

## DAN ELDON



### **Artist:**

Dan Eldon was born September 18, 1970 in London, England. His mother was an American and his father was British. When he was 7, his family moved to Nairobi, Kenya. He grew up there and always thought of Africa as home. He attended the International School of Kenya, where he was exposed to students from 46 different nationalities. This experience helped to shape him into the adventurous and open-minded person he became. Growing up, his mother allowed him to come on her journalism projects with her and take photos that often made the local newspapers. Throughout his life, Eldon was very compassionate and fundraised for various causes. He began creating his journals when he was around 15 years old, and made 17 journals in his short life. They contain drawings, photos, writings, and collaged clippings that document his experiences. It was his artistic talents in journaling that caught the attention of the art director at Mademoiselle Magazine, and at 17, he moved to New York for a graphic design internship there. During this time he created a self-portrait in one of his journals that combines a cityscape of his new surroundings and patterns and designs inspired from his African home. His sister recalls that he felt most alive when taking risks. He was an adventurer, traveler, artist, photojournalist, and activist. He managed to travel to over 40 countries in his lifetime. His mother points out that he did not collage, draw, or layer his Somalia journals. She said that he did not want to alter those photos. Sadly, Eldon, at just 22 years old, and three of his companions were killed in 1993 while covering a bombing in Mogadishu. The way in which Eldon lived his life so fearlessly and compassionately has inspired many, and his journals continue to tell the story of his life.

### **Learn more at:**

<http://www.daneldon.org/dan-eldon-biography/>  
<http://www.daneldon.org/about/timeline/>

### **Audience:**

Eldon's photojournalistic work was intended for a wide audience in order to expose the harsh realities around the world and hopefully affect change. However, he was more reserved about sharing his artistic journals because they were very personal to him. His work inspires a range of people to live big and pursue their dreams.



**Artwork:**

Through his artwork, Eldon intended to document his travel experiences. He was particularly interested in social issues, the people that he met, and sharing the challenges that they faced. His journals combined photos, drawings, writings, and clippings in a unique and bold style. His artwork and words invite his audience into his world, where he was intensely present in each moment.

**Questions:**

Why do you think some people feel compelled to risk their lives to take photos in dangerous situations?

Do you think Eldon's strategy of creating art journals was the best approach for making an impact, why or why not? How else could he have shared his work and experiences (remember the internet was not as developed then)?

Why do you think Eldon chose to not alter the images from the Somalia journals as much as images in his previous journals?

What does Eldon's use of color and patterning tell you about his life and his identity?

Do you think that Eldon's journals are still relevant to people now and in years to come, why or why not?

Why do you think Eldon chose to depict caviar in one of his paintings?

Compared to the more simple composition on the left, how does the more layered and crowded composition on the right affect the way you interpret the work?

**Vocabulary:**

Humanitarian – a person who believes in fair treatment and kindness towards all human beings

Activist – a person who strives to create social, political, economic, or environmental change

Journalist – a person who collects, organizes, and distributes news information to the public

Collage – a visual art technique that arranges a variety of mediums into one artwork



When Eldon says, “The journey is the destination”, what do you think that means?

The work on the right was created in a journal when Eldon was living in New York at only 17 years old. Why do you think Eldon chose to combine a cityscape with bright colors and bold designs in this work?

### **The World:**

Eldon’s journals document his worldly travels and the people he met along the way. He was exposed to an impressive range of cultures and customs. He serves as link between the eastern and western worlds. He told stories of people living in desperate and dangerous situations that some westerners would prefer to neglect, such as poverty, famine, and war.

### **Art-making:**

Journey Journals:

Collage elements (photos, drawings, magazine or newspaper clippings, maps and writings) are assembled in a journal or sketchbook that documents a past trip or an adventure they hope to have some day.

Altered Books:

Students can paint, cut, and/or sculpt old books to tell a story about a journey.

Accordion Books:

Using maps as the pages, students create accordion-style books that illustrate a story about a journey.

Shadow Boxes:

Using the pages of a storybook, create shadow boxes that tell the story.

### **Other Artists:**

Su Blackwell

How are Blackwell’s book sculptures about journey?

Do you think the 3D elements in Blackwell’s art are more or less successful at communicating her stories than Eldon’s flatter, collaged style, why or why not?

Why do you think Eldon did not choose to use more 3D elements in his artwork?



*Treasure Island*, 2013

Guy Laramee

All three artists are interested in creating art with books, but how are their strategies different from each other?

Do you think Laramee's book sculptures of mountains could be about a journey, like Eldon's work is about a journey, why or why not?

Why do you think Laramee chose to leave parts of the books visible?

What connections can be formed between the realistic mountains and the remaining book parts?



*Meyers Lexicon (Geislerspitzen)*, 2014



### References:

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