

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

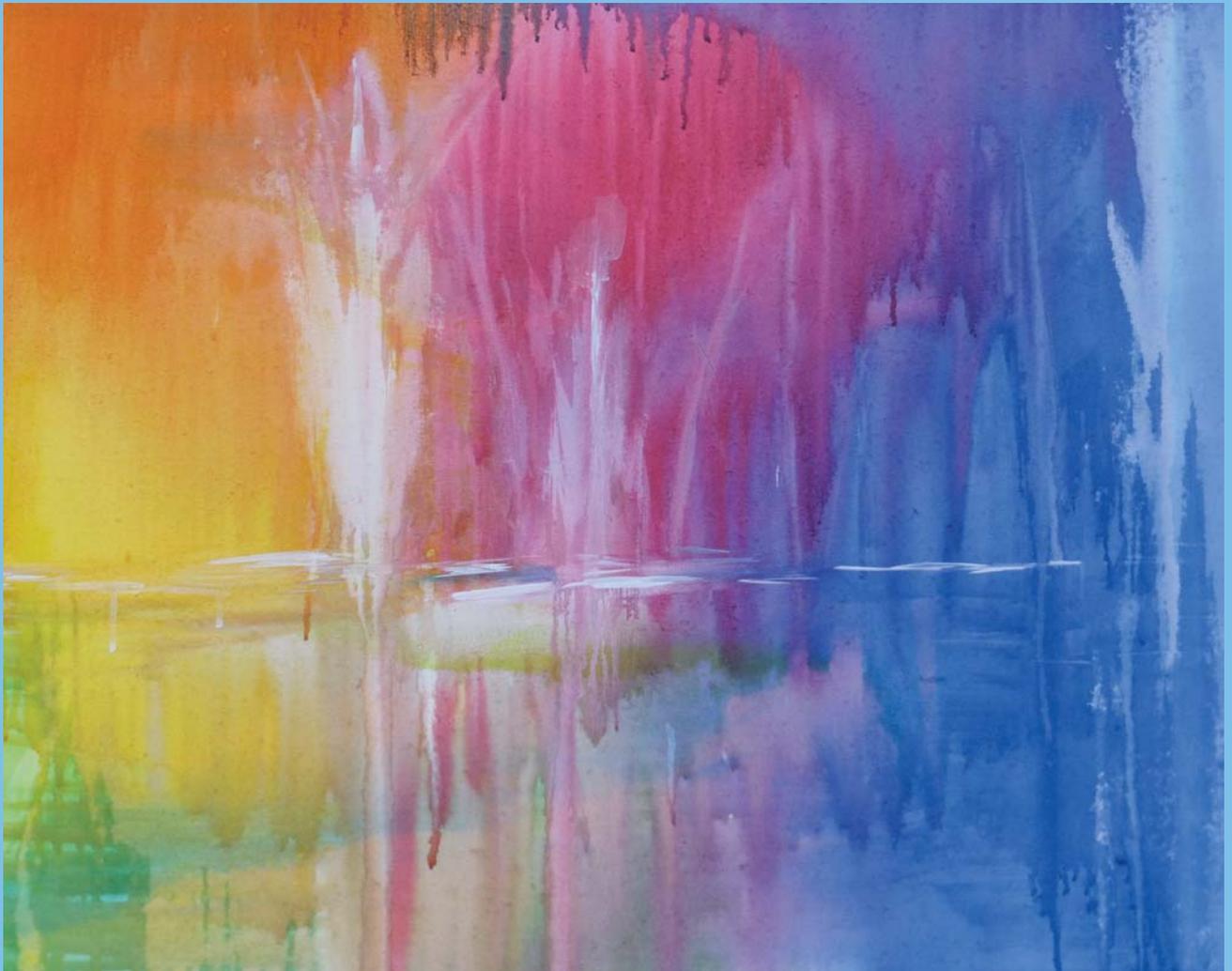
Edited by Karen Close & Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 6, WINTER 2013

SAGE-ING

WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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



A PUBLICATION OF THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

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NUMBER 6, WINTER 2013
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A PUBLICATION OF THE **Okanagan Institute**

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EDITORS' NOTES

The editors of this journal believe that art in the community has a subtle, unconsciously refining influence. The influence resonates beyond the artworks themselves. As Canada moves to replace its twenty dollar bill, the country will miss the message of those small words printed on the back. Three time winner of the Governor General's Literary award, author Gabrielle Roy (1909-1983) asks: "Could we ever know each other in the slightest without the arts?"

These words, excerpted from Roy's novel *The Hidden Mountain*, remind us that arts and culture define who we are, and voice the system of beliefs, values, and customs that we share. Engagement in and with the arts stimulates us to support each other and celebrate human potential. The arts motivate us to imagine together the future we desire. Contributions to this 6th issue of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and*

Gratitude are reflections on the issue's theme *Creative Spirit Builds Community*.

"Art is not in pictures alone. Its place is in everything, as much in one thing as another. It is up to the community as a whole, in conduct, business, government and play ... Every community should have its own will, and have the courage of it ... There would be things in that place which one could not find in any other place." These words are written by Robert Henri (1865 – 1929), painter, teacher and respected sage. They remain a truth a century after they were written.

The stories in this journal are the voices of men and women who have taken time to reflect on what art, and creative spirit means to them, how they individually express it, and how they can share art and its spirit. There is gratitude for the places art has led them, within themselves and within their communities.

The Sage-ing journal is a publication of the Okanagan Institute whose mission is to contribute to the quality of creative engagement in the Okanagan through publications, events and collaborations. The Institute's Express events have showcased some of the contributors to the Sage-ing journal over the past 15 months. A few weeks ago, in early November, "Feel the Vibe" at The Bohemian Cafe, on Bernard, in Kelowna, B.C., was filled to capacity to hear long-time professional bluesmen Sherman Doucette and Poppa Dawg tell their tales of song writing and of pioneering the blues in the Okanagan Valley. The following day, a member of the audience emailed in these photographs. He wanted to offer his own art in support of the event.

Creative spirit builds community and leads us to new, unexplored territory. The articles that we received from Alberta for the Winter journal illustrate just how powerful and influential communal creativity can be.

– Karen Close and Carolyn Cowan

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AT THE BOHEMIAN CAFÉ

Photos by Frank Kyjonka

The Okanagan Institute presents Express at 5pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month. Join Us.



Top: Sherman Doucette
Above: Poppa Dawg

Top and above: Feel the Vibe

CREATIVE SPIRIT BUILDS COMMUNITY



Lesley-Anne Evans

“The world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains, rivers and cities; but to know someone who thinks and feels with us, and who, though distant, is close to us in spirit, this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Pondering the theme ‘Creative Spirit Builds Community’, I wonder, is this true? Is this true for me? What is spiritual about creativity? What is community? Is there a measurable connection between the two? Why is this so?

As a poet, I experience a strong sense of community when sharing my work with other poets and artists. Writing conferences, poetry workshops and peer writing circles are always intimate places. It’s been said that intimacy is best understood as “into-me-see”. Writing poetry is an intimate act. By nature, the words I write are mined within me; sometimes words bring pain, sometimes within the words is revelation. I have the potential to touch others in similar deep places by exposing myself for them to see.

Reading in public places is a similar, but less intimate, experience. As I, with fear and trembling, cast my words onto the ears and the hearts of strangers, sometimes words take root, resonate, and someone will tell me they feel the same way as I do. There is an echo. There is a seed of community planted within another soul, which may grow if circumstances allow.

It’s Better Together



My poem, *The Precise Colour of Orange*, illustrates how, in many ways, human experience is universal. When I write about my life, the loss, the struggle, the wonder, I draw others emotionally by what they may have also experienced to be true. I may, alternately, distance them from the things that they cannot or do not wish to engage with. The poem always asks something of the reader. Carl Sandburg says, “Poetry is an echo, asking a shadow to dance”.

The Precise Colour of Orange

Late August we sit in the driveway. He slaps the steering wheel of his dad's Z-28, punctuation marking my small indiscretion, my attempt at last words. This is the way he teaches fear. Visceral, unexpected grip where I don't know what hit me, 'til he's long gone.

I make a point, slam the car door, run down the road half blind and furious, hindsight like Lot's wife with similar salty consequences. By the time I'm back I know I've settled. Lines I draw for hard hands make way for soft. I don't know what else to say. Maybe time

like dry ice white-hugging a concert stage, obscures bodies and connections. I could say gravity holds its breath while I hold tight against the chill. All I know is I am anchored arms wrapping knees on cool sand, sun smoothing brow of round topped Monashee, while Lesser Scaups gather Grebes

float out to meet the dark. I could say a florescent orange mooring float is a garish substitute for unsung hues of a sky set on fire.

The artist and the artist in community are inherent pieces of the process of engaging fully in who I am. I believe poetry (art) is for all of us; first for the artist, then for humanity. The creative process of writing poetry (art), meets our innate, hard wired, God-given need to create beauty, to express our gifts. And we create beauty to somehow save the world, to expose our gifts to others and to impact their lives in a transformational way. Art as healing. Art as blessing. Artist as cultural philanthropist.

Community “refers to a combination of group dynamics, interactions, shared experience, and some type of shared or common values that unite people in an identifiable way” – HubPages website, see Communities.

The root word community comes from, “Classic Latin *communitatem* (nom. *communitas*) “community, fellowship,” from *communis* “common, public, general, shared by all or many,” and *communitatem*” a noun of quality ... meaning ‘fellowship, community of relations or feelings.’” – Online Etymology Dictionary.

The concept of *fellowship*, of participation in a community based upon relationships and feelings, speaks to me. At my core I long for community, not based upon political boundaries or social politics, but a gathering around a shared desire to be authentically who I am, and to be with others who some-

We create beauty to somehow save the world, to expose our gifts to others and to impact their lives in a transformational way.

The Rhythm of Union





The Power of Words

how understand me, and are for me, not against me.

“Community is a sign that love is possible in a materialistic world where people so often either ignore or fight each other. It is a sign that we don’t need a lot of money to be happy—in fact, the opposite.” Jean Vanier

Creative community has proven to me to be a place where this goal is possible. But why is this so? I know creativity asks me to pay attention to that which is meaningful to me. Creativity allows me to record and share that which is meaningful. Creativity

offers me a way to find inspiration and nurturing. Above all, creativity is a way I find deep purpose, in being the one who says, look at this, look at that, do you see what I see, does this matter to you as it matters to me, can we find a common ground around these things?

Creative community must be what forms around intentional gatherings of individuals who are living out inspiring and nurturing actions. This is true for me. When I and others like me come together with a genuine desire to bring something of value, to open and surrender it for the edification of others, we are all fed. We communally find meaning. We communally find wonder. This is communion, the provision of a gift, a taste of what we hunger for: to belong, to be fully who we are, to be loved.

I have experienced the rich spirit of healing and transformation found within creative community. I have found like minds, creative souls, the evidence of “Imago Dei,” (image of God) human beings marked with God’s divine thumbprint of creativity. When I join together with these amazing people in community, I am filled with gratitude to God for his good gifts to me. But perhaps what I long for most deeply is soul communion with God himself? Creative community satisfies a portion of my hunger as I continue to seek and know who I am and who God is.

