

A Day in the Life of A Creative Mother

by Kathleen Karlsen

Yesterday was a painting day. A painting day is a day when almost everything else goes on hold so I can actually make some serious progress on one or more paintings. Painting days are typically very long (mine often start at 3am and end around 9pm) and begin with trying to handle whatever I need to do on the business end of things before I can get to the creative part.

Yesterday I started with multiple emails to arrange my next two art shows. Then I spent some time working on projects for web design clients and checking website statistics and so forth. With these things out of the way, I began to paint around 7am.

Christopher, age two, was here with me all day as usual. Rose, age fifteen, was home ill. Christopher required quite a bit of attention. Rose required very little. The task of keeping Christopher busy while I painted at my easel was constant.

First I made him a quick plate of French toast for breakfast, which he ate while watching his favorite cartoon. I painted while he ate. Then he needed a diaper change and clean clothes. After that he whined and fussed at my feet until he spied his older brother's new Playmobil policeman set high on a shelf--put there, of course, to keep it away from him. Finally I assented to let him play with his brother's toy, at the risk of having to replace a \$40 toy if he should break it.

Soon there were tiny Playmobil pieces all over the studio floor. This coordinated well with the laundry all over the main studio table. I stayed at my easel. Eventually Christopher got bored of the Playmobil set. I brought in his tricycle and rearranged the furniture in the studio a bit to create a track for him. He rode his tricycle round and round the table covered with laundry. I went back to my easel.

Then Christopher decided *he* wanted to paint. We stripped off his clothes. (This has become standard procedure after many sets of clothing were ruined during similar creative projects.) I found some art board, offered him brushes and helped him set up his palette with half a dozen colors of paint. Dressed only in his diaper, he painted for about 20 minutes. I worked next to him at my easel.

When he tired of painting, I searched my art supplies for something else to keep him busy. I found a couple of bags of beads and an old shoelace and showed him how to make a necklace. Soon there were beads spread all over his little work table, spilling generously onto the studio floor. I stayed at my easel.

After putting four or five beads on his necklace, Christopher asked me to tie the shoelace around him like a belt. At this point I changed his diaper again, dressed him and put on the new beaded belt. Now he decided he was going to play with a bow and arrow set. The arrow has a suction cup on the end that sticks really well on my file cabinet. Christopher knows how to shoot the arrow, but not how to load the bow. I painted in between repeated requests every minute or two to "Load it, mommy, load it!"

As the day went on, I danced between my easel and whatever Christopher was requiring at any given moment. We got hungry. I made popcorn for lunch. I took a break and went to pick up the older kids at school (after returning the Playmobil set and all of its pieces to the high shelf). I stopped at the dollar store and got plastic dart guns for each of the four boys. This kept all of them, including Christopher, engaged for almost an hour (miraculous)! I worked again at my easel.

We got hungry again and I made spaghetti at 8pm. By this time the house was a complete disaster. The spilled beads, scattered popcorn and tricycle were still in my studio. So was the laundry. The dishes were left on the table and I got in bed with the kids at 9pm.

Today I will get the house back in order, work on some writing projects for clients, put away the laundry and order more frames and art supplies. Tomorrow will be another painting day. I can hardly wait!

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