

---

## Silva Rerum Art Journal with Get Messy

---

### Chapter 1 - Overview

#### Overview

(upbeat music) - My name is Caylee Grey and I'm a South African artist living in Germany. I'm an avid art journaler and I love creating things in books and that is why I found Get Messy along with my friend Lara. Silva rerum is Latin for a forest of things and historically was used by noble Polish families to keep kind of like a family chronicle of their lives. For me, my silva rerum is an amazing place to put little piece of my life into. I like to use it as a very low-pressure way of creating and adding little tidbits of my life into a journal. I'm going to show you how to bind your own book, what to put in it, all the ideas for stuff from your everyday life, and then I'm gonna show you three ways to create art with those little pieces. I've made dozens of these. They're really great at being an everyday journal and you can customize them to fit your life however you like. (upbeat music)

#### Materials

- For my solver-rerums, I love making my own book because I can use only pieces that mean something to me. So I'm gonna be using a old vintage book. And to bind it I'm going to have an Exacto knife, an awl, some embroidery thread, and needle of some sorts, a pair of scissors. Then inside of the book we're gonna put papers that mean something to us so I just have an assortment over here and we'll be talking about them a little bit more in the binding lesson. I also have two of my favorite pens and some washi tape. And I have a whole bunch of ephemera that mean something to my heart. And then I've got my Tombow adhesive runner for the ephemera and for the cover of the book I've got some modeling paste, a stencil, and a palette knife. Because this is your solver-rerums, I want you to choose only the things that means a lot to you. Only, only your favorite things. Don't use anything that you feel mediocre about. If you don't want to bind your own book, then it's totally fine to use a store-bought one.

#### Binding the book

- I like to bind my own book because it means that every single thing that I've put in here has been put in here with love. I'm using this vintage book that I found at obviously, a vintage bookstore, and I'm gonna gut the pages of the book. If you want to do this same type of thing, look for a book where you can see that this goes separate to the spine, because that's gonna be the easiest for you to gut. I'm just gonna take my X-Acto knife, and I'm going to separate it from the cover. Do this very slowly, otherwise you're going to get your X-Acto knife right through the book spine, and that is not good for anyone. Do it very slowly so that you're not cutting through your book cover. Beautiful. Once this side is done, you can just repeat it at the back. Woo-hoo! Make sure that you keep everything inside of the book because it makes for awesome art jelling pages, but for this project we're just gonna use the cover. So, depending on your book, you might want to add an extra inner cover, but I really this book plate happening over here, and I quite like the vintage look, so I'm gonna leave my book like this. But if you feel like it's a little bit ugly, maybe you didn't cut it on a proper line, you can definitely just take a piece of paper that you like, or maybe a fabric, and cover the inside of your book. If I'm adding paper to my inside cover, then I like to use my Tombow glue runner just because it is dry glue and it's not gonna make the paper warp. I've cut out a selection of my favorite pieces of papers. I'm gonna give you a few examples of papers to use, let them spark

