

# Doodling: Creative pastime more than time-waster

BY JENNIFER FORKER  
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A cocktail-napkin doodle created by Deb Douglas, assistant professor of art history at St. Louis University, was drawn at The Crow's Nest in Maplewood, Mo. The doodle was made for St. Louis culinary magazine's FEAST's 'Booze Doodl' series.

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Ben Bass is a longtime computer programmer and avid doodler. In elementary school, he doodled World War II airplanes, and doodled throughout high school and college.

Then doodling got away from him. "Parenting and a full-time job kind of drains the doodle out of you," Bass says.

Bass thanks a tedious work meeting 18 years ago for bringing him back to doodling. Bored out of his mind, the Affton, Mo., resident started tapping a pen on his notepad, making tiny ink dots on the paper. Eventually, the spots started to look like something -- a horse's head -- and Bass' doodling days returned with a vengeance.

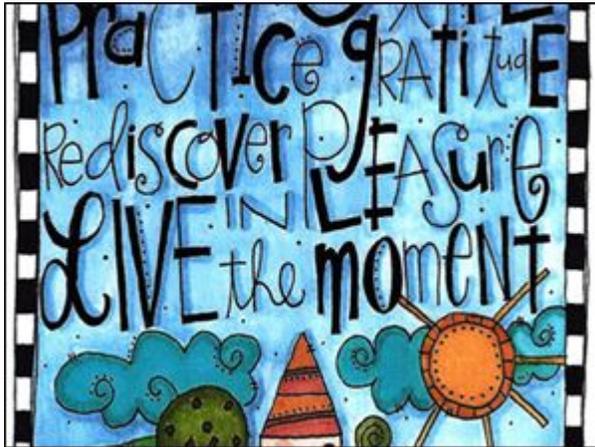
Today, he doodles in his personal pointillism whenever he's sitting with his hands free. "It lets me focus my energies. It lets my mind reset," says Bass, 49. "Those are the two main benefits of it."

Schoolchildren and adults doodle for the same reasons: out of boredom, to focus, to release pent-up energy. Doodling is a playful way for artists to tap their imaginations. For novices, classes are available online via crafters' blogs and at some small arts and crafts shops.

"It's a good way to germinate ideas," says Deb Douglas, assistant professor of art history at St. Louis University.

Ms. Douglas was featured this summer in Booze Doodle, a series in the St. Louis culinary magazine Feast. Local artists are asked to doodle with a Sharpie on a cocktail napkin at an area restaurant. First they're handed a cocktail to "stir the creative juices," according to the magazine's Web site.

Ms. Douglas doodled some floral and seashell patterns she'd been working into a painting, she says. On her own, she doodles when she feels stuck artistically.



A doodle lettering creation, 'Simplify Your Life,' by Stephanie Ackerman, of Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.

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"Doodling is often a way for me to make lists aesthetically," she says.

What is doodling, and what isn't it?

Ms. Douglas says there's a fine line between doodling and sketching. Doodling involves pulling ideas out of one's imagination or drawing

what one sees, whereas sketching is more purposeful.

Pam Keravuori, 67, an abstract painter in Fairfax Station, Va., says both sketching and doodling involve carving space with lines, but doodling is more carefree.

"I think doodling has become a popular thing ... because it's fun," says Ms. Keravuori. "It doesn't have some big, ulterior motive. And yet, it's practiced."

She teaches a "Doodle Ink" class on how to stylize handwriting with doodling.

Ms. Douglas questions why anyone would need to be taught how to doodle. "Then you're doodling someone else's ideas," she says.

But Ms. Keravuori says her doodle lettering class is popular with scrap-bookers and painters like herself who want to improve their penmanship without the rigors of calligraphy.

"The obvious rule is that it takes practice. The rest of it is without rules," says Ms. Keravuori, who blogs about her doodles at Pamela Jane's Studio. "You can do what you wish, as your imagination guides you."

That is the joy of doodling: There's no pressure to conform or perform. It's private until you want to share your doodles with others.

Stephanie Ackerman, 43, who teaches doodling classes on her blog, Homegrown Hospitality, says adults need help letting go of their fear of failure -- even when doodling.

"When it's a child, it's no problem," she says. "When it's an adult, it's an arm wrestle. You have to retrain your brain."

Ackerman, of Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., teaches a few basic concepts -- about lettering, shading, embellishing, and coloring -- then sets students loose to experiment.

"You can't teach doodling, but you can teach the techniques," she says. "The doodle part of it is free form. That's where you have to practice relaxing your mind and letting it flow."

For the new doodler, Ms. Keravuori suggests investing in a waterproof ink pen and un-textured paper.

A new book, *Fill in the Blank* (Quirk Books), by artists and graphic designers Elodie Chaillous and Vahram Muratyan, is full of visual and written prompts for tapping inner creativity.

"Most people are really scared by a blank sheet of paper," says David Borgenicht, publisher of Quirk Books. "This is hundreds of different starting places ... to let your pencil or markers do the work."

Read more at <http://www.toledoblade.com/Art/2012/09/09/Doodling-Creative-pastime-more-than-time-waster.html#1QEUH5btMJk17t9B.99>