

BY GIGI ROSENBERG

IF YOU'VE ALWAYS
DREAMED OF BEING
AN AUTHOR, THIS
IS YOUR GUIDE TO
LAUNCHING YOUR
BOOK PROJECT

It all started with an article artist Carol Marine (carolmarine.com) wrote for the February/March 2013 issue of *Professional Artist* about her experience selling her paintings online. An editor at Watson-Guption (a division of Random House) saw the article and contacted Marine to see if she might be interested in writing a book about her daily painting process.

1 *Creamy Layers* by Carol Marine. Oil on panel, 6" x 6". Copyright © Carol Marine. Used by permission of the artist.



Marine's book *Daily Painting: Paint Small and Often to Become a More Creative, Productive, and Successful Artist* was published in 2014, and the book has sold almost 20,000 copies so far.

I can't promise that if you write for *Professional Artist* you'll find a book publisher, but Marine's story points to one common way of finding a publisher for an art book: You get discovered. But you can only be discovered if you're out in the world with your expertise and your art. It could be with a blog, a YouTube series or a magazine article, to name just a few examples.

"I started my blog nine years ago," Marine



said. "Then I got an invitation to teach a workshop and I started writing everything down. I also kept notes while I was painting.

At the end of three months, I had all these notes and compiled them into a handout."

Marine had always wanted to write a book and her students were clamoring for one.

Before she'd even talked to a publisher she had already taken that handout and her tutorials and starting creating a book and researching self-publishing options.

She wanted to make a beautiful book with lots of illustrations, and when she found out how much it would cost to self-publish a

YOU WANT TO WRITE A BOOK, NOW WHAT?

visual, high-quality book, she decided against it. "I would have had to charge a ton for each book," just to break even, she said.

So by the time Watson-Guptill contacted her, Marine had a specialty, a growing community of students and daily painters, experience as a teacher and, little did the editor know, a hankering to publish a book. She also had her website with many tutorials and the online auction (dailypaintworks.com) that she had developed for her own and other artists' work.

"I've already written it," Marine told the editor when she inquired about a book. She fleshed out her first draft with material from her online tutorials, wrote extra chapters and included

thanks to getting out in the world with her blog.

"I was contacted by an editor at Race Point Publishing stating that she found my blog," Mucklow said. The editor had an idea for a coloring book series with up to five titles. "The editor wanted a more psychological background to the books," which made Mucklow a good match. Her blog proved her writing skills, her expertise and her established following.

The editor matched Mucklow with UK illustrator Angela Porter and the *Color Me* series was born. Author and illustrator collaborated via email. "As I wrote the introduction to the books

(janefriedman.com), who teaches publishing at the University of Virginia and worked in acquisitions at North Light Books. That's not a lot of money for a project that can take you six months to two years to complete. (The author first has to earn back the advance money before earning royalties.)

So, if book publishing isn't necessarily an income stream, why do it?

"Writing a book leads to other opportunities. It opens doors to more speaking, teaching, writing and publishing," Friedman said. "Having a book raises your platform."

Writing a book is like writing a PhD thesis or immersing yourself very deeply in one topic for an extended period of time. You can't help but emerge from this process as an expert. My book, *The Artist's Guide to Grant Writing* (Watson-Guptill, 2010), was not a moneymaker on its own. But writing a book gave me two things: confidence and credentials. From there, I was able to book more speaking gigs and national workshops and build an artist coaching practice. At a minimum, a book is a useful marketing tool.

"Publishing a book gives you street cred," Marine said. "If you have published a book people take you seriously. People share a book with their friends. They might not share a website, but they'll share a book."

Don't Wait to Be Discovered

So, what do you do if you haven't been "discovered" by a publisher and you want to publish a book?

The first step is to define your expertise. What do you know how to do that is unique to you? What would you enjoy teaching others? Jot down your ideas for the kind of book you'd like to write.



“ Writing a book leads to other opportunities. It opens doors to more speaking, teaching, writing and publishing. ... Having a book raises your platform.

~ Jane Friedman

examples from other daily painters.

Even if the publisher hadn't seen her article in a magazine first, all the work she had done to grow her business, build her following and show she could write would have been key to convincing a publisher to sign her on.

From Blogger to Author

Lacy Mucklow is an art therapist based in Washington, D.C., who's been blogging since 2005 at *Adventures in Art Therapy* (arttherapist.blogspot.com). She's now also the author of three adult coloring books (with a fourth in the works)

