

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



A PUBLICATION OF
THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

NUMBER 23, SPRING 2017

EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

KNOW YOURSELF. BE YOURSELF.
LOVE YOURSELF. SHARE YOURSELF.

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The Voices of Creative Aging

CREATIVE AGING is a powerful new social and cultural movement that is stirring the imaginations of communities and people everywhere.

This is the first book to document the movement.

Often called Sage-ing, Creative Aging takes many forms: academic, social and personal. It includes festivals, conferences, classes, group sessions and individual creative pursuits. The Journal Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude was founded by the Okanagan Institute in 2011 to honour the transformational power of creativity. Intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing, the Journal presents the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement.

Sage-ing is about seeking – satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Aging can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to Know Thyself and contribute that

knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and wellbeing

for the individual and to our culture. Creative Aging brings together more than 50 essays and galleries of images that showcase the power of the imagination expressed and enjoyed.

CREATIVE AGING

STORIES FROM THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL
SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE
SPIRIT, GRACE AND GRATITUDE
EDITED BY
Karen Close and Carolyn Cowan



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NUMBER 23, SPRING 2017
ISSN 1920-5848

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Okanagan Institute

1473 Ethel Street, Kelowna BC V1Y 2X9
www.okanaganinstitute.com

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Email karensageing@gmail.com

Cover image by Leona La Pierre

FROM THE EDITOR

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief; it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of Light: it was the season of Darkness: it was the spring of hope; it was the winter of despair...” (from the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities*, an historical novel written by Charles Dickens in 1859)

It is the spring of 2017. I smile with the recognition and deep appreciation that the arts will remind us, and sustain us. We just need to maintain the records. Creative expression is the gift of hope, the recognition we give to ourselves and each other. By nature humans are deep resources of creative spirit. We are life energy sourced by the senses, pumped from the heart’s intelligence, translated by the mind and

converted into an eternal flow of wisdom. Art and life coexist.

This issue of the Journal is a rich repository of those who’ve discovered the magic of aligning themselves with this natural flow as it has presented itself to them. That is the art of coexisting with life. It requires vigilance for the moments, sometimes suffering, but always offers the promise of peace and an emerging understanding. When we began this publication in 2011 we dreamed of becoming a mecca for those seeking to share the “*transformational power of creativity*” and the conviction that “*Sage-ing is about seeking - satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action.*” This issue applauds initiative, has international contributors, is at times quirky, and celebrates doers. Each article is a voice of those aligned with

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twenty-first century values: compassion, empathy, self actualization, aesthetic, global and environmental consciousness. These are the values that proclaim the best of times, and the movement towards interconnectedness. These values are humanity's escape and protection from externals that seem to shout the worst of times.

Making art was never meant to be about celebrity of the few, but rather the noticing of the uniqueness that is everywhere in our environment, and purposefully embedded in the hearts of each of us. *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* exists to encourage listening to each other's hearts and believing we can make this *the epoch of incredibility*.

– Karen Close, Editor

SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE TO SAGE-ING

• **Article is to be related to aging and creativity, in any of its many forms, as a path to gaining wisdom and self awareness and/or the act of harvesting life's wisdom as a legacy for future generations.**

- Article to be attached as a document in .rtf format;
- 500 to a 1500 word maximum;
- Photos: Please attach each photo separately including: the writer's headshot photo and four or five photos, related to article . All photos should be attached in high resolution jpg format with a caption;
- Insert the word "photo" with its caption within the article where you would like each image placed (we'll try to honour this request as layout permits).
- Please include brief bio information (one or two short paragraphs) placed at the end of your article; this is meant to give the reader an idea of who you are, your passions and/or what you do and have done with your life that feels relevant to the article. Include contact info: email, website, blog address – whatever you want to include. For each journal, due date is the 10th of the month preceding release date. We release around the equinoxes and solstices. **For next issue due date is June 10th, 2017**
- Email the article and photographs to karensageing@gmail.com

Antiquity identified a sage as a wise person ... wisdom is a form of goodness, and is not scientific knowledge but another kind of cognition.

– Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1246b

FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN

A TRIP TO INDIA AND AN EXPERIENCE OF CARING AND CREATIVITY

Fern Helfand



Portrait taken by Adrienne Hammond

It all began rather mundanely when I bumped into Liz Jarvos at the grocery store. Delighted to see her, as we chatted and caught up; I mentioned that I was on sabbatical from my teaching position at UBCO and that I was looking for some challenging and inspiring volunteer work to do. “Well, you could come to India with me” she suggested. I jumped at the offer! Being a photographer and life-long adventurer, people need to mean it when they extend an invitation to me that entails traveling, because if at all possible, I always accept. Five months later I met Liz and her life-long friend Adrienne at the Vancouver airport ready for our 14 hour, direct flight to New Delhi. From there we traveled to the city of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu in the south of India, where the orphanage is located.

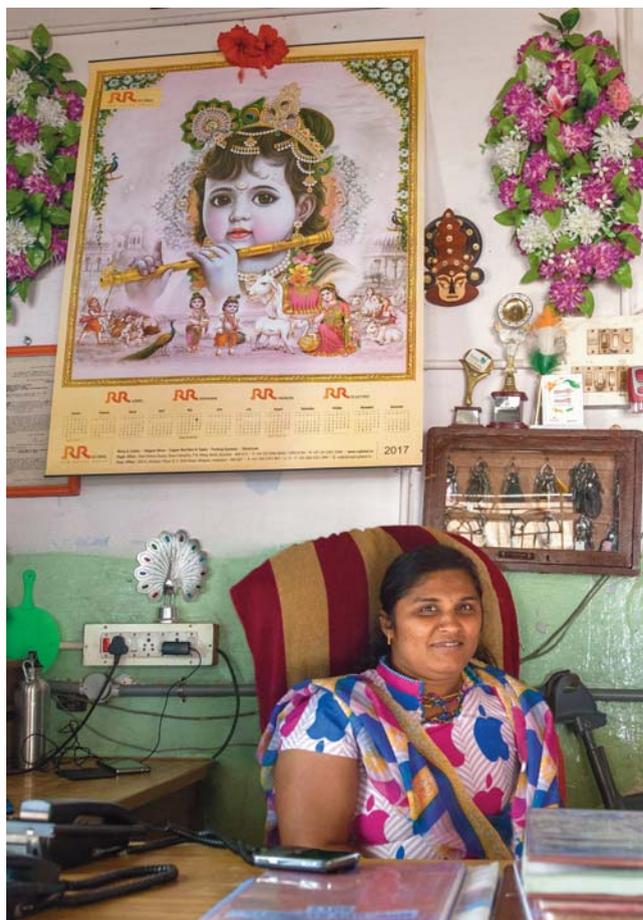
For over 30 years, Liz has been a major fundraiser for *Families for Children* (FFC) a Canadian founded charity, which runs 2 orphanages, one in India and one in Bangladesh. Every year she gathers interesting objects and crafts handmade at the orphanage and around the world, to sell at 2 fundraising events, one in Kelowna and one in Victoria. All the proceeds go to FFC. I was introduced to the charity through the sale and have been sponsoring a child in India for a number of years. So, volunteering at this orphanage was particularly attractive to me, not to mention the fact that I have always wanted to go to India.

We were met at the airport by 3 friendly faces from the FFC’s staff in their well-worn, Indian version of a land rover used to transport everything imaginable from children to garden supplies. The drive through Coimbatore to the edge of town where the home is located was typical of the chaos we’d

experienced on the roads of India. Mmm sometimes it was hard to figure out how many lanes there were supposed to be. It seemed that whenever a few inches opened up, they were immediately filled with vehicles somehow expanding one side of the street to hold cars, yellow and green tuk tuks, animal drawn carts, buses, motor bikes and brightly decorated trucks. All the while it sounded like every one of them was blaring their horns nonstop. Oh yes, some of the bikes occasionally were trying to go in the opposite direction and there were often a couple of stray cows or goats at the edge of the mix. Did I mention that some of the moped style bikes had families of 4 jammed on them or

Priya, Rema and the driver Mani came to pick us up from the airport in FFC’s well worn Cruiser





Above: Kalai is in charge of the main office and oversees the daily activities at Families for Children

Right top: One of the preschool classrooms at FFC

Right bottom: Children playing a board game in a preschool classroom



had ladies in colourful saris sitting side saddle balancing groceries on their laps?

Families for Children is an oasis in the chaos. True to its name, it really did seem to me to be a family for the over 300 children and adults who live there. It is home to a wide variety of individuals of all ages and all abilities from severely mentally and or physically handicapped to youngsters who simply have no parents or have been abandoned. There are many more girls than boys. Children that are able, go to various schools in the area; all the others attend classes within FFC. Because India does not have a social safety net, there is nowhere for many of the disabled to go when they grow up. Over the years the organization has expanded and now looks after the totally helpless and has sheltered workshops and activities for those graduates who are able to function on higher levels. They also employ some of their alumni. For example, Kalai, a college graduate and Polio survivor, runs the office and daily management of FFC.

