

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close & Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 9, FALL 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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# A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close  
& Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 9, FALL 2013  
ISSN 1920-5848

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A PUBLICATION OF THE

### Okanagan Institute

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Cover painting detail by Daphne Odjig

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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

## INTRODUCTION

I wouldn't say that I'm a sceptic. There are,  
however, mysteries that I can find no  
definitive belief in, and they leave me  
wondering. Coincidence, synchronicity,  
concurrence, fate, or whatever you wish to  
call it, has affected the direction of our  
quarterly online journal.

As we move into our third year of  
publication, we are grateful for the outside  
intervention we sense exists. One time, in  
need of photographs for the Journal, Karen  
and I bumped into a young photographer  
she knew, on a street corner in Kelowna.  
Preparing for this issue, I was looking for  
writers and finding no inspiration. Within a  
few days, a friend from Toronto sent me  
the name of an artist from Whitehorse, in  
the Yukon Territory. Daphne Mennell's  
story is told in this Journal. She had two  
commissions for large-scale metal art  
pieces, but knew nothing about welding.  
She remembers her neighbour who  
happens to be a proficient welder. She  
designed and they created The Whitehorse  
Horse, an important icon for the city.

When we look at how this issue has  
come together, there is a weaving of  
themes that support each other in ways  
that were never consciously planned. As  
Karen began research for this issue's story  
on Daphne Odjig, the iconic Canadian  
artist, Karen met Daphne's roommate,  
Karen R. Hersey, and discovers an artist  
whose career has been sidelined by  
dementia. It is a disease which may  
redefine how we look at creative engage-  
ment. Karen Hersey's story is yet to be fully  
revealed, but certainly creative spirit has a  
part to play. You can read Dalia Gottlieb-  
Tanaka's article on her experiences and the  
science that's emerging on creativity and  
dementia.

It seems to me that the mystery depends  
on our individual belief systems, the  
conscious or unconscious decisions we have  
taken that act as conviction and evidence  
of our beliefs. There is something operating  
which we each have experienced often, but  
know by a different name, creative spirit,  
God's Will or sheer coincidence. There are  
no hard truths to apply to these unexplain-  
able occurrences, except to say that they  
form an essential thread that runs through  
the content gathered during the two years'  
existence of the *Sage-ing* Journal.

Carolyn Cowan

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# DAPHNE ODJIG - HAPPY 94TH BIRTHDAY

**Karen Close**



Left: Receiving greetings  
Right: Giving greetings



“It’s hard for me to talk about what’s in my paintings because many people don’t understand.

How do you express in words, feelings that you feel inside? I express my feelings in my paintings, but not in words.

You see things, whether you’re asleep or awake.

If I didn’t feel these things, there’s no way I could put it down in painting like I do. I try my best to interpret my feelings about the barrier, and things in my own way. Like another dimension sort of thing. These things have to come out, that’s

part of me, part of my artistry.

I work at a fast speed because it’s all there for me. If I have to labour over anything it never turns out.

I see it and it just happens. I just know it’s supposed to be there.

As an artist and as a person I have been impressed since childhood with the process that takes us from the inner image to the external reality of an image. For me, it has been an endless source of delight and wonderment that awareness, thoughts and recognitions can come seemingly unbidden from an inner source that, in adulthood, I learned to call it the unconscious. I know now, as an adult, that every one of us is a fusion of the eternal, of ancestral wisdom or caution as well, a seer of the future - but some part of us always remains capable of responding to here and now with originality.”

– Daphne Odjig quotes from *A Paint Brush In My Hand*

Daphne Odjig is a pathfinder, a visionary, a sage. We first met ten years ago, in the summer of 2003, when I moved to British Columbia. Since that initial morning of conversation, I have been motivated to explore and understand her unique wisdom. After our first meeting, we enjoyed telephone conversations, but Daphne’s life was full. Then in the spring of 2013, I learned she had moved into Cottonwoods, a long-term care facility in Kelowna. I

**For me, it has been an endless source of delight and wonderment that awareness, thoughts and recognitions can come seemingly unbidden from an inner source**



Top: Meeting of the Spirits. To this day, the spirits of the natural world remain Daphne's friends. "Every stone, every tree speaks to me."

Above: Family Totem. This work from a private collection shows Daphne's interpretation, done years later, depicting Daphne with her mother, father, sister and brother.

determined to spend as much time as she would allow. We connected and enjoyed sharing. I spoke with others who have been her close friends and I read more about her life and her artistic beliefs. In that first conversation, ten years previously, we had both laughed and boldly asserted a shared belief that two women relaxing into the art of deep conversation can bring forth important insights. Indeed, that morning Daphne shared with me a drawing she had done, just before my arrival, of two women sitting on a stoop talking. Synchronicity always delights me.

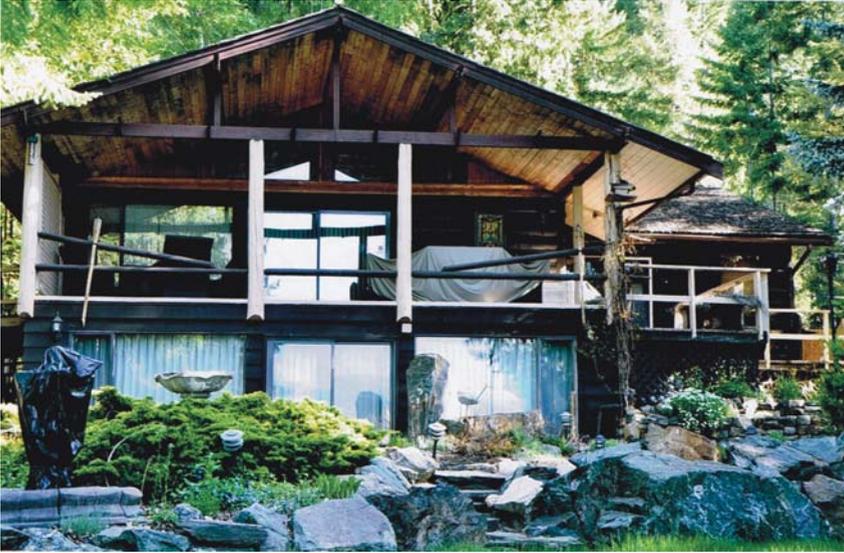
From October 23, 2009, to January 3, 2010, The National Gallery of Canada (NGC) presented *The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig*, the institution's first solo exhibition by a First Nation's female artist. The show was a culmination applauding the strength and determination of this visionary whose 91 years had been a courageous journey.