“The longer we journey on the road to inner healing and wholeness, the more the sense of belonging grows and deepens. The sense is not just one of belonging to others and to a community. It is a sense of belonging to the universe, to the earth, to the air, to the water, to everything that lives, to all humanity.” Jean Vanier

Lesley-Anne Evans lives in Kelowna, B.C. with her husband, three almost-grown-up children, and neurotic hound. Old paper books, B.C. wine, turquoise beach glass and silence are a few of her favourite things. Lesley-Anne just launched Pop-Up-Poetry. You can follow her spontaneous frolics at www.popuppoetry.wordpress.com/

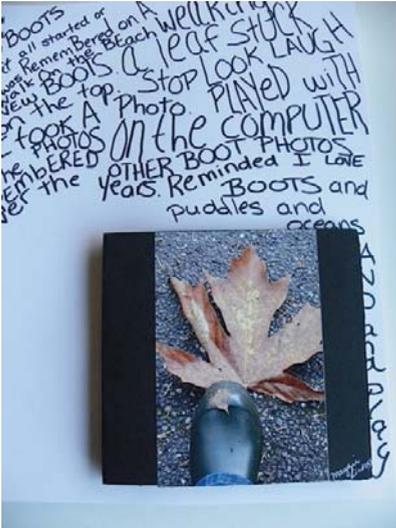
DEVELOPING AN ART JOURNALING GROUP

Naida Brotherston

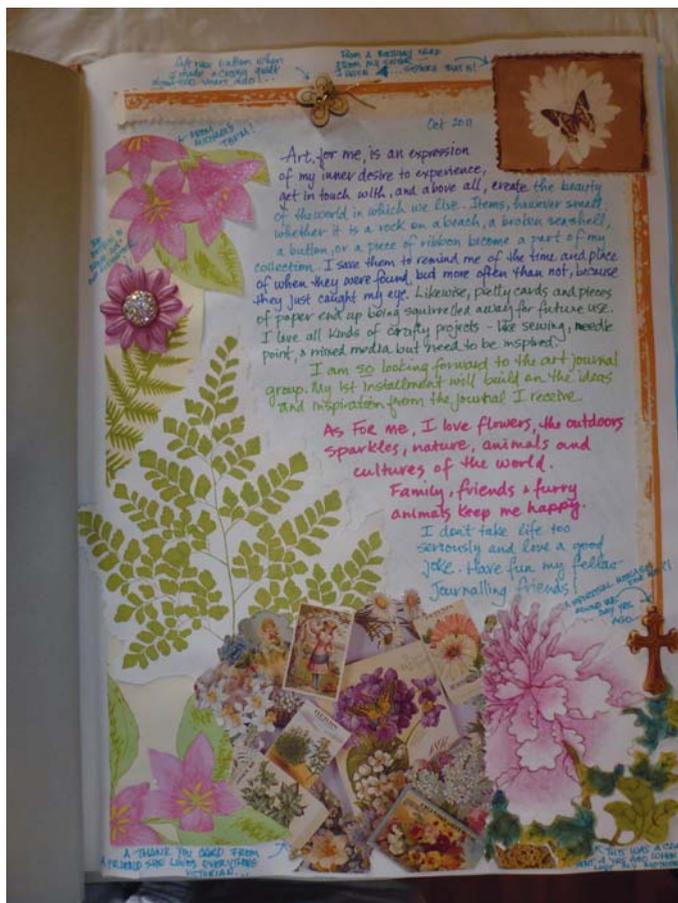
Women who work in expressive arts and crafts often find the solitude of the studio isolating and challenging. Often beginning artists feel tentative and self-critical about their skills, and this can hold them back from a full artistic experience. In Calgary, we have developed a group that, at least in part, assists with these concerns.

Our groups are rooted in two earlier programs. One was started by nine women in Roswell, GA., which focused primarily on the building of community, and the other developed by women artists in Red Deer, AB. who were seeking a supportive environment in which to hone their skills to a professional, marketable level. My sister, Derryn Yeomans (who was a member of the Red Deer group) and I wondered what it would be like to form a group for creative women of any age and skill level. The women would be interested in working in any or several forms of art, including those art forms often considered craft. The idea was to put the focus not on the quality or market value of art, but rather on self exploration, exploration of the meaning and essence of creativity and the role of spirituality in art and creative being and doing. At the core of this journey would be the building of a community of women in a way that offered them total freedom and confidence to push the boundaries of their work. They could share the journeys that had led them to find an outlet through artistic means, at whatever level they were comfortable.

We floated the idea with several women, and gathered ideas to formulate a practical context of principles to support our evolving philosophy. The two previous groups had used a round robin format, wherein each woman had a journal (sketchbook, box, binder, etc.). The journals were rotated each month, and each artist created one to three pieces of art for the owner of that journal. The first journal entries were by the owner of the journal, in which she introduced herself to the group in any way she chose – narrative, collage, and photos, are a few often used examples. The journals were not discussed or revealed to the owners for the duration of that session which lasted for the number of months that there were members; that is, nine women, nine months to participate. This process seemed to us to serve several purposes. The fact that the journals were not seen in their entirety until the end of the series added an air of mystery and excitement, and led to a celebration of sharing at the end of the cycle. The gifting of art to others opened up a kind of freedom in that the art was out of the person's life and on to a journey of



Top: Art Journal
Above: Journal



Art Journal

its own. In a subtle way, it also validated that the art made was of value ready to be given to the recipient. The creation of art for another person also often deepened the sense of community within the group, as each person listened to other group members in order to be able to develop art for that person's journal that would reflect the person's individuality. For instance, one person has a love for Tofino, B.C. as a place of spirit for her. Knowing this, another member took a series of photographs of the area and used them in her journal.

The previous groups which were the foundation for the Calgary group had focused on two prevailing principles: the building of community and improvement of artistic skills. Our Calgary group embraced both these principles, but wished most of all to emphasize the creation of art as an expression of the journey of the soul and how it manifests itself in a myriad of ways. Central to this theme is a non-judgmental, non-critical environment. We wanted the group to be as supportive as possible in practical ways, considering the busy lives of most participants. No meetings would be held in December, July or August, although the journals would still circulate in those

months. From the beginning, we chose to emphasize a request for no self-criticism and no criticism of the work of others. Absence from meetings was totally acceptable as long as the journals continued to circulate. When illness, travel or other barriers made completion of artwork difficult in one month, the member could simply prepare the pieces when time and circumstance allowed and enter them into the journal(s) at the next meeting they attended. We decided to start the first few meetings with a bit of an agenda and see, as the meetings progressed, how much guidance was needed and what the members saw as interesting and useful.

Because of the need for commitment for the entire duration of the group's life so as to ensure that each member received a complete journal, we decided to hold an initial *all call* meeting to emphasize the need for commitment for the cycle life of the journals. In addition, we focused on the non-critique and round robin aspect of the group as non-negotiable. Those who still wished to proceed were welcomed to the group.

The first group we organized consisted of 11 women between the ages of 36 and 65. To our surprise, the most difficult concept for women to embrace was the sharing of the work they had created. Whether to share a work proved to be a discussion held in every group we have run to date. Many saw their efforts as too amateurish to be acceptable to others, while others wanted to keep their work to provide a gauge of their progress. We remained

**Art Journal**

firm on these points, and after two or three months, the members had a complete turnaround in their thinking and agreed the round robin was essential to the group. Self-criticism was also a barrier to be surmounted, particularly for those who had no formal background, or who had worked only sporadically in creative areas. Again, as the women gained trust in each other, this tendency dissipated rapidly. At the beginning, we prepared a fairly detailed agenda, but by the third month, it became evident this was not necessary. The conversations galloped in all directions and were always stimulating and thought-provoking.

Midway through our group's cycle, we decided to invite one or two members to bring a piece of art and to share with the group the story behind their treasure: where it had been obtained and why, what meaning it had for the owner and any other story about it that they wished to share. Soon this sharing became a monthly agenda item in this and all subsequent groups. The parameter of subject matter expanded to include music that had an emotional impact for people.

The end of cycle celebration was planned by the group in communal discussion. We held it in my home, where the completed journals were scattered throughout the house in reading nooks. One of the members performed a ritual emphasizing community and celebration, after which



Art Journal

each woman was guided to her own journal. For approximately four hours, women celebrated their achievements, shared ideas and techniques, and admired each other's work. We shared a potluck meal where the conversation and laughter continued to flow.

At the end of the day, women were invited to review their commitment to the group and to decide if they wished to continue through another round. As well, they were asked to let me know if they knew of others who might like to enter into this type of journey. We have run four subsequent groups, and always have a waiting list.

Very soon into the first group's existence, one of our members became terminally ill. It was amazing and gratifying to see the immediate and deep response members of the group had to this person. Discussions in the group moved to issues of spirituality and the use of art as a vehicle for evoking and expressing deep feelings. Despite her illness she continued to prepare her art and celebrated with us at the end of the group cycle. Before she died, she was supported not only in the group context, but also outside the confines of meetings, with visits, rides to medical appointments and many other manifestations of love.

Each group has quickly evolved into a close-knit community in its own unique way. Each group has added, deleted and expanded the group process through a collaborative openness that stimulates growth and innovation. One group introduced in-meeting workshops, both demo and hands-on once every second meeting. Another invited an outside facilitator to teach them a certain technique. The current group is excitedly discussing the feasibility of carrying out a guerrilla art flash mob where all members will create a piece of art on a theme and the resulting collage will be mounted somewhere in the community, perhaps on fences or public bulletin boards, where they can be seen (or ignored) by the general public. We want to reinforce the idea that the creation of art is available to everyone at any level of skill, if the passion for expression is honest. We are also thinking of day or weekend sessions on occasion to open the door to more adventurous exploration, such as *plein air* work and collaborative art pieces.

We would invite you to experiment with this concept if it appeals to you. Play with the ideas, shape and mold them to your use. If you choose to do this, contact us at Naida Brotherston, naidabro@telus.net, and let us know what you have learned. We would be interested to see what we in turn could adapt from what you have discovered. Art and creativity are a birth-right for every human being on the face of the planet. We all have a sacred core that, when given permission, bursts forth and enriches the lives of each of us and those around us. We feel supportive communities are the fertile soil that allows this flowering to occur.

HOW I BECAME A PILGRIM



Harold Rhenisch

I travelled the Camino, but not the usual stretch through the Pyrenees to the grave of St. John in Santiago de Compostella, Spain. My pilgrimage was in the north, from St. Boniface's crypt in Fulda, Germany, east across the former Iron Curtain into darkness. The spirituality there is not a story of light. Yes, Bach is there, and the great German poets, and Luther, too, but they're all tangled up in dark forests, tapestries full of hounds, unicorns and beech trees, and tales of witches, sleeping emperors, and bandits. This stretch of the Camino is called the *via regia*, "The King's Road". It passes through the Great German Forest, and has rules, such as: "a path through the forest leads only to more forest," and "when there's a clearing it's only a clearing in the trees." Only old kinds of story-telling can talk about such a place, ones that came before railroads and novels, in which travel is from one place to another in space and time and identity is discovered. In a tapestry, like the forest, all places and characters are there at once and your story is already written.

I thought at first like a Canadian. I thought this story would lead in an easy line from Fulda. I loved Fulda. It's here, after all, that the man who brought Christianity to the forest is buried in all the gold that a thousand years of pilgrims could bestow. It's here, too, that I was first waylaid – not by bandits or by gold-encrusted St. Boniface but by the older church next door, the Church of St. Michael. It had started out as a fortress, erected in the middle of the heartland of the Saxons. From it, the first monks traded arrows with their potential converts. Today's altar sits in the middle of the old, round fortified tower, surrounded by a couple dozen chairs arranged in a perfect ring. The light pours straight down from overhead. I stood stock still in that unearthly light. That moment was my first hint that on this road I was no longer a writer. The path had chosen me, and what did I do? I went on, thinking I was making a book, not that one was making me.

By the time I got to Eisenach, I was deep in the trees. Bach grew up in that old city, and there's a museum. While light pours in the window at your back, you can don digital headphones there to listen to any one (or all) of his thousands of musical conversations with God. Otherwise, it's a city that has seen way too much war, badly-planned industrialization, plundering and five-year plans. Its patron saint is St. George. He stands helmeted and brave on a sandstone plinth in the square in front of his church. He has a spear, and with calm conviction is wrestling with a dragon that looks like a house pet. He looks as if he doesn't really want to plunge the spear in. Oh, and both saint and dragon are completely covered in gold.