The 2 weeks we spent at *Families for Children*, of course, were not nearly enough to understand the issues at play, but instead of talking about the difficult things we experienced, I would like to relate some of the outstanding loving and creative aspects of the life we witnessed. The first thing I noticed was the relationships between many of the children. Always evident was how they looked after each other, pushing wheel chairs, carrying around little



Top left: A montage of caring FFC children watching the Pongal festivities

Top right: A large Komal or rice drawing welcoming everyone to the FFC compound on the morning of the Pongal celebrations
Above: Local sponsors and staff prepare a ceremonial pot of the traditional sweetened rice and dahl mixture. Some of the FFC children are gathered in the background

ones and sometimes, smaller friends who were unable to walk. Whether they were abled or disabled this interaction seemed to be done lovingly as in the way one would help a sister or brother. Not only did the abled kids help their friends, but often included them in their activities. The orphanage appeared as a safe place, where all disabilities were accepted. Physical deformities seemed to be ignored and children that otherwise would not be able to function in normal ways could participate as valued – seemingly equal members of the group. The most visual example of this was in the girls’ absolute favourite activity - dancing!

According to Kalai, if she let them, they would dance all day. Although an accomplished classical Indian dance teacher volunteers his time each week, the hundreds of dances the girls perform are learned from television. (They do not have access to computers.) Creativity seems to be at the core of many of the activities at the home. To begin the day, every morning, as with many households in Tamil Nadu, FFC women draw *Komals*, intricate rice powder patterns on the ground in front of their homes welcoming all. We were lucky enough to arrive just in time for the *Pongal Festival*, so the *Komals* were especially large and ornate.

The compound was bustling with excitement and awash in the brilliant colours of new dresses and saris reflecting the dazzling sun from sequins and mirrors sewn on as trim. *Pongal* is a celebration of the harvest and is when the Sun God is offered milk and *jaggery* (sweet). Local sponsors and staff led the ceremonies and prepared the symbolic dish, a sweetened rice and dahl mixture also called *Pongal*.

After the ceremonies and when everyone had been given their Pongal and treats the dancing began. All the children who were able danced and entertained each other. The fun they were having was contagious. Dancing is something that many of the disabled kids could participate in, incredibly and surprisingly well, as I saw demonstrated time and again over our 2 week visit. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, there was dancing.



Top left FFC Children eating the sweetened rice mixture and chewing on sugar cane, traditional foods for Pongal

Top right: Dancing is one of the most inclusive activities I observed during my 2 week visit

Middle left: Children of all ages dancing together entertaining their friends and the staff at FFC

Middle right: preparing the exhibition

Bottom left: A couple of the photographers and their friends looking at the exhibit

Bottom right: I joined in the dancing during the party for the Photography Exhibition, photo by FFC Child

Along with other volunteer duties, my personal creative contribution was a photography project. I met with some of the older girls in Kalai's office and as they crowded around my laptop, I gave them lessons on design, photo composition and told them how to tell a story through pictures. As expected, they did not have access to cameras, but were quite familiar with camera phones. Everyone was very excited about participating. Since I only had 6 small cameras, I gave them out in shifts, one day at a time. I downloaded the pictures onto my laptop and one evening we all gathered together to look at them. There was a lot of fun and laughter as they chose their favourites. I had just over 400 pictures printed through a local shop.

There really wasn't anywhere to hold an exhibition. Kalai, also like a big



Top left: Youthful faces and care givers in front of the House of Hope, a new facility that houses workshops and activity rooms for more mature handicapped residents

Top middle: Multi purpose play area

Top right: What you can't tell from the smiling face at the front of the picture is that one of the girls has lifted Jessie, who has no use of her legs, onto the trampoline to join in the fun.

Above: In the evening, watching television in the dorms.

sister to many of the older girls, said that we should laminate the photographs using a donated machine and materials. Then we could hang them up in front of the school so everyone would have the chance to see the pictures. It would also be a good place to have the party I was planning. We all got together the following night and had a great time laminating and preparing the show.

The 420 pictures were up for most of the next day. All the photographers got to proudly show their work and it does seem that just about everyone on the main compound got to see the pictures. The event was a great success. That evening at the party all the kids were asking to take pictures, so I gave up my own point and shoot camera and let them record the evening. Dancing of course was a big part of the night. They asked me to join in. The staff and kids were totally surprised and thought it was amazing that I could follow and keep up to them. (Thanks to my life-long love of folk dancing.) We all had so much fun and A LOT of pictures were taken.

After our 2 weeks at *Families for Children*, Liz, Adrienne and I visited some of India's most famous sites like the Taj Mahal and the pink palaces of Jaipur, but it was our time at the orphanage and the children and adults we met and lived with, who have had the most lasting impression on me. Love and creativity, a very dedicated staff and the generosity of many local and foreign sponsors, volunteers and fundraisers, have all come together to provide opportunity and a happy life for those who otherwise would have nothing.

Everyone wanted to have their picture taken, photo by FFC child



Fern Helfand is a photo-based artist whose work most often reflects the environments and cultures in which she has lived and traveled. Since receiving an MFA from the University of Florida she has held positions teaching Photography and Art at the University of Western Ontario, the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang, Malaysia and is currently Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. Fern is looking forward to embarking on new creative adventures when she retires in 2018. You may see examples of Helfand's work on her website www.fern Helfand.com or contact her at fern.helfand@ubc.ca

To find out more about **Families for Children** please go to their website www.familiesforchildren.ca Fundraisers are held every November in Kelowna and Victoria. For details please contact Liz Jarvos, ljarvos@gmail.com

AN INVISIBLE THREAD OF INTELLIGENCE

Michel d'Estimauville



Michel tending one of his water lily ponds

My journey into a more creative life began as I was building a rock retaining wall on the bank of Skaha Lake in the Okanagan. My job was with Environment Canada, and doing outside work is where I feel most at ease. After a promotion, I was spending too much time behind a desk. I allowed a new direction into my life.

Working with the rocks gave me a feeling of connectedness that I really liked. It was like being with a best friend who totally understood me, and I started thinking, “What if I could do this for a living?” My mind replied, that I would have to move, at least to the Coast, to further my education in some kind of landscaping discipline, and this was very impractical. I had always loved plants, but I had very little “professional” knowledge about landscaping. Easily, my wish soon came into reality. A week later, I found out about a horticulture and landscaping course being offered 15 minutes from my home. Even better, it was held on weekends and evenings, so I would not have to quit my government job. I immediately enrolled and the learning experience was wonderful and stimulating.

Now, I was somewhat torn between the desire to work with rocks and staying in my secure well paying position. Soon the answer came. The department where I worked was cutting back and someone in the Yukon was going to be laid off with a buy out. I knew that he did not want to go, so I asked

to be the one laid off instead, and allow my Yukon colleague to take my position. This decision provided the funds to go out on my own, and after much searching I was guided to specialize in water gardens. I would be working with my favorite elements: Rocks, Water and Earth.

I still had a lot to learn about landscaping and water gardening, and every project that I took on was unique and new for me. I had a lot of challenges, but I learned to trust and rely on inspiration for guidance and somehow help always came in one form or another.

Sue's pond2: This gentle waterfall leading to a fish pond creates movement and natural sounds in this Okanagan back yard. Large rocks anchor this feature into the natural landscape.





Bundle Creek: Ancient glacial draw was the perfect setting to re-create a trickling creek.

Michel d'Estimauville has a BSc degree in Biology and a post graduate Diploma in Education.

He has always loved the outdoors in his spare time, and worked for 15 years as a water surveyor.

For the last 20 years, Michel has been self-employed, running Skaha Water Gardens. He not only enjoys creating water features, but also consults with many of his customers, with all aspects of water gardening.

Michel now lives in Okanagan Falls, BC with his family and enjoys walking, gardening, camping meditating, reading and learning. He has taken a multitude of self development workshops over the years. His travels have given him a wider perspective on the planet and its inhabitants

As a life learner with a deep resonance for spirituality, I became interested in Shamanism and this led me to take workshops with Marv and Shannon Harwood. Shamanism is an ancient healing tradition and way of life. Shamanic teachings focus on our connection to nature and all of creation. Soon, as I absorbed these teachings I felt at home; they talked about universal principles that are not dependant on a particular religion or political idealism. Each person is guided to find their own Truth and connection with Spirit which results in a lot of healing.

