

## How to Set Artistic Goals for Artists – by Elisabeth Larson Koehler

The new year is a wonderful time to be able to look at a blank slate and write down some artistic goals for yourself. At the same time though it can feel like a lot of pressure to think of making goals for a whole year! It is good to have fun with it and make goals that are achievable but also stretch your abilities significantly as an artist. As quoted by Joe Vitale – a goal should scare you a little and excite you a lot.

Of course, we often hear about setting new years resolutions... and they are great! However, as artists it's so important for us to create (both micro and macro) goals for ourselves throughout the year — *micro*, being the more detailed focused goals and *macro*, the more holistic overview of what we are working on/wanting to achieve.

So, the first idea for helping you set realistic and meaningful goals that will impact the growth of your art – deals with coming up with the right questions to ask yourself!

### Take time to think and process

Making artistic goals requires some time and processing. This is an important step of goal making as it requires you to think through what you want to achieve and which direction you wish to head in. If you are struggling with knowing what goals to set for yourself, a good place to start is to ask yourself questions...

- What artistic skills do you want to improve?
- What kinds of paintings (or drawings) do you want to create?
- How can I put myself in a position to be held accountable to improving my art in 2025?

### What artistic skills do you want to improve?

Are you wanting to learn new things? Write down specific things you want to learn or improve upon like portrait painting, watercolor painting, color mixing, or perspective drawing. Whatever it is – write them down. The act of writing them down makes them more real and as a result you are more likely to put them into action.

### What kinds of paintings (or drawings) do you want to create?

Write down goals and ideas for what sort of paintings you want to create this year. Do you wish to paint a series of landscapes or [still life paintings](#)? Or maybe you have a goal to paint portraits of your family?

It is helpful to jot down ideas you have for specific paintings you wish to create. Though it would not be possible to plan out every single painting for an entire year, writing down specific ideas helps you to get started and excited about your goals.

### Keep yourself accountable by keeping a journal

One of the best ways to keep yourself accountable is to keep a record of your progress. Doing this keeps you motivated and also helps you to be intentional about your goal setting. The more intention you have behind your goals the further you will progress.

A journal also helps you look back at where you were and see how far you have come. There is nothing more motivational than seeing progress!

### Plan a show

To push and motivate yourself further it is helpful to set a date for a show where you can present your finished works for others to view. It does not need to be a fancy show at a gallery. You could just plan a show in your home or at a coffee shop. Invite friends and family to come view your completed art work. You could even do a virtual show if options are limited due to covid.

It is rewarding to see others get enjoyment out of viewing work that you spent a lot of time creating. In addition, it is hugely motivating to have a deadline for a show as that keeps you accountable for getting work done!

### **Get outside yourself**

One of the best ways to get inspired and set goals for your art – is by getting out and seeing others work!

Make time to go out to an art museum or gallery to see some great art goals examples. \*TIP often in the beginning of the month there are free admission days to art museums (so take a look at what's available near you!).

Studying others paintings and drawings, is something as artists we always want to be doing. When it comes to setting artistic goals for ourselves, it can be particularly helpful. As you might notice something in someone else's work that triggers a reminder of something you want to be doing or achieving in your own art!

### **Develop habits that support your artistic goals**

If you do not have habits that support your goals then you will have a difficult time achieving them! Habits can make or break our ability to move forward. Work at being consistent in your art practice. Maybe you set aside each morning to paint – or two evenings a week. Whatever works best for your schedule be consistent at it. It is much better to work at something 15 minutes a day every week than 2 hours once every while.

All of us need a little help to focus our every day activities! I recommend the book '[Manage your day – to – day: build your routine, find your focus and sharpen your creative mind](#)'. It will help you to be focused and create a routine that supports your goals.

### **Do not be afraid to fail!**

I can't emphasize enough the importance of failing. There is nothing more stifling for your artistic development than the fear of failure. Allow yourself the freedom to take chances and create some bad paintings. Yes, it is OK to make bad paintings!

Never feel like you need to make perfect work all time. It is from failed work that we learn. So, allow yourself space to experiment and make work that may not look perfect. If you take this approach you will increase your skills far more than you would have otherwise. So, make bad paintings one of your artistic goals this year!

### **Try something completely new and fun**

Like me you might use more traditional art materials – oil paints, pastels, watercolors, acrylics etc... However, it is good to try out something completely new that you have never used before.

### **Like, Digital Painting!**

For awhile now, I have ventured into trying digital painting with my iPhone and iPad and have used it quite often to create quick study's/get ideas for a composition I want to try.

If you have not tried out digital painting – I highly recommend! Personally, I use [the procreate app](#). Since I do not have an apple tablet I use the [pocket version of procreate](#) on my iPhone – it is just a **one time** purchase of \$4.99. The iPad version is also just a one time purchase of \$9.99.

It is very user friendly with a low learning curve. It is a great way to create little sketches while on the go. Not to mention, it is a little fun to be able to 'paint' without needing to set up and clean brushes afterwards! Digital painting will never replace traditional art materials for me – but it is fun to try out and experiment with.

### **Traditional but still different**

Something new and different for you might still mean a traditional medium like encaustic painting or monoprinting. You can roam your local art store and see what might catch your fancy. It does not need to be something completely different.

It could be as simple as trying out a new product you are not familiar with. I recently got some [watercolor graphite](#) that I have never used before and am looking forward to trying it out for the first time. Trying out new things can add some more fun into the art making.

### **Get writing and make your artistic goals!**

I put together a free printable goal sheet for you to be able to write down your artistic goals for this year! [Download it here](#) and print it out. Spend some time thinking about what your goals are for the year and write them down with a pen or pencil. Keep your goals in sight so that you are frequently reminded of them. This will keep them at the forefront of your mind and help you to put your goals into action!

Also, spend some time thinking about how you will put your goals into action. Remember to make your goals as tangible as possible by making them measurable. For example, 5 paintings a month or 1 hour of painting every day. Instead of just saying that you will create more paintings or spend more time painting.