

# designing your artist's journal pages –Part One

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My students seem to be interested in ways to design journal pages so they have more impact, or hang together better—visually pleasing pages, in other words!

Sometimes I just do a sketch or a collection of them on a page and leave it at that—other times, relationships seem to suggest themselves later, and I'll add a headline (or not!), or a box or a circle to focus attention on some element or tie it together with other related images. It becomes instinctive, almost. Sometimes just overlapping images, as at left, seems enough.



I didn't want to tie this article too much to MY style, so I made a series of designs using generic symbols from Photoshop Elements. That way, you can visualize your *own* art there...

On some of the page designs, I used lines like this \_\_\_\_\_ to suggest text—your writing or notes. In others I used mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm for the same purpose—it's just to give you ideas!

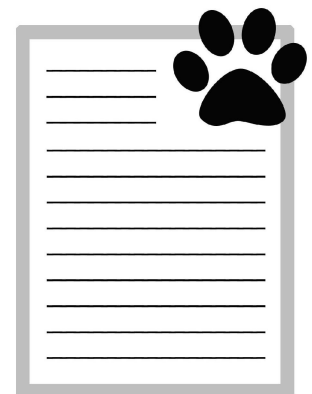
*NONE* of these designs are set in stone! They're just idea-starters—try them out to see what pleases you. As I said, I used generic Photoshop brushes to avoid too much in the way of suggestions!

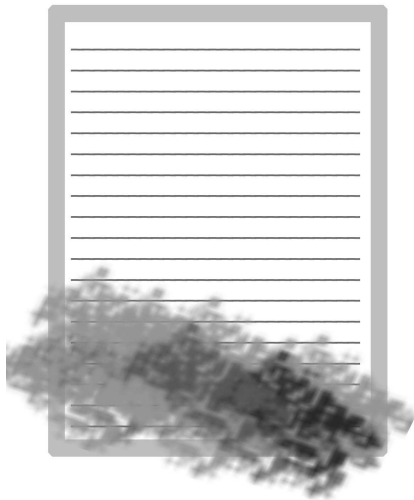


## DESIGN #1

This is a simple design that works on either page, depending on which side of the gutter you're on or where you started drawing!

The lines suggest wrapped text, and the image is pleasing overlapping a border—but of course it's nice and clean without a border, too.



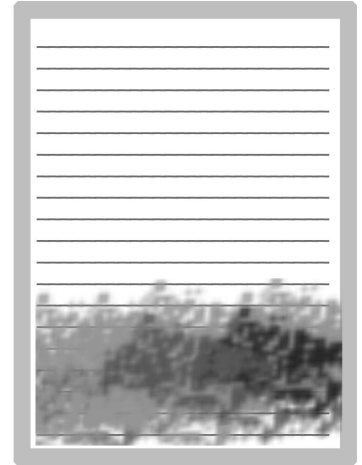


## DESIGN #2

I tend to like borders on my pages, but that's a personal decision. The large gray blog represents your art, which can overlap the border, if you wish. Add a headline or not, as you choose.

## DESIGN #3

At right I did the same thing but kept the "artwork" inside the border.



**DESIGN #4** is the same as #2, but with the "artwork" at the top of the page.

**DESIGN #5** does away with the border altogether and uses a headline to balance the busiest or darkest part of the "art."

large text



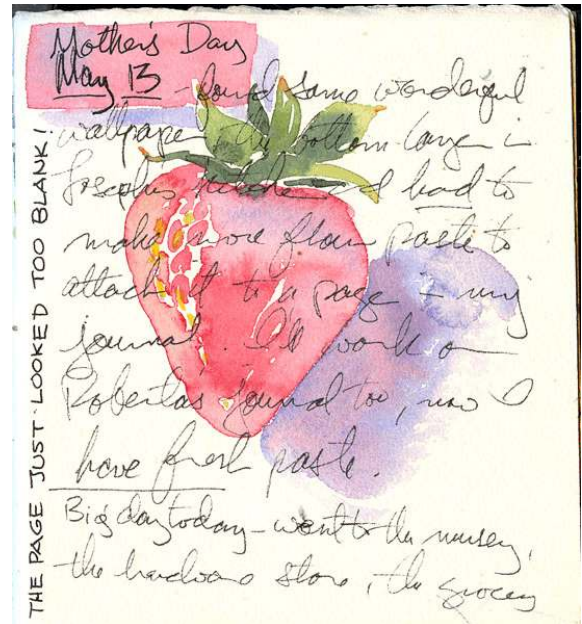
The journal page at left is roughly the same idea as #5, but the artwork takes more of the page and I didn't use a large text header.