Only old kinds of story-telling can talk about such a place, ones that came before railroads and novels, in which travel is from one place to another in space and time and identity is discovered. In a tapestry, like the forest, all places and characters are there at once and your story is already written.



Top: St. George in Eisenach

Middle: The Eisenach Market

Above: An immigrant clothes shop in Eisenach, at the end of a long day

At George's feet, teenagers dressed in dark hoodies decorated with Gothic, neo-Nazi imagery, sit in the evening, sharing a single bottle of beer, because it's all they can afford, and watch the stars come up. In front of them are the abandoned, broken-down once Jewish and then communist hotels and shops that line the square. They have stood empty since Germany was reunified, so to speak, twenty-two years ago.

The next day my world, so nicely separated between storytelling and reality, broke completely in two in that square. It was a Saturday. It was the weekly market. There were bright stalls everywhere, filled with fruits and vegetables. There were cheap clothing from China and Turkey, stacks of gum rubber and canvas running shoes, and sausages, of course, because it's Germany, after all. As I was photographing the path of the ancient road, so I could follow it deeper into town and write about it that night over dinner, an old man with hands twisted into claws by arthritis grabbed me by the shoulder and asked if I was a millionaire.

"No," I laughed. "Just a writer from Canada." "Ah, the Promised Land," he said, then he told me his story. He'd been a farmer in the Republic of Farmers and Workers, and had the arthritis to show for it. "Look what they did to me," he said, and held out his hands. His hands didn't open, not as hands should, but were twisted tightly into fists made out of twigs. He said he went to West Germany once. He said, "I won't ever go back." When I asked why not, he was evasive, but then he grew tired of me. "I live on my pension," he said. "I get 138 Euros a month." It was a gross exaggeration. No one in Germany gets a pension so low. I didn't know that yet, though, so I was shocked — right on script. "You can't live on that," I said. "I know," he said. "So, what do you do?" I asked. "Oh come on," he snapped. "I beg in the market square. What do you think?" And he held out a claw. I reached in my pocket and gave him a two Euro coin that was lying warm against my thigh, as I might do to a man begging on the street in Kelowna, who would be glad of it. Here it was the wrong thing. "Is that it?" the old man scoffed. "I'm just a writer," I said. He turned away with a look of complete contempt.

I had entered a fairy tale. St. George's dragon had stepped off of its plinth. I didn't know that. I still thought he was an old man. I still thought like a writer, someone who believes that stories are to be made up and that writing is self-expression. Nonetheless, I had to learn. In a fairy tale, you have no self. There is only the story. It is telling you.

Fairy tales always have guides. You meet them as witches, or poor people, or dwarves, beside the path. If you pay them generously, with all you have, you pass freely. If you give them nothing, they will destroy you. If you give them something in between, you'll be lost for a long time in the forest before you find your way out. I learned that day that they're not just in stories. When you are in the East, you think as all humans do who are free of the individualism of the West: you think through these magical and transformative moments. That was me. I'd just paid St. George's dragon poorly.

My trip went for weeks. Every day, I met many more guides, until I just



Top: Wartburg Castle

Above: The fountain in the courtyard of Wartburg Castle

gave myself up to the Road. My payment for my lack of generosity was that before I found my way out of the forest, I had lost all my photographs — 12,000 of them. It forced me to find this story, yet after I came home to Canada I still wandered, lost, for a long, long time, until, that is, I admitted fully that I was on a spiritual journey. I might find my way home again, but I would be forever a pilgrim. I would be on the Way.

Eisenach is a perfect place to this path. Germany began as a modern country here (out of the romantic dreams of a poet, actually). Luther wrestled with the Devil here while he was translating the Bible. Every year the staff at the Wartburg Castle up on the hill repaints the ink spot on the wall where he threw his inkpot at Satan to make him shut up so he could concentrate. It's here that eight hundred years ago St. Elizabeth ministered to the poor. Her hospital still stands on the edge of downtown.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary started as a child bride in the Wartburg. She dearly loved her husband, the young prince, and bore him two children. When he was killed in the senselessness of the Crusades, she sank into grief. The king offered to marry her, because she was young and because of her connections to the Hungarian Crown. She said, "I'd rather cut the nose off of my face." This was bad politics, but she was as principled a young widow as she was beautiful. She left the luxury of the castle to give her wealth, her time and her health away to ministering the poor. It was a profound form of grief.

When the king and her spiritual counsellor (a monk who appeared to have had a genuine hatred of women) expressly forbade her to continue, under threat of death, she snuck out with a basket of bread. After she was caught and arrested, the cloth covering her treasonous basket was whipped away. By this time, it no longer contained bread. It was full of roses, symbols of Christ's mother, Maria, and symbols of faith. St. Elizabeth died shortly thereafter of self-imposed starvation.

Today, in the courtyard of Elizabeth's old castle, the Wartburg, directly under the window where Luther translated the Bible, there's a well. Over it spreads a metal rose bush and a metal dragon. It looks down through a rusty grate into stagnant water. What stares back is the sky. Anyone who looks into the water of that well is in that sky. It's a piece of poetic delight — long the staple of German culture. It's also the way it is in the Forest. The Forest, and the Way through it, have their own story. Your task as a pilgrim, as mine was four years ago, is to give yourself to it, completely.

The format of this poem is a loose variation on the Urdu and Arabic form, the Ghazal. It's a song form in Asia. Through the work of John Thompson and P.K. Page in Canada, it has evolved into a form of meditation, taking off from the intriguing quality of the original form that each pair of lines is independent, yet somehow links to the others. It gives two kinds of logic, sliding past each other.

The Day We Reenacted the Story of the Trinity

Each walnut splits in two halves, like a brain.
Like the brain, they are held together by a tongue.

Our cities used to serve our farmers.
Now our farmers serve them.

Up the coast, wolves swim five miles between islands.
Tonight, they are my name as the moon glows in the surf.

Communist children used to play with lead Indians.
Their parents did not manufacture soldiers or cowboys.

I met a retired farmer who lives on \$128 a month.
Writers don't retire. They rest on the lip of each paragraph.

While grocers were selling produce in the market,
a beggar was giving himself away in a twenty-year-old shirt.

Politics is often a matter of punctuation: exclamations,
quotes, commas, semi-colons, colons and periods.

Forbidden to feed the poor, St. Elizabeth became poor herself.
She died of starvation.

Bach stands in the doorway of a church shaped like a woman,
but we are the ones who push the inner door open.

Every woman was once a virgin and every man a holy spirit.
Then it's Christmas and the organ fills all the space there is.

Eisenach, July 2008

Harold Rhenisch has been writing poems and histories of the Okanagan for over thirty-five years. This work is based on a wide range of models from literature to ancient prayer, myth and spell craft. He is currently exploring the deep roots of the language in Old Norse and Anglo Saxon. After twenty years in the Cariboo and on Vancouver Island, and after two long journeys on the German section of the Camino, he has returned home. He lives in Vernon, where he writes the deep ecology blog, www.okangaganokanogan.com.

ART IN TRANSIT

When we reflect on great works of art, we need to remember that the artwork emerged from a far greater source of creativity, ourselves. As the human race, we are genuine works of art, infinitely more complex and interesting than any created art piece.

The photographs displayed here pay homage to the beauty of “us” as we evolve from childhood to elder hood. The pictures are a reminder that each of us is a work of *Art in Transit*.

Children exhibit an innate freedom that allows them to display superb focus and uninhibited joy. Their freedom enchants us with its simplicity, and if we are wise, compels us to reach deep within ourselves to rediscover and rerelease our own creative freedom.



THE CREATIVE EDGE



Gord Churchill

“There are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the ground.” – Rumi

There are a thousand urchins at the door. Each of them has a hand out, begging, calling, trying to make themselves more presentable than the others. You have only limited resources. Which of these urchins will garner your attention, time, and energy? The sound of their calling is bad enough when you are employed full-time, but upon retirement, the clamour of their begging grows even more shrill.

One of these urchins is shopping and another is television, another is the internet or the world wide web. There are books to be read, and relatives to visit and courses to take, the poor to be fed, volunteer opportunities, and always the incessant telephone solicitations. They all have their seductive charms. Each of us sees them differently. Some can't stand the computerized urchin, but can't leave alone; the one that keeps us numb, whether we call it drugs, booze or any of the other intoxicants. For others, the call of the social issues in our society is the only one that is worthy of attention.

The urchin's crying becomes more shrill upon retirement because we are suddenly aware that the resources of time, energy and attention are not limitless. The finish line or end zone is in view. Coupled with this is the sudden freedom to do what we wish with our time, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. There is no boss, or job, or office or situation requiring us to put our resources in any specific place. For much of our lives, the most urgent urchin has had our attention. With retirement, it suddenly comes to us that we had best be about what is important, lest we have used up what time, energy and attention is left to us while the most important go wanting.

So the question comes clear, *What Matters?* In other words, which of the urchins gets fed? It is a question that has perplexed me since retirement. There is no final solution, but, for me, a significant piece to answering this question is to be found at my creative edge. I have no illusions that everyone will find it helpful, but perhaps someone else will find clues that will help them.

For more than thirty years, I have had a hobby of carving wood. I started one summer at Naramata Centre. It caught my interest. Over the years, I have carved in many different styles. Books, teachers and fellow carvers have helped me understand my craft. With each learning is the awareness that there is still much to learn.

Sitting at the carving bench recently, sharpening a chisel, it came to me that there is something very elemental in what I do. It is right where a piece

For more than thirty years, I have had a hobby of carving wood. I started one summer at Naramata Centre. It caught my interest.



Top: Dragon head based on a sketch by Lora Irish

Above: Carving of a man's head, based on a photo



of steel slices apart the fibers of wood. One side of the chisel will be the image or object that I am carving and the other will be the shaving or chip that is discarded. I have come to call this *the creative edge*.

In every block of wood there is something waiting for a creative edge to separate the planes and masses and shapes from the waste and free it to be seen and appreciated and worked with. It is right at that creative edge that I, the sculptor, the wood, the tool, and some slippery little urchin called creativity, find a symbiosis that is worthy of attention and feeding.

When I am carving, it feels as if I am pulling something out of myself, but it also involves all those other pieces: wood, tool and creativity. Right there at the edge, all the elements are in conversation, for regardless of the idea I pull out of myself, the wood, tool and creativity will also change the final product.

I find, as I get older, that I am less satisfied to work with other people's images, ideas and designs. I have a deep yearning to find my own creative edge and let the carvings flow as they will. For it is in the fusion of all these elements that there is a mystery, a becoming, that is exciting. Something that never existed springs out of the wood.

It doesn't have to be wood. For someone else, it could be clay or stone or paper or paint or charcoal or pencil. For me, it is most often wood, but it is this birthing of something at the creative edge that I find has made all the other urchins sound less important. I find echoes of it, hidden in those old words that begin the first book of the Hebrew testament, "*In the beginning... the earth was a formless void...*" At this edge, where forms are taking shape, I meet the holy, where both God and I are looking at the formless void and making something.

It is an incredibly tender place. A soupçon of judgmentalism or criticism can destroy what is coming

into being. I have discovered that there is a critic in my head with whom I have had to strike the following bargain, *If you shut up while I create, I will let you improve on it later. But if you keep criticizing, there will be nothing for you to work with.* Like Moses, I have to take off my soul protecting value judgements and criticisms and walk barefoot at the creative edge. I listen more closely to what *feels* right. I use a different part of my brain, and I often find that I am exhausted after I have been at the creative edge for very long.

