



# LETTING MISFORTUNE GO, INVITING GOOD FORTUNE

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## WHAT YOU NEED



Some paper, something to draw lines with (ideally, water-proof if you will use water-soluble media), something to colour with. Whatever you have at home will do.

If you want to use the exact materials I use, here they are:

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<https://nvcheart.teachable.com/blog/137545/neuroart-origins>

- hot press watercolour paper 100% cotton
- masking tape to secure the edges of the paper
- **for line drawing:** Pigma Sakura FB pen and Pentel Ink Brush
- **for painting:**
  - water-based gouache (Malevich brand, and any will do),
  - synthetic brushes (a slanted brush big and small and a flat brush),
  - a water container for washing brushes,
  - a rag or kitchen towel to clean brushes
- **for highlights and calligraphy (optional):** Gellyroll White 10, Metallic Paints - Kuretake Gansai Tambi - metallics



## STEPS

1. Pick up the time you want to review. IF you do this exercise for a year, you'd be looking at the year passing, and the year coming. Otherwise, you can review shorter or longer periods: e.g. a time of a work project, your time at school, at university, at a workplace, your time in a relationship etc. Make a note on your paper of the time passing (either as a year or write it in words etc), and the time coming.

Now, think back of the time period passing - I will use here the passing year 2021. How was it for you? If it was a line with ups and downs, would it be a smooth line? One with many ups and downs? Would it be generally going up or down?

I invite you to draw this line as it was for you for the year passing, and mark the year passing. E.g. I noted it as “2021”.

Now as you are contemplating how the next time period (year for me) would be, how would you like it to go? What would it be as a line?

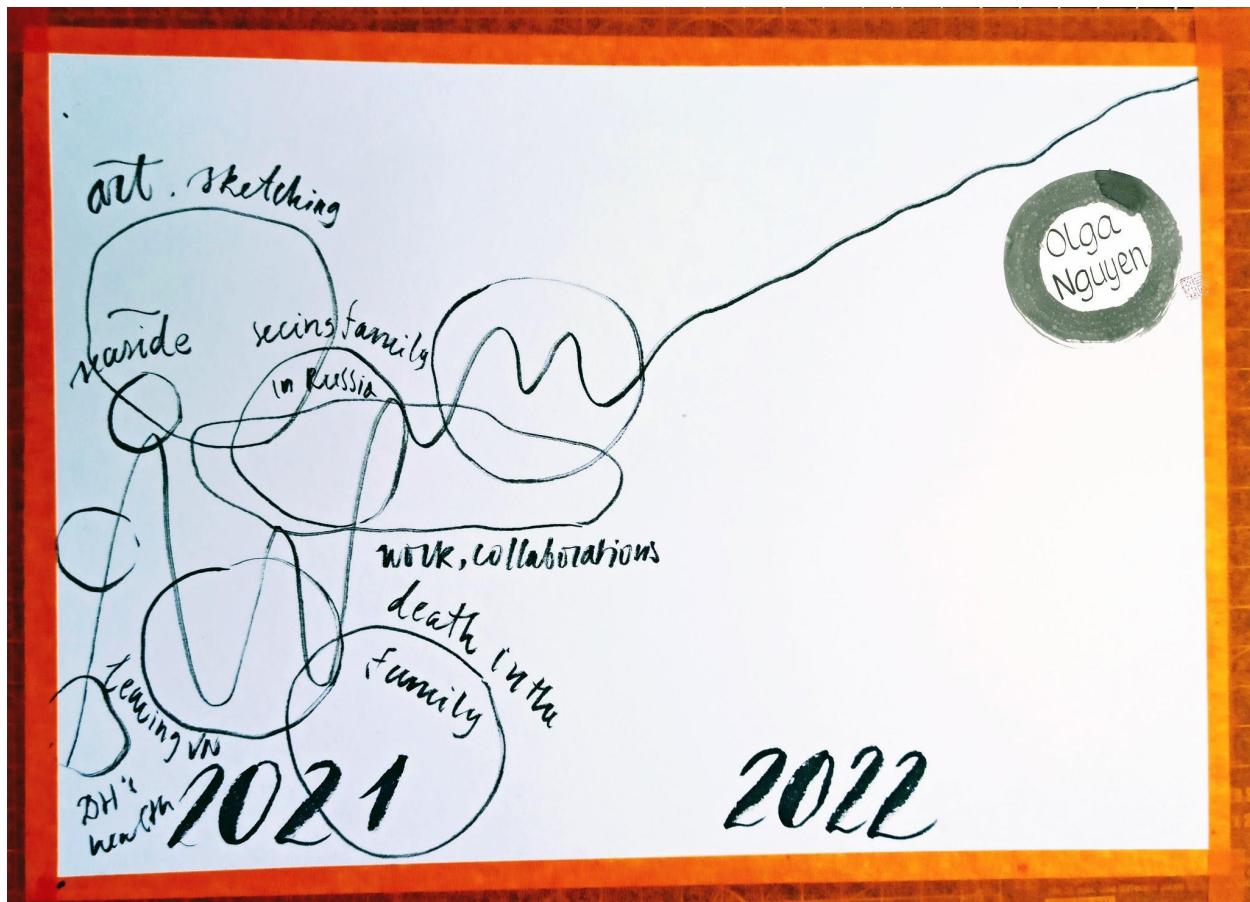
I invite you to draw this line as you would like it to go for the year coming, and mark the year coming. E.g. I noted it as “2022”.



