

Melody M. NUÑEZ



Melody M. Nuñez is an artist, writer, and teacher. She enjoys seeking out odds and ends to use in her art and describes her artistic style as “modern vintage.” Melody loves to combine visual art with the written word, which can be seen in her self-published and self-illustrated collection of short stories, “An Altered Existence: Fictitious Stories About Faces from the Past” (2013). She volunteers by teaching art journaling to at-risk children, which is her passion project. Melody works for Ellison/Sizzix and lives in Mission Viejo, California, with her husband, Jose, and their rabbits, Cypress and Pinto.





I'm definitely a "glass is half full" kind of gal. Through the ups and downs of life I've always tried to look at the positive, and to make the best of things as they are while working toward something better. Similarly, my creative spaces have varied over the years, beginning with me writing, creating, or scrapbooking on my bed or a small table. For a time I had an entire room dedicated to my studio, which seemed so decadent to me, given that I didn't even have my own room as a child. My current studio is integrated into our 650-square-foot apartment, and it works well. And while I'd love to have a dedicated studio space again someday, I truly believe that making the best use of what you have and simply creating, no matter the circumstances, is much more important than a perfect setup.

Hubby and I are both artists. He was the one who spotted the IKEA closet fixtures with different drawers and shelving configurations and recommended them for use in my then-studio. Because we incorporate our workspaces into the main room in our little apartment, these units are a great way to store our creative pantry in plain sight without the room looking chaotic and messy.

Many of the drawers contain the odds and ends I've collected over the years, which are the ingredients I use to create. Like many of you, my interests and focus have meandered a bit over the years. Once a hardcore scrapbooker, my life was forever changed when I discovered mixed-media and paper crafting. I started working with art journaling and collage, and have added assemblage to the mix. I think it's very important to keep learning and growing, and to try new things. I've just begun to learn to sew, and I am excited by the idea of completing sewing projects and adding sewn elements to my mixed-media work. When I'm sewing or working on other creative projects, I bring out a small folding table to work on, and then stow it away when I'm done.



For me, art and creativity are both a way of life and a way to help process life. Creative endeavors have helped me since I was a child. They helped me to focus on something positive and to process the unspeakable. They've helped me to formulate a language all my own and to have some of the best times of my life, which were joyful, fun, challenging, and triumphant! Whether I've been focused on creative writing, dance, singing, scrapbooking, journaling, photography, or mixed-media, creative pursuits have been my saving grace. I strongly believe in the powers of creative self-expression.

I also believe in helping others. Many kind and loving people have helped me along the way during my life, particularly during childhood years when my parents and family struggled, and that kindness and generosity has stayed with me. The need to pay it forward, coupled with my personal experience with the healing powers of creative work, inspired me to volunteer to teach art journaling to at-risk elementary school children. I started in 2003, teaching every few years in the beginning. I progressed to teaching every year, and I am currently working with six classrooms per school year. I donate my time and solicit donations for the necessary supplies.



Just begin: DON'T WAIT FOR THE perfect SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES BEFORE starting. WHAT YOU create IS MORE important THAN where YOU make IT. DOING SOMETHING TO help A FEW IS better THAN not DOING anything AT ALL. Stumbling ALONG THE WAY IS better THAN failing TO TAKE THAT FIRST step.



“ALL *life* IS AN experiment. THE MORE experiments YOU *make*, THE BETTER.”
 — *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Many friends and kind strangers in the art community have donated over the years, and I'm so thankful to each and every one of them. My students are learning a positive form of self-expression and are receiving supplies and art instruction that their public schools don't have the resources for, and that is worth all the time, effort, and vacation days I've given up. Over 500 children have learned about art journaling since I started volunteering in 2003, and that's something that makes my heart so happy. I hope to establish a non-profit someday and expand the program even further, but in the meantime I'm doing what I can for whomever I can. The letters and drawings I've received from my students over the years are among my prized possessions; I keep them close at hand in one of my studio drawers.

I've become pretty good at setting challenges for myself, and embarking upon some life experiments. In the last 10 years I've gone outside of my comfort zone many times: walking a marathon and several half marathons, starting a blog, self-publishing my illustrated collection of short stories, exhibiting the illustrations from my book, expanding my art journaling program, and reducing our living space and possessions, though I love to collect. One of my biggest challenges is that ever-elusive life balance; perhaps that's a challenge for you too. I'm going to keep working toward it, though, while making sure to grow, lend a hand, and always be thankful for my many blessings along the way.



WHERE WOMEN CREATE would like to thank Melody M. Nuñez for her involvement in our summer issue. To learn more, visit melodynuñez.com.