The Shaman usually works within Sacred Space. This assures that the guidance is pure and originating from Spirit. To open sacred space, the Shaman calls upon each of the four cardinal directions each represented by a totem animal spirit, as well as Mother Earth and Father Sky. It has been my experience that work done in this space is always divinely guided.

I look at my work with watergardens as a way to “use” nature to create beautiful, relaxing and healing spaces for my clients. Sacred space helps my creativity which benefits both me and the homeowner. I also ask Nature for inspiration and that the water

feature be imbued with a residue of beneficial energy that will bring peace and healing to all those who sit by it.

20. Photo: Joyce's Pond: This backyard Koi pond creates a peaceful setting to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature.

21. Photo: Keith's W.F.: This dramatic waterfall was created to drown out traffic noise in this gardener's backyard.

In particular, I have learned to trust the rocks. When I begin a waterfall there is a big pile of rocks, somewhat similar to pieces from a jigsaw puzzle. I used to pick through these rocks looking for the right size, shape or colour. That searching was quite time consuming and sometimes frustrating. Now I spread out the pile of rocks before I begin, and intuitively pick the first rock that seizes my attention. It's very quick and accurate. Mind you this method takes a leap of faith because so often my mind will jump in and tell me it's the wrong rock. Sometimes I might think it's way too big and there is no way that it will work or fit in, but I have learned to ignore my contradicting thoughts and pick up the rock, or use another means when they are too heavy for my back. Always, my intuition seems to pick the perfect rock for the situation and it fits in there like a glove. This makes the work very satisfying and I feel like I am in partnership with Nature. My practice of opening to the cardinal directions before I begin helps me to be clear about my intentions for the project and my willingness to work in partnership with Spirit.

Looking back, I see an invisible thread of intelligence that has supported and guided me on this journey. I see a series of coordinated events that have not only contributed to the creation of wonderful water features for my customers, but also allowed me the honor of being creative with Nature.

HOZHO



Brenda Feist

To be “in Hozho” is to be at one with and a part of the world around you.

An ex-pat, now living in New York, asks me several times over the course of my stay – am I homesick? The repetition and unmistakable ache in her question tell me she is. It’s not a feeling I’m unfamiliar with, I’ve been homesick most of my life - little to do with place or other people, I’d just never really felt at home in my own self. But, I realize in the ask that that old familiar feeling simply *isn’t there*. Nothing is missing from my moments. And this is a new state of being for me. For all the women in me.

Close to the end of my travels, the lonely ex-pat asks again—will it be hard to leave? My granddaughters? Manhattan? But, it isn’t. I do not feel, as I have in younger versions of myself, that physical *tear* of separation.

On my return flight, I have an uncommon urge to listen to music. I usually use my sound-cancelling headphones for the quiet, but on this day, I choose a song I love, by *Panic! At The Disco & Fun* called *C’mon*. A few notes in and I feel like I am filling with helium...

How is it that the right *arrangement* of notes, words, elements, can bid the little hairs on your body rise, your cells begin re-ordering themselves in some remembered dance? Is it the same principle that allows birds to bank, fish to

school, trees to flower from a note in Aslan’s throat. (Remember that great lion and main character in C. S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* series?) Science tells us harmonics can suspend and change the shape of water, and I am water, am I not?

It’s getting late, and I
cannot seem to find my way home tonight
feels like I am falling down a rabbit hole
falling for forever, wonderfully wandering alone.
What would my head be like
if not for my shoulders
or without your smile?
May it follow you forever,
may it never leave you to sleep in the stone,
may we-e stay lost on our waaay home
C’mon, c’mon, with everything falling down around me
I’d like to belie-e-eve in all the poss-i-bil-i-ti-e-e-e-s

BUM bum BUM bum...

It’s right about here in the song, 30,000 feet in the air, that I realize the last time I heard it was on my commute to work, a year earlier. I used it as one would use a bike pump

Heading home



to inflate a tire, get to a place, find it flat again at the end of the day, pump it up, and ride home. Every. Single. Day. I wonder now, were its rhythms, repetitions, notes, words working on me, calibrating me for poss-i-bil-i-ti-e-e-e? Because that is certainly what came next.

If I should die tonight
 may I first just say I'm sorry, fo-or I,
 never felt like anybody
 I am a man of many hats
 although I never mastered anything
 when I am ten feet tall
 I've never felt much smaller since the fall
 nobody seems to know my name
 so, don't leave me to sleep all alone
 may we stay lost on our waaaay home
 C'mon, c'mon, with everything falling down around me
 i'd like to be li e-e-eve in all the poss-i-bil-i-ti-e-e-e-s...

BUM bum BUM bum

Music unpacks memory and it's right about here that I remember one of the lowest points of my life, hear myself sobbing a confession into a friend's arms, *I just want a kitchen table again!*...and her response: *You ARE the kitchen table.* Again, five words of a particular arrangement, and context, were enough to give me all the direction I needed, enough to point me *home*. I'm guessing this is the reason the great American theatre legend Helen Hayes, always carried a poet in her pocket. Think *wayfinder* - the wayfinder is a blend of artistry, magic, and technology.

A few days home, I open Christopher Sartwell's *Six Names of Beauty*...to the chapter on Hozho, a Navajo concept of beauty or beautiful conditions. Hozho is not a beauty *separate* from goodness, health, happiness, or harmony; not an *abstractable* quality or a *fragment* of experience. "*It is the normal pattern of nature and the most desirable form of experience.*" (Gary Witherspoon, *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe*).

Hozho is not just about the way things appear...but refers equally to a *state* of human beings, the objects around them, and the universe as a whole; to the world when it is flourishing. Hozho teaches that beauty is one complete thing: *everything*; something the French painter, teacher and art philosopher, Robert Henri seemed to understand: "*The object isn't to make art; it's to be in that wonderful state that makes art inevitable.*"

Hozho is something that can be lost by a person, or by a community, or by the world.

Right there. I knew what I wanted to do—connect art to life again, foster the practice of finding the art in everything, and celebrate the gobsmackingly-good art of this region, country, and world. How could I create a curriculum/practice that was less about making a picture and more about learning to see; one that would embody simplicity, quality, connection, and a little bit of crazy? It seems to me the real health epidemic is a disconnection from self.



Top left: dollhouse for my granddaughter
Above: "Keeper and the Zoo" installation
detail, wood, 6'x6'x6'H

Top right: Detail of work in progress, clay,
3"x4"x16"H



Could I build something that spoke more to the *whole* in art and the *whole* in each of us? And, *Simply Art* was born.

Try not to mistake what you have with what you hate...
it could leave, it could leave, come the mo-o-or-ning...
Ce-le-brate the night,
it's the fall before the climb,
shall we sing, shall we sing, 'til the mo-o-or-ning
If I fall forward, you fall flat
and if the sun should lift me up
would you come back? C'mon!

I write to sort myself out and to communicate with others, but, I have to *make things or die*. I need to *make* as a tree needs to *leaf*. And it cannot be only in my mind that I'm building, I need my hands in it. At one point, too long cut off from that outward expression in NY, I smashed together a 3-story cardboard dollhouse for my granddaughter one afternoon in what can only be described as a trance (of the good kind). I had to move it. It had to move. *Simply Art* advocates for this impulse. Something we now know to be integral to our well-being. We need it. It needs us.

That *thing* you feel— those of you who *used* to draw, paint, play, dance... is of value to us all, and more precious than we currently understand for building a healthy, functional, and imagined society. Art doesn't just solve *art* problems. It solves problems, period. It stops time, and creates space for solution. It recalibrates. We all have the capacity to bring beautiful things into this world. The creative process is part of a balanced life.

I believe with environmentalist Paul Shepard that we are "geographies within geographies..." , formed by the things outside us and giving form to the things inside us. Art is a way of giving the thing or thingness we are, shape and form and direction. It's a way of communicating not only OUT of your 'ruins'



I AM my happy place

but IN to your ‘possibilities’, and most importantly, it’s a way of sharing what you find.

Several things come to mind here, right on top of each other, as they usually do when I am hopelessly trying to tie off my own thought process: Dorothy and her red shoes, The Course in Miracles, a greeting card on my bulletin board, poet R. M. Drake, novelist Tim Tharp and Molly Bloom from Joyce’s Ulysses. Yes, it’s a pileup (of the good kind):

There’s no place like home. There’s no place like home. If I ever go looking for my heart’s desire again, I won’t look any further than my own backyard. Because it isn’t there, I never really lost it to begin with!

All sickness is homesickness.

Any moment can change your life. You just have to be there.

In the end, she became more than she expected. She became the journey, and like all journeys, she did not end. She simply

changed direction and kept going.

Goodbye, I say, goodbye, as I disappear little by little into the middle of the middle of my own spectacular now.

Yes I said yes I will yes.

More days than not, a year shy of my 60th birthday, I AM my happy place.

