

Exercises, March 21 - 26

What follows are prompts for daily thinking and doing intended to support you in incorporating the commonplace book into your daily life. **These exercises will also prepare you to have a bank of material, language, and observations that will be useful in the work we'll do in our next class.** There are no wrong ways to approach the prompts, and in the end they are meant to be a sustainable outgrowth of your particular life. You may find that you adapt or modify them as you go; that's great. All approaches are totally fine. ☺

Ordinary views

(20 minutes)

Frequency: 3x/week

Fill a page in your commonplace book with 2x3" rectangles (portrait or landscape; do not need to be exact). Have colored pencils or other media ready. Position yourself so you can see out a window, or select a photograph of a familiar landscape. Set a timer for 20 minutes. Quickly make loose impressions of contour, shade, and color. Don't feel you need to include details; focus on capturing color. If frustrated, move on.

Attentive walking

(20-60 minutes)

Frequency: 1x/week
to daily

Plan in a moment for walking alone. If you can manage to do a short walk daily, that's perfect, but there's no best way. Do what works for you. I often just walk a four-block loop, which takes me about twenty minutes. The thing is not endurance but a manageable and repeatable walk. Select your route; put your phone on silent or airplane mode; and set out. As you go, look at the ordinary things that walking slowly makes apparent: light, vegetation, surface textures. Take photographs using a constraint from the sidebar. Carry your commonplace book and a pen(cil) to make quick sketches. Don't worry: no one will even notice. Take conscientious plant samples from public plants, especially weeds, and press them when you get home.

Florilegium

(10 minutes)

Frequency: 5x/week

On a regular basis this week, walk around outside and use iNaturalist to look up the names of plants in your yard, garden, and neighborhood. Include (and maybe especially look for) weeds or other plants that are easy to overlook. Write the names (common, Latin) in your commonplace book.

Gathering I

(30 minutes)

Spend time in your yard. Get close to the ground. Collect plants that catch your eye and use an app or a guidebook to identify them. Bring these back to the worktable with you, then make a few quick, repetitive drawings—try different media (pencil, crayon, watercolor, ink, colored pencil). Let the drawings be sketches—and try not to worry about whether they are “good”. The idea is to practice seeing and recording—it's ok not to make a perfect rendering.

For next time:

One piece of heavyweight paper at 7.5"x17"

Ten pieces of lightweight paper at 7.5"x11"

One piece of foamcore cut to the format of your choice (I suggest 11"x17", but it's up to you)

One piece of heavyweight paper cut to the same format as your foamcore

Straight pins

Watercolors, colored pencils, etc.

Extra pieces of heavy/watercolor paper

Scissors

Please read Thomas A Clark's book *Farm by the Shore*.

the beautiful world is there when we look for it