2. As your next step, I invite you to quickly remember the events of 2021 that you found challenging or significant - you may have enjoyed them or did not like them. For the ease of it, unless you want to do it differently, I suggest that you match the “ups” of your annual curve with the events that you enjoyed, and the “downs” with the ones you found challenging and want to leave behind. I invite you to draw each one as a circle or another figure as big or small as feels right to you.

If you do not know where to draw a particular circle, I invite you to hover your hand with a pen over your piece of paper and notice at which point your breathing becomes deeper and you feel more relaxed. This is the place where you can draw this circle.

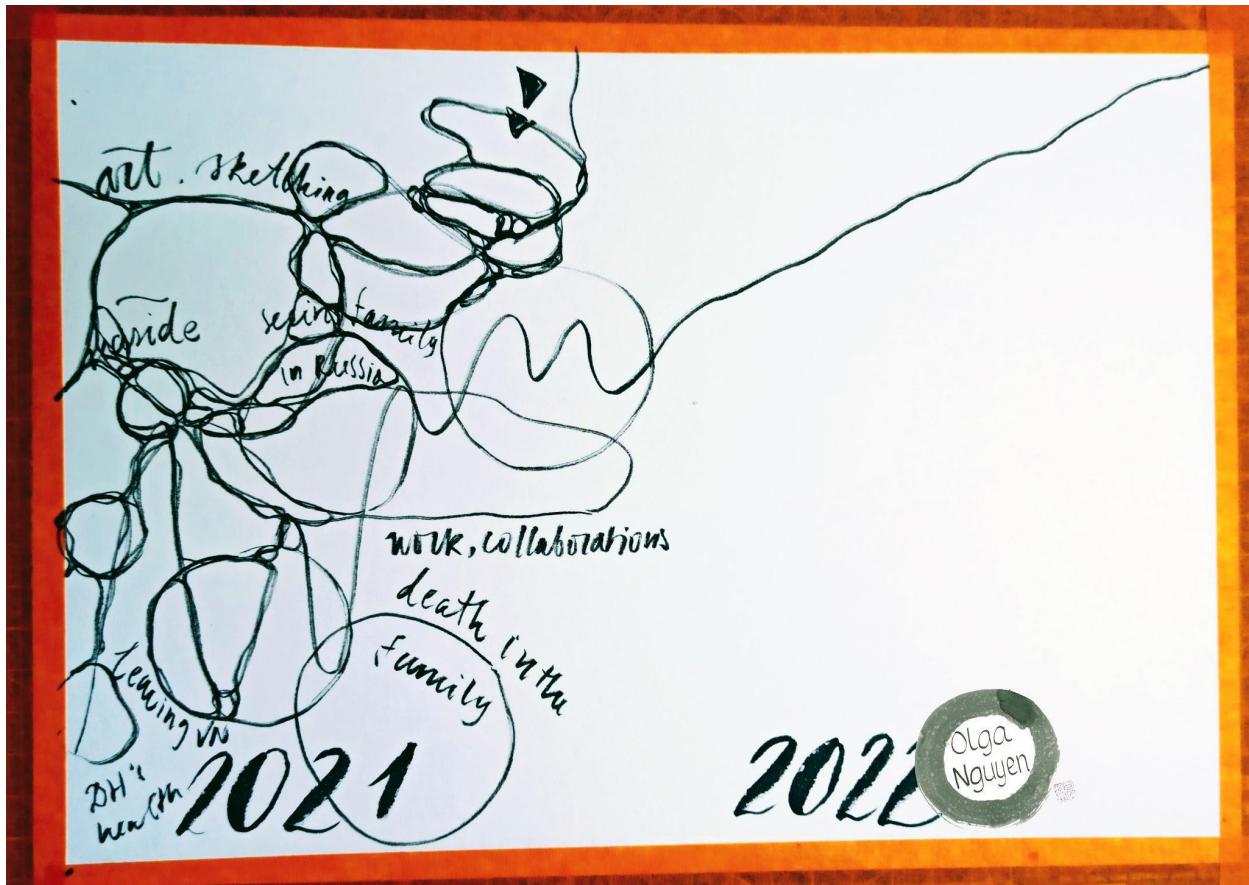
In my example, you can see that I noted both things I enjoyed and the ones I found challenging or painful. You can see that my “ups” were art and sketching, seaside trips (that happened before the lockdowns!), my Russian trip, and sustainability, also work collaboration (I put all of them together although I could also do them as specific events I enjoyed). My “downs” were leaving Vietnam, health challenges for the family members and death in the family.