Daphne was born in 1919 on the unceded Wikwemikong Reserve, Manitoulin Island. An unceded Indian reserve in Canada means that it has not "relinquished title to its land to the government by treaty or otherwise." As we spoke, it was important to Daphne that I note this about her birthplace. Her heritage is a combination of Odawa, Potawatomi and English roots. Her mother was a war bride who moved to Canada with Daphne in her womb.

"Daphne Odjig holds an important place among the great artists of Canada," said the NGC Director, Marc Mayer. "She is respected nationally and internationally as a matriarchal figure who has captured her people's voice, history and legends in a unique artistic style." Daphne's numerous awards include appointment to The Order of Canada in 1987 and election to the Royal Canadian Academy of Art in 1989. In 2007, she was given the Governor's General award for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts, followed by investiture into the Order of British Columbia. She has received Honorary Doctorates of Letters from Laurentian University in Sudbury, the University of Toronto, Okanagan University College in Kelowna, and Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops. She claims to have been born with a paintbrush in her hand.

There is an innate part of all of us that strives to heal – to move toward greater health, wholeness and interconnectedness with all that is. Daphne discovered this at an early age. As a preadolescent she would seek out her favourite spots in the grove surrounding her home. Animatedly, she recalls being transformed by the sounds around her as she leaned against a tree trunk and looked up into the mysteries of the world above. The whole canopy of green leaves and dark branches moved gently in the breeze making patterns as the bright blue sky, and passing puffs of white clouds, peaked through the spaces. Entranced, Daphne could lose herself in the changing forms, then shut her eyes and feel herself part of the natural design.

In 1932, at age thirteen, Daphne was struck with rheumatic fever. In bed for six months, and then kept at home to rest for the next three years, she explored the images in her imagination; making art sustained the heartbroken young girl. Her mother had also been struck by the same disease at a



Top: Daphne's home on Lake Shuswap with studio below

Above: Her view of the lake

young age and was an invalid for most of Daphne's life with what was diagnosed as a faulty heart valve. Joyce Odjig's diseased heart resulted from her own childhood illness and insufficient recovery time. She died at age 38 with Daphne at her side.

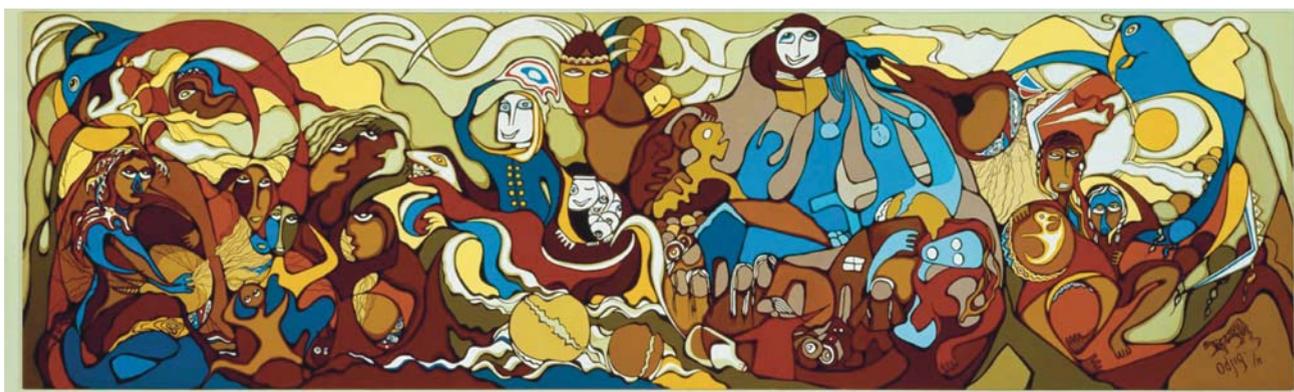
Today, Daphne vividly recalls the courage she had to find for the sake of her two younger siblings. As she grew, Daphne's grandfather, a sculptor, and her father, a fiddle player, encouraged her art making. They did not instruct, but rather drew with her as the family sang together. Intergenerational creating has a long tradition, particularly in non-literate societies. This informal sharing is a way of transmitting skills and values with love and respect for individual expression.

For Daphne, as with many women, the next three decades were consumed by the responsibilities of creating a life. She moved off the reservation and slowly moved west. In 1960, she was widowed with two children, and the job of maintaining the family strawberry farm de-

manded long hours that left little time for art. In 1962, she remarried and through the next decade worked, with her husband, in a variety of locations advocating for emerging Native consciousness in Canada. Daphne gave to her heritage through her own artistic output, teaching, and creating the Donald Street Craft Shop for the sale of Native art. The shop ultimately expanded into the New Warehouse Gallery which opened in Winnipeg in 1974. It was Canada's first Native art gallery with a native proprietor and became a meeting place for artists to visit, talk, paint and dream. It was a place where those more established supported upcoming Native artists. Seven of these senior artists came to be known as "The Indian Group of Seven." The pace was very busy and Daphne yearned for the time when she could devote herself to full-time painting.

In 1976, at age fifty-seven, Daphne and her husband moved to the shores of Lake Shuswap, located in south-central British Columbia.

A mature Odjig style slowly emerged. Finally, she had the time to reflect on her surroundings, and their connection to her own inner emotions and



Above: *The Indian In Transition*, Daphne Odjig

Below: *Tribute To Picasso*



beliefs. Critics noted Daphne's palette began to change; as she regained her childhood relationship with nature, she began to incorporate the sage greens of the grasses, the azure blues of the water and sky and the soft earth tones of the rocks as she painted a personal anthology. Like the earlier B.C. artist, Emily Carr, Daphne's paintings brought international awareness to the spiritual inspiration of British Columbia's forests. Over the next two years, she feverishly worked to complete a twenty-seven foot long mural depicting *The Indian in Transition* which was unveiled at the National Arts Centre in

Ottawa on June 28th, 1978.

The mural's content is as dramatic and powerful as its size, and brought a catharsis for its creator. She explained that it was "just the facts, just history", but more significantly for her were the emotions called forth in response to the historical facts. The mural's creation gave the artist an opportunity to release inhibitions and boldly move into exploration of the woman that is Daphne Odjig. Always a strong admirer of Picasso for his daring, one can feel the influence of his mural *Guernica* in *The Indian in Transition*.

In 1986, Daphne Odjig was one of the four artists in the world selected by the curators of the Picasso Museum in Antibes, France, to paint a memorial to the master. Like Picasso, she was fascinated by the merging of forms as a means of looking into herself, and contemplating within her own experience aspects of the universal human struggle.

