In this excerpt from *Art Saves*, author Jenny Doh introduces us to Kelly Rae Roberts: artist, author, possibilitarian and all-around lover of life. Kelly Rae believes that inside each person’s heart there exists a collection of affirmations—small whispers nudging them to dream bigger, take risks, and trust their creative spirit.

Kelly Rae also believes that developing a list of personal affirmations to use in artwork not only allows the artist to identify what they want more of in their life, but also to make deeply meaningful art that reminds them to be their truest self. In addition to meeting and learning more about Kelly Rae, you will also work step by step through a collage project is one that teaches you how to incorporate layers of papers and paints, along with a bit of charcoal pencil work, with affirming messages of hope.

To learn more about or purchase *Art Saves* by Jenny Doh, click here.

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Kelly Rae Roberts: Possibilitarian

Sometimes, in order to become who you are destined to be, you need to push aside all the self-doubt, all the fear, and courageously embrace the power of putting pen to paper, brush to canvas, and dreams into tangible plans. This is exactly what Kelly Rae Roberts did as she found ways of thinking big, and simultaneously disciplining herself to take small and methodical steps toward success. Her story demonstrates that art is faithful to those who remain determined and work hard.

(From Art Saves by Jenny Doh, 2011; courtesy of CreateMixedMedia.com)
INSPIRED LESSONS

Professional training is not a prerequisite for being an artist. Even without formal art school training, Kelly Rae has learned that art makes room for all, whether schooled or not. The most important thing is to just begin.

It’s the process, not the destination. If you let them, the pressures associated with being an author, teacher, and artist can take their toll. That’s why Kelly Rae insists on honoring the now.

Prove it. Successfully tackling an activity outside the creative zone can boost self-confidence. For Kelly Rae, it was running. It was an unexpected activity that she dared herself to take on. By proving that she could do it, she found that the exhilaration from running could aid her self-confidence to make important artistic breakthroughs.

PAY IT FORWARD

Don’t ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

— Howard Thurman
SEENING THE POSSIBILITIES

Her bright and colorful, collage-inspired artwork has become synonymous with themes of love and positivity, and has gained Kelly Rae a devoted fan following. In order to claim these artistic successes as hers, Kelly Rae had to first recognize herself as an artist. “I think for me, I considered myself a successful artist once I was able to accept and say out loud ‘I am an artist,’” she says. “It meant owning what I had to own, and being brave enough to see the expansion of my life’s possibilities.”

Kelly Rae delights in being able to help others become their own “possibilitarians” through her role as an art instructor. It is an experience that she considers to be among her most rewarding. “I love watching the blossoming and transformation that happens when students arrive at a workshop all shy and nervous, only to find their rhythm and confidence by the workshop’s end,” she says. “I can see the joy exploding, their hearts expanding, and their enthusiasm about to burst with all they’re discovering.” She relishes the honor of providing guidance and support to others as they travel toward their artistic epiphanies.

Creating in the studio is what Kelly Rae loves most, as she makes a mess with paint, stamps, and paper scraps to create meaningful, one-of-a-kind creations. “Art heals the creator during the process of making it,” says Kelly Rae. “It goes out into the world to hopefully provide a moment (big or small) of healing, happiness, or joy for someone else when they encounter your work.” By sharing her talents with the world, she intends to inspire others to be “possibilitarians” who actively work to actualize the experiences that they need most in their lives.

(From Art Saves by Jenny Doh, 2011; courtesy of CreateMixedMedia.com)
IN KELLY RAE’S OWN WORDS: BLESSINGS ON BILLBOARDS

I love finding kind messages in unexpected places. Whether it’s a message scribed on the sidewalk, or a hand-written note left behind on a mirror for a stranger to find, I think the world needs more moments of kindness that make us pause to consider all that we have in the midst of our busy days. Recently, I was in New York City and I spotted an old, abandoned billboard upon which someone had spray-painted the words “bless yourself.” As I passed by the sign in my taxi, hurrying to my next appointment, reading those words quickly re-centered me, and reminded me of what’s important in life.

UNEXPECTED AFFIRMATIONS

Guerilla acts of kindness, such as leaving simple affirmations in public places for a passerby to discover, are easy and rewarding ways to have a positive impact on the lives of others. If you have a pen, a scrap of paper, and a few compassionate words, then you can make someone’s day with a surprise affirmation.
IN PUBLIC PLACES

Jot down several messages of hope on slips of paper and leave them in public places. For example, you can write a message that reads “you are gorgeous just the way you are” onto a sticky note and place it on the mirror of a public restroom. You can do this inside of restaurants, post offices, grocery stores, on counters, on bike racks, or practically anywhere.