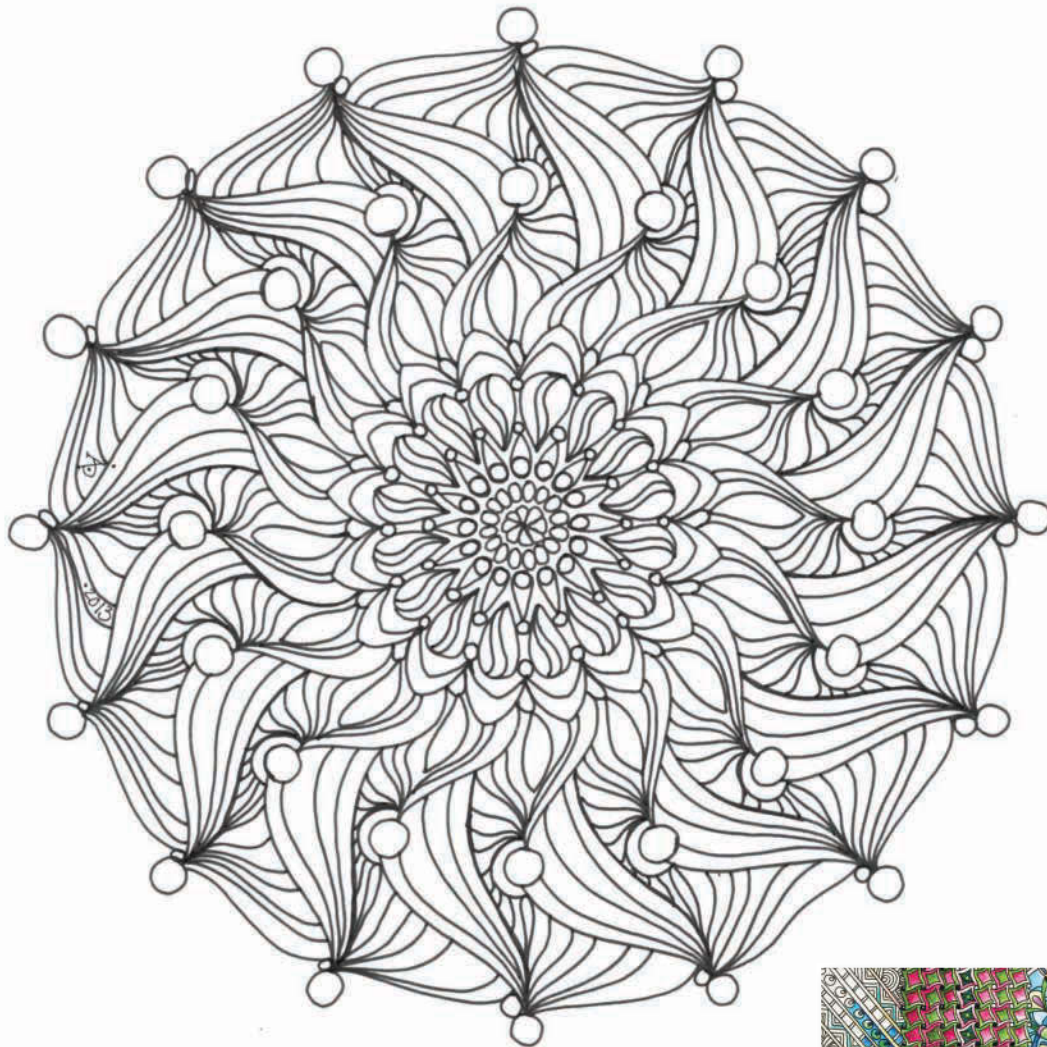


and each of their chapters, I also included image suggestions that I wanted Angela to translate as line drawings in her own style," Mucklow said.

Color Me Calm reached No. 23 on Amazon's list of all book sales, and the upcoming *Color Me Stress-Free* has already been a "#1 New Release" just from pre-orders, Mucklow said.

Why Write a Book?

Book publishing isn't usually lucrative. Most author advances from a publisher are between \$2,000 and \$9,000, said Jane Friedman

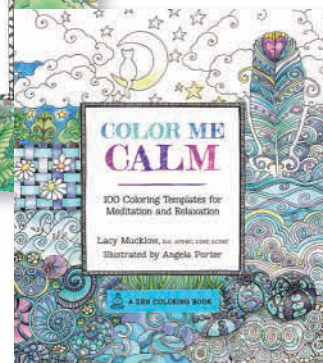
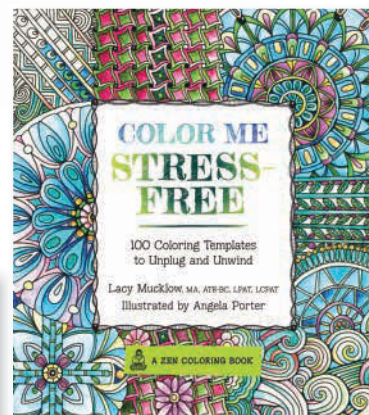
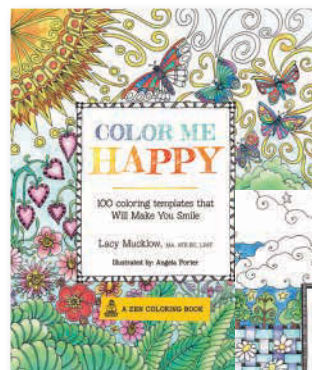


5

The next step is easy and fun: Visit your local bookstore, if you still have one in your neighborhood. Browse an online bookstore and research what's out there.

