

Q&A with Artist, Author, and Educator Danielle Krysa (aka The Jealous Curator) @thejealouscurator (Instagram Account)

By Danielle Unger, Primary Curriculum Rep, BCATA
Visual Art Educator, West Point Grey Academy

Have you ever put a name to that little voice in the back of your mind that might tell you you're not a good artist? Danielle Krysa has. She calls it an art bully.

In her two children's picture books, *How to Spot an Artist* (2020) and *Art and Joy* (2024), Danielle encourages young readers to stand up to the art bully—the villain in her stories who tries to stifle creativity—and to keep making art, no matter how loud that inner critic becomes. Her message is clear: as long as kids stay focused on having fun and creating with whatever materials they can find, “the art bully doesn't stand a chance”, she says. Ultimately, Danielle wants to remind them that the joy of making art is what truly matters.

Over the past year, we had the wonderful opportunity to host Danielle for several art classes across our school, from Kindergarten to Grade 7. She read her books to the students and led a workshop inspired by them. After hearing the stories, we discussed what our own art bullies might look like if we were to draw them. What shapes would they have? What colours and textures? The students then brought their ideas to life using markers and paints, with the fun option to add googly eyes at the end. Each art bully turned out to be unique, reflecting the creativity and imagination of every student.

I recently had the chance to have a Q &A with Danielle, where I got to learn more about the inspiration behind her two books, as well as a glimpse into her creative process.

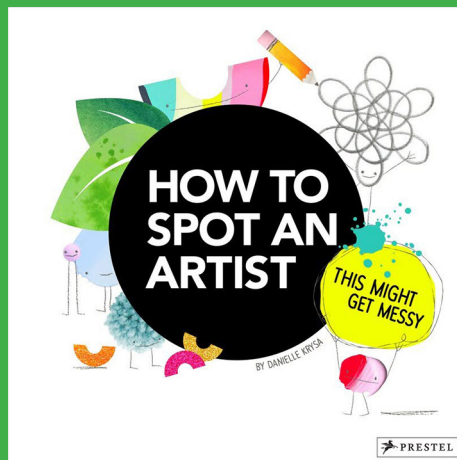
Questions for Danielle Krysa:

What inspired you to write your two children's books?

Since I was a little kid, I'd always wanted to write and illustrate a children's book. I honestly didn't think it would ever happen, but it was firmly on my bucket list! After writing five books for adult artists, all with the focus of getting past creative blocks and quieting the inner critic, I had an aha moment. While I was promoting these adult books, I had so many artists tell me that when they were young – usually ages 6, 7 or 8 – they'd been told that they couldn't be an artist when they grew up. What!? I decided that instead of writing another adult book, I'd sneak around to the front and talk to these artists when they were in elementary school! I wanted to put a different idea in their head, early! Both “HOW TO SPOT AN ARTIST” and “ART and JOY” were written to let children know that they can be whatever they want to be when they grow up, including AN ARTIST.



Books by Danielle Krysa



ISBN: 978-3-7913-7440-6



ISBN: 9783791375373

You've mentioned your own inner critic or "art bully". Do they have name?

Yes! His name is Arlo, and he is very annoying! Thankfully, I've learned how to keep him relatively quiet over the past few years. Granted, he was completely in charge of my creative journey – or lack thereof – for a really long time.

I love your colourful illustrations and your characters. Can you tell me about your illustration process?

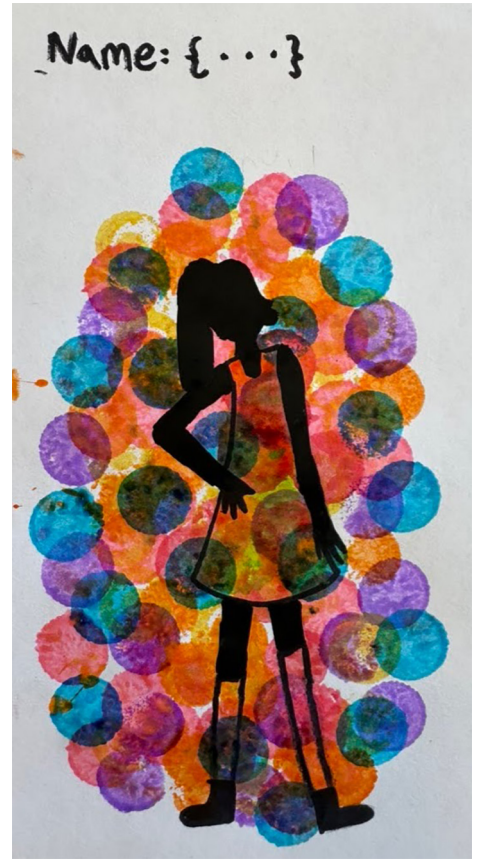
I had the story idea for "HOW TO SPOT AN ARTIST" in my head for about three years, but I could not picture what the characters should look like. I thought they'd be kids – but how old would they be, what ethnicity, which gender, etc. Then, one wonderful totally random day, I was swimming laps at our local pool, when a swoosh of paint with little pencil lines for arms and legs popped into my head! I cut the swim short, dried off and RAN home to my studio. Zillions of brushstrokes, blobs, and washes of color later, I had illustrated my first children's book! Okay, there were a few more steps after that, like photographing all of the swooshes, bringing them onto my computer, placing them onto the pages and then sending everything off to the publisher, but you get the idea.

What have you noticed since you've been in classrooms reading these books to children?

Reading my books to kids is the most rewarding part of this entire journey. They get really mad about the ART BULLY, which I love! What breaks my heart, though, is that so many kids already know exactly how it feels to hear a tiny voice in their head saying, "This isn't good enough! This isn't perfect! You're not an artist!!!". Usually by the end of the story though, you can actually watch them realize that the ART BULLY is, in fact, just a big bully. As long as they keep having fun while they're making whatever they want to make, the ART BULLY doesn't stand a chance! If I can leave a few kids with that message as they head toward adulthood, then I feel like I've done my job.



An "art bully" created by a West Point Grey Academy student.



West Point Grey students imagine their own "art bullies"