Time is one of the ways I know I have found that creative edge. At first I didn't understand it. My wife and I had some struggles until we understood



Two dragons copied from a panel found in the ruins of a Welsh cottage

that at the creative edge, time stops, the awareness of time passing is turned off. When I am creating something, it can feel as if I have been there about twenty minutes, but in reality, hours may have passed. I have heard this described as flow. Flow is the space or time when all one's attention is at the creative edge and something new is flowing into existence. I am most unaware of all the other mortal realities. It only causes problems when I hear my wife saying, *Are you coming for supper?*

In the legends and fables told by storytellers, there are those who are taken to faerie or the 'other kingdom'. They eat the food of that magic land, they dance and laugh and sing. In faerie, all seems brighter, more alive, colours more vibrant and beautiful. Yet, when they return to this mortal world, time has passed and they find their friends aged and changed. It is always presented as a seductive place that must be avoided. I believe that this is where all artists have gone, the creative edge where magic and

wonder are to be found and the holy met.

It is true, we are changed at that edge. While legend has warned people away from it as a place where we will age and wither, I know that I will age and wither, regardless. After all, the end zone, or the finish line is in view. I fear more that I will age and wither, having never glimpsed the creative edge, never heard the fairies sing, or danced the wild steps that are only found in the fusion of all those elements that make up the creative edge.

Gord Churchill is a woodcarver, a storyteller, a grandfather, and has done many different things in his life, including retail sales and ministry in the United Church of Canada for nearly thirty years.

CREATIVE SPIRIT NURTURES COMMUNITY AND LOVE

Kristin Butler and Sherman Doucette



I started *Beautiful Arts* in 2003 to provide the raw materials, opportunity and expertise to give everyone a chance to be creative. *Beautiful*, located at 510 West Avenue, in Kelowna, B.C., is a spot for people to hang out, have a coffee or tea and relax into the fun of being creative.

My customers and I have built a community where all ages gather to bead, toss around ideas and make or buy something unique. I am happiest when I can share all I've learned from my decades of jewelry making, and guide others to find their own unique styles. Everyone can be creative. I am passionate about allowing people to explore areas of themselves that often lie dormant. Particularly rewarding were classes and workshops. I offered classes to NOW Canada, Okanagan College's ESL program for international students, the Metis Society, for School District 23's Young Parents Program and student work experience program: Access to Employment.

Recently, I had the pleasure of having a volunteer from the young parents' program work in the store for two months. She was earning part of her grade 12 credits at Okanagan Collegiate and was a very bright, creative young woman. It was a true pleasure to have her around as she began exploring her creativity. Now she is making beautiful copper and semi-precious pendants. It was wonderful to see the pride on her face when she completed the first piece and her excitement in picking beads for her next project. I imagine how that pride will translate into the rest of her life for her and for her family.

Really I am a 'community hostess' for our colourful Kelowna Pandosy Village and I love to watch who comes through my door. I've had visitors from every part of the globe. I keep a guest book and I've had visitors from the UK, Germany, Australia and Japan. My job is to provide a warm, inviting atmosphere that allows the creative juices to flow. Creative individuals find each other. Beaders are a unique group of individuals made up of jewellery makers, quilters, model makers, those making miniatures or doing fly tying for fishing- really all kinds of fabric artists. When these people bring their special interests into my store I want them to feel relaxed enough to let down their inhibitions and allow themselves to play and create.

Remember how good it felt to make things when you were a kid? I want people to feel that joy in my store. I believe that if you join with others in



510 West Avenue



Top: Learning Together

Above: A Special Piece

creative play, you'll be much happier because creativity allows us to relax together and feel community. When we have community, we are loved and we love. Through my relationship with my musician husband, Sherman, I learned this to be true.

When Sherman and I met, I so admired his passion for his art and the way he pursued it with all of his heart. I love his steadfast way, how he continues to persevere through thick and thin. Making music has given him the courage to meet the challenges life has dealt him. I see how those struggles have made him even more passionate about his music and songwriting. I want that passion for me and for others. I don't make music, but I do make beautiful pieces of jewelry, and I show others the techniques to *sing their own songs* through beading.

In the twenty-two years Sherman and I have been together we have brought our creative worlds together. We are fortunate to live in this community of amazingly talented artists. For me, sharing through creativity is the real beauty of the Okanagan that I want to share with people. Our life is full of wonderfully talented friends and family.

What makes me proud is when I see a client wearing a piece I have specially designed for them. They come to me with an idea and trust my creativity and experience to make them a beautiful piece that is one of a kind.



Street Jamming

When making jewellery for a client I sit down with some materials and just start to play and the creativity just starts flowing. I think of the client and what they are looking for and my take on enhancing a color or shape for them. It's more of a feeling than anything else that guides me. The playing is my favorite part of the process. I get that wonderful feeling of bliss when I relax and go with the flow. My best pieces come from play, when I have no idea what I am making and I just let spirit take me there.

A few years ago, Sherman and I had the pleasure of going to Salmon Arm Roots and Blues festival. Sherman performed with his own band and it was fabulous. A very special time was on the Sunday morning when we all gathered to hear Sherman and a piano player from England, Ben Waters. The boys had only met the day before and with no rehearsal they got up, just the two of them on harmonica and piano with vocals, and blew us all away. It was beautiful! They played in and around each other. It was magical. We all glowed the rest of the day. It was a spiritual experience. We felt the magic of music and how it brings us together.

Sherman

When I first met Kristin I was knocked out, not only by her beauty and her kind, gentle spirit but her fashion stood out, too. I have watched her jewellery making expand; have seen her evolve over time to the present at Beadiful Arts. For the past nine years, we have both been artists painting pictures - me with song, her with jewellery. We do what we love and hopefully inspire others. For the past four decades, I have played, mostly in Vancouver. I love to sing and play harmonica blues. I am the founder, lead singer and harmonica player for one of Vancouver's most popular blues bands, Incognito. I have hosted blues jam sessions in Vancouver and Kelowna for the past 30 years. Happily I have supported and encouraged other players to pursue their own dreams of playing music. I am very fortunate to have performed with many blues legends such as Long John Baldry, John Lee Hooker, Pinetop Perkins, and Lee Oskar. As well as playing harmonica, I also collect antique harmonicas dating back to 1893. Some with bells, trumpets, bass, and chord attached. All shapes and sizes, there are over 700 antiques in my collection. Hohner is the oldest and largest harmonica maker in the world and I have been an endorser since 1993.

Kristin helps keeps me grounded and focused. She also keeps me hip to world music and gets me outside of my blues box. We are both happy to have found our true creative passions in this world and to be here together in the Okanagan, sharing our gifts and contributing to our community. Look for us on West Street, just off Pandosy in Kelowna. www.beadifularts.com

HOW HEART FIT STRUCK THE RIGHT NOTES FOR ME



Self Portrait

Ed Bownes

My perspective at the time of this writing is that of a retired and recent newcomer to Kelowna. Also, lumped into the many changes that have flooded into my life (along with my wife Edna's, our two sons and five grandchildren) on this journey, has been my unwelcome and untimely arrival of melanoma cancer. I'll leave it alone at this point, but will share with you later how all of this and the magic of a positive spirit, love, hope, good friends and heART Fit has impacted me.

It's amazing, but not surprising, that ever-greater numbers of people from all walks of life and locations have made Kelowna their residence/destination of choice—for a multitude of reasons—at a time in their lives when they have the luxury of such a decision. I trust and hope that I am addressing some of you in a very personal way.

Here you are in your new homes with your heads and hearts full of excitement and expectation; you've been busy discovering how to navigate the city and surrounding wonders (including some of our more than 100 wineries), meet the neighbors, put your personal touches into your homes, get rid of the packing boxes. You can finally take a breather.

Before moving to Kelowna from Calgary, we were lovers of live theatre and the arts; we had season tickets to Canada's only all mystery theatre, Vertigo Theatre. There, I felt the pull to make a bigger contribution and have more fun than simply attending performances. So, I spent the next four years as a board member, loving every minute of it and feeling a part of something important and good for the heart.

About the same time, I retired from the career management firm I had helped build from the beginning, and started my own company, Career Visions Inc. I was a career coach and consultant to senior level management mainly, but not exclusively. I had the luxury of guiding those who were either underemployed, unemployed or looking to retire—to reach their potential and get to that place where they could be most fulfilled and happy. Edna was working hard as a booking coordinator for a radiology firm.

Suddenly, we began to embark on a wild ride, one with loads of blind faith and the hope that we were doing the right thing. We made a total transformation in our lives—resulting in change after change after change. We left Calgary for a weekend visit to Kelowna. The visit led to a chain of



Top: Brenda helps Karen turn 65 at heART Fit



Above: Here we are hard at work.

events that could not even be imagined, loaded with so much excitement, discovery, and some trepidation. Two months later, we became residents of this fine city, leaving our careers, family and friends in Calgary.

I alluded to this earlier, but forgot to mention that in the process, I managed to leave my melanoma cancer in the fine hands of the genius surgeons at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre in Calgary. How lucky can one get!

Life was never going to be the same – ever. What emerged was a solid commitment to positive living and to the love of all things beautiful, useful, different, strange, new, fun, etc. After all, things could only get better and I couldn't wait to see where this new path would take us.

Not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that art and community would become such a driving force in my life. I was looking to make connections that would satisfy and nurture my creative bent for building things, creating beauty, sharing the wisdom of my profession, having fun and making life for my wife and me the best yet.

Edna and I were wandering downtown and walked smack into the Rotary Centre for the Arts. Let's go in, I said. Actually, I was more excited than I let on. We ventured in. As we perused our way around I came across a poster that spoke to my heart directly. It was an open invitation to visit the centre on Tuesday mornings to experience the joy of building community through creative spirit in a painting group called *heART Fit*. Interesting name! Gotta check it out!

This is where the fun began. It was a Tuesday morning and I couldn't wait to show up at the art centre to launch into one of my biggest challenges yet – can I paint?

I arrived early and was greeted by Karen Close and Brenda Valnicek who exuded such warmth and enthusiasm that I knew I was in the right place. Soon, the room started to fill up with about twenty people (mostly women and one man and one child, if I recall correctly). They seemed very familiar with each other, greeting and chatting and seeming to be really excited about something.

I was soon shown the way by Karen who opened the session by welcoming and introducing any newbies, like me, followed by a brief explanation of the fact that this is an "open to all" option for people interested in painting; there are supplies you can use for your initial visit(s) and that after that you are encouraged to bring your own. Great!

She also introduced a theme for the session that she sends out by email earlier for all to think about. Okay so far. She made it clear that this is not where you come to learn to paint, but a place where people come to experience putting paint to paper or canvas, some with their hands, some with brushes and surprisingly some with sponges or twigs or anything that would make a unique mark. "Hey, I can do this."

After looking at some options of things I thought I'd like to tackle, I got into it. All the while, the buzz in the room was energizing with a constant chatter that seemed so friendly and helpful. Some more experienced painters



were sharing their stories and techniques or suggestions with others, some were a little stuck. Under Karen's watchful eye, the morning proceeded. She just seemed to know when to show up at your side to help out or to offer a suggestion or to engage the group in a discussion around some feature of painting methods, etc. This was very helpful and took all the pressure off my thinking that I had to be an artist to be there. I was painting – yeh!

It was amazing to hear the stories going around the tables – a clear and evident demonstration of caring and acceptance for and by everyone in the room.

Why am I telling you all this? Well, I am compelled to help build on the foundational format of heART Fit as a “pay it forward” act of appreciation for what it has meant to me and Edna. My father was an artist and a constant spiritual guide who motivated me to love art, to take risks with my style and to be proud when I see someone admiring and/or getting enjoyment from my works. I want to see what I can make of this expressive aspect of my life.

Last summer, my cousin, Rob and his wife Bev took Edna and me to ArtWalk in Lake Country. We were so impressed with the depth of talent there and could not have imagined that we would be participating this year in the heART Fit booth.

I am proud of our accomplishments so far and am humbled to present our art along with our colleagues and friends. It feels just great to be in the Okanagan landscape with the luxury of self-expression through art.