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## DESIGN #6

This one has the text—your writing, observations, notes—superimposed over your artwork, which you keep pale enough to be read.



That's basically what I did on the little journal page at right, May 13, except I added the strawberry *after* writing my notes...the page was too empty and boring! I just kept it light enough that the words remained legible.



The journal page at left is basically similar to **DESIGN #7**, at right, except I chose not to use a headline.

Or a lot of text. OK, it's not *THAT* similar. :-)

The quinacrodone gold band at right holds my godchildren on the page—I blotted it while still wet for an interesting texture with the ink drawing.



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# header



**DESIGN #8** at left is similar to #6, but the text—your notes or handwritten observations—give the illusion of going right under the art.

That's what I did on the journal page at right—again, no header though.

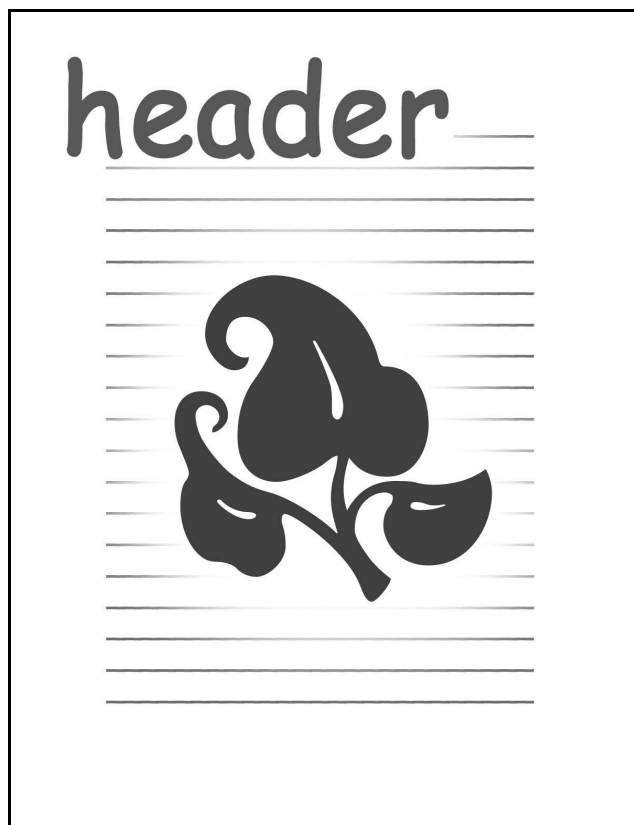


The **DESIGN #8 variation** at right shows a shadow effect that makes your art seem to float on the page and have a bit of dimension. That's what I did under the palette, above right.

# HEADER



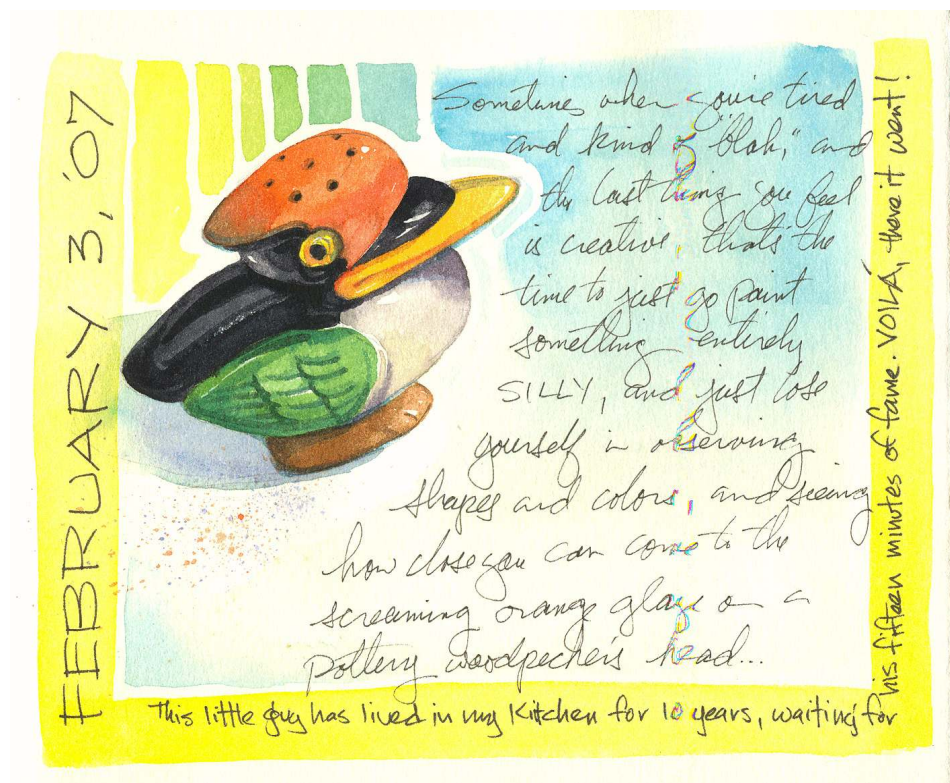
date, weather, location, mood, whatever!