ideas, and what you can rummage through your paper (mumblin). I have some vintage illustrations over here. This is from a magazine, scrapbook paper, old book pages, obviously. This is from a paper marbling workshop. More magazine. And then it's also really nice to get some papers that have texture. So, tissue paper's great for that. Different types of paper. Ones that are semi-transparent. Maybe some vintage ledger paper like these ones. This is from an old book with a poem that I absolutely love. Some map paper. Really whatever you feel like putting into it. When I am cutting my papers down I like to use a template. So, I use this as my template and all I did is I did a rough estimation of how it's gonna fit into my book, and I used that to cut out all the other papers. All of these pages are already folded in half. You can see some of them are a little bit smaller like this one with my favorite poem on, but I kind of like a variety because it adds a lot of interest. You just need to make sure it's not gonna be bigger than your template, 'cause obviously, then it's not gonna fit in the book. I made my template by just cutting a piece of paper out to roughly fit the size of the book. You can see it's gonna fit in quite nicely there, and this is what I use to cut out my pages. So, I have this artwork that I played around with, and I want to use it as a page in my book. You can see I just cut it out to be the exact size of the template, and then I can just fold it over in order to make a little page. Now, I really like using a bone folder for this, especially with these thicker pages just because it does get the paper a little bit more flat so that there's not too much chunk in the book because it's gonna chunk up anyway. If you don't have a bone folder, you can use a ruler, you can use a side of a pair of scissors, or you could just fold it. I mean, this is just perfectionism doing this. Once you have all of your pages ready and folded, we're gonna bind them into signatures, which are just classes of pages. If you want to know how many pages you need to use, a good way to do this is to stack them all together. This is not a very exact science. But you're gonna stack them all together, put them into your book, and see if they fit, more or less. Okay, I like binding three signatures in my book. Usually, it looks better if you use three or five signatures, but it's really up to you and how many you feel like doing. Since I'm doing three, I'm going to divide my stack into three equal parts. And I'm going to choose my very favorite pages for the front of the signature. So, I know I really like this one, so he's gonna be the leader of this signature. Also, I really like this one, and this guy can be the other leader. And then we are just going to assign our pages to signatures. When you are doing this, it's really good to have a variety of colors, variety of textures in each signature just so that you don't get bored. Once we've evenly distributed our pages, I wanted to put them together in a pleasing way. Using the cover of our signature as the base, I'm just gonna put it in with pages that look good next to each other. Usually, it makes sense if something is very busy such as this page, then I'm gonna put something that is less busy next to it. And once again, there is no science to this. It's just whatever feels right to you. If you've got something that is semi-transparent, then obviously, it works well if you check what it looks like. And if there are any pages that no longer speak to you that you're no longer feeling, then just take them out and use them in another project. And you can always refold your page the other way if you feel like, I mean, I think that is definitely gonna look better than this, so I just want to fold it the other way. Good practice when you're binding a journal is to make sure that your middle page of your signature is a bit stronger. So, for example, I wouldn't use this marbled paper because it's quite thin and flimsy, and it's gonna break easily. So, your middle one needs to be a bit stronger than the others. If you're set on having a flimsy page in the middle, then using some washer tape down here will just reinforce it. Okay, so I think this signature is all ready. Then you are going to repeat this with the other two signatures. We're going to now bind our signatures into the book, and I'm gonna start just by doing one. I'm going to use a template for my holes to be punched, and I'm gonna go back to my trusty

little template guy over here. I'm gonna look at the spine. I'm doing a long stitch for this journal, which means I need six holes. And there are two, two, two all clasped together. So, if we go in the middle, you can become very mathematical with this, but I do not have time for that so I'm just going to do it based on my eye. Dot here. And I will draw a little there for myself to punch. There's two. There are another two close to the top. And another two close to the bottom. I'm gonna put my template against here and just put lines where the holes need to be. (mumbling) that line. Alright. I'm gonna punch through these with my awl just to get the holes where I want them. Be careful not to punch yourself. We do not want to bind our own hand into the book. Once that one's been done, we can punch through the journal. I am going to make holes next to it for the second and third signature. Be careful not to do it too close to the edge of the spine because it's gonna make your book a little bit weaker. And now, I'll make punch marks into the spine of your book. Go very carefully through here. If you want to make your little punches a little bit cleaner you can go in from this side, but I'm not too worried about that. Okay. Can do just a quick check on your spine on the other side, and I mean, you can see that my holes are not perfect, but it's gonna end up still pretty beautiful. Now, we're gonna take our template and we are going to use our awl to punch through each of the signatures. You're gonna punch through them as a whole. I know that some people like to lay it flat and try to get exact, but this is the way I've found the easiest for me, and I like to hold this slightly closed 'cause it makes it easier to punch through. I also like being careful and not punching my fingers. It's nice when I don't have pain. And the bigger your holes are gonna be, the easier it's gonna be to find. Here we go. Now that we've made our holes with the help of the template, we are going to bind our signature into the book. I like to keep my awl in there just to keep its place and make sure it's not wobbling around. And the amount of thread usually, I think about three or four times the length of the book works very well. If you're like me and you like a bit of room, then just add a little bit more thread. I am using plain embroidery thread. You can use any kind of thread, as long as it doesn't stretch. I'm using a needle with a nice, large eye, and blunt on this side because I like to prick myself a lot. So, blunt means that I'm not gonna prick myself as much. Leaving a tail of about six inches, we're gonna go from the inside of our signature, outwards at the second hole. I'm putting it through before adding it to here just to get everything right. And I'm just leaving a little bit there so that I can knot that later on. It's easier to work with your last signature first, and so I'm going to go into that hole, the second from the top out of the book. So, pull this snag, but not too tight to give yourself some leeway. And then we're going to come back in at the top hole over here. Then we need go to the top of our signature over here. Wriggle your way through all the holes. And pull it through. If your papers are getting in the way, you can always use a binder clip just to keep them together. Once we've come up we're gonna put on the old back through this original first hole, and when you're doing that be careful not to split your thread. And back up through that hole. And then just tighten all your threads. The first set of holes is always a little bit fiddly. We're gonna then go back into our book over here. Be careful not to wiggle your signature too much because then these are going to loosen. If your holes feel like they are a little bit off, then just get your awl again in the center just to reposition them. There we go. It's always more difficult to do the outside going in. Okay. Make sure this is nice and tight, and then go back out through this hole. Then we're gonna go back in again through this one over here. And then we're gonna go back out over here. And then we are gonna put our thread back into here. Once again, be careful not to split your thread. Check that all of your thread is as tight as you can make it, and then just use your thread to tie a knot with the tail to close off your signature. Can make a knot. And then cut off any excess. And there we have our first signature in our journal. Attach your other two

signatures in the same way. (slow music) (moves into upbeat music) This is what the book looks like when it's all bound. We have our three signatures bound into the book, and you can see it's got lovely assortment of pages. And I mean, even if we just left it like this, it would already be a work of art.