An extra step here is that, as you are drawing your events of the year, if you start noticing any thoughts, feelings, sensations, you can invite them into your drawing hand and draw a squiggle, so called “tangle”. We do this to acknowledge that even now, at the end of the year, we may still be affected by the memories and the experiences we have had. To put it down on paper, you can just let your hand move in the way it wants to! Again, if you do not know where to place your “tangle”, you can hover your hand over different parts of your paper and see where you feel more relaxed and breathe deeper.

3. Once you have drawn the events as circles (and as an option, your current reaction to them as a tangle), to acknowledge the connection between different events in our life

through the year and of the time line, and interconnectedness of them all, I invite you to connect them all into one figure with a wiggly, wavy line, to “round up” all that you have drawn. You can see below how I did it. There’s no right or wrong way to do it - you can start at any place in your art work and shift to any place at any point in your “rounding up”.



4. Once you have done this, I invite you to take a breath and notice how your body feels. Is there a sense of relaxation? Settling? Deeper breath? If you notice any of those, you are moving in the direction of letting go of the events of 2021. If you find that there's still something and you do not quite relax, I invite you to ask yourself whether there are other events and other reactions that need to be acknowledged. Also, if you have found the year really hard, and you find the presence of other people or beings supportive, you can invite your loved ones to be with you when you do this exercise, it may help!