With the same strength she had employed as an advocate for the na-



In Search of Wonder

tive community, its struggles, beliefs and traditions, a sixty-year old Daphne became a pioneer in what has come to be known as the consciousness movement. She is adamant about the need to know oneself and the power of creative expression as a conduit.

Grace Griffin, of the Gallery West in Vancouver, encouraged Daphne's introspective studies in paint. The interpretation of dreams had been widely heralded by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung and Griffin assured Daphne there would be an audience for the examination of her dreams and feelings of spirituality as sources of creativity and understanding. In 1979, the exhibition, *Time Passages*, opened at the Gallery West in Vancouver, and the public responded with exuberance. Her theme was the two kinds of passages that are the human journey. Images depicting her perspective on both the general passages experienced by every individual in the course of life's cycles, and the specific ones from the artist's own life, had broad appeal.

Regardless of cultural identity or particular family experiences, Daphne understood, "Each person has many facets of personality in relation to other people, whether they are sons, fathers or lovers." This internal world is the territory that would become her focus. The fol-

lowing year, the exhibition *Behind the Mask* opened at the Robertson Galleries in Ottawa to another enthusiastic audience supportive of this woman's midlife quest for self-awareness. That journey is universal and has gained more momentum in the twenty-first century.

The spiritual concentration that has guided Daphne Odjig to her 94th birthday, September 11, 2013 remains strong. This summer it has been the art of reflection and of conversation that has engaged her. Arthritis in her hands



Top: Daphne is Creative Aging

Middle: Okanagan Artist Lee Claremont thanks Daphne for being an inspiration, and mentor

Above: Back: Eckhard Freitags. Left: Daphne's sister Winnie. Middle: Daphne. Right: painter Karen Hersey with her portrait of Daphne.

has ended her painting and drawing, but she is in good health and remains her own woman. Looking right into my eyes she says, "I must do what myself wants me to do. Always."

## EPILOGUE

### HOW TWO ARTISTS FOUND FRIENDSHIP AND PURPOSE AT COTTONWOODS

One day when I arrived to visit, Daphne was not in her bed. Startled, I looked about and there she was by the window in the far corner. Shortly after settling into these new accommodations, she had wheeled across the room seeking a glimpse of the outdoors. She discovered that Karen R. Hersey, her roommate, also shared a love for nature and, even more importantly, for painting. Over the summer, the two have spent many delightful hours remembering and conversing. Karen had been a successful landscape and portrait painter. She still had her paintbox near her bed, but had not used it.

One day, while I was visiting with both of them, I suggested that Karen could paint a portrait of Daphne for her birthday. The idea found interest, and so I provided paints and a canvas. If you've seen the movie *Quartet*, you know how creative spirit remains a friend when other faculties weaken. Three days later, I returned to see the portrait completed and hear about the lively conversations that accompanied its creation. The portrait is excellent. Daphne loves it, and Karen Hersey says she feels like herself again. However, when I asked Karen if she had painted recently, she couldn't remember. We decided I should call her daughter to tell her about the portrait. She couldn't believe it. "My mother has not painted for over ten years. She stopped when she realized her memory was leaving her in her early sixties."

Since completing the portrait for Daphne, Karen says she wakes up each day feeling alive and eager to begin painting. As she is about to turn 72, she is delighted to have her creative spirit rekindled; Daphne is watching, carefully enjoying each brush stroke with her friend. Read the next Winter issue of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* to follow this journey. The issue is due in mid-to-late December.

"You know I never thought I would turn 94, and I NEVER thought it could be such a beautiful day," – Daphne Odjig

Writer Karen Close [karensageing@gmail.com](mailto:karensageing@gmail.com) is on the advisory board of the Arts Health Network [www.artshealthnetwork.ca/initiatives/british-columbia](http://www.artshealthnetwork.ca/initiatives/british-columbia) and the board of The Society for the Arts in Dementia Care [www.cecd-society.org](http://www.cecd-society.org)

The Sage-ing Journal thanks photographer Frank Kyjonka for images from Daphne's party

# MY JOURNEY INTO CREATIVITY

## Sheilagh Simes



**I chose to resign from nursing and start a new chapter of living physically healthy, and in a stress-free, creative environment.**

A soul bereft of creativity is a soul in need. So began my journey.

For 19 years I worked as a nurse in long term care until my late fifties. Complex healthcare needs in an aging population, constant staff shortages and reduced government funding became persistent factors in creating an unhealthy work environment that was full of stress. My physical and mental health suffered as I tried to stem the problems and pressures of work. Finally, after coping with a thyroid gland that was no longer functioning, blossoming weight and high blood pressure I realized it was time to get off the circular wheel of self-destruction, and to feed my soul so that I could live healthy and well. To achieve this goal meant shifting priorities in my life. I chose to resign from nursing and start a new chapter of living physically healthy, and in a stress-free, creative environment.

Looking back on my teenage years, I remembered how fond I had been of drawing with pastels, and working with clay, but it had been decades since I had even thought about art. Uncertain of how to proceed, I started with the simple and the tangible. I turned to my garden. Working with perennial plants and trees, I coaxed my garden into a park like setting that gave me some wonderful soul time. Filled with vibrant colours and textures and calming greens and whites it started to work its magic. At the same time, I became extremely interested in eating healthy and so turned my talents to cooking. Exploring a wide variety of ingredients I focused on creating meals that represented clean eating, delectable tastes, and artful presentations. My husband and children were very appreciative, but still something was missing.

One evening in early 2011, I was looking at some photos of Okanagan birds and immediately saw how the body and wings were divided into natural areas that would lend themselves to showcasing Maori art. Having lived in New Zealand for 14 years, I was strongly attracted to the traditional curved repetitive Kowhaiwhai (co-fi-fi) patterns seen on Maori ceremonial meeting houses, known as Marae's, and in other traditional Maori wood and bone carvings.

The main motif that the reader can see on the wings of the quail in 'Quail Talk' is the Koru, a deeply symbolic form which resembles the young silver fern frond before it has uncurled. The Koru, symbolizing new life, renewal, growth and strength is also reflective of my creative journey and the start of a new chapter. The circular nature of the Koru is meant to suggest the perpetual motion of going forward while the inner coil is returning to the point of origin or one's true self.



Quail Talk



Top: Canadian Goose

Above: Gourd: Back of Loon Rising

On the upper portion of the wings on the Canadian Goose, the Koru is also interlocked to portray the interconnectedness between family members, generations and the giver and recipient of artworks.