#### Adding material

- Now that your book is bound, we're gonna put a whole bunch of stuff in it. And I'm gonna give you a few ideas for what stuff that you can find from your own stash and put in your *silva rerum*. Because the journal already has its own busyness because we've used our own pages, you can really start wherever you're drawn to. I love that part about a *silva rerum*. I tend to work in layers, I add things as I feel like it, I add things as they speak to me. This is a great idea which is a vintage photo. I've been very drawn to vintage photos of mothers and their babies at the moment because I am a new mother. This is some paint swatching that I've done. I hate throwing these away and my *silva rerum* is the perfect place to put them. I like sticking things down with this Tombow tape runner. The glue's dry and it's not going to warp our pages. I also really like paint chips. I also like keeping bits of envelopes from my friends and then I've got my friends' handwriting in here as well, which is pretty special. If you've got more flimsy pieces of paper, then a regular glue stick will work just fine. Something that I really, really like doing lately is if I see a pattern or something on the computer, I print it out and I use that in my *silva rerum* because it's a great way of transitioning digital to tangible. This is a close up of a jersey that sold on Zara. Love this so much, I printed it out. I've also used pictures from people's Instagram stories and Instagram posts, but if you are taking from another artist, just absolutely message her or him and make sure that they are comfortable with you using it in your work. As you fill your book, it's going to get nice and chunky, things are gonna stick out. If you like that look, great. If you don't like it, you can always trim it off. I really like using pieces from art that I've tried out. Definitely packaging that speaks to me. This is so beautiful, I could never throw it away. That is why I have a *silva rerum*, otherwise I would be a complete hoarder and my entire house would just be filled with paper. I also like to record words that I've heard or that I've read. I have different ways of storing these. I will, often when I'm reading late at night, I might just quickly take a photo of it and then print it out so that I know I can write it into my journal. I also like to make a note of when someone says something interesting to me that speaks to me. I keep it on a to do list app on my phone and whenever I'm working on my *silva rerum*, I can just bring this up and I can write it into my journal. So I really like this one from Neil Gaiman and it is a whole speech of his but essentially the message is make good art. So I'm going to letter that. I'm using my Kuretake ZIG brush pen. And I'm just writing slowly. Okay. Basically anything that catches my eye that I am in contact with in my everyday life. So just this is a nappy box but I really like the little doodles at the bottom so I've kept that because I know that'll look really nice in my *silva rerum*. It's a good idea to keep a little box, that way you can put all the papers from your day in and then you've got a place where you can just pull things out and add them to your *silva rerum*. I like to do it on a daily basis because I really, really like this book and I feel like it's such low pressure. I can just add things when I feel like it, as the mood strikes me. Every now and then, I do like to get a little bit fancy and I'm gonna show you three examples of that now. So the easiest and low pressure way for me to get fancy is just by collaging my found pieces. I'm gonna be using these guys. And I'm just gonna paste them down in a way that feels good to me. I really love tearing my papers. As I'm tearing this, you can see that one side has this lovely bit of extra detail, other side has a little bit less detail, so keep this in mind while you are tearing your paper. If using vintage paper, it's probably better to use a

glue stick rather than a tape runner unless you want your tape runner to have a whole bunch of vintage paper in it because that's what happens, and zero glue. When I'm collaging, I do like to repeat elements just to keep things balanced. I'm gonna finish this page off with a quote and I'm going to be using one of the quotes from the book that I was reading. This quote is from *American Gods* and I really liked it, so I snapped a picture of it while I was reading late at night. And it says "I don't sleep, it's overrated." I'm using my Pilot G2 pen for this. A *silva rerum* is the perfect place to put little bits of paper pieces and quotes that you really want to remember. Another way I like to get fancy is by embellishing a photo. So I have this photo that I took last night. If you print your photos black and white, then that really helps this technique. Then you're not competing for color. I'm using some of my favorite colors of acrylic paint and my fingers. And I'm just going to smear them on the page. Once this paint is dry, we're just gonna add some marks. I like to add symbols that have a little bit of meaning to me. Can add colors that have meaning to you. Maybe you want to add your birthstones or your birth flower. I have rubbish birthstone and birth flower, so I'm not gonna put those in. But I think I will add the swan. If you are not good at drawing, like I am, you can make it as abstract as you feel like. It doesn't have to be a scientifically correct, anatomically correct illustration, just a little reminder for yourself. Then I also like to add little marks like these circles just to bring things in. Not everything has to have meaning but it is really nice to bring some of yourself into your page, besides obviously your self-portrait. You may want to go back and add some of the acrylic paint. I'm gonna use the back of a paintbrush for this because I hate washing paintbrushes. Okay. You may feel like adding a bit of scribbles to this. Sometimes framing it is quite fun. And there you have it. Adding some abstract paint and mark making is a great way to elevate a photo from just a memory to a piece of art.