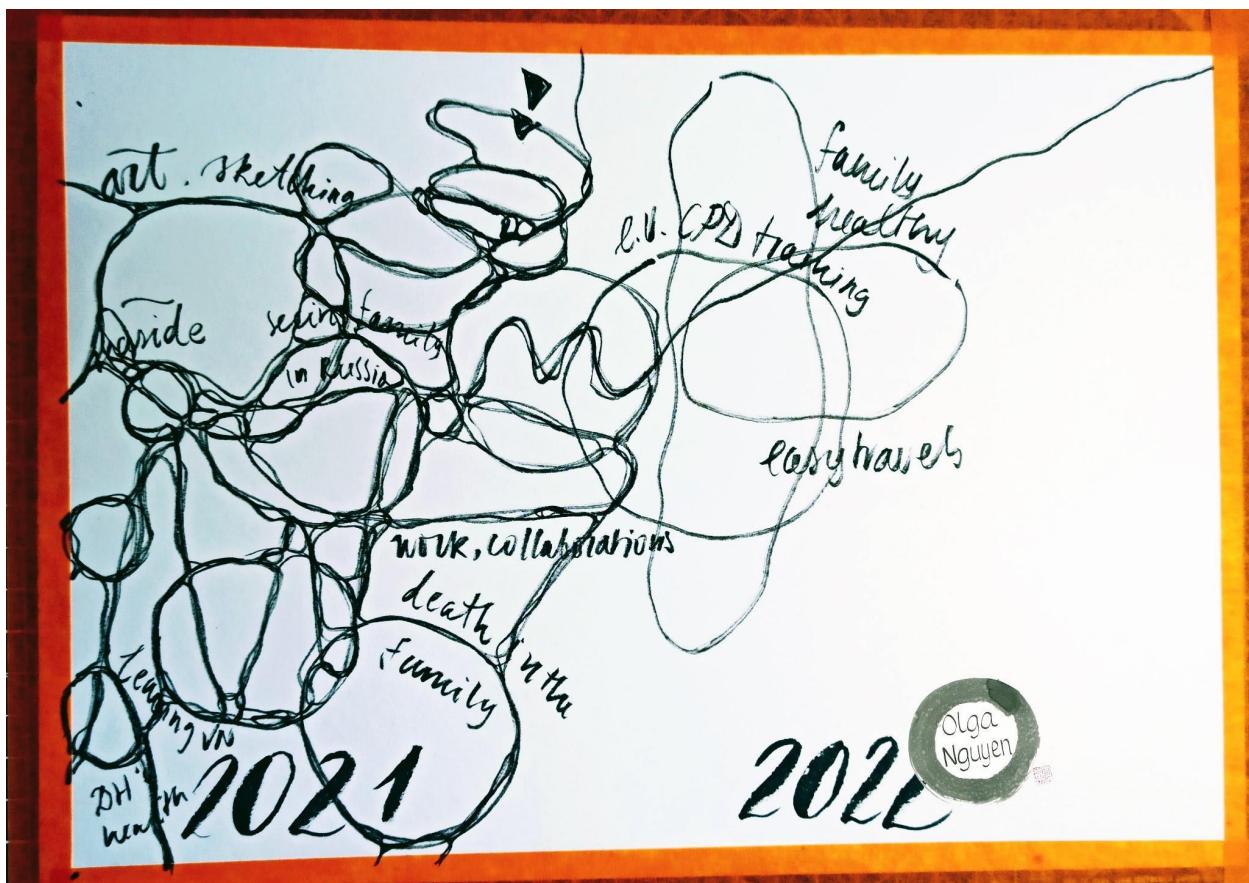
If you find the exercise hard and cannot put the things that come to the surface as you think back to 2021 to paper, at any point you can take a break from this exercise and come back to it if and when you want to. This is because, in art therapy, we aim at increasing our well-being, and often this comes from having choice in our art process,

including the choice to stop or to pause.

5. If you feel more relaxed and are willing to try and anchor the things and events that you'd LOVE to have in your 2022, this is the step where you can try it.

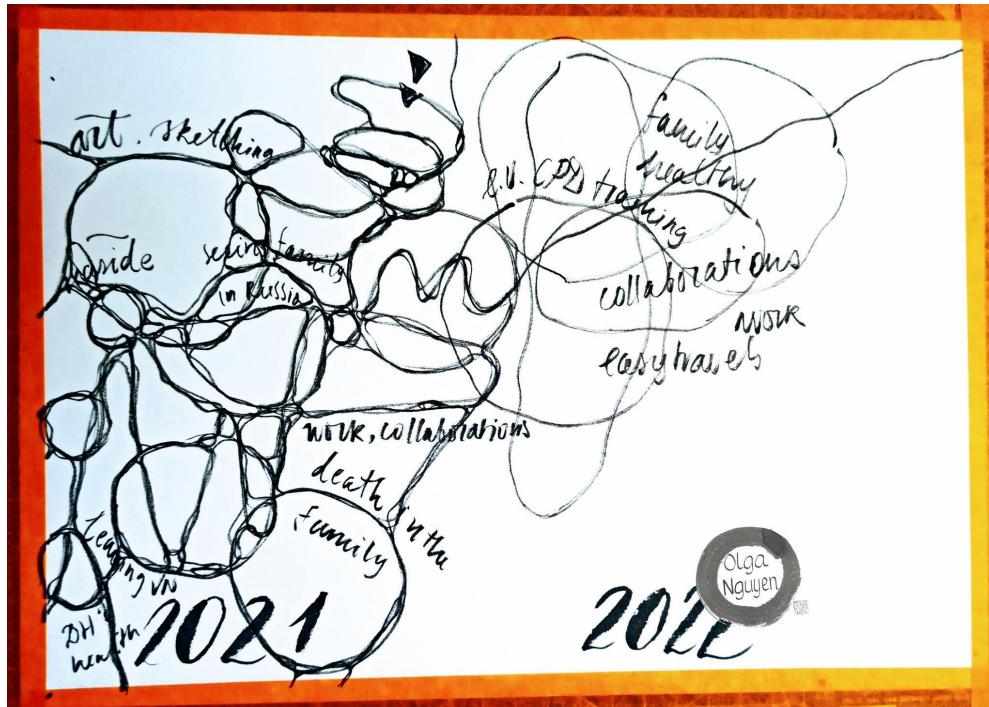
Once again, as in the previous step, you can use circles or other shapes for the things/events/etc. You can choose where you place them, time-wise (earlier or further in 2022 or spanning the whole 2022), their size and also how high up on your time line you place them.