Brenda Feist is an artist, educator, mother, and grandmother with an MFA from UBCO and loads of lovely experience in the art world. Before founding Simply Art, she was Education Coordinator at the Kelowna Art Gallery.

“I believe art is about everything that is truly valuable—passion, love, life, humanity, and that it connects us to each other and the world though time and across the globe.” ~ Brenda Feist

Simply Art is, an exciting new outreach art and wellness program in the Okanagan. We offer talks, tours, and classes to further an art practice. Come to our studio or we’ll come to you. Open to all ages.

Why make art?

For health! - Connection? Visual literacy? Focus? Expansion? Growth? Peace? Fun?

“To practice art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, so do it.” ~ Kurt Vonnegut

For more information contact bfeist@hotmail.com



BEYOND EULOGY

Vivian Garner

A Contemplation

Three score and ten. What then?



Blessings

blessings come in some strange packages
my husband for instance

I thought I loved him for his good looks and charm
then I discovered his temper
and stubbornness
I thought he had an inquiring mind
till he questioned me
his righteousness was an answer to prayer
I thought
I have learned to be careful about praying

I thought we had a marriage made in heaven
I discovered it had to survive on earth
and it worked
not because I was so smart
nor righteous
but because he was too stubborn to quit
and so was I

we were heavenly minded when we were young
we learned to be one flesh in spite of it
all that stuff about fuller's soap and refiners fire
we expected to go through it together
never suspecting to find it in each other.

It had to end sometime. And the end was welcome.
The pain was over. For one of us.

After The Funeral Was Over

reality — suspended
— hanging —
only the pain is real

in olden times the world was
young
and so was I

who knew
who knew...
how long
it takes
to die...

mourning sun will peek through
the curtains
& I will live again
— suspended —

— waiting —

Getting On With Repairs

there's pieces of me missing
funny holes in places I've never noticed
he'd filled them in
and I was glad to let him
I suppose

I've patched them up
made do
accepted the composite

this new composite me
bits patched repaired replaced
lop sided and one sided
life's map upon my face
staggers around
finding my way
praying for grace

learning renewing regretting
living as this new me
finding some pathways foreign
finding it hard to see
where I belong what I can do

missing the other me

Hands

that pot that you fixed — the handle's loose again
 the other one – my favourite – the wooden knob still works
 so does the door that wouldn't close and the window that wouldn't open
 I hope they keep working because tradesmen are expensive
 I miss you coming to me after we argued
 and asking if I wanted to continue or should we go out to dinner

it's lonely with only myself to blame
 no one argues with me
 they just give me sideways looks
 I see them inside looking out.
silly old woman just don't argue

I miss your hands — tradesman's hands
 you were proud of what your hands could do
 I took them for granted — no more

in the night I miss all of you
 but today I need your hands

He Told Me

*I thought getting old would be easy
 it's the hardest thing I've done*

we saw the end coming
 he warned me

you've never lived on your own

then grinned
there's parts of it you'll like.

so I carry no guilt

Thanks, love. See you soon.

My name is **Vivian**. That is precious to me because for a very long time I was the daughter, the wife, the mother, the caregiver. I am now 77 years old and these last few years are the first time that I have been just 'Vivian' and I am just beginning to know this person I have become. I have written poetry for a long time. This is the first time I have made a serious attempt to present it publicly though I have always written articles for whatever group or organization I was involved with. I came to Australia from Barrie, Ontario in the 1970's with a husband and five children. My husband died in 2012 after a long illness and I decided that I wanted to be nearer my family. I have children in the northern and southern suburbs of Adelaide so I purchased an apartment in the centre of the city and now I can reach the suburbs easily by commuter train and they can reach me. I had gone back to study part time and decided to take the plunge and sign up for a master's degree. It has been a stimulating two years and I have had much appreciated encouragement from my supervisors to take poetry seriously. I am surprised to find how much of it there is lurking in my files. Poetry has always been an outlet for me and these poems were written during and after my husband's illness. Now I share them with you.

MOVING INTO 90

Ruth Hughes and Karen Close



Ruth and her view

“It was excellent; the purchasers who bought Mom’s house were interested in all her artwork too. Mom carefully chose and marked the ones she wanted to bring with her and the rest sold along with the house. It was great for her to know her pieces would continue to be enjoyed; those works were so suited to that house and yard.”

After the move to *Sandalwood Retirement Resort* in Kelowna, Ruth Hughes’s daughter invited me to visit. As we chatted, the years were filtered through fond memories and Ruth glowed with pleasure. She and her husband had designed and built their Penticton home thirty years ago. It was hard to leave, but knowing the new owners would enjoy her art work made it easier to cross this threshold into a new environment.

In 1974, after Ruth’s family was grown, she felt drawn to the clay works of her friend Phyllis Noel. Ruth had always felt a kinship with pottery and spent much time enjoying pieces in local shops. When Phyllis suggested that Ruth join the *Penticton Potter’s Guild*, pottery became her focus.

“I have never looked back. I was hooked. I especially like working with my hands and creating masks, fish and other forms. Some of my creations include pots, masks , ogopogos and wildlife.

I have been invited into schools and worked with students creating with clay. One spring I made about 100 clay inukshuks for a school reunion. *Being able to make a glaze for my works using local clay made the pottery have a special Okanagan feel .*

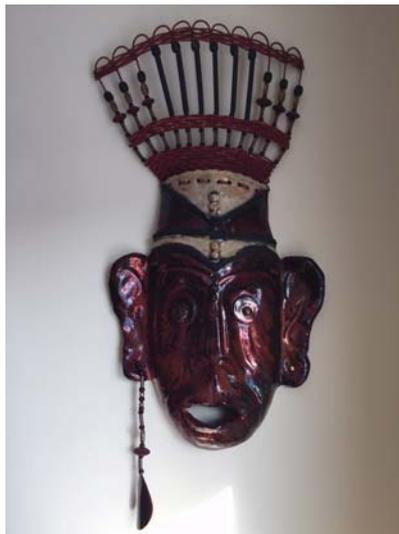
For the past decade or so I have made little angels at Christmas time and taken them to hospice and other care facilities. The people really enjoyed the little gifts. I have enjoyed mentoring and sharing my work.

While working at the wheel, I always had a little verse by my side which

Below left: careful handwork gives textural interest

Middle: cane weaving adds to this mask

Right: found objects decorate this piece





I thought was so true: ‘As clay is in the hands of the potter, so am I in His’. Throughout my life I have often felt guided as I work. Being an artist has made me look at everything and see the possibilities. I have loved working with clay, never knowing when I started what I would do or how it would turn out.

Making pottery was such an important part of my life, but when I moved to Sandalwood it was time to take my creativity in a new direction. I had three kilns, two of which I gave away to others starting their journey with clay. The third I sold, and donated the money to support the Potter’s Guild. I am now trying my hand at painting and I feel that the arts are still keeping me interested and challenged. Sandalwood has a professional painter who offers advice and organizes our art club. It is always a sociable and enjoyable get together with teacher Terry Weiss. There are many artists living here and we all enjoy doing our own thing.



The day I visit Ruth it is bright and sunny following a few days of snow. The apartment’s large window provides a beautiful view into the snow covered hills. We laugh that we both enjoy imagining forms in the puffs of snow on tree branches. Inside, the light illuminates the cherished pieces of pottery Ruth has brought with her and the new paintings she has made.

Looking at all of these I get to know Ruth, her keen sense of design and composition, her curiosity about textures and combinations, her love of precision and craftsmanship. She has a generous creative spirit and an inquisitive mind. I can feel how living with her creations, old and new, brings deep contentment. Her new home feels cosy and highly personal. Above her bed is one of her paintings and above the chest of drawers a whimsical plaque of three angels.



I notice the beads making the hair on the mask to the right, and how the tones make the glaze sparkle. Ruth laughs, “I bought those beads for me, but didn’t like them. They work for him though.”

A table in the living room appears to be the birthing place for her new creative ventures. Hanging above is a series of inukshuk paintings. Ruth is experimenting with hard edge and textural brush effects in her work. I am intrigued by the abstract design elements at the bottom. “I am trying to express the northern lights,” she explains.

Sitting on the table’s surface is a collection of wood block shapes painted in bright primary colours. Arranged in groups there are small rectangles with peaked tops. “They are odd bits left from my husband’s workshop,” Ruth interjects, “and they remind me of houses. I’m making a small installation piece and am working on the composition for a painting to go in the background.” She shows me a sample sketch and I see how deeply she is engrossed by her new creation - the old and the new transforming into now.

