

## **Sensing Nature: The alchemy of connecting to the natural world through custom-made field journals**

### **Information**

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Date/ Time: Saturday, October 17, 9 am – 5 pm  
Sunday October 18, 9 am – 4 pm.

Meet at: [Black Rock Nature Center](#), **Joshua Tree National Park** (click on the link for a map to the meeting site)

Address: 9800 Black Rock Canyon Rd. Yucca Valley, Ca 92284

Instructors: Brenda Littleton, Artist, Writer, Instructor and Monica Lynne Mahoney, Artist, Writer, Naturalist, Instructor

### **Overview**

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Join artists Brenda Littleton and Monica L. Mahoney in a collaborative hands-on journal making workshop in the heart of Joshua Tree National Park. The two-day course begins with an introduction to book making and ends with a field journal that holds the experience of being immersed in the striking landscapes of Joshua Tree National Park. Students will create their own glued accordion journal to contain thoughts, images, drawings, paintings and poetic incantations inspired by guided engagements in nature. This is both a hands-on workshop and a field studies class open to all artistic skill levels. Moderate hiking will take place to observe and experience the spirit of the Park.

Celebrated for her richly textured and layered art books that take the reader on a journey into the mind of an alchemist, Brenda Littleton will guide students in the basic design and construction of a glued accordion journal, one which will document the weekend's workshop of creative exploration and expression. Skills learned are transferable into book making for photography, poetry, drawing and fine art painting.

Known for her deep connection to the desert through her expressive landscape drawings and paintings, together with her rich knowledge of the native flora and ecology of the region, Monica L. Mahoney will guide informative natural-history walks in spectacular locations. With newly created journals in hand, students will be facilitated in completing short creative exercises to explore the

power of nature as muse for self-discovery and one's personal connection to the land. Students will have a variety of opportunities to choose what they are most inspired by such as the shapes and forms, plants and animals, and vistas and horizons using watercolor, graphite, writing, and collage. At the end of the course students will take home a hand-made journal that serves as a visual narrative of their experiences in one of the most beautiful Joshua Tree woodland plant communities in the world.

The class is designed for all artistic skill levels. Please take note that we will be walking over uneven terrain for up to three miles.\* Students will be given one-to-one book making, drawing and painting instruction as needed. The goal of the workshop is to learn simple book making techniques and creative journaling methods to deepen our connection to Nature and ourselves.

## **Itinerary**

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Saturday, October 17, 9 am – 5 pm

*Black Rock Nature Center*

- Introduction
- Book making hands-on workshop
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- Book making hands-on workshop
- Field Exercises: drawing & writing the alchemy of the land

Sunday, October 18, 9 am – 4 pm

*Black Rock Nature Center*

- Book making hands-on workshop
- Field Exercises: drawing & writing the alchemy of the land
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- Field Exercises: sacred space, painting immersion in Nature, collage
- Final assembly of journal
- Discussion and sharing the journals in a natural gallery setting
- Clean-up

## **What to Bring to the Course**

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*The 10 Essentials: Every day in the Desert*

- Day pack
- 4 quarts of water
- Closed toe hiking shoes
- Lunch and snacks
- Clothing layers
- Hat

