

Relaxing Doodles: A Coloring Book for Adults

Lana Sajaja

iUniverse (Oct 27, 2015)
Softcover \$17.95 (110pp)
978-1-4917-7426-7

These are sophisticated coloring spaces for adults and teens seeking relaxation.

Joining the ranks of the popular new selections of adult coloring books is Lana Sajaja's *Relaxing Doodles*. As the title suggests, the focus of the book is on designs that are uncomplicated rather than challenging, whimsical rather than serious.

The book contains some four dozen full-page designs, each measuring approximately six by nine inches with one-inch margins, printed only on one side to make each illustration fully usable. Although the author suggests the use of a wide range of coloring tools—colored pencils, Sharpies, markers, brush-tip markers, watercolors, or watercolor pencils—to complete the designs, the paper quality is not conducive to wet media. There is some buckling and considerable bleed-through, especially with brush-tip markers, and the paper can pill and tear if overly wet. A note warning users to insert a blank sheet or other barrier beneath the page being worked on would prove helpful.

Most of the forty-nine illustrations are nonrepresentational, although flowers, topiary, and a highly decorated elephant are among the most appealing offerings. Other entries include an abundance of mandalas as well as geometric patterns, spirited cartoon paisleys, and balloon-font text pointing the way to “Peace,” “Love,” and “Home.” The illustrations reflect a number of influences, including Indian art, Islamic mosaics, psychedelic art, and Zentangles.

Other than the list of coloring tools mentioned above, the author provides little guidance in using the book. While the absence of rules and expectations may foster creativity, there are also places where the author's experience and insights would have enhanced the book's usefulness. For example, one of the designs included is the classic “baby blocks” pattern, familiar to quilters but not necessarily to those new to graphic design. A note about using different shades of color to create a three-dimensional effect could expand the potential for understanding.

Clarifications may also be missed in the realm of Zentangles. This is a relatively new technique, most navigable once explained. Unlike traditional doodling, which is done when the doodler is distracted, a Zentangle focuses attention and requires concentration, employing repeated patterns within a set structure. The attention required by a Zentangle is thought to provide a mental breather by drowning out minor worries and anxieties. Since several tangle-style doodles are included, and the focus of this book is to stimulate relaxation, a paragraph explaining the concept would have been appropriate.

Relaxing Doodles is a good introduction to sophisticated coloring, appropriate for adults of all ages, older children, teens, and anyone who wants to experiment with color and take a break from the daily grind.

SUSAN WAGGONER (December 29, 2015)

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