In my example below, you can see that my dreams for 2022 have been my family staying healthy (touch wood!), easy travels, and attending a specific CPD event.

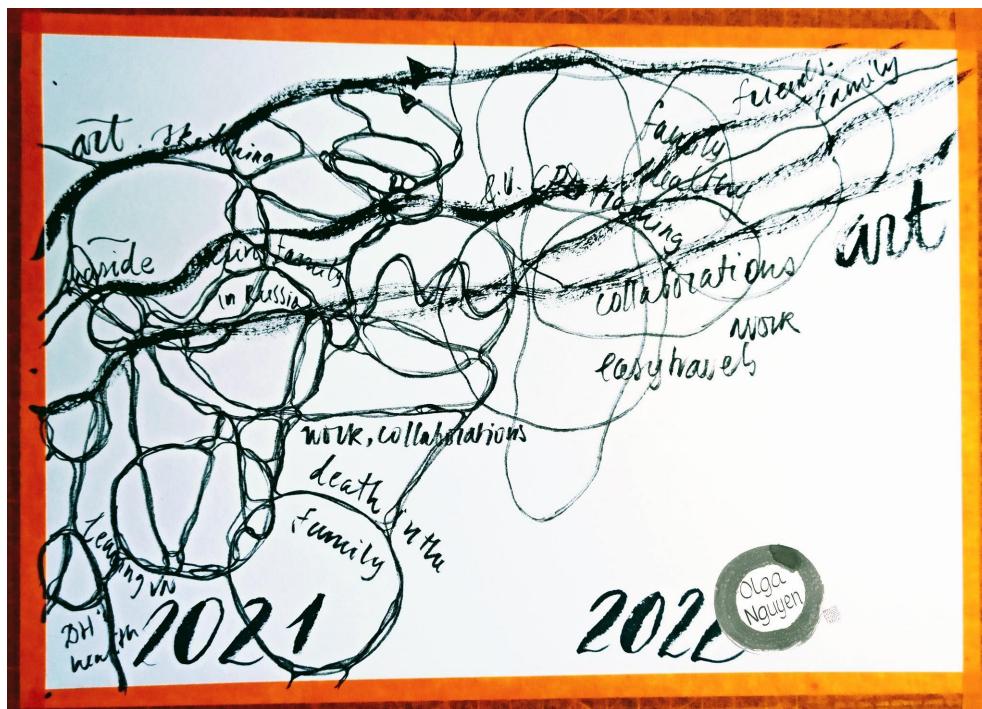


You can also either add the things from 2021 that you'd like to continue as new shapes or