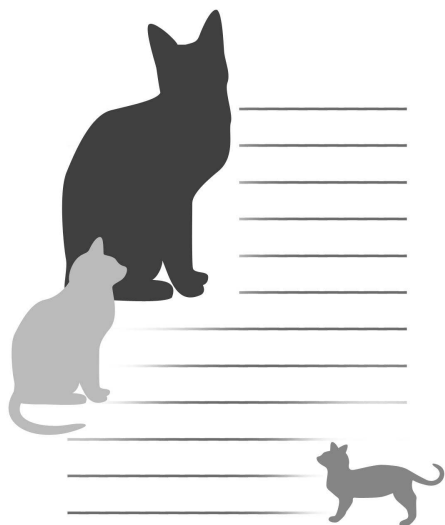
**DESIGN # 9** has no border, and your words are “wrapped” the art—and of could that art needn’t be dead center. Place it off to the lower right for a pleasing balance.

The thin black line is jut to show you the dimensions of the journal page, it’s not part of the design!

This silly little salt shaker has the text wrapped around the image so it’s easy to read and easy to DO. And of course the headline wraps around the page, too, on this one...



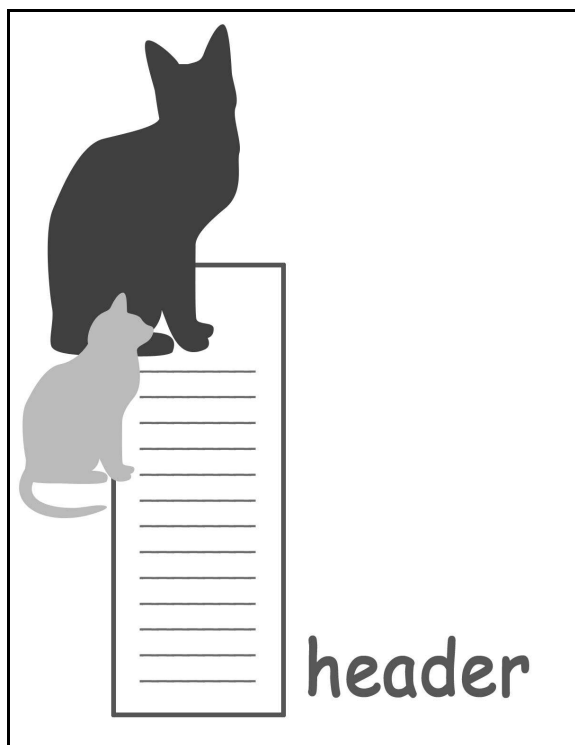
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related subjects, wrap text

**DESIGN #9** groups related subjects on a page, with text (notes, observations, whatever) wrapped around them.

This looks cool with a border, too, letting your art overlap or explode out of it. Use a bold header if you like!