The legacy one leaves behind is often not created by intent or realized until you are gone. My father was a gem who managed to work three jobs – oh, I forgot – four jobs, to support his family during the 2nd World War and tough years that followed. The fourth job was his most lasting, rewarding and memorable. Early on, dad was a schoolteacher who struggled to manage the financial demands of raising a family of four kids on one salary, so he took a correspondence course to learn the art of painting pictures that he could sell for extra money. It was a legacy that only now in my own retirement is coming to mean even more than I could have imagined. I never took the time, even though I had the inclination, to see if I could follow in his footsteps to paint and create art. He planted the *heart for painting* in me and heART Fit has opened the door for me to grow the passion for painting into a reality. Thanks dad and thanks to heART Fit!

Here are some of my pieces I have created at heART Fit.



Top: My grandson pulling his wagon

Middle: A Peaceful Place

Above: Should I try Abstract?

STAGING' MATTERS

Ruth Bieber

Courage, thy name is a performing senior.

Ten short weeks ago, I sat at an open house for the Society for Learning in Retirement (SLR). The room was electric with people of a certain age coming to sign up for workshops. There was a plethora of possibilities to choose from and I was offering drama for seniors, with or without previous acting experience. "You could just see them," comments Mary Ann Murphy, UBCO professor. "Someone would come to your table, Ruth, then after speaking with you, that same person would begin to circle the room in contemplation. Then the same person would suddenly make a beeline for the registration desk and sign up!" Now that takes spunk! Dr. Murphy, along with SLR's president, Vera Ito, were successful in obtaining a New Horizon For Seniors grant which is funding the project. Ultimately, three separate ten week drama groups will run, coupled with ten performances. Did you say performing? Do you mean in front of an audience? And the courage continues.

"Exploring the depths of creativity through acting can strike fear in the most valiant soul; coming to it later in life takes great courage and commitment. These amazing seniors, guided by Ruth's sure hand, have stepped up to the challenge with heart and humour (not to mention phenomenal talent.) I'm sure they will touch and inspire all who see them." Adeja Chrisara

For seventeen years, I directed theatre for a company I founded in the early 1990s. The actors were people with disabilities: all kinds of disabilities. I knew that if the theatre process I had developed for these actors was safe for

them, I was pretty sure the seniors would respond accordingly. For the most part this has been true. For the most part this has been true. The only difference is seniors these days are busy!

Did I say busy; it's an understatement! At times it's been a little like herding cats, but we're getting there. The other thing is that seniors have some very firm ideas about the ways of the world. Isn't that what this project is all about, though: giving voice and visibility to a population that collectively has more life experience than all the politicians in the Federal government? The project is designed to promote awareness and understanding as well as to educate regarding relevant issues of aging; ageism, isolation, dependency, elder abuse and more - there's so much more!

The stories these seniors have to tell are rich with history, heartwarming and inspiring. Just think World War II, Britain and air raids.

The first performance is scheduled for December 6th at Express, which takes place at the Bohemian Café on Bernard Street

Below: Finding Freedom

Bottom: Ruth Bieber Directs





Top: I Did It My Way

Middle: Finale

Above: Wartime Memories

in Kelowna. Nerves aside, the actors are ready to strut their stuff! A second performance is scheduled for the 10th of December at the Pulp Fiction Café.

In the meantime, I would like to give some closing words to a couple of the regulars from the Wednesday class:

Susanna Svendsen says, “Geriacting has stimulated my brain cells and forced them to interact with the rest of my body in unaccustomed, but invigorating ways. It’s like discovering new muscles, learning to use them all over again and, in the process, feel rejuvenated. Specifically, am so grateful to Geriacting because I wrote my first haiku (it has always deterred me before – gosh, I have to say something in 17 syllables!) and my first script (never thought to attempt it – not my department). So the sessions have really stretched my imagination and abilities.”

The first show will feature Susanna’s script, which is fabulous.

Faye Stroo writes, “I have been a workshop leader and teacher for many years and realize that we continually play roles in everyday life. Depending on the situations and the people around us, we can choose from a range of options to achieve our goals. This class offers us the opportunity to play and to explore boundaries.”

Faye continues to write, “to conquer stage fright is also an intense group experience that fosters a strong team spirit. Through acting I am learning about me and again asking myself How can I play my roles in real life to best effect? The experience has also assisted me in seeing once again that it is not the words, but the world that underlies those words, that creates the behavior we display. It’s not just about acting it’s also about day to day living and the roles we play in so called real life. Ruth and Matt (our leaders) are experts in guiding and assisting us in this endeavor. I find it a challenge and have not been challenged like this for a very long time. Their leadership is as much about real life as it is about drama. What fun!”

Faye, believe me, is a dynamite performer.

SLR President, Vera Ito, who is also in the class, says “This drama class is something entirely new for SLR. We were delighted to get the New Horizons grant which allowed us to hire Ruth and Matt for this project. It is exciting to see some of our members challenging themselves to reach new heights of achievement in their senior years and to know that life is not over and they can still play a part in our community by presenting talking points about seniors to a greater audience.”

Matt Brown is a theatre artist, who resides in Vernon, B.C. He can be found at The Hub Arts Collective, at www.thehubartscollective.com.

Ruth Bieber is one of the founders and a regular contributor to the Sage-ing journal. She can be contacted at her website www.playwithperspective.com.

RE-VOICING THE VOICELESS



Alexandra Babel

Everyone has a voice. Ultimately each voice is worth hearing. Why then are so many muted? So often in my teaching voice to singers I find that they are carrying with them the criticism of the past. They love to sing but cannot release their voice. Invariably somewhere along the path their voice was criticized. Does this describe you?

Speak up! What's wrong with your voice? You can be in the choir but don't sing; just mouth the words! People carry these criticisms around with them throughout their lives. And every time they attempt to speak or sing, these words return.

Why does it sting so much when your voice is criticized? Well, if someone said your piano was out of tune or your trumpet was too loud it would be an instrument-focused comment. But your voice is YOU. And when someone criticizes your voice they are taking a shot at your very person. Your voice comes from your body. And from your inner person. The mere idea of being criticized in this way scares many away from trying.

How liberating and healing it is then to watch someone free their voice and enjoy the sounds coming from their own throat. But for many, this is not an easy process. It means revisiting hurtful history and letting down defenses.

Several years ago, a woman phoned to ask if she could have lessons. She explained that she was a Child Psychologist and found her job to be quite overwhelming at times. She hoped that her return to singing would be cathartic. For the first six weeks of lesson she couldn't sing at all. In fact, I sang for her. I became quiet, listened for the Spirit to guide me in what to sing on her behalf. The words flowed from my heart onto my vocal chords. She wept. We continued this way until she could begin to allow vibrations to be released from her own body. In this beautiful, spiritual way she found healing and restoration. Did I do this? No. Did her voice do this? No. But the Spirit that gives life and whose voice is inside of her sang through her with healing sounds. She was willing to be the instrument in her own recovery.

What is the *voice*? I believe the best term to use to describe it is Ruach. This is a Hebrew term which means Spirit, Life, and Breath. In Genesis, God ruached Adam into being. I love this word. I love the idea of breathing in and singing through life. I witness Spirit that overwhelms the broken and brings about cathartic healing through this process. I think it is parallel to others whose voice is in painting, dancing, writing, sculpting, conducting, dancing, etc.

How did I come upon this insight? Growing up in a family that loved music and had a song for every occasion, I modeled my family's whole-

**Your voice is YOU.
And when someone
criticizes your voice
they are taking a shot
at your very person.
Your voice comes from
your body. And from
your inner person.**



Top: The freedom, fullness and emotion of singing gave me a vehicle to express my deep feelings of faith, grief, yearning and love.

Above: With Kelowna Symphony

hearted, full-throated sounds. This was coupled with a family history of miracles. My parents were fortunate survivors of the Stalinist terror and very much relied on listening to the Spirit in order to get specific direction for survival. My father's war diary is filled with just such stories. His deep faith and willing brokenness allowed for the Ruach-guided survival.

But I never heard of classical music or opera until I went off to college. At the age of seventeen, I heard classical singing for the first time and began to weep. I knew this was my life's calling.

Yet, it was not the classical genre itself that captured me nor was it even my own voice. It was a notion that my classical voice could be a vehicle in which to understand and then share eternal things. It has never been my ambition to merely sing what others have sung before me and others will sing after me. I realize that as soon as I cease from singing, another soprano will take my place. But what really matters is considering and communicating the deep spiritual, eternal values through my vehicle of voice, and thereby bringing healing and wholeness to myself and others.

What are those values?

I value listening - Have you ever been so still in nature that you can actually hear the snap of an autumn leaf as it comes off the tree and the sound of it gently landing on the ground? Have you listened so carefully, so humbly, and so quietly that the Creator begins to sing over you and to you and through you? When I teach my singing pupils, I often tell them I'm listening like a giant letter 'L'. I make that letter with my arms. I point to my pupil and say "I'm listening to you" Then I point up and say, "I'm listening this way too." Everything that my pupil says and sings I give to the Divine and then ask, "What do they need to hear from you today?" In this way I step aside and am humble. I can freely teach with the intention that my pupils will one day surpass me.

I value singing what I hear - In my own performance I know that I am too feeble to deal with either criticism or compliment. Neither is good for me. One leaves me devastated while the other deludes me, making me too proud to embrace my daily circumstance. The worst I can do is believe my own press. So I first listen to what is divinely true about me; that I am made in the image of God, that by Grace I am seen as pure, that I am justified (Just-as-if-I-never-failed) and that I am a broken vessel through which the breath of God breathes. Recently, I asked my friend Brian Wiebe to cover the stage at Kelowna Community Theatre with the beautiful pots he creates out of Glenmore clay. Specifically I requested the broken ones. We put lights inside each one and called the concert, *Light in Earthen Vessels*, which is profoundly autobiographical.

I value discernment: I believe that most battles you face have a significant spiritual component. I believe the spirit world consists of both benevolent and malevolent forces. And I believe that there is a lot of masquerading going on within the spirit realm. What appears good may not ultimately be so and perhaps the opposite is also true. I also believe there is an ultimate frequency, colour, or truth which may or may not be tonal. I believe in



Top: Meek But Bold

Above: Candesca Singers

absolutes and in *both/ands*. So I need discernment to guide me through each moment. This requires me to listen both in the flesh (on earth) and in the spirit (divine.) It requires me to put on ears that I humanly don't have. So I must tap in to the One I trust and listen through, and be led to discern the others. This posture is one of humility not self-defacement, with a perspective that is divinely informed but not of lowly-esteem. I chose to be meek but bold. Yes, meekness is outrageous strength under wraps. Christ is the ultimate example of this. A Divine, unrecognized super-hero.

I value worship: All of the sounds I hear, I teach, and I project to the listening audience are sounds of worship. I believe that the sounds given to me are sounds of worship for the one who made me and loves me beyond all measure and who has healed and delivered me from my own earthly bound state. The sounds I make are sounds of deliverance, freedom, and healing. I recognize my sounds mingling with that of the spirit to result in life change.

While in the recording studio with Candesca, a singing group of girls whom I take with me on tour each year, we began to sing spontaneously. I asked them to just listen and then sing what they hear. At first, they felt so self-conscious, but as I coached them to simply imagine that we were just playing, they gained courage. I called this track Ruachaos with the intention that some might hear Ruach while others hear chaos. We put the track on our classical CD as a hidden track, meaning that when the CD was seemingly all done there was one more surprise for the listener. You may enjoy it here.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiGUUXwRYig

Perhaps I've given you courage to use your voice in whatever capacity is yours. Be re-voiced and rejoice!

Lyric Soprano Alexandra Kosachukova Babbel, being the only American-born member of her family, has approached her music with a great sense of privilege. Her German mother and Ukrainian father met and married in a displaced persons refugee camp after fleeing the Stalinist terror in Ukraine and later immigrated to the United States where Ms. Babbel was born.