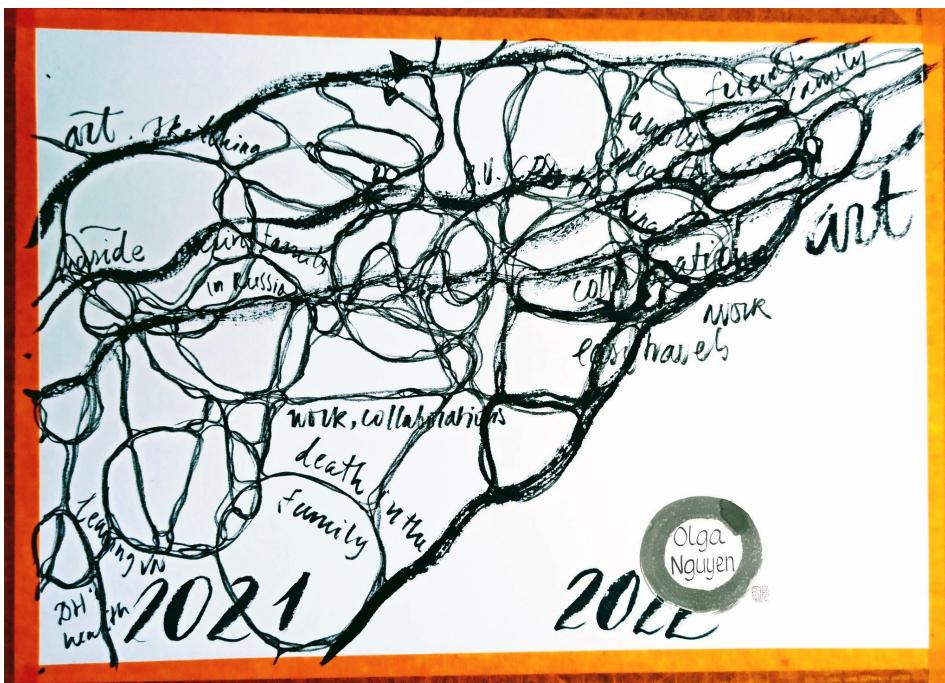
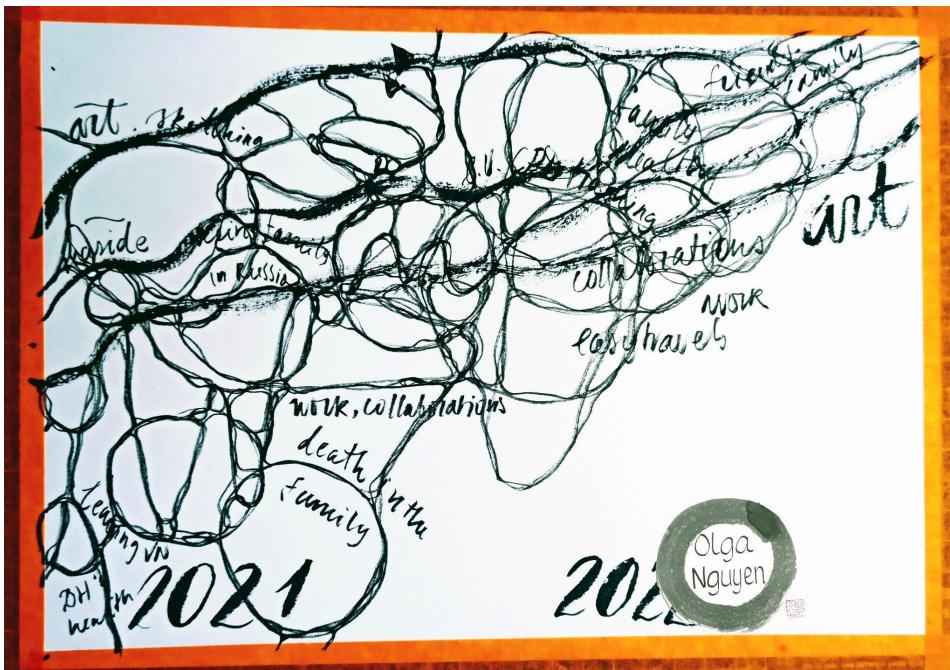
circles. This is how I added “collaboration”, see below.



Or you can connect them with a wavy lines from their existing shapes to the lines in 2022 - this is what I did with art and sketching. Can you see those thinner, wider lines?



6. “Round up” again, to connect your new shapes with each other, the time line and the shapes of 2021. See (3) above for rounding up hints and tips. “Rounding up” is the movement that integrates the events, the past and the present together and acknowledges their interdependence.



7. Once you are done with rounding up, I invite you to start with colouring your picture - if you want to add some colour to it. What I usually do, I step away from the picture to look at it from more distance, or rotate it or turn it upside down, or take a photo of it with my phone. And when I am looking at it from a new viewpoint, I see if I notice any patterns.

To try it out, are there any patterns you can see in my picture? Again, different people can see different shapes and there's no right and wrong about it, just different choices.

For me, I do see a ram in the picture (which is my animal in a Lunar Calendar, accidentally!).



