

Extreme Field

Notes:

**Intermission**

*"The High Road  
To Taos"*

# Chapter 1

With  
Field Reporter  
Juliana Coles

Temp  
R746.3  
Mus

*Notetaking*

DATE OF MAGAZINE	BORROWER'S NAME	TIME DUE

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Gun The Wonder of the Mon-  
archs  
829.0 Coles, Juliana

Field Notes

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REFERENCE  
ONLY**  
(DO NOT CIRCULATE)

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Chapter 1:  
Intermission

*Wish you were Here*

## Picture This

*Let me tell you a  
story about a  
scared little girl*

### Chapter 1:

# Intermission

breakfast 1/29/09

## -CONTENTS-

The High Road to Taos Story pg.3-7

Don't Leave Home Without It pg.7

All Weather/All Terrain Gear pg.8

Field Assignments Helpful Hints pg.9

Visual Journaling in the Field pg.10

Field Tripping Pep Talk pg.11

Composition pg.12-13

Artist As Traveler pg.13

Homework pg.15

Chapter 1: Summary of Tasks pg.15

Whether you began this journey in "Field Notes: A Book of Reminders" with a few Field Notes Assignments close to home, or you are just now joining us, by now, we've all chosen our books, packed our JMU's, and we are ready to head out into the wild blue yonder...If you haven't put your Journal Mobile Unit into practice yet, it's high time you tested it out to make the adjustments necessary for documenting LIVE out in the field.

Don't leave Home without it...  
For a few ideas on packing it up and taking it on the road, see Chapter 1 video, "Albuquerque MASH Unit: Journal Unit RE-Adjustments with Dr. Gina..."

We're about to get going, and I mean hitting the road with our Journal Mobile Units, but first, I need to take a little break. I want to tell you a story...and since we've gotten to know each other, I think I can be honest with you...

## HOMEBOUND

For most of my life, I've been a homebound girl. You might not believe it, but it's true. I grew up asthmatic and epileptic and had to spend a lot of time very still and quiet. I went on endless family driving vacations and field day trips, only to have to lay in the back seat of the old paneled station wagon trying desperately and terrifyingly to suck up some air from my closing lungs while the rest of my family picked apples, went for hikes, etc. There was not much I could do. From my place of quiet and stillness came an artist. I drew with my mind's eye around everything. It was my way of slowing down, trying to catch my breath, trying to stay here. As I grew up, I maintained that same energy. I went where I needed to go, but didn't venture out much on my own due to fear of the unknown and my ability to handle it. I got used to staying in. In spite of myself, I eventually went to art school in San Francisco, but rarely went anywhere. I felt trapped in my own home and couldn't even look out the window. I sat at

-3-

my desk creating in my visual journal: page after page after page. It was healing, but also very isolating. Things changed for me when I moved to New Mexico, but I still don't venture out much. Mainly I stay at the homefront, creating, but mostly *working* as my excuse to stay in. I don't take time off. I don't plan road trips or day hikes or museum tours or even work in my yard. I don't go anywhere in this beautiful state of mine. So it's funny, I can travel to do a retreat in Greece or Egypt, but I can't drive to Santa Fe, only an hour from my house. I want you to know: this workshop has been very exciting for me as I have had to venture out beyond my self created borders and try my sea legs out in this desert of mine. Because, you know, *its my job*, I have to! So first of all, thank you for moving me out of my comfort zone, it feels great and inspiring. And I know I can't be the only one: so self contained she couldn't even look out the window, let alone venture into her own backyard. So for all of us home bodies, let's get out there, it's *our job* now, so no excuses can hold us back. Our whole world is waiting for us!!!!!!! Let's Go!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## Artist as Traveler

I tell you all this because I want you to understand that it was a super big deal for me to load up and head out past Santa Fe, well beyond my comfort zone. I did it because I HAD to. I did it for YOU. I did it for you because I don't know how to do it for me.

**"SISTERS ARE DOIN' IT FOR THEMSELVES..."**

After much ado and to do and worry about what if I break down and you know, Princess Snow, my trusty Steed, has never even driven all the way up La Bajada incline and over the pass to Santa Fe, and I don't have a cell phone and should I have AAA and what if and oh no & hiring a pet sitter to

You may ask why  
Am I making such  
a big deal?

