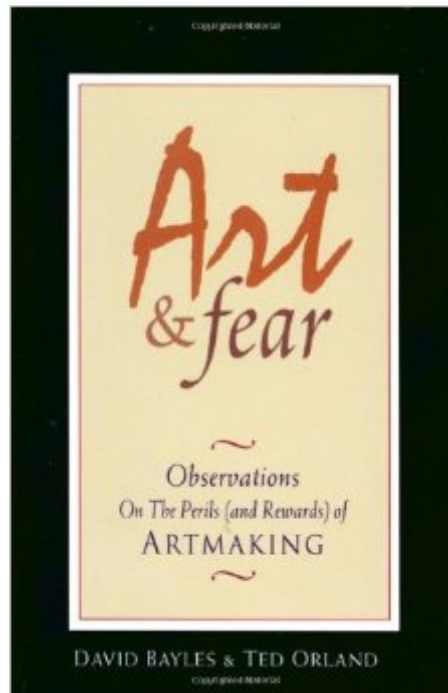


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# Art & Fear: Observations On The Perils (and Rewards) Of Artmaking



## Synopsis

"This is a book about making art. Ordinary art. Ordinary art means something like: all art not made by Mozart. After all, art is rarely made by Mozart-like people; essentially "statistically speaking" there aren't any people like that. Geniuses get made once-a-century or so, yet good art gets made all the time, so to equate the making of art with the workings of genius removes this intimately human activity to a strangely unreachable and unknowable place. For all practical purposes making art can be examined in great detail without ever getting entangled in the very remote problems of genius." -from the Introduction

Art & Fear explores the way art gets made, the reasons it often doesn't get made, and the nature of the difficulties that cause so many artists to give up along the way. The book's co-authors, David Bayles and Ted Orland, are themselves both working artists, grappling daily with the problems of making art in the real world. Their insights and observations, drawn from personal experience, provide an incisive view into the world of art as it is experienced by artmakers themselves. This is not your typical self-help book. This is a book written by artists, for artists - it's about what it feels like when artists sit down at their easel or keyboard, in their studio or performance space, trying to do the work they need to do. First published in 1994, Art & Fear quickly became an underground classic. Word-of-mouth response alone - now enhanced by internet posting - has placed it among the best-selling books on artmaking and creativity nationally. Art & Fear has attracted a remarkably diverse audience, ranging from beginning to accomplished artists in every medium, and including an exceptional concentration among students and teachers. The original Capra Press edition of Art & Fear sold 80,000 copies.

An excerpt: Today, more than it was however many years ago, art is hard because you have to keep after it so consistently. On so many different fronts. For so little external reward. Artists become veteran artists only by making peace not just with themselves, but with a huge range of issues. You have to find your work...

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I agree that this is a very clearly, respectfully, and unpretentiously written book that can serve as a companion to any artist. Making art can otherwise be a lonely, daunting undertaking. My concern for readers of this book, as with readers of *The Artist's Way*, is that it can be a pacifier. If it gets you to your work sooner and with greater courage and confidence, all the better. But if it substitutes for the process itself--makes you feel better but does not get you "working"--then it's something to pick up but let go of. There's a growing genre of books like this out there, some (such as this one) better than others. The sage advice gets recycled, as do the homilies from famous people. And again, that's fine, as long as they get us to a place where we are working with more energy and joy, but perhaps not so fine if the internal process becomes more interesting than the art-making. Did you paint today? No. But I reread passages of *Art & Fear*...

*Art & Fear* is an easy book to rave about, but it is a particularly difficult book to write about. The authors have chosen their words so well, that it seems as if there ARE no other words with which to talk about this subject or this book. I'll try anyway, fully knowing that whatever I might say surely will not please me as much as what I have read in their pages. And this is part of the message of *Art & Fear*, one of the lessons to be learned - just do it and learn from it. *Art & Fear* is an unpretentious little paperback, written by two lifelong friends who have been artists, as well as other things, for most of their lives. Both of them have their feet firmly rooted in the real world that we all live in (however high their ideas and ideals might fly), and both of them have keen insights into what enables individuals to produce good art and to continue to produce good art, and what stumbling blocks stop many individuals. These insights are of value to artists in any medium whatsoever, and are in fact likely to be of significant value to many individuals who don't think of themselves as artists at all. One doesn't need to be an artist to be struggling with goals that seem beyond your reach and a lack of appreciation from others; it's just a little more pervasive in the artmaking world. Reading this book is like sitting down with the authors for a long and lively conversation. You'll learn something of them, and something of yourself, and good things are sure to come from it. I've

actually found it too good to keep to myself - I'm on my 6th copy now, as I keep giving them away to friends!

I do not describe myself as a practicing artist. I have practiced Emergency Medicine in large urban teaching hospitals for 25 years. Until a year ago, I hadn't played a 'cello or bass viol for 35 years, and hadn't written a poem in almost as many. I started writing letters to a friend making a difficult passage 8 months ago, to support the process, and began to recall the letters and poetry I used to write. I wrote 50 letters in 6 months, then "hit a wall." After reading this book, I began rediscovering my "art," outside of my professional and personal life. Art may not be my life, but my Life is more Artful after reading this book. It will not get the "disappointed and afraid" a good job after art school, but it may help anyone begin to reconnect to that Fearlessness that permeates early childhood, and from that, a richer expression of themselves. I will not write the great American novel, and probably nothing publishable, but the authors have made a genuine contribution to the quality of my life today. Try it.

Before you even buy this book, I believe you need to determine what you hope to get out of it. If you're hoping to identify with other artists who have faced doubts, fears and obstacles, you'll not be disappointed. This book delivers on its title: it is about ART & FEAR. It will describe where you are or have been. It could even help you stay there, if you choose. This book says it explores "the way art gets made", why it often does not, and the difficulties along the way. As such, it is, in its own words "observational", not instructive. So it is not a "How To" book. It is also analytical, though not necessarily insightful, so it's not intended for your next meditation. And though other reviewers have said otherwise, I wouldn't recommend this book to help rouse anyone from their creative slumber. If you're a practicing artist or would-be artist who is stuck, I don't believe this book will help free you. You may find identification or sympathy with other artists - maybe even justification - but not the inspiration, motivation or plain old instruction to get you going again. Better to read something that is designed to be instructive or inspiring. (One inspiring book that springs to mind is Denise Sherkerjian's UNCOMMON GENIUS which profiles 40 winners of the MacArthur Prize. These artists cross all creative disciplines, face numerous obstacles and still create. It says a lot worth listening to and applying to the process of creating.) I received ART & FEAR as a gift and read it as much out of curiosity as to honor the giver. I rated it 3 STARS because it (a.) has some good quotes, and (b.) helped me appreciate how differently I think about and respond to the doubt, ambiguity and chaos in my art. Compared to the Bayles & Orland landscape, I have more faith, trust and love in the process

and the results of my creation.

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