

## Accentuate the

# POSITIVE

Take a deep breath and relax. Think of some things that make you feel comfortable.

Are you comfortable now? Good.

So is Mary Meyer, who lives in Salem, Oregon, and has shared with us her personal art journal, *The Myth of Leisure*. Just looking through her book is very relaxing. You feel good about

her and about yourself. You feel—yes!—comfortable.

Meyer got the idea for her journal from Jennifer Louden, who wrote *The Woman's Comfort Book*. For Louden, a Comfort Journal includes things that “relate to your ideas of self-nurturing. It is a place where you can lose yourself in creating your personal source

book of comfort. You will be comforted when you work in it and comforted when you look back through it.”

Before reading Louden’s book, Meyer had been journaling for several years. “A friend gave me a couple of Griffin and Sabine postcards he picked up at a trade show,” she says. “I loved the art on them, but had no idea how to



*The Cover*

Mary Meyer's art journal explores *The Myth of Leisure*.



*Personal Correspondence*

A sample page from *The Myth of Leisure*.



### *All I Want*

*Sometimes our lives turn out pretty well, better than we expected.*

enjoy them best. So I bought a blank journal and stuck them in.”

After reading Louden’s book, Meyer added to her journals, not in a diary style, but in the comfort style. “It was a marvelous thing. When you assemble all the different things that bring you comfort or pleasure, you get a different image of yourself, one that you can really like.” This is like Harry Potter thinking about happy memories when he’s in a tough spot—or Oprah’s gratitude book. We learn to focus on the positive instead of the negative.

### **Discovery**

The journal itself is unusual because the pages are irregular. Where did she find it?

On Sundays, Mary and her husband Alan occasionally drove south from Salem about 35 miles to Corvallis, Oregon, home of Paperworks, a

store that specializes in exotic papers and craft media. (Corvallis is also the home of *RubberStampMadness*). “Paperworks is never open on Sunday,” Meyer says, “so I just stood in front of the window and drooled.”

But that was before she became comfortable.

Eventually, it came to pass that Mary and Alan were able to make the trip on a day when Paperworks was open. While Mary was admiring all the wonderful products upstairs, Alan was in the basement. He discovered a paper sample book that contained different sizes and types of papers—the sort of book a printer would use to order paper from a supplier. “Alan came up and told me I HAD to go see this book,” Mary says.

She bought several sample books and rather than remove the paper for collaging, she decided to turn them into *objets d’art*: “I liked the idea of work-

ing within the confines of the book. Boundaries make me more creative.”

Inside the book are quotations from Van Gogh (“The way to know life is to love many things.”); Henry Miller (“The aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely aware.”); and Picasso (“Everything you can imagine is real.”).

Some of the things that comfort Meyer include napping, sleeping late, daydreaming, dancing, walking, Sunday drives, watching the sun set, reading poetry, taking baths, drinking tea, eating cookies, listening to music and petting the cat. Each page is illustrated with stamped images or collage elements. (See her Personal Correspondence entry, shown on the facing page.)

One section in Meyer’s book is introduced by “In my leisure I will . . .” Here we find activities like “. . . build fairy cottages in the garden” and “. . . have time to sit and think.”



## *More pleasant discoveries*

Meyer is the manager of B. Dalton Bookseller in Salem. Her philosophy of living a comfortable life includes her work: “My day job is a constant source of inspiration, whether I’m salvaging packing paper, gorgeous junk mail, talking with customers, or just inhaling the paper and ink. I’ve been working there eleven years—I’d spend almost that much time in bookstores and libraries anyway.”

But why is her journal entitled *The Myth of Leisure*?

“The concept, *The Myth of Leisure*, was something I had been exploring for some time,” Meyer says. “The idea that we are constantly being marketed to for things for vacation, relaxation, leisure time. etc., and how we respond to it, intrigues me. For instance, how many women who buy bath salts actually take the time for a bath instead of a shower? We constantly buy things we have no time to use, as if we are buying the leisure itself. So, my idea was to illus-

“*Everything you can  
imagine is real.*”

-Picasso

trate the facts and fallacies of leisure in my own life. Some of the facts have been pleasant discoveries, some of the fallacies amusing.”

The journal cover (shown on page 84) bears the word Synergy, a tea cup, and a tag with an image of a woman looking pensive—or meditative—or relaxed maybe, depending on your point of view. A clock is placed prominently at the top of the cover. Says Meyer, “I love layers—stamping on tissue paper or tracing paper or rose petals and gluing the piece down, which you can see on the cover of my book.”

On another page reproduced here (shown on page 85) is a woman with a slightly enigmatic expression on her face. Underneath the cutout, Meyer has written: “When I was about 9 or 10

years old and standing in line at the end of recess I envisioned myself as a woman with diamonds and a mink stole getting into a convertible with my Cary Grant-like husband.”

There is also a circular tag on this page with her musings: “What is my reality? Sometimes it is better than I could ever have dreamed of. Many times.”

As you get deeper into the book, the words disappear and the art takes over. We are now in the inner recesses of the artist’s imagination. It’s a wonderful journey that includes art reproductions, clippings from magazines, and swatches of paint. At the end, you feel *very* comfortable.



*Michael Malan is the associate editor at RSM. Things that make him feel comfortable are pretty much the same things that make Mary Meyer comfortable. This article first appeared in the March/April 2005 issue.*