-4-

take care of geriatric, yet still mighty and loud yowling Pete, I mean, I'm only going for two days/one night- its only a two hour drive, you'd think I was going to Egypt! And I guess as far as I am concerned, that's how it feels. It's very stressful.

## That's what a big deal it is for me.

Crazy, oh I know. Nevertheless I packed up all my bags with way too many clothes with nothing practical for hiking, walking or sketching out in the field, but I definitely had a pair of heels (what am I thinking?) and worried about my house and how clean it was for the pet sitter and will it be too hot for Petey and will she remember his medicine, and what about email while I'm gone and what if I've forgotten something and on and on and on...

## In spite of all my fears

And better late than never, I drove out of my long driveway with a pit in my stomach and onto I-25 heading North. I had hoped to document my trip all along the way by video taping and sketching but I got to tell you I was really stressed out. Me and Princess Snow (my little white Toyota pick-up truck) never drive that fast around town and it was hot and it was really all I could do just to pay attention to the road and my driving. I never remember to take pictures; I'm not a good documentarian in that way, though I did get some horrible video footage while driving and even caught the Rail Runner, our train system, before I decided that was insane and I better concentrate on driving safely.

I felt much better once I exited to Santa Fe and made the turn off past Pojoaque to take the High Road to Taos. It's a beautiful drive and when you come here you'll have to make it. I felt so independent and adventurous and screaming in the wind, above my music- look at us Princess Snow! We're driving! We did it!!! We followed that twisty mountain road past old cotton wood trees, sweet adobes and haciendas, old farms and plenty of art galleries. No, I did not stop at a one- I had a destination in Truchas at my

DESTINATION **-5-** TRUCHAS

friend Robert Bennett's Gallery, Studio and home. I was pretty exhausted by the time I got there, but arrived very proud and happy. I know this all sounds ridiculous and totally overblown, but it's true. I only just got my driver's license when I moved to New Mexico, so driving is not really my thing. The open road does not call to me. Or she does, but I don't listen.

## Truchas, NM

Truchas is a tiny old mountain community, now an artists' haven, in Northern New Mexico. It is absolutely breathtaking! And I am there for some serious field tripping footage- my job, you know- so I immediately change my outfit, reload my gear into Robert's Jeep and we head up the mountain in 4-wheel drive. The sites along the way were so beautiful, but like I said, I'm not used to the whole travel documentation thing- I didn't even take pictures in Greece or Egypt - I let others do that and then send me their photos- but there were so many great sites on this Field trip I could have photographed and drawn later...

## Don't make room for Regret

Shortly after we leave Robert's house it begins to rain. We continue onward. Past a colorful cemetery in the middle of nowhere, past the old adobe chapel and finally down the rocky service road and into the forest and forge a river! Now it is raining. Not pouring, but it's making me unsure of everything and certainly, what if...? Hesitatingly I take out the video recorder (you'll see the footage in the Field Trips Part 2 video with the horses), but I get discouraged by the rain and the idea of hiking and having to carry all my gear and what if it all gets wet? **What if?** Neither a driver nor a hiker I be. And not that I'm not good at it or I'm not in shape, it's just I don't have a lot of experience in either so I don't have a lot of confidence. My hike up a muddy trail, my ability and stability, then takes precedence over my desire to sketch and document, and besides, I think, it's raining, I'm not going to film or sketch anyways. Up the trail we go...

Don't let what was get in the way of what's to come...



Get out There  
shadowy darkness all around us,  
Get Wet

...deeper and deeper into the forest. Albuquerque is the high desert and very dry. Here it is lush and green and wet. It smells damp, potent and alive and I am thankful to be here exactly like this in the misty rain. We don't hike very far when we suddenly enter into an open and light forest of Aspen trees in the middle of this green densely wooded dark forest. It is incredible. The rain has stopped. The silvery leaves and white trunks of the Aspens are more magical than I can describe. No camera. No video. No sketchbook. Damn. How did I let my uncertainty overwhelm me?