"The best inspiration is to look at the shelf in a great bookstore," Friedman said. "Notice how publishers package books. There are three different types of book: inspiration, project books and how-to books, where you're learning principles with less projects and more focus on teaching."

Buy the books that are similar to the type you want to publish or that you find inspiring for their design, content or both. You're looking to find where your book might be shelved in a bookstore so you know what category you'll be in, and you also want to ensure that you're not publishing a book that's already out there. If you find a similar book to the one in your mind's eye, study the competition. How might your book be different or



6

better or reach a larger audience?

This is homework you'll need to do even if you decide to self-publish.

How to Be the Perfect Author

Publishers often meet potential authors at conferences or from finding their blogs, Friedman said.

"It's hard to find the right author," she said, explaining that a publisher is looking for an artist whose work has consumer appeal and who's a good teacher "known for teaching techniques that make difficult concepts easy to understand." An author also needs to have some kind of online presence.

"An online presence is highly appealing to publishers who often don't have a direct consumer connection," she said. "It doesn't have to be a large Twitter following, just some kind of online community." She cited the example of Mark Crilley (markcrilley.com) who North Light discovered because he was popular on YouTube.

Friedman advised against trying to chase a hot topic. Because book publishing is a years-long process, by the time your book gets published, the trend you were chasing may be over. "When I started doing art books, the hot topics were stenciling, polymer clay, stamping and scrapbooks, and then scrapbooking went away," Friedman said.

The Book Proposal

If you've identified the kind of book you want to write, it may be time to write a book proposal. My favorite book and the one that I used when I wrote my proposal is Michael Larsen's *How to Write a Book Proposal* (Writer's Digest Books, 2003).

Larsen's book will help you flesh out the idea for your book enough



7

“An online presence is highly appealing to publishers who often don't have a direct consumer connection. ~ Jane Friedman

that you'll be able convince yourself it's worth self-publishing or convince a publisher that you're the right author. The proposal document becomes your publishing roadmap.

Elements of a book proposal include:

■ **Title and Subtitle** – Choose a title that succinctly captures what your book is about and how it is unique. The title will likely change as you

8



7 *Eggless* by Carol Marine. Oil on panel, 6" x 6". 8 *Sliced Not Diced*, 2013, by Carol Marine. Oil on panel, 6" x 6". Copyright © Carol Marine. Used by permission of the artist.

proceed through the book publication process, so don't get too attached to it. Let the title guide your content.

■ **Audience** – Define your audience. Who are the people clamoring for this book? Who is your perfect reader?

■ **Promotional Plan** – How will you find your readers? How will you reach your unique audience to launch your book into the world? You'll need this promotional plan if you self-publish or traditionally publish.

■ **Competitive and Complementary Titles** – What books on the market are direct competitors with your book? How will yours be better? What books complement your book? How will yours be different?

■ **Your Author Bio** – Write a full bio that includes everything that's relevant to your credentials to write this book. How has your whole life led to the inevitability

of this book? This bio can include specialized training, employment, accolades, website, publishing credentials and anything else that proves you're the perfect author.

■ **Sample Chapter** – Write the first 1-3 chapters of your book. Start this exercise by first writing a table of contents. For inspiration, peruse other books for ideas for how to organize and sequence information. Writing the first three chapters will help you develop your voice as an author and will prove to a publisher (and to yourself) that you're up to the writing task.

Larsen's book includes many other parts of a book proposal, but the aforementioned ones are the ones to complete first. This assignment will help you flesh out both your idea for the book and the intended market. You don't want to write a book and then find out that a

similar one already exists or that you have missed your audience.

If the book proposal seems too daunting right now, start smaller. Write and post a series of blogs that teach a technique. Create a series on YouTube on your expertise. Write a magazine article on a topic you'd enjoy teaching others. These smaller projects help you develop your voice and ideas and build your audience in the meantime. And who knows, you might just get discovered. **PA**

Gigi Rosenberg is the editor of Professional Artist. She's also an artist coach and the author of The Artist's Guide to Grant Writing (Watson-Guptill, 2010). She's been a guest commentator on Oregon Public Broadcasting, performed at Seattle's On The Boards, and been published by Seal Press, Poets & Writers, and Parenting. For the latest, visit gigirosenberg.com or reach her at rosenberg@professionalartistmag.com.

THE KOO SCHADLER EGG TEMPERA PAINTING KIT



12 Powdered Pigments
3 Traditional Gesso Panels
Koo's Signature Golden Taklon Brush Set
Palette Knife
Atomizer

Eye Dropper
Scraper
Pipe Cleaner
Tempered Glass Palette
Egg Jar

Trekell
Fine Art Supplies Made in the USA

VISIT TREKELL.COM TODAY

twitter: @trekell_art
instagram: @trekell_art_supplies
facebook: facebook.com/trekellartsupplies

MISSED AN ISSUE?

Don't worry!
PROFESSIONAL artist
digital back issues can help you
keep your collection up to date.



Download your digital copy now for as low as \$2.99 at
ProfessionalArtistMag.com/store.