Imagine this vibrant woman, entering her 90s, and planning an art

Top: a favourite piece

Middle: one of Ruth’s paintings above her bed

Above: Ruth loves angels

37. Photo: Welcoming you into the hall are her masks of the three wise men.



Top left: Inukshuk
Top right: display cabinet
Above: table top

installation piece. Observing, wondering, speculating, trying out new ideas and challenging her skills has kept her mind alert, brought back memories she values and given her a strong sense of self. She is active and alive working with her daughter to make *Sandalwood Retirement Resort* her new home. While I am visiting her art group leader drops by and one can feel their mutual respect and the joy creating in community brings them.

In the entrance hall of the resort there is a display cabinet for residents to share their works. This month Ruth and her daughter Susan have set out a number of pieces of Ruth's works. Susan also enjoys painting and Ruth is proud that her children all value creative expression, each in their own way.

Moving Ruth into her 90s and settling into a new home has required a lot of work from this mother and daughter; they have chosen to make it about sharing in an adventure of remembering and celebrating the next phase of Ruth's creative inquiry. Creative spirit ignites confidence and integrity as we cross thresholds allowing the beauty of the new to emerge.

PAINTING THROUGH PAIN



Leona La Pierre

Living through the loss of my son Tyler, the feeling of searching was enormous, and the pain so deep, I felt myself screaming for release. At the time I didn't realise, but what I needed was an expression for all the feelings that were swirling inside. The pain was so deep and raw that I found that I was going deep within myself to places that I never thought I ever wanted to be. Facing awareness of these places I knew I had to find a way to express the gratefulness that I have in knowing my child and let my gratitude for the light of his memory shine on all the emotions that I was feeling inside.

I started to visualize colour and felt the need to paint. My canvas started dark. Slowly, within my heart, I felt the sorrow and rage emerge in many layers of color. From deep within my gut the need to expel got stronger and stronger. As I applied different colours each layer brought more comfort. The psychological impact of colours and their emotional equivalents has been studied since the Middle Ages, but I hadn't understood how this power of colour would be for me. I could feel my feelings releasing as I painted. Each layer of colour and each discharged emotion brought a union with my son. It was as if he was speaking through me and my brush.

In this first canvas you will see a bouquet of white and pink. For me The white resembled the light, and the pink is the love. Together they symbolize the gift of my gratitude to Tyler for this gift of finding a way to grieve that he has taught me. As I continued, I added many colors, and the concrete symbols I thought I needed disappeared. More important was the process of painting that I could feel pushing me through my pain. I went over the canvas with many layers of paint. I scratched. I rubbed. I got physical with the paint.

Left: my first canvas
Right: My Tribute to Tyler



A CREATIVE WAY



Margaret Verhagen

To sit and write about my creative process was oddly enlightening. I needed to figure out how to describe something I have done many times in many ways for as long as I can remember. I started the process by hashing out details with pen and paper.

What I thought at one time:

Art, a word used to describe rigidly defined forms of expression.

What now I like:

Art, a term used to describe expression of our innate creativity, in any medium that conveys the spirit of that creativity.

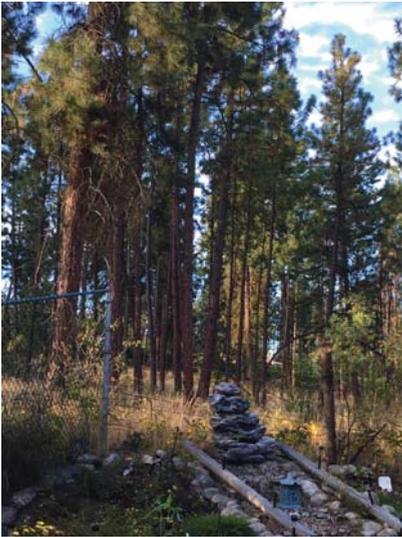
This new description is what I have come to believe. Plus for me I like to feel my expression is elevating something from the ordinary, or utilitarian, into something pleasant, pleasing, unexpected or maybe even spectacular; usually I am also solving a 'problem'.

Let me present the *The Story of the Chain Link Fence*, the story of this ordinary 6 foot high divider which is a sentinel protecting the property of others. I sit with lovely views all around, of trees and fields, halfway up a mountain, and then, there is this 14 feet of an RV view. It is jarring to the vista and intrudes on the lovely natural views, home to quail and deer. The fence became an interruption that subtly offended me. I found myself sitting with my back to it and thereby relegating my view to the wall of my brother's home - rather ridiculous.

After sitting with this wall view for several weeks, I determined not to use those horrid plastic slats which help block view, but rather I began trying on different solutions in my mind. Weaving strips of cloth in a pleasing pattern seemed possible, but then there is a UV issue. I took trips to the nursery, investigated different plantings to cover the fence, and the time frame before they would fill in. I also considered maintenance of the covering because my brother is not a gardener. I let my problem sit for awhile, percolating.

Then one day I stood on the lawn at this yard sale staring at a bin of Christmas garlands, sprucey looking things, not the same colour or style, 5 in all. Somewhere, I had seen a fake ivy blanket you could purchase to hang on a chain link fence for privacy. Like slow motion in my mind's eye, those garlands began to entwine themselves onto my brother's fence. I saw a sprucey hedge of sorts, that might camouflage the RVs, even just a little. After a little negotiating, plus not needing the bins the garlands were in, we came to an agreement: \$3.00 for the 5 garlands. After all it would be an experiment and if it didn't work, a small loss.

Unfortunately, that bit of magic where the garlands intertwined on the fence by themselves didn't materialize - darn. Also, after putting up the second garland it quickly became clear I needed more; I took down the second one, rethought the design, made a couple of measurements, and four



Top: ForestView
Above: RV View

panels were created. It was ok I knew we would find more garlands sooner or later.

So with the panels up, I took a break and viewed my handiwork. Still, the open spaces between the panels allowed the dreaded view, but my mind's eye was on a roll. I was off to the shed to round up the pine cones I had picked up off the lawn in June. I chose larger ones than the holes in the fence and screwed them in, bottoms facing to me. They had a rosette look and created enough of a pattern, that they interrupted the dreadful view. You could still see the RVs, but it was a disrupted view and less jarring.

How do I know it was effective? The first person who saw it said, "How cool is that," and after their second look said, "how did you get the pinecones to stay in without wiring them?" As each new person sees the 'art installation', the comments are varied, but all have to get closer for a second look. They ask questions, usually what made you think of this and often, "How creative; I never would have thought of that." My brother's home has been under various renos since May. I was probably most tickled by the comments from various contractors, all of whom took notice and said they liked it, and "What made you think of that?"

When more garlands are found the hedge will 'grow', the pine cones will come out, and the RVs will be hidden. This is my end intention, but now there seems to be no hurry.

Yes, to sit and write about my creative process was oddly enlightening. I realized I wanted to figure out how to describe something I have done many times for as long as I can remember. In writing this article, and with the help of the editor, it became clear that when we open to our creative spirit and listen, it never fails to present possible connections, for seemingly unrelated ideas and events, a synchronicity.

Throughout my life, I never thought of what I do as a creative process. I was unschooled, self taught, and would do, instead of say. There were always people willing to talk me out of my plans, yet an idea would be so strong it demanded my full attention. Often I might require a new skill to bring the idea 'out'. Hence I have become an 'A student' of much and a graduate of nothing. I am a dabbler.

I am happy that slowly over the years I have come to appreciate that to ignore insistent creative urges was like 'a little death'. When I didn't listen to my creativity, I would feel out of sorts, sad and dark. It was like closing the curtain on a sunbeam because it makes you smile. I also discovered that always, without fail, when I listened and allowed, when I threw myself into that creative spirit, no matter the idea or the outcome, there was an indescribable feeling, a joyful calm - not self satisfaction but a happiness in the doing.

I also have come to realize that I often found myself using what was on hand when I got creative. It used to be called making do, now upcycling and recycling. This ties into my personal 'hippie' beliefs. How we treat the planet on which we live reflects how we treat each other. I like to see all the qualities of things and people.

I am now on the other side of 60, a mother, grandmother, aunt, daughter,



Top: installation closeup
Above: Improved RV view

sister and friend. I have worked at jobs I disliked and those that fed my creative spirit. I was a single parent with little money, and yet our home was always welcoming and many wondered how I did it. Well, that is where a little imagination and a willingness to give it a go became my best friend.

I now look forward to sensing the ‘feeling’, the creative urge, and am finding ways to coax it out more often. Through the years, my creativity has usually been of practical pursuits, but now I play more.

When I met ‘my fence’ I was living in Kelowna, British Columbia with my brother and attending a program called heArt Fit. The program really opened the door for me to the realization that creativity is a natural part of the human spirit and that it was ok to not get into that ‘box’ of conformity that so many are willing to build for you, and which I stubbornly refuse to get into. I watched myself and many others ‘blossom’ in the heART Fit program. The atmosphere is unique in my experience and initially appears unstructured, but that is not the case.