Shortly after starting to draw with ink, I was invited to join a group of very talented artistic women who were interested in working with gourds and who have become an inspiration for me. In 2011, the first gourd patch in B.C. was started here in Kelowna and is known as “Just Gourdgeous”.

I was hooked from the first moment on. I find gourds both visually and tactically sensuous. The various shapes, mould patterns and colour tones appeal strongly to me. Before starting on a gourd, I look at it and let the characteristics of each gourd guide me to create a unique piece of art using a variety of techniques and mediums.

Each month our gourd group tries a new process. One of the easiest techniques is to draw zentangles onto a cleaned gourd surface. The art of zentangling focuses on relaxing the mind and body which in turn allows creative ideas and insights to flow freely. There is no preconceived idea as to what the end result will be, rather the design is created as you go, focusing on one stroke at a time. This was the perfect technique to start with as the art of zentangling incorporates all aboriginal and modern designs involving repetitive patterns. Zentangling also related to my life in general where I was trying new forms of medium to satisfy my creativity. The end result is unplanned and unknown, but I am enjoying the flow of the moment.

Zentangles can also be burned onto gourds using a razor tip knife and other shaped burning tools. The design on this gourd is the back of a loon rising from the water. It has been hand drawn, burned and the various patterns dyed with both alcohol and shoe dye. Again, the Koru is a predominant feature on the lower central back and neck of the loon. A basket weave pattern outlines the left and right back wing and base of the neck while inside the wings repetitive circular and inverted hook patterns have been used.

The burned design on this next gourd follows the natural ragged edges of the mould or stain patterns on the gourd. The desired result was to try and reflect the natural topography of the ocean floor. The complementary element of seaweed was attached to the base and neck of the gourd to enhance the organic nature of both, as well as to highlight the symbiotic relationship between seaweed and ocean floor. Natural earth tones in shoe dye have been used to create a visual effect of changing topography on the ocean floor that are similar to the hills and valleys on the surface of the earth.

Many of my gourds are complemented by natural products such as pine needles, shells, bark, and feathers in addition to seaweed as well as man made products such as beads, copper wire, and things you find to create an interesting look. Mediums of choice include alcohol and shoe dyes as well as liquid and pearlized acrylics.

On reflection over the past 2 years I have found meaningful purpose and well-being in creating ink drawings and designing gourds. I have been inspired by my life in New Zealand, my work with Maori and First Nation

Right: Gourd: Ocean Floor



peoples, and all the wonderful artistic souls that surround me in everyday life. My physical and mental health has never been better. My art has connected me to my family in different ways and has mutually helped us to see life from a different perspective. They are my biggest fan club and supporters of my creative endeavours. I thank them with all my heart.

Sheilagh Simes: RN, BScN is an artist currently living in Kelowna B.C. She holds both Canadian and New Zealand (Aotearoa) citizenship.

She attended the University of British Columbia in Canada and Massey University in New Zealand where she lived with her husband and children for 14 years. Her nursing experience in acute care and staff development was strongly influenced by the Maori culture and the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1992, she returned to Canada, and worked as an educator and quality improvement co-ordinator in both mainstream and First Nation Long-term Care facilities. She finished her nursing career with Accreditation Canada as a surveyor in the First Nation health care system with her main focus on Primary Health Care.

Sheilagh is an active participant in Kelowna's "Just Gourdgeous" Patch group and a member of the Canadian Gourd Society. [www.canadiangourdsociety.org](http://www.canadiangourdsociety.org)

**On reflection over the past 2 years I have found meaningful purpose and well-being in creating ink drawings and designing gourds.**

# HEALING IN THE HOSPITAL

## THROUGH THE ARTS

### Shirley A. Serviss



Caricature of Shirley drawn by colleague and artist, Lorna Bennett

When I told a friend of mine that I was going to be working as a poet in the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton, he said, “I knew they let dogs into the hospital, but I didn’t know they let in poets!” Prior to being hired, I didn’t either!

Artists on the Wards was started by the Friends of University Hospitals in 1999, using a visual artist to reach patients unable to visit the main floor art gallery operated by the Friends. The program was so successful, within a few months, it expanded to include literature and music. I was the first writer hired to work at the bedside, and am currently the only writer on part-time staff. We also have two visual artists, two musicians and numerous volunteers across the three artistic disciplines working throughout both the University of Alberta Hospital and the adjoining Mazinkowski Heart Institute.

The program is funded by the Friends through the revenue raised in their Gift Shop, a yearly grant from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and donations from individuals. We receive referrals from the spiritual care staff, from social workers, nurses, physicians, family members and from the patients themselves. We also make cold calls, going room to room to see if anyone is interested in what we have to offer. Patients who turn us away at least have the benefit of being able to control some part of their day.

We push around colourful carts loaded with books, supplies, or instruments, depending on the art form. When people meet us in the elevators they assume we are there for the children. I enjoy telling them, “No, I get to play with the grown-ups.” The most common thing we hear from patients is: “I used to... write poetry, draw, paint, or play an instrument...”. We try to put them back in touch with their creative side.

The artists on staff are professional artists; we aren’t art therapists, with the exception of one of our staff musicians who is a certified therapeutic harp practitioner. Nor are we medical professionals. We’re interested in what’s right with the patients, not what’s wrong with them, and describe our program as providing distraction, diversion and entertainment. But, even though we haven’t done formal research studies, we know it is much more than that.

Research done in other centres shows that arts activities provide patients with a sense of control and accomplishment, as well as meaningful social engagement which has positive health effects on the immune system. Patients are distracted from their pain and their feelings of anxiety are

Singer, songwriter and recording artist, Al Brant, shares his love of music with patients.





Top: The artists' colourful carts catch attention and evoke smiles and comments. Here, literary artist, Shirley Serviss, writes a poem for a patient in front of the Poetry Walk.

Middle: Therapeutic Harp Practitioner, Bev Ross, improvises in tune with the patient's particular needs.

Bottom: Nancy Corrigan, a staff visual artist in the Artists on the Wards program, works with groups as well as at the bedside.

reduced, resulting in less need for medication. Quality of life is improved which results in a more positive attitude toward hospitalization.

We can provide anecdotal evidence of these findings. Medical outpatients who come to hospital frequently for treatments tell me they look forward to reading the most recent poem I've written on the whiteboard in the hallway waiting area. One patient undergoing dialysis told me she could feel her pain trickling out her toes as I read to her. Patients who are upset or in physical distress when we arrive at their bedside find themselves laughing, reciting a poem they memorized in school, painting or sculpting, or singing a favourite song.

