

In One
Word ... *Eclectic*





BY KRYSTAL LEE

I'm a multi-disciplinary artist and illustrator. I studied painting/drawing at university, and majored in illustration for my honors degree. My artworks range from watercolor prints and illustrations to blind contour drawings and cut paper works, amongst other things. I made the decision to return to full-time study when I was 28, but when I started my degree everything changed — my art completely took over. While I had never thought of myself as academic, I just couldn't get enough of university. I feel like I really came into my own there, and it absolutely cemented art in my life.

I've always had a space for creating, but once my husband and I bought our home together I was able to really set up a full working studio. Our home is a 1950s weatherboard cottage that we are currently renovating, and I have converted one of the bedrooms and the adjoining sunroom into my studio. I've been in this setup for around two years now and it has worked wonders for my creativity and my business. ▸



I would describe my space as eclectic with a strong vintage vibe. I am a collector, so there is a slight hoarder vibe going on too: feathers, scissors, keys, and old card files, bulldog clips, and ledgers, as I'm quite obsessed with vintage office items. I have a gorgeous vintage hole-puncher that weighs a ton and has a place of pride in my studio. There's a lot of dark timber, piles of books and papers, and jars of paintbrushes and pencils. I'm also partial to wildflowers, seedpods, crystals, and little natural objects, so they can always be found amongst my things. There is usually a layer of pencil shavings and paint palettes too! It's quite a mess, really, but it's the good kind of mess that feels worked-in and relaxed. For me, my studio space needs to be a perfect balance of practicality and aesthetic. I draw so much inspiration from the objects I surround myself with that as practical as a space might be, I'm just not going to use it if I'm not surrounded by the things I love.



Having two spaces is perfect, as I am able to work quite differently in each area. One room is for the messy creative stuff with two antique Blackwood tables I use as workspaces, a drying rack, shelves holding all my materials, and folios of papers. The other space I use for the less messy business side of things: signing prints, sorting artworks, packing, and posting. It's where I store my prints, keep lists of my to-do's, and I will quite often work on my paper cutting in this space too, as it's less likely to have smudges of charcoal around! Having these two spaces has really defined the areas needed for the different aspects in running a creative business and has helped streamline my daily practice.

My studio was set up with little to no budget. The tables were inherited, and I have a shelf of racks on wheels that I bought from a local baker for \$30; they were once used for loaves of bread after they came out of the oven, and now they're perfect to hold my paintings while they dry. I also wanted a drafting table, so I converted one of the Blackwood tables into one by adding some props and hinges. *I think the only thing I have bought new is my industrial-style desk lamp, but in terms of everything else, it's either secondhand, gifted, or repurposed.* All of my budget goes into buying paper and materials! ▷



On days when my ideas are running slowly or I'm in between projects, or when other day-to-day tasks start to take over, I like to schedule studio time so I'm not just sitting around waiting for inspiration to hit or being pulled in too many directions. Once I'm immersed in my work though, the schedule falls away into a more natural routine where the act of creating takes over. Those are my favorite kind of studio days — when everything else falls away and I can be at my most creative and productive.



Although I don't manage my time as such, I do try to manage where my headspace is. I can get quite single-minded and restrictive about my work, so as a way to stay open and explorative, I try to have a few projects going on at any given time that I divide into three areas: business, passion, and a side project. I find this helps me tick all the boxes that keep me fulfilled as an artist. I also use a daily planner.

On Sunday evenings I like to set out a rough guide of what I want to achieve during the week, and I also revisit this at the end of every day.

I use it throughout the day to write down any orders that need to go out, emails I need to send, materials that are getting low, etc. I also use my sketchbooks for when any ideas pop into my head; I have ideas flying around most of the time, and if I don't get them down I lose them. It's really just about getting it out of my head and onto paper. It's a solid practice that keeps me feeling grounded and also grants me the freedom needed for when my work takes over.



On any given day you can find me waking up early, flitting between both spaces with my pup, Rudy, following me, and a cup of coffee in my hand. If I need to organize orders or do any administrative tasks, I like to get them done in the morning so it frees up my time later. If I'm straight into the studio, I will usually start with a few blind contour drawings and then move on to whatever it is I have planned. I like to put on some music or a podcast, or when I'm in the middle of a large project I like to put on a TV series in the background and just let the episodes run. In between painting and drawing, I'll make sure to meditate, Rudy and I will take a walk along the river, and I usually have a few visits a week from family and friends who drop by for coffee. Regular activities also include taking photos of any works-in-progress, posting to Instagram, placing orders with my printers, and working on ideas in my sketchbook. >



My Top 10 Favorite *Studio Songs*

- ♫ "Chandelier" by Sia
- ♫ "Handle With Care" by Traveling Wilburys
- ♫ "Runaway Train" by Soul Asylum
- ♫ "What if God was One of Us?" by Joan Osborne
- ♫ "You get What You Give" by New Radicals
- ♫ "It's all About Soul" by Billy Joel
- ♫ "Free Falling" by Tom Petty
- ♫ "Wuthering Heights" by Kate Bush
- ♫ "Dancing in the Dark" by Bruce Springsteen
- ♫ "9 to 5" by Dolly Parton

Having a dedicated studio space is amazing, but some of my most creative moments have been when I've had my work spread out on the floor in my living room or while propped up in bed with a coffee and a sketchbook in my hand. I feel very privileged to have the space that I do, but I know that without it I would still create. Don't let not having a dedicated space be what stops you from creating.

Krystal Lee is a multi-disciplinary artist who works from her home studio in Australia. Her works range from whimsical watercolors to crisp white paper cuts and smudgy drawings. She loves nothing more than being surrounded by jars of paintbrushes, vintage books, and pencil shavings, with her pup, Rudy, at her feet. Her works can be found at krystalleeartist.com and on Instagram (@krystal_lee_artist) and Facebook (Krystal Lee Artist). She welcomes email at hello@krystalleeartist.com.

Photography by Krystal Lee.