Ms. Babbel has enjoyed Operatic and Concert Solo performances in Canada, Germany, England, Switzerland, Holland, Italy and solo concert tours in Russia and Ukraine including guest appearances with members of the Kiev Conservatory of Music, Moscow's conductor Evgeny Vechenko, and recital performances in association with the Britten-Pears School. In addition to training with teachers Galina Vesnevskaia and Kathleen Kaun and Vocal Coaches, John Wustman and Joan Dornemann, Ms. Babbel sang in Master Class for Maureen Forrester and Elly Ameling.

Alexandra Babbel holds a BA in Choral Music Education from the University of Michigan, an M.A. in Opera Performance from the University of Alberta and Post-Masters Certificate of Performance from Northwestern University, Deerfield, Illinois. She held the faculty position of Voice Department Head, at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois before relocating to Canada.

Besides her many private voice students, Alexandra has formed many youth ensembles, most notably a group of talented young women called Candesca which means "Beginning to Shine". Candesca was established eight years ago and many of the members, whose average age is 17 – 21, have gone on to study voice performance at some of Canada's most prominent universities. Over the years, Alexandra has taken these beautiful musical maidens on sold out concert tours to England, Germany, Czech Republic, The Netherlands and New York City where they have wowed audiences with their glorious angelic harmonies.

SAGE-ING INTO ACTION

Ute Freitag

I grew up in Germany in the post war time. There was not much food, no toys and we lacked nearly everything else as well, but I still had a very happy childhood and parents who gave me lots of love to build confidence for my future life.

Sage-ing means learning and appreciating the values of caring and respect and to create a meaningful life.

I always read the biographies in this Sage-ing journal with great interest. It brings me a wonderful warm feeling to realize how much I have grown over the years, and how now I want to bring in the harvest of my learning and doing. As long as there is the feeling of youth and strength within me, it is difficult to accept my actual age.

My life could have ended before it even started. I was ten years old when I nearly drowned in the Baltic Sea on a summer afternoon in Germany. Instead I lived. My life is filled with so many ideas and projects I want to do that it is impossible for me to imagine that one day all will come to an end, and I will have to slow down. My heart does not age and perhaps sometimes it feels a little uncomfortable in a body slowly declining.

I very much believe in the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud who states that the first years of our childhood are very influential. We build our future on the experience of our past, but if we really want to grow and educate ourselves and learn, we have to leave our past behind us, continue with our life and look into the future. We are responsible for how we grow and who we become.

I grew up in Germany in the post war time. There was not much food, no toys and we lacked nearly everything else as well, but I still had a very happy childhood and parents who gave me lots of love to build confidence for my future life. From my ancestors I inherited some talents which I have developed in my later life and these have helped me to grow into the person I am today. My mother was a very creative person. She decorated our little home in a way so that nobody could ever imagine that we had lost everything during the war. Our home was cozy and warm and I think that is how my home looks today. My mother created great outfits for me out of basically nothing, and I always looked up to my glamorous mother when we went shopping together. However, when it came to cooking my creative mother was probably the lousiest cook I can think of. It was my grandmother who had a great talent for cooking and I loved going to her place for some special meals. The secret she told me is to cook with “guter butter”, lots of butter. I am afraid, even though it is not very popular any more to cook with butter, I still do it occasionally. I don't particularly like baking, but if I promise a birthday cake for a good friend it is always a creation that takes hours to do, but I only do it once! My ice-cream cake is very popular and sometimes three feet high.

Creativity Ignites





I Am With Me

My grandfather was the one who taught me how important and meaningful it is to help others. Nietzsche once said, “The best way to start every day is to wake up and think whether there is at least one human being we can please on this very day.” I was very proud when my grandfather put on his Red Cross uniform and the two of us went out hand in hand helping others.

Last, but not least, it was my father from whom I learned how challenging it is to always have a project in the making. I remember him building a garden house. It was anything but straight and probably cost double the amount of a prefabricated house, but he was very proud that he did it his way.

Here I am today, a creative, volunteering food lover who always needs a project and who likes doing something for people who are not as fortunate as I am. It is very important for me to get up in the morning, look into the mirror and not feel ashamed of myself. Growing up as an only child, I learned very early in my life to be *my best friend*. During the over forty years of my marriage, I have had to move fifteen times. Even though I was always starting all over again, I never felt lonely. I like to be surrounded by dear friends, but I also need my wilderness time to get the strength to do things that are important to me and to my growth. To me it was always a little bit of dying to leave everything behind, but the moment I settled down in the new place I realized how much I had gained and grown.

In my new community of Kelowna I am a Hospice volunteer. For more than six years I have been comforting those who are dying, and recently I finished my first book. It is about death and dying. Over the years I have collected many stories and poems and I always get a smile from the patients when I tell them one of my stories. Sometimes when I drive downtown and see my friends on the golf course I ask myself, Would you rather be with them and not volunteer at the Hospice or sit and write? So far the answer is, I like what I am doing and I feel blessed that I have so much pleasure doing this.

Each year during vacation on the Island of Hawaii, I live my spiritual life. This is my wilderness time, where I want to be myself, only my husband and me, my books and my writing.

Two years ago I started writing about my experience with those who are dying. In my own private life I have buried over eighty people who were meaningful to me and had shaped me in many ways. For me death is not a stranger anymore. I am happy for everybody who can go, when their lifespan has been fulfilled. We all have to pass over one day and hopefully it will be without pain. Being with a patient at the end of his or her life always means growing, understanding, and feeling gratitude for the life I can live with at that very moment. I have collected stories and poems for over thirty years, and in those moments of passing I am a storyteller to the patients and their caregivers. I always get a smile when I finish my story. That is the greatest reward I can think of. This summer, one of my dearest friends died in the Hospice and that gave me the idea for the title of my book. The foreword is about him. For all the years that I have known him he always used the phrase, “It is what it is.” He was a philanthropist in our city and generosity was his



A Community Shares

It is unbelievable how many wonderful people I meet on this road and how much support I get from everywhere to make this event happen.

trademark. I am more than happy to call my book *It Is What It Is - On Death and Dying*.

I was always very fortunate to live on the sunny side of the street, yet I know well that many people are not so lucky. Perhaps I want to pay back and say thank you for the life I am able to live. That is why the idea of an *Advent party* for mums and children in need was born last Christmas. I told my husband about my new project and he looked very puzzled, thinking, Here we go again! He is always my best critic, my best supporter and he spends endless hours helping me. Since last May I

have been working on this new project together with a great team of people. I feel I am on an exciting new journey. It is unbelievable how many wonderful people I meet on this road and how much support I get from everywhere to make this event happen.

I didn't know it would be so much work, but I hope by the end of the day the sparkling eyes of the children and the mums will be the reward. For one day I want struggling mums of our community to feel special. I hope our planned program of music and dancing from *The Nutcracker* to the Flash Mop Dancing, outstanding food, and very special presents (not only for the children but also for the mums) will make this afternoon magic. Among the mum's presents we intend to include a coupon or ticket for the opportunity to enjoy an event together with their children that they might not otherwise afford.

If the children are old enough perhaps they will remember this Advent party later in their adult lives. At best, for one afternoon during Christmas time I hope they will feel very special and loved. For me, I am grateful to feel healthy and energetic enough to still do all this, but I don't take it for granted. I know there will be a time when other, younger, people will have to take over; I am happy that I am able to spread the seeds. Who knows, if we are successful this year, it could be that we will stage this event again in the years to come. Will there be another project in my life? I don't know, but I feel life is very exciting and has lots to offer. I am still able to create my own journey and that to me is the greatest present of all.

CREATIVITY, COMMUNITY AND SELF

Jennifer Yarrow

My purpose in life is to manifest loving people who spiritually connect to one another through painting and community. The value of painting with community is that we are choosing to be together to come to a better understanding of our values, our art and ourselves in relation to the whole community.

The process of my painting is that I start with the three primary colors using Golden Fluid Acrylics. My training has taught me that the color trinity, the three primary colors, are inseparable colors- the God-given essence and expression of wholeness. The color yellow is closest to light and the color blue closest to dark. Through the union of light and dark, red was created. When I paint, I start with yellow and then red, and then blue. I stay with color and trust the process. I just feel and move the paint around, mixing colors and watching what appears. I don't have any perceived idea. I move brushstrokes around rapidly until a form appears.

I have been studying Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner's (1886-1924) Anthroposophy, The Study of Human Wisdom, and Waldorf Education for over fifteen years. I have been mesmerized in the past by Eurythmy performances. Eurythmy is speech, made visible by movement, color, sound and gesture. I studied Goethe's color theory and Rudolf Steiner's color theory at Antioch University. I learned through studying Goethe that he says, "colors are the deeds and suffering of the light." Goethe said, "optical illusions are optical truth." The color red, I see as love. Steiner says, "we need to find the Eternal Feminine in order to give birth to our hearts."

Reflections of the Soul



One week I received this email from a painting group I belong to: "The suggestion for this week at HeArt Fit is that we will continue to paint while holding in our hearts one of the 4 traits we love about ourselves. The intent is to listen to ourselves, to hear our own stories with love, and to paint from that place. Spontaneous Process Painting in community creates space for us to support each other through the energy of our presence. When we create together we create energy. When we create from a place of self-love for the truth of who we are, we create space for others to live their truth. Together we move forward into enlarged consciousness and greater well-being." Karen Close



Destiny

Karen talked about Theosophy and connected it to Lauren Harris. I learned about the group of Seven in Northern Ontario at Gravenhurst High School art class in the seventies and I feel I have always been influenced by Canadian Artists growing up. I thought about Rudolf Steiner's short connection with Theosophy and how he eventually broke off from that group and formed his spiritual science called Anthroposophy. Out of Anthroposophy, Waldorf Education was born.

I love this heART Fit assignment on four traits we love about ourselves. I thought first of the physical traits, such as eyes, lips, hands, and body. But I thought deeper for a minute and thought of the physical, etheric, astral and "I" component of myself which is

part of Steiner's Anthroposophy. I then thought deeper - my soul, what about my soul, yes that would be one trait, and my spirit another.

"In the present 5th Epoch, humanity has acquired the possibility of full self-consciousness, freedom of thought. Further evolution now depends on the conscious activity of the individual ego. Through the practice of virtue the individual can bring about transformation of the threefold body from within: the soul-body becomes transformed into the spirit-humans. In this way eternal spirit of the individual comes to manifestation." Spiritual Foundation of Morality by Rudolf Steiner

I understand this to mean the higher ego or higher self comes to birth within the lower ego. I seek this process in my paintings. I am becoming a vessel that weaves unconscious and conscious thoughts of all I have experienced. The process I used in this spontaneous process painting was again using the same trinity or three primary colors, starting with yellow, then blue and then red. I moved the paint in broad strokes across the surface with yellow and then used red on edges then went into blue. I then rapidly drip Golden fluid acrylic colors from the top, controlling certain drips. There is an opening of yellow light for the background and horizontal lines to create horizon and water reflections of colors.

With my brush, I used blue and a form appeared in the foreground; to me this appeared as a Blue Heron and the repetition of wings behind the heron became a human form with arms parallel in the air. This human form I see as an Eurythmic. This arm gesture in Eurythmy is called "U" and the sound is (oo). The gesture means creating a vessel for higher self. When performing, Eurythmics are dressed in colored silk fabrics that move and flow with speech or music. The Eurythmic's head is covered in silk veiling the face. Behind the Eurythmic blue form which seems to repeat the same gesture of the Eurythmic. This form is like a possible plant that is releasing the white spirits of form or higher self.

As I proceeded with my painting, I used more flowing brush strokes on the right of the painting, mixing blue and red that was already present on the



Portal of Awareness

canvas. What appears to me is a nude, veiled, and I leave the rest to your imagination.

