

Capturing Craft: Instruction of Instinct through Printed Media

You can't teach instinct, but you can learn it. This exhibit features books of instruction on arts and crafts based on the five fundamental senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. The purpose of the exhibit is to consider the seemingly paradoxical nature of trying to teach something that is innate to human nature. Capturing the abstract knowledge of sense into something so confined and limiting as books and language leaves some aspect of the pursued practice wanting. But something within us continues to share craft and keep it alive and breathing, almost like a little body itself. Capturing the inexplicable is a bit of a futile, wishful gesture, so at the very least we can alert people that the instinct is there. We can write down the little that we can grasp, but the senses will keep their secrets for those dedicated enough to study them through practice.

This exhibit features the works and the words of University of Texas students past and present who have delved into the world of these crafts and honed their instincts enough to produce something wonderful. This act of instruction, study, and creation can be applied to all things, not just the traditional material objects and hobbies. It is a way of thinking. Of examining and doing something to the point that it becomes second nature. The classes offered here at the University of Texas, like these instructional books, can only teach so much. Take the opportunities you have to find the study that speaks to your nature and, through dedication, turn it into a craft.

How to Take Good Pictures: A Photo Guide 34th edition by Kodak
PCL Stacks, Call Number: TR 146 T25 1981
Published in New York : Ballantine Book, c1981

Fragrance Chemistry : The Science of the Sense of Smell edited by Ernst T. Theimer.
PCL Chemistry Collection, Call Number: TP 983 F64 1982
Published in New York : Academic Press, 1982

The Art and Craft of Ceramics by Maria Dolors Ros i Frigola
Library Storage Facility, Call Number: -Q- TT 920 R683 2006
Published in Asheville, NC : Lark Books, 2006

The Collegiate Class Piano Course by Jack P. Swartz
Fine Arts Library, Call Number: MT 222 S98
Published in New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971

Cookery of the Old South (Translated from Southern Lore) by Kay Burdette
Library Storage Facility, Call Number: 641 B897C
Published in Glendale? Calif., 1938

The first song I wrote, it wasn't a love song or story about something else. It was just a personal anecdote. I think that's why it clicked for me- because it was something I actually related to. I started understanding songwriting as a sort of coping mechanism. I thought, "this can very much be my own way to explain myself and say what I'm feeling."

It was a huge milestone for me, to be proud of one of my songs. But even if it's not good, write about it. This is stuff that I *need* to write, not because I want other people to relate. When it's authentic, I feel better about making it. At the end of the day, I write for myself. Not anyone else. And that's when my music is its best: when it's honest and earnest.

Don't give it up when it gets hard. It's so taxing to be in a creative pursuit. Not everyone is going to like this, and that's okay. Day by day is...if you're serious about this, you have to treat it like a job. Not just a hobby. It's about making weekly goals. Baby steps.

Lainey Gonzales
Independent Singer-Songwriter
B.S. in Public Relations, 2019

Lyrics by Lainey Gonzales
Written mostly on paper, when not on her iPhone Notes app



[Link out to Lainey's website](#)

That's what I've been doing recently- smaller concepts in my head. It's hard for me to view it as an art form, because I'm not creating quite like I used to. I felt like my masters thesis was more an art than what I photograph now. Creating the concept of what I wanted to portray and say with the image, seeing what worked and didn't work. There were hundreds of images I didn't use to get the thirteen for the thesis. I am not a full-time artist. Even then, it started from a very personal space. It was my therapy.

I have this background and training and an eye, but when is it art and when is it just me documenting my life and relationships? That's why I have a harder time thinking of it as an "Art" with a capital "A". I'll probably never show some of these. It's not something I dedicate my life to anymore. It'll be my joy, but not my job. It has to stay this thing I want to do, not have to do. It's when I'm not working and have these breaks in life that I pull out the camera.

Craft and hominess is so important though. And you'll see that in outsider art. The artist is not schooled and not trained. Their work is rarely shown when they're alive; it's just for them. They just have to get it out. So there's a question of the intention of why you're making something. What makes one better than the other?

