please share your own book recommendations or send comments about this list. I am open to all and any you might have! Reach me at kristin@terrakindstudio.com. Reading — such an enriching pastime, next to making art. ;)