### **“What if” got in the way of what is**

And in this light cathedral of tall white trees and soft grass we lay down our blanket to have a snack of cheese and crackers. I can't believe I didn't bring my camera or my Journal Mobile Unit. I say to Robert, “This is perfect. This would have been so cool to draw. I could have brought a little journal in my pocket or something...I'm so disappointed.” And Robert exclaims, “I have a little sketchbook in my back pack and a pen and pencil!” So from the comfort of the blanket, I draw these white trees. It was so fun to do. Then Robert drew me. Then I sat on a fallen tree trunk as a bench, and I drew him. Then he drew me again. It was a perfect afternoon and we both had so much fun drawing. And he recommended rain gear for the Journal Mobile Unit. I could have had my camera and journal in Zip-Loc baggies. In the video you will see my little sketches. They are probably my favorite of the whole field notes video series of field trips. And maybe because I didn't have a camera. And maybe because I didn't have all my gear. I was able to take as much time as I wanted. I didn't feel the pressure to perform because I was on video or the need to hurry up. And I had the time to just look and be. It was so special and one of my favorite memories. What a treasure. I am so happy Robert had his sketchbook- he ALWAYS does, as a poet and an artist...

### **So what is the moral of this story?**

## *Don't Leave Home Without It*

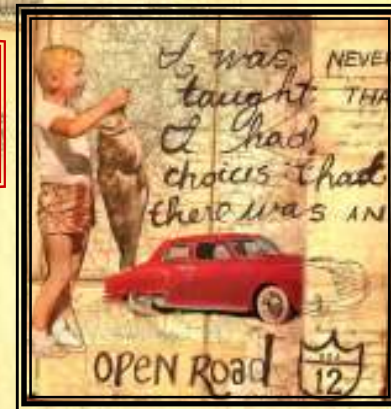
Once you start sketching, you'll want to sketch and document everything. It becomes addicting. Since I started this class, I even sketch in my dreams. Every moment of every day is an opportunity to be in your world carefully and with intention. Don't miss out on it by not being prepared or by being fearful...I don't leave the house now w/out my sketchbook.

**-7-**



## **All Weather/ All Terrain Gear:**

- I keep an Umbrella behind my seat.
- You may want plastic baggies.
- If it's cold where you are, you may need gloves with the fingers cut out.
- You may need a little stool.
- You may need a big sun hat or sunscreen.
- What about a drawing board or make-shift easel?
- Special shoes? Rubber Boots, Keen sandals for walking in water?



**Whatever “it” is,  
don't let “it” stop you.  
Get “it” covered...**

**TRIBAL COUNCIL:** Any other ideas on how we can be prepared? Let's share them with each other in the Tribal forum. This is our tribe. We have to support each other to get out there and keep going out there. And help each other figure out ways to make it easier and more fun. This is our creative life we are talking about. This is more important than all that other stuff we think is more important. Add these thoughts to the Journal Mobile Unit Discussion...

**Once in Art School I left my journal out in the rain. It was soaked. It was the best thing that ever happened to it. And don't be intimidated. Don't be thwarted from your true desires. Not by other people, situations, or family members. Exercise your journalistic rights. You are a Field reporter. Show 'em your press badge of courage. You must get the story...**

**I hate it when I let others cloud my decisions. And I let that happen all too often. I'm even in my way...**

**-8-**

## FIELD ASSIGNMENTS HELPFUL HINTS

I have a ton of field assignments for you to try out and you can do all of them, or none. There are a few things to keep in mind:

- On most of these assignments, though certainly not all, I want you to work quickly. We'll need lots of notetaking to rework later in our Rainy Days and Mondays Visual Journaling chapter. We work quickly so that we don't tighten up. Don't worry about making it perfect.
- The view itself is not important- it's the practice- so don't get caught up in what you see/don't see.
- I want you to work in two page spreads, as much as possible.
- Date everything, including the year. ( I also like to sign mine, in the lower right hand corner, like artists do, and title it. That kind of sums up the day or assignment for me and gives me closure. It can also give you a starting point for reworking back at the ranch or studio).
- Do not tear anything out. Everything is something. It is not about good or bad. You can always paint over it or use it as a background for another image. The more layers we have the more vitality a page has. So forget your judgement and critic. Say instead, wow look at me, I made another drawing! I'm really doing the work! For now, your job is to worry about quantity.
- Keep your Journal Mobile Unit with you at all times. You never know when the perfect opportunity will arise. These opportunities will begin to present themselves everywhere...