Research shows that stories can provide a means for individuals to deal with fears and realities, discuss their issues and situations, escape from their present situation, and find meaning in their experiences and renewed hope. The artists provide a listening ear and try to reflect and reinforce the positive in what we hear by following up with an appropriate artistic response. We also provide journals and encourage the patients and their families to write about their experiences. I often engage a group of patients who are waiting impatiently for treatment or family members waiting during surgery in helping to craft or illustrate a poem for the whiteboard or sharing the Thoughts For the Day they've drawn from my selection of quotes. This activity leads to further conversation among them, reducing their anxiety and feelings of isolation.

Another research finding is that artists in residence programs help families and staff deal with the stress of caregiving, and build relationships. We've seen this play out numerous times. A unit where live music is wafting down the hallway evokes a much calmer atmosphere for everyone. A patient and visitor, who are discussing their shared arts activity or filling out a memory book, rather than focusing on recent medical difficulties have a more pleasant time together. Painting tiles bonded one father and his estranged daughter and gave a mother and her oil-worker son something in common. A poem I wrote for an elderly man about his life was illustrated with photographs by his family and hung on the wall of his hospital room. I encouraged one patient to have his family bring in his violin. An unexpected consequence was that his doctor showed up with his violin and the two of them played together!

Staff members often stop us when we arrive on the units or search us out. "I need something," they say, and we provide them with a Thought For the Day or a button we've made with a slogan about nursing on it, or a piece of artwork or Poetic Medicine (a poem in a pill bottle). We also offer creative opportunities for physicians and staff: writing workshops, painting ceiling tiles, making mandalas, and relaxing to harp music are some examples.

A growing number of medical schools, including the University of Alberta, are incorporating the arts and humanities into the medical curriculum. They recognize the arts as a powerful education tool in enhancing observational skills, imagery and three-dimensional thinking. Involvement

## POETRY AS CONTINGUENCY

Shirley A. Serviss

Memorizing poetry is insurance  
for when you find yourself  
sitting in dialysis for hours  
three days a week with nothing to do,  
but stare into space, unable to see  
well enough to read or watch TV.

Little did you know, back when  
you were skipping school  
to go shoot pool, some day  
those memorized lines would return  
on little cat feet to keep you company;  
the lady that's known as Lou  
more comforting than the calculus  
you taught yourself later in life.

Poetry should be part of every person's  
risk management program.  
You never know when you'll  
find yourself on a stretcher in Emergency  
repeating over and over again  
to distract yourself from pain:  
"For I have promises to keep  
and miles to go before I sleep  
and miles to go before I sleep."  
Poetry comes to us at the best of times  
and the worst of times. It's poetry  
we turn to for valentines and epitaphs,  
not numbers, actuary tables,  
charts and graphs.

Poem previously published in the *University of Alberta Health Sciences Journal*,  
September 2007



Lorna Bennett, staff artist and a popular children's book illustrator, delights in engaging patients in the arts.

in the arts also improves listening skills, understanding and empathy. A number of our Artist on the Wards volunteers have been accepted into medical school and tell us how helpful it was to meet patients first as a musician rather than as a physician. Medical students at the U. of A. have the option of taking an elective that involves shadowing the staff artists, doing a literature review on arts and healing and an arts-based project. One student who took the elective reported being able to make a better diagnosis as a result of spending more time listening to the patient. Another commented on how the time she spent with me at the bedside of a badly burned young man taught her more about empathy than any textbook or classroom lecture ever could.

Research is only beginning on the economic benefits of the arts in healthcare. Cost savings such as fewer doctor visits, shorter length of hospital stay and reduced need for pain control, anti-depressants and blood pressure medication are some of the potential impacts. With the growing concern over the increasing cost of health care, I'm surprised more hospitals aren't incorporating arts programming.

The personal impact of this work on me has been profound. I have learned to be in the moment, to give my total attention to the patient in front of me. Much of the work we do is intuitive so if we aren't fully present, we miss important cues. Working with people who have no limbs, sometimes no ears or noses, often no hair, people who have spent months in hospital, and people who are dying has helped me put issues in my own life in perspective. I have been humbled by the ability of people to be positive and hopeful in extremely difficult circumstances. Continually having to find new ways to play with words and working with artists of other disciplines has stretched my creativity and forced me to risk making mistakes and looking foolish. This work has also changed my priorities. Knowing that what I do makes a difference to others far surpasses any previous ideas I had of personal success.

Shirley A. Serviss can be reached by email at [shirley.serviss@alberthealthservices.ca](mailto:shirley.serviss@alberthealthservices.ca) or [sserviss@telus.net](mailto:sserviss@telus.net)/ Read more about the Friends of University Hospitals on [www.friendsofuah.org](http://www.friendsofuah.org). Find out more about arts and healthcare programs by checking the Vancouver-based Arts Health Network of Canada ([artshealthnetwork.ca](http://artshealthnetwork.ca)) and the Global Alliance for Arts & Health (previously the Society for Arts in Healthcare) at [www.thesah.org](http://www.thesah.org).

A limited number of copies of Shirley's most recent poetry collection, *Hitchhiking in the Hospital* (Inkling Press, 2005) are still available from the author.

# ST. MARIENSTERN

## THE ART OF THE PILGRIM'S PATH

### Harold Rhenisch



**Such sudden moments are like writing a poem. I used to write a lot of those, before I became a pilgrim and learned to walk through the poems that are already in the world.**

I took the northern road to the orient, east from Mainz, where the old Roman bridge crosses the Rhine into the land of the Barbarians. I didn't arrive at it at the end of my road, on the Polish border. Time and again I just suddenly stood still and knew I was there. One of those times was a sunny June morning on the stretch of the Camino between the old Sorbian fisher towns of Kamenz and Bautzen, deep in East Germany.

Such sudden moments are like writing a poem. I used to write a lot of those, before I became a pilgrim and learned to walk through the poems that are already in the world. I had to learn not to make anything anymore. Now I follow stories to where I already am.

By walking, I don't mean plodding, step by step in weariness, with five pairs of hiking shoes replaced before I kneel at a saint's crypt, like St. John's in Spanish Santiago, or St. Matthew's in Celtic-Roman Trier. That's one way of becoming the road. One walks through one's weariness until one becomes the path.

My pilgrimage was more wayward. I lost the path of the world so completely that I started meeting angels (in Dresden), Artemis the Greek goddess of the hunt (in Fulda), the Devil (in Bautzen), and the Virgin Mary (in the neo-Nazi town of Pirna) on the way. Such was my luck – if it was luck.

I started with a goal – to find the historical story of the Camino. I found it, too: European civilization is the Camino. But that's only half the story. The real story is spiritual.