Again, there's no right or wrong about how you want to go about your colouring. For me, because I was working in gouache, which is an opaque paint, I wanted to start with giving my picture background colour and build the colour in layers. I wanted to make the background red, which I did - with a wide synthetic brush. I got some paint out onto the palette (if you do not have a palette, you can use a white or light coloured plain plate) and added some water to it, and then applied it to my paper.

8. Here is where I started working on the shapes that I noticed. I wanted to make the body of the ram in the shades of yellow. You can see me outlining the edges of the shape with the narrow edge of my slanted brush.

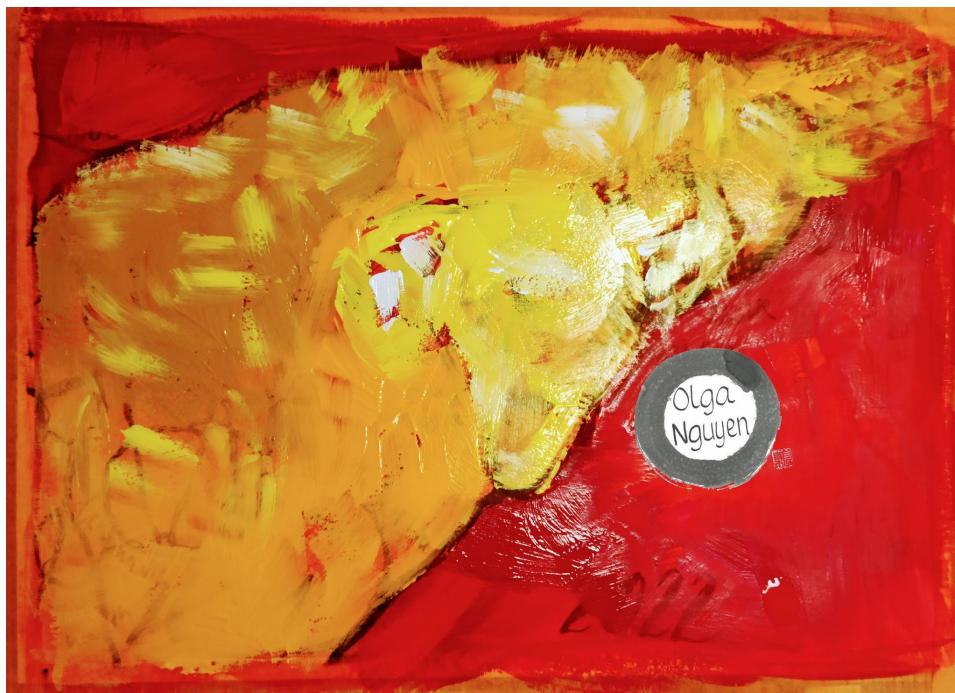
I wanted for the colours to mix a little bit, so I waited till the first layer was only slightly wet (you can see the paint glistening in the photo) to apply the second layer. I also touched the first layer very lightly, and kept my paint for the second layer fairly thick vs diluted with water. If you want your gouache layers to mix more, you'd be looking at adding more water to your second paint layer. And if you want to keep them separate, you want to make sure the first layer has completely dried up before applying the second one, and keep the brush strokes light and your paint thicker.



9. Here you can see that I have filled out the “body” of my ram and I’m going to use a lighter shade of yellow for the head.



10. And here you can see the “head” of the ram filled in lighter shade of yellow - as well as some lemony-yellow and white highlights I added to the body. And you can also see that I added some white highlights to the “horns” and the head.



11 . At this stage, I'd invite you to pause often and to step away from your picture to look at it from more distance and see whether you want to add more colour, or more fine detail. If you are working in gouache and want to keep your layers separate, and especially any white or light highlights bright, I'd invite you to check whether the last layer of paint has dried off before you apply the next one. I also find that applying highlights with thick enough paint (yoghurt-like consistency) and lighter touch (vs pressing hard or working paint in) helps to keep the highlights a bright and separate colour, if this is the effect you are aiming for!



If you are unsure how thick or thin your paint should be, one thing that helps me is to try it out on a piece of scrap paper. Ideally, it'd be a chunk of the same kind of paper I'm using for my artwork.