Each week our facilitator would email us with a suggestion as to what we might do on Tuesday if not working on an individual project. The emails often included observations of surroundings, weather, a bit of art history, suggested readings and more. I found the emails a delightful nudging to my creative spirit. This structure facilitates the young and old, professional, amateur and all artists at heart, to mindfully and gently, encourage and support each other, laugh, share stories and teach each other with a generosity of spirit we seem to be lacking more and more as a society. I watched the very shy become comfortable, the skeptic relax into the flow, intergenerational family members delight in the discovery of each other, and each week looked forward to this haven where a beautiful blossoming of creative spirit takes place. I really could go on and on about this program, its creator and facilitator Karen Close and the need for her ‘Creative Community’ programming.

I found this on the back of one my heART fit paintings

heART Fit
heART Fit space,
great place,
to come,
to stay,
to play

No judgement here. MAV Aug16/16

Sadly I am no longer in Kelowna, circumstances have taken me to Edmonton, for now. The heArt Fit experience stays with me, Tuesdays have become my dedicated day to feed my creativity and explore ideas. I now apply the heArt Fit experience and its message of creative spirit to more and more areas of my life.

“The unfolding of the unexpected becomes the energy that drives you. You discover how thirsty you are for exploration without analysis. You feel strangely at home in a place you can’t define. You are truly creating.” - Michell Cassou and Stewart Cubley.

TAKING TIME FOR ART IN THE OKANAGAN



Suzanne Chavarie

Art Through The Ages

Art through the Ages is Lake Country Gallery's 4th annual intergenerational art exhibition Inspired by the work of British Columbia's *i2i Intergenerational Society of Canada*. This year's particularly welcomed children.

Longtime Okanagan artist Liz Earl decided to ask her granddaughter Abby, age 9, to join her in creating a piece for the exhibition. Liz got them started by preparing a surface. "I started with an acrylic pour in light shades of grey, blue and white. When it dried I turned it ninety degrees and penciled in lots of circles in various sizes. Abby started to work with acrylic, painting the circles in lots of different colours." Liz was pleased that Abby enjoyed herself, but did note that she mentioned her grandmother worked much slower. As the two painted together Liz shared some of her experience about colour theory. They agreed the tones seemed a bit too bright and bold and all the same value, so Liz taught Abby how to tone the colours down in places. It was then decided that some darks were needed. A few crows were added and a cat playing a banjo. And that was it! *It's a Balloon Day at Peer Greer School*

It's a Balloon Day at Peer Greer School



was created. Grandmother and granddaughter were proud to put in their work in the exhibition.

"Reconnecting Community. Helping Generations See Eye to Eye" is the mission of the *i2i Intergenerational Society of Canada* and this grandmother and granddaughter and grandmother's painting is a great example of how to nurture 'seeing eye to eye' by making art together.



Art In Functional Spaces

When strolling along Main Street in the downtown area of Penticton one can't help but notice the inviting store front of "Haute House Design" with its window length planters and bold black painted trims. Inside you will find Nadine Alleyn who is passionate about helping you create a home where art is found in functional spaces.

Her small studio is an interesting mix of materials, including furniture, textiles, wallpaper, drapery, hardware, area rugs and vintage objects of desire.

These are some quotes promoting products on their facebook page 'Haute Design'.

They made me smile.

"I LAY UPON IT WITH SUCH JOY I NEARLY DIED"

"LET'S GET COZY"

"IT'S MONDAY DON'T FORGET TO BE AWESOME"!

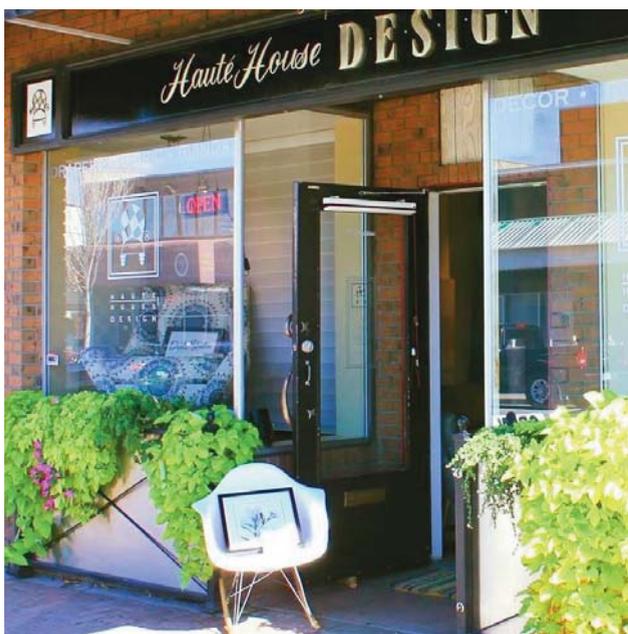
In 2001, Nadine had a vision for a business which led to the creation of 'Haute House Designs'; it was brought to life during a period of extreme passion for all things.

Within a few minutes of browsing around you will be delighted with discoveries; among her interesting mix of items you might even find a vintage piece you have been looking for for that special space. Art pieces that find their way into one's home speak volumes of the type of personality of the space dweller. It's great to know of services like Haute House Designs to assist in your search. When looking to connect with Nadine, you can find her on Main Street in the downtown core of Penticton. Just look for the brightly lit **OPEN** sign in her window of her shop.

Haute House Design is located 544 Main Street, Penticton, B.C. Phone 250 770 1033 email haute@vip.net

Kelowna resident **Suzanne Chavarie** pays attention and savours all she encounters. Sharing her special finds with others is Suzanne's generous talent. Filling with enthusiasm for every day and the art filled encounters she anticipates is her creative expression.

Top: we had fun
Above Welcome



TWO CENTURIES MEET IN AN OKANAGAN TREASURE



Dina Kotler

I spent about an hour of my first visit exploring, just lost to my imagination: fascination growing, my mind racing with the possibilities, the history, questions, and the potential stories. Like a grandmother's arms wrapped around her grandchildren, this grand old piece of Okanagan history enveloped me with warmth and comfort.

It was last July when I stumbled upon this beautiful old home, completely unexpectedly. It was a lovely July weekend and I was out with friends when we spotted the Open House sign and out of curiosity ventured into what has now become my dream. She has lovely curb appeal; there is a quaint front yard, full of of colour, and in season the fragrance of peaches, and strawberries. The house itself has a wide exposure onto the street with an open facade and an "enormous" porch, but nothing prepared me for what lay inside.

It stole my heart the moment I walked through her front door. Greeted by the warm amber glow of softly illuminated wood, lots of wood, I stood speechless in the gracious foyer of this 1912 craftsman home with it's original wood panelled walls and ceiling. I stared at the beauty of the staircase. I inhaled the smell of history, as the words "WOW" quietly passed my lips.

Heart racing with childlike wonder, I explored every nook and cranny of her 5600 square feet. Nothing was what I was expecting when I mounted the front steps and crossed the porch. Each new turn revealed another wonder: creaking floors, radiators, dings in the wood, original windows, the window

bench seats, the fireplaces, copper sinks, the lead glass doors, built in wardrobes, the black and white tiled bathrooms, clawfoot tubs, solid wood doors, children's initials discretely carved. All tell a story of this gracious old lady's life lived with love, challenges, and the odd bit of "work" to lift and update her. All of it was magical, and I LOVED it all...

I took the thought home of what a beautiful Bed and Breakfast she'd make. Visions of brides descending the staircase, families reuniting, romantic couples sharing a special weekend, cultural events - salons, and even the possibility of the odd small corporate gathering - whether

From city archives





Top left: Christleton Manor today
 Top middle: entrance hall
 Top right: upper hall
 Above middle: salon
 Above: dining room

for a conference, a retreat, or an appreciation award. I could see her welcoming them all.

And then there is Christmas! Could one imagine Christmas in this stately old home?

My heart's eye saw a real tree standing proudly in the front entrance, tucked up against the staircase, its fragrance filling the house. Twinkling lights, tinsel, the sounds of happy people embraced by this hundred and five year old home, I could see it all. I had butterflies just thinking about it and I knew somehow I had to make this a reality.

The bones were magnificent. In her original state I've learned she had 7 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, but over the years she's had updates that included new wiring, plumbing, a new roof, a reduction in the the number of bedrooms to accommodate additional bathrooms, and a fabulous Nanny Suite in the attic. At the time of my purchase there were 4 lovely corner bedrooms on the second floor, one with a converted closet (now literally a water closet with a small 3 piece bathroom) and 3 interconnecting bathrooms. It was an odd configuration but with some minor modifications each of the 4 bedrooms could be awarded it's own private bathroom. The 2 door walk through shower that adjoined one room to the neighbouring room became a larger challenge when we decided to redo it and it revealed an interesting room behind the shower that to this day I can't figure out. It was too small to be considered of any use, measuring 5x8 feet and adjacent to the closet; it had a wallpaper border that matches that found in the centre of the home on two floors. The bathrooms separations were Item number one on my list of to-do's.