If you've been reading these stories of mine from the Camino over the last year, you'll remember how Saint Elisabeth and her miraculous roses set me on a drunkard's path through churches full of roses and castles high above the world, as if they were floating on the clouds. That surrender of personal power was difficult for a man with Canadian ideas about individual identity, yet complaint would be useless. There were just moments of such intense spiritual light that they burnt me away completely. In the end, the man who returned, written by the story of the Camino, was not the man who left to follow it. Instead of finding the story of the road, I found the pilgrim's path.

So it happened in St. Marienstern. True to my ignorance, I didn't even know that the cloister existed. Even my cousin Udo, who repairs automobiles in Dresden, some fifty kilometres to the Southwest, hadn't heard of it. He hadn't even driven past it on the 1000-year-old pilgrimage road, neither in the good old bad old times nor the newer ones after the collapse of the East German government in 1990, when the East suddenly became the West.

St. Marienstern, "The Star of Mary," snuck up on me like that – like a sphinx, lying on that old trail to Minsk, waiting to pounce on travellers.



Above left: St. Marienstern Cloister Church  
The tower is more typical of Austria. Saxon towers often look like military helmets.

Above right: The Bohemian Lion The Convent erected this lion fountain in 1720, during the Baltic Wars, as a bid to rekindle the protection of the Kingdom of Bohemia.



The abbey was founded in 1248, as a hospital. It was granted land and serfs in 1270, and came into the possession of the King of Saxony and Poland in 1697. Legend says it was founded where a monk had a vision of Mary in Heaven, with her head streaming with spiritual light.

You have to take stories like that with a bit of a smile. Every monastery in Germany has a legend like that. It's part of being on the road. A monk has a vision of Mary and, presto, there is St. Marienstern. A monk's donkey (Maul) finds a spring (Bronn), and there you have the Monastery of Maulbronn, northwest of Stuttgart. Obviously, even monks and nuns were letting the story lead them. When it stopped them in their tracks, they stayed.

In the case of St. Marienstern, the vision was transformed into a statue of Mary, set against a star with many spines of pure, gleaming gold. During the Cold War, it became a collective farm and a hospital for mentally-challenged girls. The nuns, who reclaimed it after the collapse of communism, insist that their church is a working church now, and not a tourist site. They don't want photographs.

That's political. During the Communist period, abbeys such as St. Marienstern survived by making themselves into World Peace Centres, socialist youth centres, and hospitals. These were translations of the Christian legacy that remained palatable to the Communists. The price paid for this accommodation was that they had to be open to all citizens. What's

more, no place within them could be secret. There were no confessionals, and no altars reserved for the priesthood. In other words, no place could be sacred.

The nuns of St. Marienstern are trying to reverse all that. They even have a man with a weed whacker to beat down the meadows that are all that remain of the old floral and herbal gardens. When I arrived, they were serving cabbage soup for lunch. Its greasy scent filled the whole courtyard. I don't know about you, but it sounds to me that within the State of Farmers and Workers they had learned a thing or two about humility.

I found the abbey because of a wheat field, blowing as golden in the sun as Mary's star. Blue cornflowers were scattered through the stalks like scraps of the sky. The wheat flowed out of its fields down to the fruit trees shading the old Napoleonic road. It seemed to hold the sun. Soon I was clambering up the bank, into wheat and cornflowers and branching chamomile, like stars. I waded out into that sea of light.

That's when the silence of the road struck me. I was surrounded by one unified space. I was part of it. It was like the feeling of slipping into Okanagan Lake on an early summer day when the water is exactly the temperature of the air, when both air and lake are like silk on your skin. You don't know where one stops and the other begins.

As I turned around there in the centre of the sun, my vision focussed. I saw an old tractor against a monastery wall, an old man, a load of manure,

Below left: Father, Son and Holy Ghost - St. Marienstern. The disrepair is typical of rural Eastern Germany

Below right: The St. Marienstern Madonna – Note the hand-hammered silver moon.





Soup's On! Collective farm-era equipment outside the back gate of St. Marienstern

in which hundreds of princely botanical gardens were roughly planted with simple hot house flowers from State greenhouses—at best. Most just went to grass. The man with the tractor was let go when the collective farm collapsed in 1990. He'd gone back to the 17th century. And the wheat fields? Well, that's the thing.

the dome of an abbey church rising above exotic trees, the buildings of a privatized collective farm, and a cast iron village fountain set with a few half-dead roses.

I had been travelling long enough that I could read this story. The roses were a Christian symbol, likely planted by a woman who found it safer to worship there than at the politicized abbey church. Their condition was a sign of the poverty of East Germany,

## THE STRANGERS

### *Weissenfels, via regia*

The people we meet on the road are not strangers: we share the crows and the big trucks and the silence they leave in their wake like eddies in a mountain river. There are no mountains, of course, only hills draped in rapeseed and topped with graveyards of an ancient people who dressed in flax and clasps of finely-hammered copper that they were buried in. We are all trout rising to take a fly woven of silk and deer hide and cock pheasant feathers. The people who pull their curtains aside in crumbling houses to watch us pass their peeling lintels are not strangers either: they look out as eagerly as we look in. The kindly monk, the waitress who treats us like a father, the young woman with black hair who is dressed like an airman in 1942, are more intimate than those we've left at home, with warm bed and the hard work of teaching children to read and count, who wait for us to return from this increasing distance, as if we could ever find our way back from our pilgrimage that stretches on and on to a never-nearing East. I don't know how it happened, or exactly when, but I have lost my country, or gained one. The strangers wear shorts and straw hats, and see what they have come to see — and pay the extra five Euros for audio that tells them what they are looking at. They returned to Canada three towns back. A single guard moves from room to room with me and sits in a corner, unobtrusively, he thinks, while I push buttons and listen to actors read old journals, who came for a week and stayed for decades (They were no longer strangers.), and listen to Bach's music that once gave form to winter here, with sleigh rides on the river, and feel the intricate footsteps of a dance

move through my body, minced with silk shoes and blushing faces (or at least old ones softened by blush), on hand-laid parquet. I must travel again tomorrow, and the next, and the next after that, with no guides but the people I meet — I no longer think by accident — who I do not recognize as guides until I've left them far behind and find that I've brought them along, that I am them — the barfly who stops me in front of the Nazi administration building and admits he doesn't know what it was built for, the woman who sets me on a journey through old shoes. It's me I've left standing on a street in the East, or sitting in a pub with a beer as black as coal, staring into the darkness at the others seated there — old lovers, most of them, touching fingers by candlelight, ever so briefly and ever so lightly, but holding them more strongly when the waitress comes to ask if everything is to their liking in this old warehouse for brewing green beer. It is. None of us are here by chance. There are no signposts, although once in awhile there is a stone milepost in the grass, marked with the seal of the emperor, which clocks now only roads no longer traveled, that are too slow and follow the curves of all the hills. If we've brought back wisdom, it does not bear repeating, except perhaps that once we've been on the road, it's the people we started as who are the strangers, and we must learn to greet them, and to live within their houses, and to come when their names are called, and to answer, simply, and with grace, to love their lovers with humility while in our new countries in the East we accept new strangers in our midsts and give them what they seek as an act of mercy, because everyone enters his or her own blindness with their eyes shut, and only then opens them, to the kindness of strangers.