Linna Dean
M.F.A. in Photography from University
of Oregon
Pursuing a M.S.I.S. in Information

Untitled, 2017, silver gelatin prints by Linna Dean

I'm still finding my way here and figuring things out. I've gotten a bit more experimental over time. Thematically I've been pretty consistent and interested in the way we perceive animals and study them. They're interesting as symbols- the folklore and mythology around them. And I really enjoy working with things that would otherwise be tossed. I try to use found materials or things that would only be used once.

I used to, as a kid, go out into my backyard and dig until I found clay and sculpt with it. I remember making a horse, with short stubby legs. It's one of my earliest memories of trying to shape something in that way. There's something about shaping it and knowing you're changing it. It's almost therapeutic. I don't know if I could find that in other things. I think it's just the personal expression and how you channel it. It's the creation. Shaping something, stepping back, thinking about it and how I can take it. I still sort of think in 2D, but it can be fun reworking and figuring it out.

I really taught myself. I've taken sculpture classes and they're all very "here's a prompt and go!" I've figured out the processes myself, and failed spectacularly several times. And I've learned a lot through my peers. Working with them, talking with them, figuring things out with them. It's something I'll keep up for the rest of my life.

Kira Slentz
Visual and Sculptural Artist
Pursuing a B.A. in Studio Arts

Before you even take a bite of the food, you close your eyes and smell it, then take a bite and slowly savor. Try to pick out different ingredients. As far as sense of taste, it definitely helped to start off early. Being young, I was more accepting of failure and my parents were encouraging. It was really motivating. I'm still trying to develop my palate. Now when I try something new, I read about how to improve it. And I have a little notebook where I write down what I did this time so I can keep or change things in the future. I don't even use a recipe anymore.

Food has been super closely tied to my family. I tried to get my parents to teach me, but they just knew magically how much of everything to put in and didn't walk me through it. Pasta sauce is really close to me because it's the first thing I learned to cook. I think it was fourth grade where I read that it was easy to learn, because you could continue to taste and alter as you go. And I'm still learning. I just bought two cookbooks that are more science related. I like tinkering and seeing what happens. They're honestly like textbooks.

Before, I always cooked alone. In TAMM you have to cook with people and get to talk, with a couple of people in the kitchen with music. We talk about food and trade ideas. But it's fun. It's really fun to do. It's like a project at school- the final result is very rewarding. It's super wholesome. I love that sense of community. I want to keep that culture of family and food alive.

Eric Xu
President of The Austin Meal Movement (TAMM)
Pursuing a B.S. in Biochemistry

When I graduated, I cycled through a couple plant-based jobs- from slinging produce at Wheatsville to native plant landscaping. I went to Half-Price Books and found this sweet little book [*Magical Herbalism* by Scott Cunningham]. I was still a hardcore scientist/atheist then, so I thought to myself “What is this silly superstition and why do I just have to know **everything** about it?” It was very transformative. By the end of the year, I had started up the Natural Magic, no “k” back then, line.

I came at this from a very science-based perspective, but there’s always a spiritual aspect. I happen to have a naturally really good sense of smell. I think I have what photographic memory is for vision, but olfactorally. And, of course, I trained myself. From a very early age, I was interested in plants and animals. There was a lot of self-study on herbs and plants in high school, so I knew all about it theoretically. I took classes at UT with Marshall Johnston. He would teach us in varying ways, and he’d teach us to smell things to attach the name in your brain. The verbal centers are up at the front of the brain, olfactory centers are towards the base. They’re geographically far away from each other. You have to grow new neural networks from the language parts of the brain to connect the two.

I’ve always had the crafty-girl imperative to make and sell things; to have the passion pay for itself. I’ve gone from obtaining knowledge and putting it into my head, to getting it out of my head. So I’m actually writing a book right now!

Cedar Stevens
Owner of the Natural Magick Shop
B.A. in Biology, 1985

Happiness Potion/Room Spray
Made with essential and infused oils including Neroli and Catnip
on either the Friday or Sunday following a New Moon