#### Noting every day life

- A *silva rerum* is the place to catalog your everyday life and even if you've got a Post-it lying around or something like that, having your own handwriting in your journal is a fantastic form of memory-keeping, giving yourself insight into the person who you were at the time. I have this note, it's a verse that spoke to me when I read it. I just wrote it down on a Post-it note. I'm gonna add it to my *silva rerum*. I'm just going to simply paste it down. To tie the two pages together, I'm going to summarize this a little bit on this side. I'm gonna use alpha stickers that I've had for years and years and years. I don't have an E left, I'm just going to change my F. And I'm gonna finish it off with this little flower illustration that I found in a magazine. Because I did choose a vintage book with a pretty plain cover, I'm going to add a little bit of texture onto it. I'm gonna do this with some modeling paste, and I have a stencil. I really like this little bird here but not more than this pattern, so he gets to be hidden behind it. I'm going to wash my stencil down to keep it in place. I'm gonna use a palette knife to get the modeling paste down onto the book cover. I am currently completely and utterly in love with modeling paste. I love how creamy and smooth this brand is, it's Golden brand, and it really feels like I'm icing a cake, it's just so much fun to play with and I really like the look of it. Be sure to clean your stencil as soon as you're done with it, otherwise you're not gonna have a good time the next time you use it. Last thing I want to add to my cover is just a label with the date. Make sure to leave your modeling paste to the side while it dries, you don't wanna touch it and smudge it everywhere. I love these types of journals, I love making them, I have them all the time and I have a variety of uses for them. Sometimes I have a everyday kind of *silva rerum* that is my go-to, I always have one of these on the go. This *silva rerum* was also made in a vintage book and you can see I've got a solid color scheme going on for my life. I also used modeling paste for these flowers but I

---

added a little bit of blue acrylic paint to it just to give it a bit of color. This was actually the very first one I made. You can see for this one I did add an inside cover paper to it. I also added a strip of duct tape just to reinforce the spine because this was an older book. This one I also used as a place for me to play a bit, I did a bit of journaling here, took a very boring photo of my medicine cabinet. Sometimes I use a lot of stuff in my *silva rerum*, it just depends how I feel and how much time I have. You can clearly see there I did not have a lot of time. But that's what I like about these journals, you can go to any page, you can start creating, because you found it yourself there's a lot of stuff already in the journal. This one has a lot of journaling. There you can see another example of the photo with the abstract acrylic around it. You can see my duck swan period's face through. And you can see I'm not worried about these pages looking "unfinished" or... It's just like everything is super low pressure for me. You can add bits of conversation from your day, tea bag wrappers, whatever you feel like in this journal, it's all for you. Journals can also have a broader theme. This one is all about my motherhood journey so it's got photos in here, it's got a lot of words in it. Completely low pressure in here. So with this one I just kept this open over time and instead of putting it in my regular *silva rerum* I just added anything that had to do with motherhood into this journal. A *silva rerum* is also a really great place to process a bigger piece of information that you had. So for example, this one was made after reading a book about art and resistance to making art. I summarized it in here, I wrote down the key points. This one was done in one sitting. For this last example, I was too lazy to make my own book so I just bought a regular moleskin cahier. It's got very thin papers, but it was totally fine for what I did. I just embellished the cover with some thread. And this is from a friend of mine. Some more mother and child imagery, vintage photos. Notes from friends. Words that I really liked from a podcast. Photos, me and my two homeboys. Sometimes I like to incorporate art that my friends have sent with me with a little bit of my own art, this is a really fun place to play with that. I really like using my typewriter on paint chips to write a very special note to myself. Sometimes I incorporate found words that I've heard from people. You can also use old artwork repurposed. For example, I just cut these out into circles and made a mini collage. *Silva rerum* means a forest of things, so keep that in mind while you're building the trees of your own forest.