At the same time, I do appreciate the “fixability” of gouache as a medium. If you do not like how it turned out or if you think you “messed up”, you can simply wait for it to dry out and once it's fully dry, to paint over the previous layer. I feel so much more relaxed when I know that I can overpaint my gouache paintings once they dried!

12. If you are pushed for time, or can't wait, you can use your hairdryer (or a fan, or at a pinch, even an airconditioner) to dry your paint. I'd suggest that you hold the hair dryer at sufficient distance if you are working with gouache, to avoid overdrying and making your paint crack.



13. One of the ways to add finer detail and draw attention to areas of your painting is to splatter paint.



To splatter paint, I'd pick up some paint with a brush and lightly tap it on the end of another brush, pencil etc. If you have not tried this with this particular paint on that particular paper, you may want to try it on some scrap paper first. You will get more "bloom"-like splatters if you do it over wet paint or paper. And if you want really fine and defined splatters, it helps to apply it over dry paper or dried layer of paint. Also, you may find that some brushes lend themselves better to this technique than others.

Below you can see the metallic paint applied over a dried layer of gouache in a splatter technique.



14. As you are painting and we are moving into final stages of this method, I invite you to notice how you are doing in your body sensations, your breathing, your thoughts and feelings as you are contemplating the past year and the year ahead (or any other time period you picked up for this exercise). Do you notice any changes in your body sensations, feelings, thoughts vs when you started?

Sometimes, using this approach, some of my students and clients may notice marked change, and for others the change is subtle. And yet for others, one method opens up the doors to further exploration of a particular topic using this methodology or a different modality.

You may also notice as you are moving closer to completion, that you are humming a song or some lines from a poem etc is popping into your head. If you want to add some poetry in the way of collage, calligraphy or stamping, you can do it too.

I added some lines from a song in Russian about journeying and finding your way in the open seas to my painting. I used a thicker white gel pen to add the words.

This is just one option that you can try, and you do not have to do it if you feel like you are at a good stopping point with your painting before that.



15. Here is where I continue or start interacting with the imagery that I see in the painting. Sometimes I have an image completed, and I have no idea what it means. Then I put the picture on the wall or elsewhere where I see it often and keep having a look at

it. I notice what comes up in my as I contemplate it - any thoughts, feelings, body sensations?

For me, as I look at mine, I feel warm and fuzzy and happy. I also feel more relaxed generally as I look back on 2021. I feel like the heroine of the picture, the Ram, has taken enough stock of 2021's events to be able to turn towards 2022 and also to take a blessing in the lines of the poem.

## INTERACTING WITH YOUR ARTWORK

If I'm really unsure what the picture tells me and I want extra support, I may show it to my mentor, supervisor, a therapist or a friend - provided I can be sure they are usually supportive and positive vs judgemental about my self-expression. I'd ask them about what it is that they see there. I can take their interpretation and insights if they resonate with me and sound true to me at that point in time. And if they do not resonate, it is my picture and I can remember that everyone has different associations and interpretations coming up, and there is no right or wrong about it. Just what seems true to me and what does not. If you have been to my art therapy trainings via Zoom or in person, or watched recordings, you may remember this step very well from our interactions in the group towards the end of each of many methods.

As I continue interacting with my picture, I also notice if there is something that is missing, that I would like to add - I can do this, too!

P.S. If you like the method and would like to learn more like this one, up until the end of the year, we have 50% off offer on the recordings of past zoom trainings.

My methods to find meaning and connection even in challenging circumstances (using watercolour and collage)

[https://nvcheart.teachable.com/p/finding-meaning-and-connection?coupon\\_code=SEASONSGREETINGS21](https://nvcheart.teachable.com/p/finding-meaning-and-connection?coupon_code=SEASONSGREETINGS21)

More art therapy methods for extreme stuckness using gouache:

[https://nvcheart.teachable.com/p/moving-freer-through-the-life?coupon\\_code=SEASONSGREETINGS21](https://nvcheart.teachable.com/p/moving-freer-through-the-life?coupon_code=SEASONSGREETINGS21)

Art Therapy for health:

[https://nvcheart.teachable.com/p/healing-bodies-with-art?coupon\\_code=SEASONSGREETINGS21](https://nvcheart.teachable.com/p/healing-bodies-with-art?coupon_code=SEASONSGREETINGS21)