In the painting, the movement of these three gestures is transformative in nature. Imagine a flower blossoming. Follow the heron off the painting and then reverse your eye movement back into the painting through to the plant and you may experience this transforming effect.

In Karen Close's book, *Unfinished Women*, she says, "I believe in collaboration. I delight in discovering talents in others and pooling our strengths to accomplish mutual goals."

In making this painting at heART Fit I feel that Karen has collaborated with me to make the painting possible. I am grateful for her knowledge, teaching experience and ability to inspire artistic community. We both believe in collaboration.

In her book she also says, "In advancing age, creative expression is shaped by the desire to make strong, lasting contributions on a personal or community level, to affirm and complete life, and to celebrate one's own contributions." This sparked further flame in me to contribute, to collaborate, to continue to learn about myself in relation to community and myself, and to share who I am. I can't wait to express myself further through this Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude journal and continue to participate in HeART Fit at the Rotary Center for Arts.

"I believe that the significant factor in the further evolution of spiritual science will be that, in the process of attempting to understand the concept of art, it will itself devise an art of the conceptual, in which the work and activity of ideation will be fulfilled with images, with reality and that which now appears as dry science will in the future come closer to art." The Inner Nature of Music Lecture, September 30th, 1920, by Rudolf Steiner.

One of the first things Karen told me is how delighted she is that her oldest granddaughter is attending a Waldorf School program. (See the Summer, 2012, Sage-ing issue.) We both enjoy Goethe and Steiner's color theories and how they relate to community and self, especially through painting. Steiner has a lot to teach us. Through painting with HeART Fit painters, I continue to learn and express creativity, community and self.

Each of us being self-aware will aid in experiencing a peaceful co-existence in our universe. When we truly understand the human being as a spiritual being, our actions in the world will be that of peace and love for one another. Our thinking will be in our heart, not in our heads.

Jennifer Yarrow is a visual abstract painter, former Waldorf teacher, and former international top model (1980's). Currently she is developing an exhibition of her paintings called *Imagine Inventing Yellow* and writing her memoirs called *There Lives in Me an Image*.

BUILDING A DREAM

Bonnie Gratz

“Stand up and start. A path will be created.” – Persian Proverb

I love stories – reading them; creating them; watching them; performing in them. Stories trump everything in my life as a theatre artist. My earliest memory is when I was around three years old, creating a story in my bedroom with a Pinocchio puppet and a flashlight. I was creating what was a going to be a magical play for family members to see after a Sunday dinner. This childhood performance, like the many that followed, was fraught with intense planning, turmoil and divine excitement. Believe it or not, this is still what turns me on about theatre today - forty years later.

Some people say that my devotion to theatre is a cool diversion; others, an illness that is too consuming personally and financially. Then, there are those people who know me best. They say that theatre is my true passion, something that I need to do. The latter category is a pretty small group, but a group that is very dear to me.

What I know is that theatre, in its many forms, has been something that I have been compelled to do for my whole life and even when I have tried to stay away, it is the home I go to that makes me happiest. What is unique about my experience is that I like the groundbreaking of creating new theatrical endeavours. How do I end up in this position? Is it initiative? Most likely it is impatience, so here I am.

I was always the theatre kid in school. In high school, I was in every play and I had the opportunity to do some movies and television in my hometown of Calgary. Things changed drastically for me when, at the end of my Grade

11 year, my father got a job in Central Alberta at Olds College. This was the end of the world to me. There were no drama classes at the high school, not even a stage in the whole town. My two younger brothers are Cree and our family faced prejudice. After a few lonely months of feeling sorry for myself, doing some pretty sorry things with some really sorry people, I wrote a letter to the local voice teacher, who was also the theatre director, Marlene Skeet. She cast me in my first of many musicals, *Fiddler on The Roof*.

Marlene is still my mentor and her daughter Mary-Jean Uszy became my musical director and writing partner on several plays. Ironically, my first job out of university was as the first drama teacher at

The Cask of Amontillado (play adaptation by Bonnie Gratz)





Play Reading at Pulp Fiction
on Pandosy

I learned at a young age that in order to be an artist you have to be determined; you have to go out and make things happen.

Olds High. But most importantly, I met my husband, Derek, a fantastic designer. We were just 17 when he sat in front of me in Mr. Melnychuk's English 30 class and we have been together ever since.

Moving to Olds was the best thing that ever happened to me. I learned at a young age that in order to be an artist you have to be determined; you have to go out and make things happen. Nothing is handed to you. I often call this "the hustle". It is never easy. Never. You have to make things happen for yourself and hope that people will believe in you and that you are good at what you do.

As a Secondary School Drama teacher for several schools, I found it was a rewarding challenge for me to take languishing programs and build them into popular, inclusive ones. My motto was *theatre for all*: no matter what your ability, background or demeanor, show up, work hard and we will have a place for you.

After a stint in Edmonton, working as an actor and producer with Walterdale Theatre and on the board of The International Fringe Festival, we moved to Calgary and I decided to try running my own theatre company full-time. At one booth in the early days, I was questioned by a notable playwright and actor about what qualified me to run a company? How could I call myself professional? How could I offer classes, direct plays and work with artists? How dare I?

After explaining my background, I realized I had actually done it - I was a professional artist. I was 100% in and I was willing to fight for what I believe. By the way, I ended up working with my inquisitor later on many projects. We actually became quite good friends. In fact, I hired him several times when I was working at Calgary Opera.

For ten years, I had the grand adventure of raising my boys, maintaining my marriage to an incredible guy and running Centre Stage Theatre, a company that toured extensively throughout Alberta and B.C. I wrote many original plays, directed and performed in many others. I have had the pleasure of having my work on almost every stage and venue in Alberta. I have collaborated with hundreds of artists. It has been fun, not so glamorous and an awful lot of work, with even more sacrifice. The rewards though have always outweighed the pressures.

Last year my husband Derek was offered a job at University of B.C., Okanagan Campus in Kelowna. It was time for our family to follow a new course, to escape the traffic, the cold and the pressures. Without any friends or connections, I found myself going back to "the hustle".

This meant calling people up, emailing, hoping to meet for coffee. It hasn't taken me long to meet wonderful people here, but I admit I am still learning the culture of Kelowna. Luckily artistic souls exist everywhere. My year has seen me work as a freelance artist for Bumbershoot Theatre,



We're Ready

We want theatre to be accessible and inclusive for all.

Playhouse 25, and I was involved with a movie and for Vancouver-based Young Actors' Project. After a year of travelling a lot between Calgary, Kelowna and Vancouver, I decided it would be a great idea to generate some paying gigs in Kelowna.

This is how New Vintage Theatre came to be. I began discussions with other artists in between shows, waiting for shows over coffee, and while consuming wine after shows. "Wouldn't it be great if ..." has evolved into the idea of a theatre group that would create new plays and present innovative versions of the classics. We are exploring venues such as coffeehouses, wineries, beaches and mysterious locales to present our work, as well as traditional thea-

tres. We are offering classes, doing play readings and leading a playwright's circle to generate original work from the Okanagan. But, most of all, we want theatre to be accessible and inclusive for all.

Starting a professional theatre company when there are already established and loved community theatres is a pretty crazy idea. When I hear, "I don't need to be paid, I do it for the love of it", you can cue my guilty slink away into a dark corner. Certainly I do theatre for the love of it; it is truly my life but it is also my livelihood. Unless a professional theatre community is fostered in cities - even the small ones like ours - artists can't stay and survive. A creative culture enriches the entire community. Ask the Ontario wineries around the small village of Niagara-On-The-Lake how they have been impacted by the 1962 creation of The Shaw Theatre Festival. The union of theatre and wineries is the foundation of tourism and many jobs at Niagara-On-The-Lake. New Vintage Theatre could really be the start of something just as beautiful.

Like the kid with the Pinocchio puppet and the flashlight, I can't wait to see what frustrations, anxiety and excitement await me as I embark on another theatrical thrill ride. I invite you to hop on the train with me. Check out the opportunities to explore the life changing and community building sides of your creative spirit at www.newvintage.ca. Let's stand up and start together.

www.newvintage.ca

HEART JOURNALING



Cynthia Gunsinger

It's quite ridiculous, the number of people who are far more comfortable being a caregiver than they are with taking care of themselves. Those who are balancing work and life, those unsettled with their purpose and contribution, and those juggling the care taking of elderly parents and empty nests tend to neglect self care.

Care for our health and human body systems: maintaining physical activity and healthy eating are important self care components, but what about emotional, mental and creative care?

For those needing to fill up their buckets and reach into their creative range, welcome to the world of Art Journaling!

“Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.”

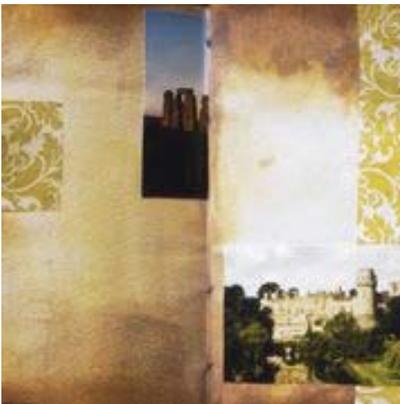
Thomas Merton

Here I established background of the journal page. Pages have been washed in watercolour and some collage has started. Combining written and visual languages to reach into a full range of expression, art journaling combines mixed media art with words to create greater understanding and insight into yourself.

Your art journal is a space for expression of your visual and written thoughts. A space for questions, thoughts, emotions and it is also a play space for experimenting with art materials. A journal can be shared or kept personal, making it a safe place to try new techniques or mediums, or a place to unburden yourself from hard emotions.

According to scientist, Grant Eckert, “Art is very important in helping the brain reach its full potential ... It introduces the brain to diverse cognitive skills that help us unravel intricate problems. Art activates the creative part of our brain - the part that works without words and can only express itself non-verbally. Art, in thought and through the creative processes, activates the imaginative and creative side, the spatial and intuitive side of our brain. Art jumps over the process of linear and logical thinking. It trains the brain to shift into thinking differently, of broaching old problems in new ways.”

Many who would not consider themselves artists have taken solace in art studios for emotional and mental care via creative expression. One great example of such a community gathering and creative exploration place is New Moon Gallery in West Kelowna, British Columbia. Students come pulling a wagon full of art supplies and emotional baggage and leave with inspiring art and lighter spirits. Another great example of creative community gatherings are Squam Art Workshops, www.squamartworkshops.com/ : creative retreats from the East Coast to the West Coast and abroad that are



Stately Journal – established background of the journal page. Pages have been washed in watercolour and some collage has started.



Mediterranean Journal – completed journal page with layers of water colour, acrylic, ink, crayon, and pastels. Words have been added to complete the page.

focused on personal self-expression.

Beautiful examples of Art Journaling can be found in the book *French Milk*, by Lucy Knisley. Other beautiful journal work examples and tutorials have been produced by artist Teesha Moore and can be found at www.teeshamoore.com.

The emotional and creative care through this flexible mode of self expression and having a space to turn your chaotic thoughts into order is invaluable.

For someone who needs more emotional and creative care, PaperBag Press from Kelowna, British Columbia, has just releasing *Reflections*, an art journal with creative exploration exercises and inspiration. Linda Lovisa, artist and art teacher at her New Moon Art Gallery, is the author of *Reflections*. The journal provided a collection of Linda's favourite works alongside the moments that inspired them. Techniques, prompts, and thoughts for you to explore are a reflection of the teaching in Linda's art classes. Following each painting are blank pages for you to create and develop your own working journal.

Semir Zeki, a former professor of neurobiology at the University College, London and co-head of the Wellcome Department of Cognitive Neurology says that "Artistic expression is the key to comprehending ourselves ... Art and its expression is an expansion of brain function."