**An abbey such as St. Marienstern would start with a botanical garden, full of herbs and medicinal plants – like a pharmacy. The places were hospitals, after all. By caring for bodies, they cared for souls.**

An abbey such as St. Marienstern would start with a botanical garden, full of herbs and medicinal plants –like a pharmacy. The places were hospitals, after all. By caring for bodies, they cared for souls.

Princely gardens, such as St. Marienstern became under King August the Strong of Saxony, full of exotic plants from the New World. They were combinations of early science, living libraries, playthings, poems and worldly Gardens of Eden. Because German kings and princes were unable to travel the world themselves, they brought the world to them. Science, and the world we know today, came from that.

The abbey, though, was also surrounded by fields. That story starts when monks wandered into the wilderness and let it claim them, far from civilization. By cultivating it, they re-created the order of God. They planted fruits, made wine, and grew grain for bread and beer –all in praise of God, all to repeat his act of creation. By feeding and clothing the bodies of the local people, who come from the land, the monks led them to civilization. Each furrow of a plow cultivated their souls. This is the civilization that collapsed with the automated gunfire of the First World War.

In St. Marienstern, where wheat is light, some of it remains. Despite appearances, it's not spiritual fire that surrounds Mary's head in St. Marienstern. It is grain. It is bread. Mary's body is the abbey. The light is the fields that drew me to her and the nuns who made me put my camera away. I was the camera. These words are the image.

This story of grain is thousands of years old. I'd like to think it survived here within the Church, just as Christianity survived communism by embracing its secular passions, and is surviving the period after it by making cabbage soup and chopping at weeds.

Harold Rhenisch has been writing poems and histories of the Okanagan for over thirty-five years. His 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.okanaganokanogan.com](http://www.okanaganokanogan.com)

# THE CREATIVE BY NATURE, ART BOOST PROGRAM



**Lisa Lipsett, Ed.D.**

## AN EIGHT-DAY INTRODUCTION TO DRAWING AND PAINTING NATURALLY

Some say the creative life is in ideas, some say it is in doing... It is the love of something, having so much love for something - whether a person, a word, an image, an idea, the land, or humanity - that all that can be done with the overflow is to create. It is not a matter of wanting to, not a singular act of will; one solely must.

– Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With Wolves*

**This eight-day creative practice is designed to give you a simple, powerful and quick introduction to drawing and painting naturally.**

This eight-day creative practice is designed to give you a simple, powerful and quick introduction to drawing and painting naturally. From almost 20 years of teaching and personal creative exploration, I've learned that everyone is naturally creative and can experience the emotional, physical and spiritual benefits that accrue from strengthening their creative muscles through regular practice. Let's get started!

During this eight-day practice, you will learn fresh drawing and painting skills while communing with nature. You will animate your natural ability to create as you open to a plant or animal you love and work holistically using your senses and both hands to create. You'll experience the joy of making art with nature. Once you master the drawing and painting in nature connection, you will be well-equipped to explore your inner landscape. Soon, you'll fully appreciate art-making as a powerful and transformative way to better know both self and the world.

Before you begin Day One, wander a bit in your immediate surroundings and open to something you love. What draws you in? Write down a few words about what you will be working with and what you love about it. Then each session, return to this object or being for further exploration. If the spark is still there, continue with it. If something else draws you in, then create with that.

### MY LOVE

As a child, I held a strong fascination with Cecropia silk moths and their stages of metamorphosis. I'd forgotten this until I began to paint. Like beings peeking out from the darkness, these same creatures spontaneously ap-



Top: Cecropia Caterpillar

Above: Materials

peared in my paintings, spurring me to remember a pivotal childhood memory of my first encounter (Lipsett 2009). Now these gorgeous creatures are both a creative inspiration and a personal touchstone. Every spring, I hatch cocoons and this year two pairs of moths mated producing eggs and soon after, caterpillars. Right now, there are five caterpillars chomping on my apple tree. I haven't seen a Cecropia caterpillar since I was eight years old, so this is very exciting. Last week I was able to draw and paint with the biggest one, enjoying its gorgeous vibrant colours, amazing sticky feet and incredible knobby body. This is what I worked with for my own mini boost.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Like a calming meditation or a series of yoga poses that ease your body back into alignment, these eight activities are meant to be repeated over and over again. Do one session at least weekly. Allow yourself at least 30 minutes to dive into each session to get full benefit. Also, be sure to follow the steps of the 'Create Cycle' as you draw and paint. There is power in a repeatable ritual that eventually deepens into an ingrained habit of working.

## THE STEPS OF THE 'CREATE CYCLE'

(Sage-ing 8, Summer 2013) are:

1. *Get quiet* - Take time to get grounded through breath as you feel your body on the earth.
2. *Explore and open to attraction* - Write down a few words about what draws you in. What will you commune with today?
3. *Go slow and create* - Slowly track a plant or animal with your senses as you draw and paint.
4. *Reflect and finish these sentences:*
  - I noticed...
  - I wonder...
  - Ask the plant, animal or image if it has anything to share.
  - Next session I will follow up on...
5. *Express gratitude* - Make an offering to express your appreciation

## MATERIALS NEEDED

A paint kit, two permanent fine tip pens, watercolour paper, and a water container. Visit [www.creativebynature.org](http://www.creativebynature.org) and watch the video to learn how to fold a creative nature book.



Contour Drawing

## DAY ONE - DRAW TEXTURE

With your eyes closed, explore the surfaces and contours of your chosen plant or animal with one hand while you track the experience by drawing with your other hand. Keep both hands moving in synchrony like a seismograph tracks an earthquake - one hand tracks texture while the other records on the page. Now switch hands. Track texture with the other hand as you draw.