-All you need is five minutes! Ready, set, draw!

-Keep focused on the whole page, keep your hand moving, don't get caught up in the details ( unless that is your focus for a particular assignment.) It's a bold experiment. Try new things. Mix it up. Keep it fresh, keep challenging yourself.

-9-

## ARE WE THERE YET?:

Julia Cameron in "The Artist's Way" (which is a great program), encourages everyone to go on an "artist date." This is a similar idea to what we are doing here, only we are calling them "Field Trips." Here we romance ourselves, and our journals, by taking them out in the field, which is the same as a date, but maybe more adventurous!

## Visual Journaling in the Field? *Why not?*

We'll talk more about reworking the page in our next chapter, but there is no reason that any sketch or collage you do in the field CAN'T be a Visual Journal page (simply put: a page that combines text w/imagery), or that it can't include some form of text or narrative of observations or stream of consciousness. For now, I want you to keep in mind that play is how we get at the story, NOT deciding what the story or page is about or GOING to be about and then making that. We get at the story by working the page. When we are working the page or playing or messing around, we are distracted from ourselves and this is when we are open to the wisdom and information that comes from an internal dialogue or active meditation. It is important to jot down notes from these internal dialogues which can include words from songs we hear, road signs, bits and pieces from conversations overheard, sounds of birds, repetitive noises from our surroundings, poetry, found text - all of this is given to us by the world, so please use it. And as you use it, try to be creative with your typography or lettering. Your writing or calligraphy is just like drawing. It is a mark you make with your hand: please vary your line. We discussed this a little in the video for the sampler and I encouraged you to make as many different lines with one tool as possible- some heavy, some light, some thick, some thin...

-10-

Study

Draw

Look

## Field Tripping Pep Talk

Chapter 2 will contain all your Field assignments. Later, in our final Chapter of "Field Notes," we take our sketches and collages from the Field and Home Schoolin' exercises, and rework them in the studio (or in the garden, patio, or mountain top!) for soulfully satisfying Visual Journal pages.

Field Trips are fun and easy and you can do them anywhere. You just need to start seeing everything you do as a journalistic opportunity. I take my "Johnny on the Spot" Journal Mobile Unit, basically my purse, with me everywhere I go. I could draw a lot more than I do, it's true, and it can take even LESS than five minutes! Especially if I break up my page into smaller sections or rectangles. I could do a quick ass sketch in the parking lot after the gym. I could jam one out while waiting to make my deposit at the drive thru of my bank. It takes some time to retrain ourselves, but we can do it. Right now, I pretty much make a plan of action, and then head out, but I could do it anywhere anytime. I live alone and eat out a lot, so that's mostly when I do my sketching. It's a lot of fun, and you can even get your friends and family to participate....

Sketching in the Field is fun, and there are so many different ways to interpret what we see though line, color, shape, etc. For some simple sketching ideas, See Chapter 1 Video #2: The Essence of Sketching with Dr. Gina.

-11-

### Field Sketch



I did this sketch at a James Hillman lecture in Santa Fe. My Sketchbook has this brown craft paper. It would have been great if I had a white pencil or china marker for some contrast!

## COMPOSITION:

Composition as a fine art term refers to the arrangement of the elements of our picture space. Basically it is how we set up the page. Composing our picture from what we see out there in the field is hard. Where do we put everything? How do we decide how big it should all be or where to start? How do we take in a view through our eyes, and then translate it to paper? A lot of it will be trial and error and practice- there are certainly tricks of the trade, but a lot of it is based on personal preference, and no one can teach you that. And you will find, if you let your self play and have fun, that it will come easily and without much effort. Ever notice children's drawings? They are naturals at composing space! And besides, there is nothing we can't change, alter or rework back in the studio to create balance and integrity. So don't spend a lot of time trying to make decisions about composition. I recommend taking a deep breath and diving in. If you ever saw me in a figure drawing session, you might see me making crazy faces or even screaming. Sometimes the line feels so out of control I don't know where it's going but carve it out I do. It's a wild ride. Get on.