Affirmations, both in her life and in her art, keep Kelly Rae focused on the things that she holds closest to her heart, and help her to combat occasional feelings of self-doubt.
CREATIVE JOURNEY
The main reason Kelly Rae held herself back from entering the art world until she was 30 years old is because she was sure she wasn’t an artist. “Why was I sure?” she asks. “Because I hadn’t gone to art school, and you have to go to art school to be an ‘artist,’ right?” Even though she didn’t believe that she was cut out to be an artist, Kelly Rae knew that her life felt incomplete without her creative voice. “Now I know what I was missing all of those years that I wasn’t making art,” she says. “I was missing that joy that permeates your whole life when you find and then lean into your passion.”

BADGES OF THE HEART
Just like the badge of “artist,” the badge of “runner” was one that Kelly Rae had never claimed for herself. Interestingly, when she and her husband moved to Portland, Oregon, the scenic surroundings inspired her to get her running shoes on and just go for it. She wasn’t a runner by nature but her drive to excel was there from the start. “Training day-in and day-out was difficult, and there were definitely moments when I wanted to give up,” she says, “but I felt that if I could make it through those moments and find the strength to persevere, I could take on the world.”

By taking a stance against her inner critic, Kelly Rae has been able to not only nurture her passion and launch a successful career in the arts, but also to give the gift of inspiration to so many others. Says Kelly Rae: “Brave in sadness, brave in love—that’s what I hope to leave as my mark.”

WITH YOUR KIDS
Using sidewalk chalk, write messages of kindness and hope on the sidewalks in your neighborhood (or any sidewalks in town). This is a great exercise to do with the young people in your life.

(From Art Saves by Jenny Doh, 2011; courtesy of CreateMixedMedia.com)
Leap fearlessly.
Love with abandon.
Surrender your fear.
What is calling you?
Hold onto your hope.
Teach kindness.
Feel the possibilities.
Begin today.
Kelly Rae believes that inside each person’s heart there exists a collection of affirmations—small whispers nudging them to dream bigger, take risks, and trust their creative spirit. Developing a list of personal affirmations to use in artwork not only allows the artist to identify what they want more of in their life, but also to make deeply meaningful art that reminds them to be their truest self. This collage project is one that teaches us how to incorporate layers of papers and paints, along with a bit of charcoal pencil work, with affirming messages of hope.
**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Cut assorted collage papers into rectangular shapes of various sizes. Randomly affix them onto the base surface using gel medium, covering the entire area (figure 1).

2. After collaging the surface, paint a coat of gel medium over the entire collage. This will help seal the papers and will allow for rubbing excess paint off in later steps. Allow to dry.

3. Using a charcoal pencil, sketch the outline of a figure onto the collaged surface. Those who are uncomfortable with drawing a figure or a face may want to try drawing other shapes like hearts, flowers, or birds. Don’t draw the details yet, as they will come in a later step (figure 2).

4. Randomly add paint to the collaged background, leaving the inside of the outlined figure bare. While the paint is still wet, use a dampened paper towel to wipe away portions of the paint to expose the collage papers underneath. Repeat this process until the desired effect is achieved.

5. Type out a list of personal affirmations in a word processing program, selecting different font faces and sizes for each statement.

6. Print out the affirmations, and cut them out using a sharp kraft knife. Arrange them inside the sketched figure and secure with gel medium. Coat each affirmation with a layer of gel medium to allow for paint to be rubbed off in a later step. Tip: Those without a printer can write their affirmations out using a pen and paper (figure 3).

7. Paint the top of the figure’s dress, using a dampened cotton swab to remove excess paint that covers the affirmations. Repeat as necessary (figure 4).

8. Fill in the face with gesso. Once dry, draw facial features with a pencil and then paint in the skin and other accents.

9. Finish painting the other elements of the piece (such as the hair and wings). Outline the image using black paint or a charcoal pencil. Embellish with lace and other ephemera as desired (figure 5).

10. After the painting has dried, spray it with varnish to seal.

**MATERIALS:**

- base surface, such as a canvas, matboard, heavy watercolor paper, or wood panel, 8” x 10” (20cm x 25cm)
- collage papers (and assorted embellishments)
- regular gel medium in gloss (Golden)
- charcoal pencil
- paper towels
- sharp kraft knife
- cotton swabs
- paintbrushes
- fluid acrylic paint (Golden)
- computer-generated affirmations
- white gesso
- archival varnish spray in gloss (Golden)

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