Visit www.gunsinger.com

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Art Journaling Basics

You don't need an art studio to do art journaling. A few supplies and workspace where you can access your work is all you need.

Supplies

- Small blank journal - find one kicking around or make one with drawing or water colour paper. You can use gesso to reinforce the pages if they are of light weight (gesso is available in any art store and is a liquid chalk primer for canvas and paper).
- Adhesive - a glue stick, mod podge or gel medium and a brush.
- Colour - watercolour paints, crayons, pencils, markers, acrylic paint, pastels or any media you are comfortable with.
- Marker - permanent ink that will not smear when it gets wet.
- Miscellaneous - rags, paper towels, scissors, paint brushes, old magazines.

1. Begin with a Background

Wash the background in either watercolour paint or acrylic paint thinned with water. Start with lighter colours for a background until you see how it goes. Remember that as you build your journal page, watercolour paint will change with the added moisture.

2. Build

Build on the background with collage: designs and colors from magazines, book text, other artwork of your own, photos, stencils, etc.

3. Mix Your Media

Add layers of collage, painting, coloured pencils, drawing, stamping as you desire. Ensure that your page has border and a focal point, but be loose with your work. Work from different directions on your page until you feel the piece is complete.

4. Write

Most of us think of journaling as a diary, but in art journaling, the visual expression speaks as well. You may choose to diary words in the in-between spaces of your piece to complete the message, thought, or experience.

What a beautiful, presence-based honouring of your life, trip, event or moment.

WORDS FROM THE HEART



Follow That Poem! Antoinette Voûte Roeder

Every poet has his or her own way of working with poetry. I *play* with poetry. It is not work to me, it is sheer delight. I give myself over to it. It is a co-creative process for me. There are two, possibly three entities playing here: me, the poem, and the Ineffable, i.e. the Source.

Every poem has many voices and could express itself in any number of ways. Poems have character and personality. Once we get started they have volition of their own. Even the seed of a poem may be out of our control and come as pure gift. Or it may be something we slave over. In either case, a poem knows what it wants to express and how it wants to do so.

Poems

Each time a poem presents itself,
comes shuttling shyly from the shadows,
it carries within it endless gifts,
a chest overflowing with treasure.
Before it appears to be truly complete
it will have tried on many costumes,
gone through various metamorphoses
before it finds its home.

The process is play,
delight the poet's work,
as she tastes words and phrases,
sifts through images,
dances with placement,
toys with commas
and in the final winnowing
discards everything extra.

In the end
it is the poem that knows
exactly what it means to be.
As phrases meet and images blossom
the poem takes root
and the poet knows
she has been the usher
of a fragment of eternity.

Weaving the Wind, 2008

The poet must come with an inquiring spirit, an open heart, a listening ear, clear eyes. If we come to the process trusting that we will receive something, something with which we can begin to weave, then it is bound to happen. We can cultivate the ground, we can read something inspirational, we can take a walk in the woods, we can turn to the inner cosmos in meditation, but the poem will appear of its own accord. We become the attending gardener, applying fertilizer and water, loving and appreciating it into being.

When I sit down to write, I often find one poem comes on the heels of another. Either that or the poem itself seems to contain more than one distinct idea or different ways it could develop or unfold. We don't want to shut down the voice that seems to be emerging. At the same time we want to be aware of what else may be happening in the poem.

Missing

I did not know
I had been missing
until I began
to show up.

Decades were strung
like paper dolls,
flimsy white cutouts
all linking arms—

a suspension bridge
over a chasm so deep,
so dark, I dared not
look down.

I spent years joining others
presenting the person they
wanted to see, hiding
me.

Showing up feels so
precarious, but the dolls
are gone and the chasm reveals
a wandering ribbon of water
dappled with sun.

I'm here, I'm me.
Despite my fears
I put one foot in front
of the other and risk being
who I am.

Missing (2)

I did not know
I had been missing
until I began to show up,

Either that or the poem itself seems to contain more than one distinct idea or different ways it could develop or unfold.

put one foot before
the other
on that bridge

that hung precariously
over a pit of vipers, coiled
and writhing, waiting to nip
my heel, strike my ankle.

Taking that first step
is possible though not
easy. Following through

is the snake-pit,
the old, familiar tendency
to abandon self to the other,

you, on the other side;
me, emptied of me because
I have been waylaid
by the snakes.

These two poems start with the same four lines and the idea or image is very similar: the chasm, the bridge. But what lies at the base of the chasm in each poem is very different. They emerge from the same root, the same witnessing, but each seeks a different expression of the experience. It's the yin and yang, the two sides of the same coin, the light and the shadow sides of an experience. Both wanted to be heard. There is one part of ourselves that wants to emphasize the positive. And there is another part we often deny, which lurks beneath the surface and also wants to be heard.

Let's look at two very different poems. They seem to have nothing to do with one another but they appeared at the same time.

Kananaskis in the snow,

but the sun is pressing through,
and Mt Kidd reveals one shoulder
then another through the clouds
and clouds are moulded mounds of
whipped air moving in such stately
fashion, slipping over lip and rim
of mountain. Snow drops straight
like a beaded curtain, icicles plunge
from eaves along the roof, water
trapped in long slim spears.
Pines troop darkly, every branch
festooned with tongue of snow,
snow heaped up on needles bunched
like shaving brushes topped with cream.

It is altogether delicious,
not a soul is in sight,
just the whitely cushioned landscape,

silent and demanding nothing,
undisturbed but for one bold
black raven cruising by and my
loquacious gaze.

Nature

pulls out all
my stops. I become
a soapbox speaker
all my senses in overdrive,
stretching language till it snaps,
plumping words like sofa cushions,
putting paint on Van Gogh's canvas,
dollops textured and twirling wildly,

so excited
so engaged
so delighted
am I once again
to be alive and
in this wooded
mountain-scape.

The last line triggered in me the realization that the second poem was already emerging. It's like giving birth to twins only without the labor pains.

The poem *Nature* followed on the heels of *Kananaskis in the snow*. The seed for these poems was a simple witnessing. I was sitting in front of a big window looking out on a spring snowscape in the Canadian Rockies, Mt. Kidd's massive form and a forest-covered foreground filling my view. Simple gazing, quiet looking often offers up words. While writing *Kananaskis* I became aware of another voice that was telling me about the sumptuousness of my description: the over-the-top character of my words and phrases. I had run with the sensual, with the imagery, with metaphors and simile. Just look at the verbs: there is a head-long rush of passion that is unstoppable. Only in the last line do I actually recognize where I've been: seduced by beauty into impassioned speech. This is the poet at play. It's more delicious than chocolate cake for me.

The last line triggered in me the realization that the second poem was already emerging. It's like giving birth to twins only without the labor pains. If you look at *Nature* you can tell it is going to be a different poem. The title stands alone, is a one-word pointer, whereas *Kananaskis* appears as if it has already been in full flow and is just now hitting the ground. See how the sentences build visually, as if they are tempted to the same abundance as *Kananaskis* but then reigned in by the last stanza.

These two poems show the observer in two different stages: first stage, observing and witnessing to a gorgeous landscape; second, observing and witnessing to the observer and witness herself. This is where I become the observed. I become the *other*.

These are two facets of my poetic soul. The one dwells in lavish descriptions but the other and actually the stronger voice of late, writes more

I have written very few poems that flowed through me in such a finished form that editing would have done them a disservice.

economically, brings an edge to the writing, and is pleased to leave *unsaid* the obvious, pleased to leave the reader free to interpret and bring her own experience to it. In the *Kananaskis* poem I give you all of it, the cake, the filling *and* the icing and there's scarcely anything the reader can add to it. Following on its heels came the observer in me who stands back with a wry smile, aware of what has just happened, and wanting to describe *that* process.

Once the seed has grown into a poem, the tinkering starts. I have written very few poems that flowed through me in such a finished form that editing would have done them a disservice. I enjoy the tinkering and the teasing, the tasting of one word or phrase and the discarding of another. I love the crisp paper, the heft of a pen. I write in longhand, and every time I make a change to the poem, I toss the old one on the floor and rewrite the entire thing. This kind of repetition is almost like rehearsing for the final production. I feel very content when my floor is covered with discarded poems and I finally rest with *the* one, the one which pleases me the most.

Then the poem goes on the computer and becomes official in print. The personal, intimate process is over ... for now. In some sense the poem already belongs to the world. But the place from which it called to me, waved to me, is always available, hospitable, and generous. So I say, "Here's to the poem that got away! Because that means there are more poems out there and we will find them as they find us!"

All poems are by the author. Only the first one has appeared in published form before.
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IT'S ABOUT STYLE

Tracy Hutton

When I was in my first decade of life I always asked my mother for a “Pocket Man”. Again and again, I would ask for the same thing. No Mum, I want a real “Pocket Man”. I meant a supportive friend that I could put in my pocket and take off to school or anywhere I chose. Only later in life have I thought about the meaning or significance of my “Pocket Man”.

I grew up with two older brothers. Because I was the youngest and only girl, I had a wonderful relationship with my mother and my brothers, but for some reason, which I still have not figured out, I did not have the relationship with my father that so many of my girlfriends had with theirs. I always envied their report, their unconditional love from the man that they looked up to and the man that gave them courage and hope to be anything that they

wanted to be. Now in my fifth decade I am coming to terms with the fact that I didn't have that father figure that I wanted, and that maybe my “Pocket Man” was my way of having an imaginary father figure to guide me and tell me I was going to be okay. I am learning to be my own guide and making myself be okay. I am sage-ing.

It really has taken me four, almost five decades to become comfortable in my skin, my soul and actually learn to like, and sometimes even love, the person I am today. I am so grateful for what I am doing in the way of work today and how it is letting me create me. Four and a half years ago, I opened Jigsaw Clothing, a tiny boutique on Pandosy Street in Kelowna, B.C. My whole working life had been in retail, though not always clothes. I had tried many things: home décor, interior design, but when a small house on Pandosy became available for lease, I felt destiny call. I remember I was taking a business course at Okanagan College with Lally and Jasmine Stonebridge, from my then favourite store, The Laughing Moon.

Welcome to Jigaw





Left: Tracy Helps You Find You



Right: Feel The Warmth

After one of our classes I said, “Would you come look at this house? I have an Idea.” Peeking through the windows, I shared my vision with them and Jigsaw, my clothing store for women, is the result.

I knew I wanted to create a warm atmosphere, European in style. I wanted women to feel at ease when they came to shop for clothes and accessories that would make them look and feel as good as they could. It had taken me years to feel that way. Now I wanted to try and pass on the knowledge I had learned about acceptance of myself, comfort in my own skin and actually looking in the mirror and liking what I saw. Using my creativity to make me feel good about myself, rather than searching for the “Pocket Man” was a big step. I really know that putting clothes and accessories together is what I am good at. This is my passion. What I have created is a place where women can come and be comfortable, relaxed, non-pressured, and feel authentic to themselves while they create their own expression of looking great. Women gather in my store. Jigsaw has become a special spot on Pandosy Street.

I am in the fashion business, but to me it’s not so much fashion as style: texture, colour, and beauty in whatever form one chooses to wear it. It’s thinking creatively about how you want to present yourself and having the confidence to be uniquely you. Women enjoy coming into my store and finding their style. I enjoy creating an environment for them to be their own “Pocket Man” - that inner friend who helps you be your best.

SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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"Art is not in pictures alone. Its place is in everything, as much in one thing as another. It is up to the community as a whole, in conduct, business, government and play ... Every community should have its own will, and have the courage of it ... There would be things in that place which one could not find in any other place." These words were written by Robert Henri (1865-1929), painter, teacher and respected sage. They remain a truth a century after they were written.

The stories in this journal are the voices of men and women who have taken time to reflect on what art, and creative spirit means to them, how they individually express it, and how they can share art and its spirit. There is gratitude for the places art has led them, within themselves and within their communities.