### THE LITTLE HOUSE

In the Field Trip video of the Abandoned Adobe in Truchas you will notice what a hard time I had with my composition. I wanted the house little with plenty of earth and plenty of sky. In my first attempt, I make my house way too big- it covered both pages from top to bottom. Not what I wanted at all. So then I tried again in the next book, somewhat more successfully, but still too big and not enough sky.

### TRICK OF THE TRADE

You can try this with any of your sketches. Create an "observation" window. In a piece of paper cut out a rectangle in the center. The rectangle doesn't need to be very big, just about

Tricky  
Business

12

Trickster

# COMPOSITION CONT.

2" x 3". Then depending upon the orientation of your book or pages, you hold the paper horizontal or vertical, and look through the observational rectangle or window and move it around until you have the view you want. You may have to squint your eye a bit. Then you draw what you see and you notice where things fit together or how big things are or this is up in the corner so I can start there. Or I can start at this horizon line, etc. Typically when I am drawing or sketching in the field, I just start with whatever is closest to me, and then add on from there. That is how I do it in most of the videos from the field, but I'm not sure it's too successful in terms of creating the composition I want, but I am a terrible planner and I like to see how things unfold in their own way. I just dive in. Hell or high water. Wish I lived my life the way I work a page...

And sometimes it's easier to start with a box or rectangle. To make a shape and then fill it in. I like to create a box or border around my page sometimes just to get my hand to the page. The best place to start is by starting. You don't need a straight edge, just whip it out.

## THE ART OF TRAVEL

I'm not a great traveler and as I said, I suck at photos. Not that I'm bad, I just don't do it, nor do I think to do it. My friend Anne is an amazing field reporter. She is incredibly dedicated to both her artist and traveler spirits, allowing them to guide her where they will. She went to Japan, she took a class with Nick Bantock. And then she created an amazing Japan postcard portfolio of her trip from lessons learned from Nick. She commits her self to big travel adventures and intensive arts workshops. She traveled to the East Coast last summer for a figure painting workshop, and documented her trip all along the way. She didn't just stop to see the sites, she stopped to draw, to photograph, to learn. In New York city, she even stopped in at a figure drawing session! You will love her style. Please check out her blog [www.annewoods.blogspot.com](http://www.annewoods.blogspot.com) for some serious inspiration. Go back through her entries to find her daily drawings...

**TRIBAL COUNCIL:** Got any favorite artist as traveler books, blogs or sites we can check out?

We learn from others in the field...

-13-

-14-



# Homework

Create a night image. Whether you draw the streets of your town in the darkness, and paint out the sky with India ink or markers, or do a painting of the night sky and all her jewels, somehow create a night image (or many). Using your gel pen or other stylus to write light on dark, you can either just make a list of what you see in the night, or write a poem. Sometimes a list of observations can become a poem by simply adding adjectives and metaphor, as in this example from Phil Cousineau: "...The moon rose like a celestial mirror over the heathered hills. The sea slapped at the peculiar basalt rock formations along the coast. The wind howled like Gaelic pipes. From a distant farmhouse came the sweet smell of burning peat." A poem helps to add meaning to our words and observations by making us slow down and think about them. (In chap. 2 there is a nighttime video where I am Sketching outside in the dark...)

## SUMMARY-CHAPTER 1

### **Check out Video:**

- #1.) Albuquerque MASH Unit:  
RE-Adjustment w/Dr. Gina
- #2.) The Essence of Sketching

### **Download Audio:**

Extreme Field Notes: Chapter 1

### **Homework:**

Night Image, pg. 15

### **Tribal Council**

- 1.) Share Night Image From Homework
- 2.) Add any Preparations for All Weather/  
Terrain to Journal Mobile Unit Discussion
- 3.) List Favorite Artist as Traveler Books, Blogs,  
or websites, to  
reference and  
resource Library  
Discussion

15

Extreme  
Field Notes:

See Chapter 2

With  
Juliana Coles

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