Next was a modification to the Nanny Suite that would repair and replace a leaky glass block shower placed mid bedroom and replace it with a full 4 piece bathroom with clawfoot tub and shower. This was tricky given that it required working without blueprints - sort of like trying to perform surgery without the benefit of x-rays or a CT scan. Lath and plaster walls

Left: new bathroom
Right: just waiting for you



didn't align, and plumbing lines required ingenious methods of detection. Back in the day that she was built the codes were different; inspection reports appear to have been nonexistent, and sadly any blueprints that might have existed are no longer available. I reminded myself what she lacked in practicality she made up for in charm. The challenge was to make modern usage work, but appear seamless, leaving no glaring scars. Many heads and patience have prevailed and the old lady stands proud.

Christleton Manor is also my little girl's dream come true, ever changing in appearance as I bring in new pieces to furnish her and add the finishing touches. She is my living breathing doll house. The doors will open for business this May and I'm delighted to already have bookings flooding in.



Dina was born into a happy existence in Johannesburg, South Africa in the mid sixties to a South African father and Canadian mother. In the early 70's the family emigrated back to her mother's birthplace. A difficult decision, but one based on fear of an uncertain future, and in an effort to avoid the growing political unrest in Africa.

Vancouver with its family ties was the natural soft landing point, but Toronto with its business environment and brighter skies pulled the family east for a number of years. The 1980's brought new adventure though when the family emigrated to Perth, West Australia where while at high school Dina worked in the family owned deli, working primarily on the catering side.

After completing Business studies at university, Dina went on to work in the finance and advertising industries before seeking her own travel adventures working in Japan and backpacking through Europe. Eventually she wound her way back to Vancouver, B.C. Whilst in Vancouver she worked at The Vancouver Board of Trade in membership, networking and marketing, before being swept off her feet and moving to Kelowna, B.C.

Married for 14 years she spent most of that time enjoying her philanthropic interests, volunteering, painting and organizing art shows & sales.

Sadly she lost her husband to pancreatic cancer in 2012, and has taken a few years to find her new passion - Christleton Manor. The perfect culmination of a lifetime of creative, business, marketing skills and her love of people and travel.

<http://bedandbreakfastkelowna.ca/> 423 Christleton Avenue, Kelowna BC, 250-470-0298

STARLING DRAW

EXTENDING THE PRESENT MOMENT THROUGH ART



Lisa Lipsett

Lately I've been fascinated by making art with moving things. In particular, I love to draw along with flying birds. I love to follow the line of their swoops and dips. I especially love when whole flocks dance and dive. Starlings are the masters. Drawing along with them creates joyful relaxation.

Artist and videographer Dennis Hlynsky is also fascinated by the movement of groups of things like animals, paint droplets and snowflakes. In his footage of a flock of birds in "Data In, Data Out" vimeo.com/32363204 he uses the visual effect of Extended Moment Photography (EMP) to reveal their flight lines. EMP is not the same as time-lapse photography where time is condensed to reveal flowers blooming, fruit rotting or the city waking up. EMP plays with speed in real time. Video footage is processed to extend individual moments to reveal where an animal or object has been and will be. This is exciting because in the case of birds, I think the result looks they are actually drawing with pens attached to their bodies. You can literally see the traces left behind by their movements much like the wake left by a motorboat in the water. Like an after effect lingering on our visual field from sparklers or fireworks, EMP reveals gorgeous lingering present moment movement paths.

Starling Murmuration

Murmuration is not a word you hear every day. I first heard it used to describe the synchronized movement of a flock of starlings in a video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRNqhi2ka9k&feature=youtu.be> created by two young canoe adventurers Sophie Windsor Clive and Liberty Smith.

They were surprised by the joyful amorphous sky dancing of starlings during a canoe trip on the river Shannon, Ireland. You can hear the young women gasp, their breath literally taken away by bird exuberance. When witnessed it is an overwhelming and truly incredible sight. Starlings fly in an incredible self-organized way with such poetic grace and precision.

"Murmuration" comes from the Latin *murmurare* "to murmur, mutter," from *murmur* (n.) "a hum, muttering, rushing," and from the Greek *mormyreîn* "to roar, boil." That's what starlings look like- a rolling muttering at times rushing, often rolling boil of thick matter.

People and pigeons in Venice (artist unknown)





I love how starlings dance as one, shifting and turning on a whim. Apparently they are masterful evaders of owls, hawks and eagles. Most intriguing is the way they spontaneously bunch up creating bulbous moving 3-D shapes that flash and morph in the sky. There are starlings located all over the world though they are concentrated in the northern latitudes. Unfortunately their numbers are dwindling due to habitat destruction and food scarcity.

How do starlings do it?

The ability of individual starlings to move in sync with their nearest neighbours is part of the scientific explanation behind this phenomena. <https://www.wired.com/2011/11/starling-flock/> They are in harmony, of one mind because they are entrained to each other. To entrain means “to draw along,” It is a 1560s term used in chemistry, also from French entrainer (12c.), from en- “away” (see en- (1)) + trainer “to drag”.

Entrainment is the synchronization of two or more rhythmic systems into a single pulse. The pulse can be as simple as a breath. This happens naturally between people, people and nature, and individuals in a flock or school. We breathe together, feel together, move together so quickly there isn’t even time to think! It feels good to be so in sync.

In the case of starlings, when one changes direction or speed, each of the other birds in the flock responds to the change. As the researchers put it, “the group respond[s] as “one” and “cannot be divided into independent subparts”. They do so nearly simultaneously regardless of the size of the flock making the remarkable thing about starling murmurations, their fluidity of motion.

www.allaboutbirds.org/how-do-starling-flocks-create-those-mesmerizing-murmurations/ In essence, information moves across the flock very quickly and with nearly no degradation. Researchers describe starling murmurations as having a high signal-to-noise ratio, meaning communication is clear and sharp with little distortion. Last week, a new study on starling murmuration by George Young at Princeton University determined that starlings consistently coordinated their movement with their seven closest neighbours. www.journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1002894.

Artists Love Murmuration

The natural beauty of starling murmuration is made momentarily still with each new shape-shifting formation. The stark beauty of their moving formations shifts from what at first looks two dimensional and quickly morphs into beautiful coherent, yet ever changing, three dimensional funnels and pods twisting and turning as they move through the sky. All the while, individual birds flicker and flash. This natural harmony is attractive and appealing.



Top: Starling Murmuration on River Shannon

Above: wall installation



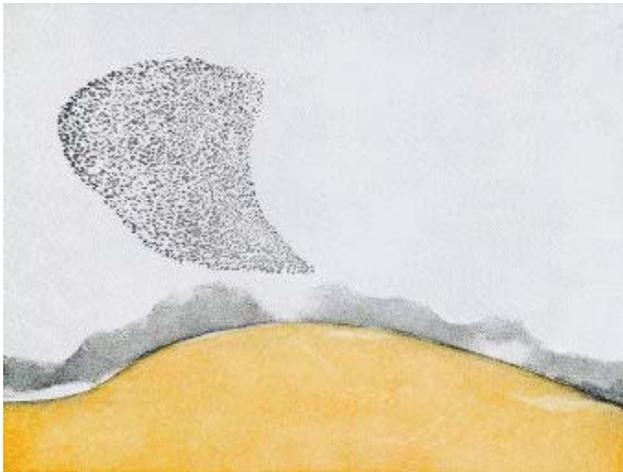
Starling murmuration has inspired many artists including photographers, videographers, dancers, ceramic artists and painters. Maybe because no matter what starlings do, it just looks and feels right. It fits.

Ceramic artist Christina Watka creates wall installations using porcelain with gold or silver lusters and sometimes full colour glazes to invite flashes of light that encourage a moment of pause in the viewer. www.christinawatka.com/murmurations

Photographer Alan Bur Johnson takes photos of starling feathers and sets them in key ring loop photo clasps, then pins them to the wall in swooping murmuration patterns.

notesfromthewest.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/phoenix-art-026.jpg

Then there is the simply gorgeous printmaking of starling murmuration by Irish born artist Vincent Sheridan www.graphicstudiodublin.com/gsd/artists/sheridan_vincent/



Starling Draw

While on holiday last year I noticed a magnificent and dramatic starling murmuration dancing and swooping over the river Tiber in Rome, so I excitedly gave into the impulse to draw with them for the first time.

In Rome, in winter, starlings congregate by the river at dusk to warm up a bit and roost in nearby trees.