- Sun glasses
- Sunscreen
- Notebook and pencil/pen
- Whistle

## Necessary Art Supplies

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- **Drawing Pencils such as:** Mechanical pencil .07 or .05 HB with lead and eraser refills and/or a selection Derwent Graphic 6B, 4B, 2B, B, HB, and 2H. (Derwent makes Graphic technical sets of 12 to 24. The medium set of 12 from 6B-4H can be good to have in general for experimenting in class and on your own.
- **Compressed and Vine Charcoal:** your choice of types. A basic charcoal assortment kit is very useful: <https://www.dickblick.com/products/faber-castell-pitt-basic-charcoal-assortment/>
- **Prismacolor NuPastel:** box set of 12 assorted colors is plenty **OR** individual colors of your choice for a desert palette such as: black, buff, light Naples yellow, light ochre, burnt sienna, raw sienna, burnt umber, corn yellow, light sap green, olive green, pistachio green, light blue, indigo blue, blue haze, cold medium gray, warm medium gray, warm very light gray, and ivory.
- **Basic Watercolor field set:** good choice is Winsor & Newton Cotman Watercolor Set - Pocket Plus Travel Set of 12 <https://www.dickblick.com/items/00337-2009/> **OR** Winsor & Newton Cotman Watercolors Compact Set - Assorted Colors, Set of 14, Half pans <https://www.dickblick.com/items/00325-1029/>
- **Your choice of brushes:** the above field sets should come with a small field brush which is adequate for the simple watercolor sketching we will be doing. For a greater variety (recommended) choose sabeline or nylon watercolor brushes to include three Rounds (sizes 1, 3, 5) and one Flat (1/2").
- **Mars White Combi or Block Plastic Eraser** <https://www.dickblick.com/products/staedtler-mars-plastic-erasers/>
- **Kneaded Eraser** (if not already part of the basic charcoal kit, get this separately)
- **Pencil Sharpener**
- **Sketchbook exact type (important!):** Canson Mix Media Art Book 7 in x 10 in 98 lb. with microperfortated sheets. <https://www.dickblick.com/items/12468-1022/> **OR** Canson Watercolor Pad 7" x 10" 140 lb <https://www.dickblick.com/items/10173-1007/> with microperfortated sheets. **NOTE: We will be using paper from this sketchbook to make your own journals. Be sure to purchase one of these sketchbooks.**
- **Straight edge metal ruler**
- **X-Acto #1 Knife w/standard #11 blades**
- **#2 Pencil and eraser**
- **Any found objects (flat), pictures, pre-printed poems, drawings, etc... that you might want to bring with you to include in the book.**
- **Day pack to hold your sketchbook and drawing and painting supplies on guided hikes.**

**A trail chair, camp chair or yoga mat** for comfort to sit on while drawing in the field. Should be easy to pack into/onto your day pack. A yoga mat or saddle blanket are because they are flexible and light and

can be folded to fit into funky seating areas or on boulders out in the field. Choose your comfort first, especially for the longer exercises. Yucca Valley Marshall's has a variety of affordable yoga mats.

### **Where to purchase art supplies:**

Highly recommended to order from Blick Art Materials: <https://www.dickblick.com/> for better selection, prices, sales and free shipping deals. Or shop your favorite locally owned art supply store.

### **Fitness Requirements**

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Participants must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold.

### **Hike Level**

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Easy to Moderate

### **Guidelines**

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- You are responsible for your safety.
- Park your car in designated areas only. Parking along the side of the road is dangerous to you and the environment.
- Rattlesnakes are present in the desert. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see them.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.
- Before leaving the class, check out with the Desert Institute Representative.

### **Instructor Biography**

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MONICA LYNNE MAHONEY, BFA, studio art, MLA Landscape Architecture, is a multidisciplinary artist, educator and native plant naturalist living and working in Joshua Tree, CA. Mahoney's diverse artistic practice includes drawing, painting, sculpture, landscape design, ecological restoration, writing, and award-winning public engagement and civic art programs that integrate art and the environment. She believes that no matter the skill level, the practice of painting and drawing in nature is a portal into the natural world, which helps us to profoundly connect with the environment—and ourselves—in new and meaningful ways.

BRENDA LITTLETON M. A. Educator, writer, and Jungian therapist. Brenda has taught book arts as a means to collect the unconscious whispering of dreams, images, rituals, poetry, prose, and personal literacy of place since 1994. Both as an art form and as a healing practice to document one's place on Earth, a hand-made book is a welcome companion to the personal portfolio of self-expression and

creativity. Littleton teaches transformative education and therapeutic self-inquiry in workshops and seminars, with a focus on how the terroir of landscape influences living a soulful life.

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\* The Desert Institute staff/instructors will attempt to accommodate participant's needs; however we reserve the right to deny a student participation in the course due to concerns regarding health and safety issues.