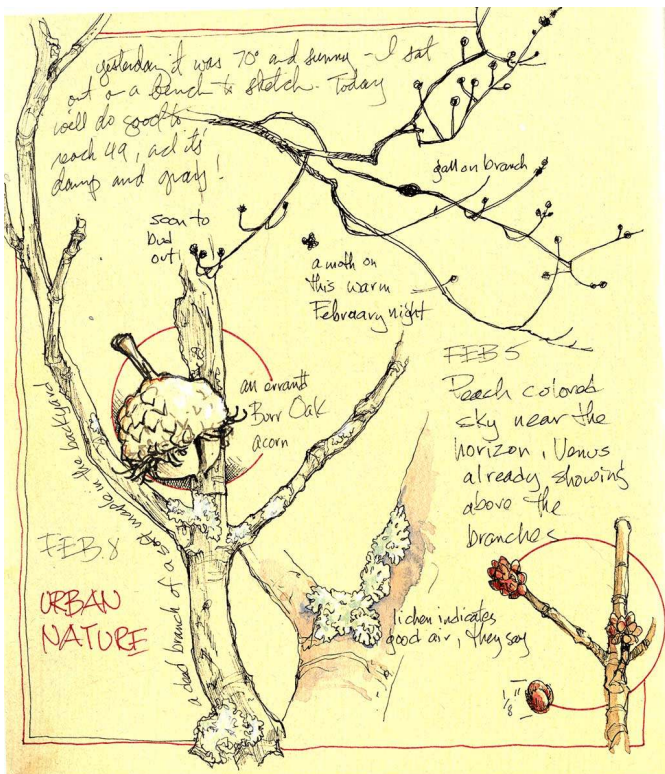
**DESIGN #10**, at left, uses lots of clean white space—nobody says you have to *fill* a page! I used a box with a border to contain my “notes,” and balanced the art with a header at the bottom of the page. Er...does that make it a footer?

Again, I added the thin black line just to set it off from this page, it’s not part of the design—unless YOU want it to be.

This is about a 5 x 7" ratio.

DESIGN #11 uses boxes and circles to contain or emphasize related subjects. The \_\_\_\_\_ suggest your notes, again.

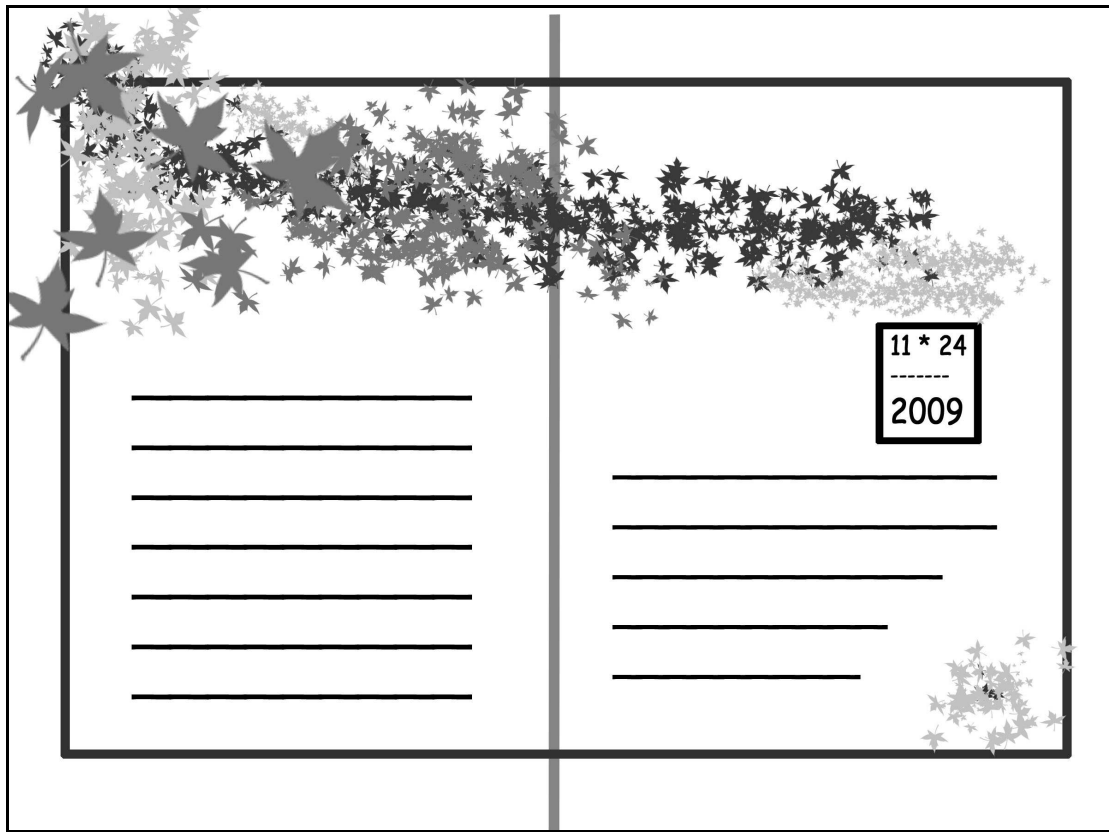
Overlapping elements makes for an interesting, cohesive page.



