



Anna CORBA

Photography by Anne Freund



ANNA CORBA is a mixed media collage artist with a love for vintage French ephemera. Her varied artistic path has currently brought her to creating workshops and retreats that encompass a lively blend of alluring venues, inspiring projects and mindful making. Anna's desire is to curate an experience where creativity can comfortably flourish amidst kindred spirits, and where everyone's senses are nourished through connection, beauty and environment.

Life is a dance and I try to move with it. As a little girl I liked spending time alone, creating worlds where I could quietly play; school house, shop keeping, tea server. On rainy days my mom would give me a shirt box filled with construction paper, stickers, sequins and glitter; I'd happily make little books, paper dolls and accordion cards all afternoon.

During my teenage years I discovered pencil drawing. The act of close observation, paired with the meditative quality of fine shadowing, felt calming and orderly, qualities that appealed to me.

Yet as I later moved on to art school, I began to sense that a skill at rendering was not the full story, there was a deeper strain to art making that involved emotion, a wordless poetry that mere replication couldn't express. This led to years of grappling with large abstract paintings, until the deeper mystery of my artistic impulses began to reveal themselves.

At this point there was no turning back. I had little idea what this would actually look like, I just knew this was the thread I needed to follow. And so I did.

For a decade, my husband and I worked with architects and designers to create theatrical interiors for restaurants and retail spaces in my hometown in Michigan. A move to California

If I were to live an
AUTHENTIC LIFE,
art making would need to be
at the center.



necessitated a change in direction; as we unpacked my supplies in my new little studio, I began to dream up an eponymous product line which I then wholesaled at gift shows for the next fifteen years. It was this product line—journals, tea tags, candle jars and photo books—that became the core of my identity as a working artist.

During much of my adult life, I've visited flea markets, not for anything particularly collectable; just humble odds and ends like postcards, old books, buttons and stamps. For the most part these modest objects sat neatly on my shelves or cozied up in mason jars, but during the creation of my product line, I started to use them in new ways.

While imagining fresh juxtapositions for a book cover or tags, a love for collage began to develop. As I widened my search for inspiring imagery and backgrounds, I noticed a gravitational pull towards French design. The subdued, nostalgic elegance of their centuries-old aesthetic felt familiar and tugged at my heart.

I began assembling shadowboxes filled with vintage French ephemera; bird illustrations, playing cards, snippets of lace and faded flowers. The abundant, variant grouping of my work caught the eye of a book producer at a gift show; as a result, I spent many years creating a series of artful crafting books. Composing these books was an act of love. I expected little in return, but the returns came gently wafting through my studio windows in the form of invitations to teach. These overtures were a stretch for me; I am still the girl who is most content to “play alone.” Yet a small wise voice within knew to say yes.

Today the most compelling part of my artistic journey is co-creating artful retreats...in my studio, at local ateliers, in the English countryside, and the most magical setting of all—the 18th-century Chateau Dumas in Southern France.



*“I wish that life should not be cheap, but **SACRED.**
I wish the days to be as centuries, loaded, fragrant.”*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON



Working within inspiring environments has always come second nature to me...I seek natural light and surround myself with beautiful materials captured in appealing baskets and colorful boxes. I have worked in large spaces and small spaces, but each space exudes a calming and organized air.

My "job" has now become sharing this type of ambiance with women for whom this appeals, ensuring their experience is interesting and inviting. Amidst these lovely settings are the workshops I design, projects featuring my continued love for vintage objets d'art...fabric journals, collaged boxes, and decorative wall pieces.



My process is a blend of
INTUITION
and **QUIET**
ATTENTION.

The seeds for these workshops are found in my personal work, which finds its origins embedded in flea market stalls, most often in France. I am utterly transfixed by naturally aged materials: handwritten letters from the nineteenth century, ink-stained music sheets and spools of faded ribbon. I search for variety, keeping my students in mind, as some of these purchases will become their materials as well.

Once home I spill my wares out in a haphazard pile, taking time to admire their gathered beauty. Eventually I'll begin intermingling things. I'm not drawn to technical complexity; sometimes a simple object needs only a touch of embellishment. Occasionally I stumble upon a long-forgotten item of utility. Last year I discovered a trio of aged bonbon bags in a sweet brocante; a friend helped me unravel the pattern and now crêpe paper bonbon bags are part of my workshop repertoire.



September 2020 will celebrate the tenth anniversary of Bonne Fete at Chateau Dumas. We are thrilled to welcome Jo Packham as our special guest and invite you to join us. This creative retreat will be offered September 5–12 and September 12–19, 2020.

Bonne Fete is limited to 14 participants each week; please visit AnnaCorbaStudio.com or ChateauDumas.net for further details and to reserve your space.

My creative life has thus become a blend of aligning myself with quality venues, spending time in my studio feeding my own muse, then transforming these results to workshops that I can share. Once I've made numerous prototypes, I then need to gather enough materials to satisfy the creative impulses of dozens of other women! This can be a little daunting, but so rewarding when eyes become wide at the selection. A much-loved part of this process is also making individual kits for each participant. This pretty package feels like a little gift in itself!

This entire cycle—from flea market, to studio, to classroom, to students returning home feeling nurtured and inspired—feels very rewarding. It is a multi-faceted narrative that I could never have mapped out through volition alone. Rather it has been a dance of cultivating my own imaginative impulses, while staying open to the siren call of others. This is where the magic happens.

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AnnaCorbaStudio.com

ChateauDumas.net

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