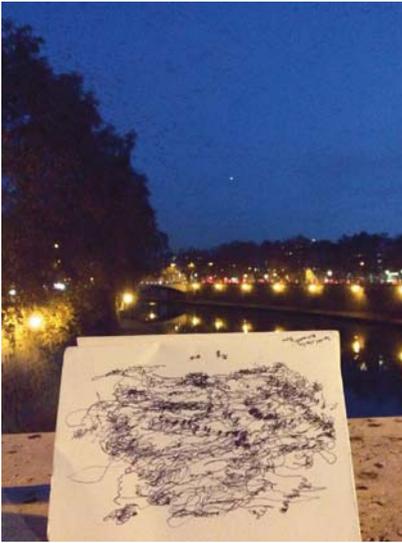
Unfortunately, they are not the friends of cars, walkways and heads as their robust numbers generate equally robust amounts of guano. Locals cross the bridge under open umbrellas at this time of day.

I was fortunate enough to have two short sessions with them just before Christmas 2015 on Ponte Sisto near the market at Campo di Fiori. A guitarist played Christmas carols as people rushed home from work, some stopping momentarily to take in the show, others dodging the inevitable stream of bird poop landing all over the ground, coating Italian high fashion and paint peeled parking posts in equal measure. Here is the video of my session entitled *Starling Draw*: vimeo.com/207840236

When I draw along with birds, I love to track a single bird in a flock, letting my pen move in synchrony with her. There is an EMP quality to the result, as the bird line only appears if swings and curls are followed over time. While drawing with this particular murmuration of starlings, watching a single bird required using the soft focus of peripheral vision as she came into, and out of, view. Sometimes she was at one with the others and at other times moving alone, uniquely herself.



Top: photo installation
Middle: starling murmuration print
Above: Starlings over the river Tiber in Rome.



For me the fascination with drawing along lies in losing myself to the moment. Change is so fast paced that there is no time to think. By allowing my eyes to slip and slide from one bird to the next, I become entrained to the unpredictability and spontaneity of their movement. Being entrained seems to open more of my awareness; it energizes my body and mind. The effect is strangely awakening yet relaxing at the same time. I am drawn out of myself and am part of something larger, naturally dancing. I also love the complexity, yet cohesiveness of the art made with them.

Drawing along with the harmonious balance of differentiation and communion revealed by starling murmuration holds good medicine. If Extended Moment Photography makes the 'now' longer by visually expanding the present moment, then drawing along with starling murmuration may offer peace because we directly *experience* the expanding present moment.

Want to give it a go? What draws you in today? What could you track and trace?



Top: Drawing the flight of Starlings
Above: Finished drawing

Movement Draw

Try drawing along with a movement that attracts. You can practice drawing while focusing on one and the many all at the same time.

Here are some suggestions: fluttering leaves on branches in a stiff breeze, schools of fish, falling snow, bubbles in flowing water, waterfalls, waves, clouds, insect swarms, people running, people moving through a busy intersection, cars on the highway, ants streaming past your door come to mind. There are a number of examples

on the Creative by Nature Art log www.creativebynature.org/blog

You can even create your own movement as you draw. Try walking along the edge of a garden, drawing as you go. Let your eyes be in soft focus, visiting lines and contours as you keep track on the page. Try this with each hand in turn, not looking at what you are drawing but staying with what you see. Enjoy.

Lisa Lipsett is a Salt Spring, BC artist and founder of Creative by Nature Art, Quiet Mind Art with Earth & Heart. Her world burst open the day she painted the way a tulip feels instead of the way it looks. Lisa offers creative mentoring, creative nature connection programs in schools and personal transformation through art. Her passion is to free people from art anxiety so they may strengthen their creative nature for joy, connection and self-change. To learn more about Lisa visit www.creativebynature.org/about/ Quiet Mind Art with Earth & Heart www.creativebynature.org

AGING WITH SPIRIT THROUGH WRITING



Ellen B. Ryan

The website and blog “Writing Down Our Years”, nicknamed Writing Aging & Spirit, emerged seven years ago as my creative retirement project.

After a series of meaningfulness exercises to discover my life passions, I identified my primary spiritual goal for early retirement years: Through writing, I will discover, touch, and teach.

My commitment to a monthly blog (how old-fashioned!) has been a practice in writing for educated older adults about resilience in later life and how creativity and spirituality contribute to that resilience. Originally, my aim was to emphasize creative writing in the broader context of Aging with Spirit. Since then, I have added two newer passions: Photography and Aging in Community.

The website provides a host for the blog and a home for resources relevant to Writing Aging and Spirit (see box). Users can access my publications – research on resilient aging, articles for practitioners and older adults, and my poetry. They can also find information about upcoming conferences on aging and publishing opportunities. The information about Workshops I offer is especially valuable when trying to find a match between what I know and what a community group might need.

The Resources section of the website is close to my heart – as a lifelong collector of inspirational quotations and evaluated book lists. As community organizational work in Aging in Community takes more and more of my energy, I have created a link here for aging boomers and policy makers to access information on mutual support strategies and housing alternatives (cohousing, co-op, shared housing).

A special reason for the website is to promote my series of ten books Writing Down Our Years. These books highlight the creative writing of older adults – memoir, poetry, letters to grandchildren, writing with dementia, caregiving lessons, etc. We intend to encourage seniors to write – for their own pleasure and that of their families, individually and in groups, and to share their best work with the world. Some of these books are available for download. The order form enables users to purchase books from McMaster University.

An inter-linked sister website features one of these projects – Celebrating Poets over 70, with poems and biographies from lifelong poets and post-retirement poets, ranging in age from 70-103 years. The oldest writer

**The meaning of life is
to find your gift.
The purpose of life is
to give it away.
– Pablo Picasso**

founded a writing group 30 years earlier, and still attended monthly meetings.

The poets offered reasons for writing – they have much to say about meaning-making in later life:

“I write poetry to stay alive! Writing is my passion. I am 83 and write every day. poetry: the power to fly. avenue to celebrations of life. writing poetry comes naturally. explore the colors and shapes of words. mysteries of the written word in verse. capturing strong emotional moments. Writing a poem helps me to live gratefully. still writing in [my] 104th year.”

The monthly blog *Writing Aging & Spirit* usually includes an inspirational quotation, perhaps the profile of a creative older adult, a few paragraphs on the topic of the month, a writing exercise, and a book review (see boxes). Blogs also include links to current resources on *Aging in Community*, *Aging with Spirit*, *Aging and Creativity* and upcoming conferences.

My monthly commitment to the blog contributes to shaping a meaningful life in my retirement. I read new books for review, explore a broader set of ideas in greater depth, write essays from a personal point of view, and stretch myself with memoir and poetry. All of this writing boosts aging with spirit.

Writing opens me up to creativity, mindfulness, and gratitude. My new interest in photography grows out of that opening to imagination and the longing to pay more attention. With the camera, I have come to see with different eyes just as with the pen. Posting one of my photographs on every blog has become another discipline – to review and reflect upon my pictures.

And now, I have begun writing memories for my photographs and taking photographs for my poems and stories. All such discoveries lead to material for the *Writing Aging & Spirit* blog.

Like each blog, I will end now with a selfie shadow photograph.



Ellen B. Ryan is professor emeritus at McMaster University, member of Tower Poetry Society and The Ontario Poetry Society, co-editor of *Celebrating Poets over 70*, and host of the *Writing, Aging and Spirit* website. Along with talented colleagues, she fosters writing of life stories and poetry among older adults.

The website referenced in this essay can be reached at: www.writingdownouryears.ca

Sample Blog Topics

Create Your Vintage Years
 Joy of Writing
 How the Light Gets In Art of Memoir
 In Praise of Slow
 Legacy Matters
 Mentoring
 This I Believe
 We All Become Stories
 Aging with Humour
 Volunteer to Love, Serve and Belong
 Write to Bless Grandchildren

Sample Writing Exercise

1. Remember or imagine an old family photograph, write about what you remember and what you don't know.
2. Choose a younger family member to direct a letter about this photograph.
3. Write the letter, extracting a life lesson from the story of the photograph for the recipient.

SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close

NUMBER 23, SPRING 2017
ISSN 1920-5848

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A PUBLICATION OF THE
OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT

www.sageing.ca

Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude exists to honour the transformational power of creativity. We are a quarterly journal intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing. We present the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement. We invite all ages to contribute their discoveries.

Sage-ing is about seeking - satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Ageing can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to *Know Thyself* and contribute that knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and well-being for the individual and to our culture.

This journal exists for all those serious in exploring their creativity, in a chosen expression. It is a forum for publication and exposure to other artists, both novice and established. This journal is an easel for any form of artistry undertaken out of personal intuition and imagination.