I used the same basic idea at left, to focus on the buds and acorn cap. Notice I placed the borders at the edges just inside the image, which makes it more dynamic.

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**DESIGN #12** shows a horizontal format, though of course ALL these can be adapted to either horizontal or vertical—a bit more “art” provides balance at lower right. Sometimes I like to add a little date cartouche...that could be at lower right, instead of more art.

The gray line down the center is just to show that it’s 2 pages...

Here, the bit of text at left balances the composition—I sketched this in a HUGE hurry as the sun was setting over the buildings.



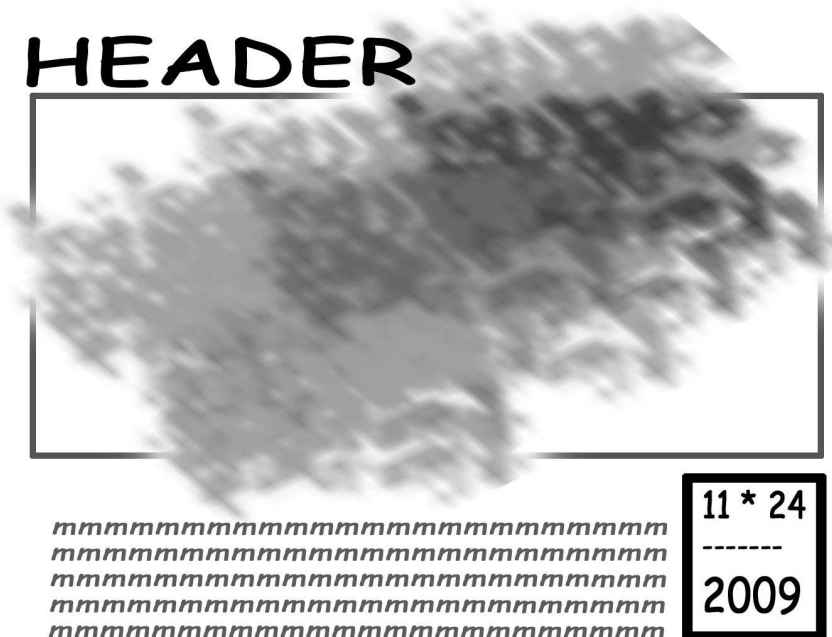
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Here are two more possibilities for 2-page spreads. **DESIGN # 13** has art that extends off the edges of the page (always an interesting design element!)



...and **DESIGN #14**, a more formal design with the date cartouche balancing a header and a border emphasizing the large artwork.

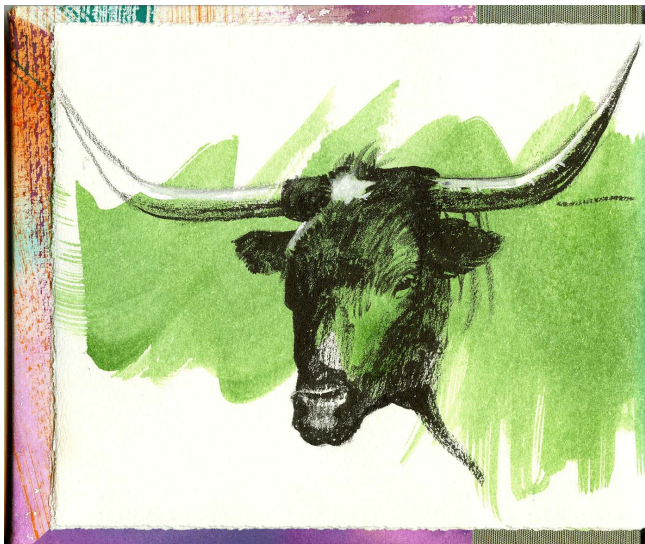




More variations on the vertical theme, which would also work fine with a horizontal...on #15, the header (footer?) and other notes balance the art. This looks good with or without a border—and of course any width of border you prefer.

**DESIGN #16**, below, uses a band of “color” (use your imagination!) down the side of the page...again, the art is balanced with the text at bottom.

Sometimes I tone pages with a band or splash of acrylic paint before beginning the journal, just to have some interesting effects.



That's what I did above, and then added an India ink brush pen drawing over it, with just a touch of white gouache. (No need to always add text, of course, and I don't!)

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