RESPONDING TO WORK AND HOW IT WORKS FOR ME.

THIS CLASS IS DIFFICULT TO TEACH.
It’s exhilarating. It’s inspiring. I learn at least as much as you do throughout the process. But it is difficult, because in this class, I am not always (honestly, I am rarely EVER) working from my own comfort zone. Even though I’m demonstrating how to integrate what you learn into your own style, I’m often wayyyyy out in left field of my usual process, and that sometimes means that there is this between place that isn’t necessarily going to be worthy of an Alleluia Choir, or an ARTGASM, or an OMG, SO HAPPY!

THAT’S OKAY, THOUGH.
This isn’t a ‘make and take’ class. This class is about learning from other journal artists, and developing as a journal artist.

SO, HERE’S THE THING:
Copying is a huge part of learning. The masters taught this way. “Copy this, and copy it for 10 000 hours until you can do it with your eyes closed”.

Right?

Except we are *art journaling*, which is not the same as producing work for patrons. We are producing work for *ourselves*. We are producing work that is meant to express our inner being. (Hence the ‘journaling’ part of the equation!)

Copying WILL help you nail techniques and ways of doing things, and I encourage you to copy. I know that many of you are right there, in the ‘copying stage’, and I don’t want to discourage you. If you’re still all about copying, copy. There is no shame in it. It is a highly encouraged, totally valid, and necessary way to learn. Copy, please, unabashedly, and with my absolute blessing.

THIS MUSING IS FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE READY FOR THE STAGE BEYOND COPYING
Responding to the work of others is MUCH HARDER for me than copying. Responding means I have to dig in and really think about what I’m doing. It means I might not always like the results, and there’s often this really awkward ugly stage that freaks me out. Sometimes, I give my results the finger. Sometimes, I want to gesso OVER my results, AND stop speaking to them, AND disinherit them, uninvite them, and pretend like they never happened.

This is totally a true story.

BUT! THIS IS ALSO TRUE:
I LOVE what I learn when I take the time to respond. I love how the *next time* I try that thing that I learned from whomever I’m learning from that week, it comes with a little less awkwardness. The ugly phase is shorter. I get where I intended to go with less frustration, less work, more confidence.
I recommend that you make a promise to ask yourself, in response to every single thing you see and read in this class, the following questions:

How did this inspire me? What am I afraid to try? What am I excited to try? What is it about this lesson that works for me? What doesn’t? What would I do differently? What do I want to put a new spin on? What does this make me think of? What is my emotional response to this demonstration, and what might that lead me to create? What’s juicy in this for me? Where can I expand my comfort zone? Where can I apply my already acquired skills? What new skills can I acquire, here?

And then? Go do stuff.

You might want to percolate for a while. You might do all the note taking and gluing of screen shots into your notebook stuff first. You might take your time, and you might even catch yourself putting it off because you are terrified. That’s ok. I’ve been there. Do all that ‘prep work’, and do all your ‘I’m going to suck at this’ procrastination stuff, and then put on your most ridiculously happy making pair of differently coloured, preferably stripey socks, (this is in the rules, and yes, you want to click that link and yes, you want to watch the entire thing. Love you, Tam!) and then settle in at your work table/desk/kitchen table, and DO STUFF in response to what you’ve read/heard/watched.

I guarantee that you’re going to fall flat on your face now and then.

You’re going to make something that makes you go all stink-eyed and suck-toothed. Your inner critic is going to have a HEY DAY all over you. You are going to want to eat a pint of Salted Caramel Gelato in one sitting (or a jar of peanut butter, not that I know anything about that...*cough*). You are going to want to beat someone up. You are going to doubt your prowess, your amazingness, your god/dess given right to creativity.

You are going to want to Q, U, I, T.

It’s okay, though. I promise. It happens to me ALL THE TIME. Like, weekly! I look at something I’ve done, and I want to die a thousand deaths because, whoa! What the hell! is that! *Shudder*

Messes will be made and experiments will go awry, but you. will. keep going. You will. Because you will also find yourself growing. Your toolbox will get more and more stacked with awesome stuff that you’ve mastered. Your understanding of what works and what doesn’t will grow by leaps and bounds. Your first (appalling) attempts will become more and more passable and then more and more masterful.

You and me? We will not quit, because practice makes progress.

It is world-view changing. It is ‘pin a medal on me’ pride inducing. It is amazeballs with a side of awesomesauce, and yes, I realize that I may only be speaking for myself here, but over a thousand of you did this with me last year, and thousands more of you have journeyed with me in BOD and other offerings, and you know what? This is what I hear:

- My confidence has increased by leaps and bounds.
- I am amazed at what I can do.
- Listening to my art really does make all the difference.
- I am learning so much. I am brave. I am scared to death, but I do it, and that makes me brave.
- Binding my own journal is so empowering.
- The notebook? It totally changed my life.
SO, YES. A CLASS LIKE THIS IS HARD.
It's hard to teach and it's hard to take - especially if you're taking it deeply, and thoroughly, and doing the notebook, and responding instead of copying.

It is scary, boundary-stretching, and omgdoomy sometimes. It really is. I get it, and I am holding my hand out to you right now because, you know what?

Taking this on together like this will grow our bravery bones. It will increase our tolerance for failing and getting up and trying again. It will beef up our resilience. It will grow our inner artist like the dickens.

SO, TRY WITH ALL YOUR HEART TO RESPOND AND I WILL, TOO
Your first go at 'your take' at something might very well suck, but the process of taking it on will absolutely GROW you as an artist. Even if you never attempt to do the exact same thing again, you will have learned something that you can apply to your next approach to the page, canvas, wood panel, whatever. So try, with all your heart, to respond.

I AM GOING TO CONFESSION, THOUGH, BECAUSE I'M GOOD AT BEING TOTALLY REAL WITH YOU:
When I'm really afraid of something, like, really, really intimidated? You will see me copying. You will see me in there with a friggen ruler, trying to measure, and mark out the proportions, and nail the dimensions. You will find me studying a lesson or a piece of art with a determined, yet confounded look on my face, and a pencil in my hand, and that ALSO grows my inner artist.

I can't stay there for very long, but it is a very valid place to begin.

So wherever you are beginning - in the 'copying' or 'responding' stage of your journey, or if, like me, you do some of one, and some of the other, know this:

We're totally badass because trying is winning.

MAY THE AWEN BE EVER WITH YOU,

EFFY
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P.S. There are pretty pictures in the next PDF and if you read this far, I totally love you. MWAH!

P.P.S. LONG LIVE THE OXFORD COMMA. I may have failed to use it occasionally throughout this document, (and, in my defense, I do not have an assistant, or a beta reader, or an editor, or anyone but my lovely dog who cannot read, alas!) but, my love of it has been declared and if you share my love, then LO! THERE DO I SEE MY PERSON! LO! There do I see my mother, my sisters and my brothers; Lo there do I see the line of my people, back to the beginning. Lo, they do call me, they bid me take my place among them, in the halls of the Grammatically Correct, where the literate may live forever!

P.P.S Part Deux. If you got that I switched out 'Valhalla' and 'Brave' for 'Grammatically Correct' and 'literate', we are truly, truly, spiritually related. Truly. And even more so if you know what movie I'm totally (ripping) riffing off of...

Okay. I'll stop now.

*GRINS STUPIDLY AND WANDERS AWAY KICKING THE DIRT AND MUTTERING ABOUT HOW AWESOME YOU ALL ARE*