

# The Reluctant Artist

by  
Laurie  
Bellet



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TORAH AURA PRODUCTIONS • 4423 FRUITLAND AVENUE, LOS ANGELES, CA 90058  
(800) BE-TORAH • (800) 238-6724 • (323) 585-7312 • FAX (323) 585-0327  
E-MAIL <MISRAD@TORAHAURA.COM> • VISIT THE TORAH AURA WEBSITE AT  
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# The Makings of a Reluctant Artist

When I was a little girl, I desperately wanted to be “good” in art. It seemed to me that my friends needed nothing more than paper and crayons to create magic! Inevitably, my mother had to break the news to me. She informed me, with gentle honesty, that I had absolutely no artistic talent.

This recollection confirms for me what I now know to be absolutely true. Any teacher, even with no artistic background, no innate skill, and no confidence can create a wonderfully meaningful classroom art program.

And that is what the projects in this book are all about.

You will find this book different than most books on this topic. These projects are not specific to any holiday nor are they uniform in their final result. Rather, these projects represent a variety of techniques. The results can be so varied that you may





designate a project for use with any topic of study.

This book invites you to expand your views of the scope of Jewish classroom art; to think beyond the typical; to see Jewish art in everyday objects and materials. Perhaps most importantly, this book will encourage you to take a risk and explore the exciting dimensions of your own creativity.

You will not find complicated techniques or exotic materials in these projects. The materials are easily available at your nearest craft retailer and the project plans guide your every step. There are, however, secrets to the success of a Reluctant Artist. I would be delighted to share them with you:

- Before presenting a project in the classroom, always do your own, from start to finish, at home. Discover the pitfalls; Plan how you will teach the technique; Learn how long it is likely to take; Figure out how to correct inevitable mistakes; Adapt the plans for your particular skills and students.
- When you make mistakes in your work, let your students know! They will respect your candor and be much more tolerant of their own efforts.
- Whenever possible, laminate your students paper projects. Lamination brightens colors and increases durability. Your students, and their parents, will be honored to know that you regard their efforts so highly.
- Photograph your students as they work on their art projects and create a bulletin board to show everyone the incredible activity in your room! Congratulate yourself whenever you

view the bulletin board and send the student photos home in your report cards.

- When asked if a plate or cup is dishwasher safe, smile and remind the questioner that it is better to simply wipe family heirlooms with a damp cloth. (I learned the hard way that some dishwashers are much more aggressive than my own.)
- Try new things and accept that some projects will not work out as well as others. One particular class of students, whom I have taught for several years, votes each May as to which project was my "failure" that year. Not everyone agrees and we all laugh about it! (By the way, none of those projects appear in this book.)

Each of these project techniques has been taught in day schools, supplemental schools, high schools and summer camps. The students and campers



have ranged in age from pre-schoolers to adults, representing a vast range of ability areas. Teen counselors and teaching assistants, art specialists, classroom teachers, and parents have all implemented these projects.

you can do this!