## DAY TWO - PAINT TEXTURE

Move your paint kit and water close to your left hand. Move your right hand fingertips very slowly as you once again explore the textures of this being. Keeping your eyes closed, dip your left hand fingers in the water then run them across the paint kit. Keep your hands in

synchrony: your right hand exploring texture, your left hand blindly choosing colours and expressing sensation on the page. Switch hands and carry on with a second painting following the same process.

## DAY THREE - DRAW SOUND

With your eyes closed, listen carefully to the sounds in the vicinity of the texture you worked with previously. Give each hand a turn tracking one sound. Take your time. Draw the rhythm, tones and nuances of what you hear. Now draw the same sound using both hands together by using two pens simultaneously.

## DAY FOUR - PAINT SOUND

Adjust your paint kit so it is close to your hands. With your eyes closed, listen carefully to the surrounding sounds. While putting your full attention to one attractive sound, give each hand a turn tracking the sound by painting the rhythm, tones and nuances of what you hear. Simply set the intention to stay in tune with the sound and trust your hands. Now paint the same sound using both hands together. Choose the paint colors with both hands and apply them simultaneously.

## DAY FIVE - DRAW A SMALL PATTERN

Open to a small pattern on the ground, on a plant, an animal or a tree. Limit your field of view to two inches or so. Slowly track the intricacy of the pattern with your eyes while one hand traces what you see in pen. You don't need to manage, boss or even look at your drawing hand. It is part of you, part of the same body, and a direct extension of your eyes. Go slowly allowing this hand to move in synchrony with your eyes. Switch hands to draw with your other hand. For your last image, continue to track the pattern with your eyes while you draw with both hands simultaneously.



Hand Painting

## DAY SIX - PAINT A SECOND SMALL PATTERN

Open to another small pattern. Limit your field of view to two inches or so. Slowly track the intricacy of this pattern with your eyes while one hand paints what you see. Again, you don't need to manage, boss or even look at your painting hand. Go slowly allowing this hand to move in synchrony with your eyes. Switch hands to paint with your other hand. For your last image, continue to track the pattern with your eyes while you paint with both hands simultaneously.

## DAY SEVEN - DRAW AND PAINT A SMELL, TASTE, OR USE YOUR 6th SENSE

Today, work with a new sense. Maybe a smell draws you in; maybe you are attracted to working with your 6th sense, an intuitive connection. Give both hands a chance to create in equal measure. Also, keep your eyes closed at least some of the time. Be an archaeologist of your own experience as you note what helps you stay in the flow and what jars you back out again. Take time to reflect on not only this session but your experience thus far. Is there a repeatable *recipe* that helps you stay connected while you draw and paint?

## DAY EIGHT - FREEPLAY: STEP INTO YOUR OWN PRACTICE

Today you have free rein to draw and paint whatever attracts you. Maybe the undulating motion of an ant, a new texture, the shadow play of a leaf on the ground, the sound or swirl of water going down the drain draws you in. Open to one exciting focus for this session, then draw and paint while you move between open and closed eyes, using left, right and both hands. Reflect on your experience.

Join the Creative by Nature, *22-day Fall Art Boost* program starting October 1, 2013, to deepen your drawing and painting skills, and to explore your inner landscape. Create in the privacy of your home yet be in the company of an online community of co-travellers. Learn more at [www.creativebynature.org](http://www.creativebynature.org)

In upcoming issues of the *Sage-ing* Journal, I will share fresh inspiration to deepen your practice. Until then connect and create!

Learn more about Lisa Lipsett's work at [www.LisaLipsett.com](http://www.LisaLipsett.com)

Creative by Nature Center – an on-line network with classes and event information:  
[www.creativebynature.org](http://www.creativebynature.org)

Art – [www.Lisalipsettimages.com](http://www.Lisalipsettimages.com)

Blog – The Drive to Create: [www.thedrivetocreate.com](http://www.thedrivetocreate.com)

# A YUKON TALE

## Daphne Mennell



I think it was when I was in my early 50's that I felt the intoxicating pull to act my age. It came accompanied by a troupe of dressed up thoughts, so seductive in appealing apparel, skillfully waltzing their way around the contours of my mind. They sounded somewhat like this: "Don't you really just want to relax? Take it easy, semi-retire. Be satisfied with the wonderful diverse life you've already had. You know, if you haven't made it by now, you're not going to. People are really interested in young, new talent, not an old bird like you. Maybe you need to limit yourself to a couple of mediums. There's no time to really become good at something new. You've made some headway at what you're doing, so why not stick to the tried and true. Sincerely, you are going to re-invent yourself at your age? Really?"

I'm not sure what sobered me up. Perhaps it is typical of Yukoners to resist the urge to grow old. Perhaps it's because artists can never really retire, or perhaps it was my own rebellious nature. In any case, I decided to set myself on a course of determined defiance.

I am a person who loves to entertain new ideas, much to my husband's chagrin. In order to entertain ideas beyond one's experience, all one has to do is find someone whose experience it is. Combining arts with the

trades is a perfect example of this. The combination can give wings to an artist's imagination. All I needed was the right timing, the right tradesman and a sponsor.

In the Yukon, when a government building is erected, one percent of the budget goes to commissioning public art. Two such competitions came open within a few months of each other. The first was for the tiny village of Carcross, and the other was for the capital of the Yukon, Whitehorse. I live in-between the two, closer to Carcross.

I have always had a desire to try big, metal sculptures. When the competitions came open, I approached my neighbour and friend Roger Poole who is a journeyman welder with more than 35 years' experience. I asked him if he would be open to helping me

Daphne Mennell and Roger Poole walking down from installing the new Carcross sign and Caribou





with these two sculptures I was proposing. He unwittingly agreed. He knew nothing of art. I knew nothing of welding. We were the perfect team!

My proposals won through and we began our adventure on constructing a caribou from scrap metal. I had pre-arranged to use the White Pass and Yukon Railroad slag pile in Carcross. WP and YR have had a significant presence in the history of Carcross so I wanted to symbolically represent this in the making of the caribou. Carcross is an abbreviated name originating from the town's former name Caribou Crossing. There, the caribou would cross the narrows between Bennett Lake and Nares Lake, thus the caribou sculpture to represent the town.

I could go into all the glitches, stumbles and advances, but really that is almost the description of art in a nutshell. Suffice it to say... we worked it out. Now, a few years later, hundreds of tourists are snapping their pictures beside it. Summer is a busy time in Carcross.

During the time we worked on the caribou the second commission was accepted, The Whitehorse Horse. Up to this point there was no prominent sculpture for the symbol of the capital of the Yukon. The city got its name, during the gold rush, from the tumultuous rapids that reared like white horses galloping towards the flats where the town sprung up. I took the idea a step further by suggesting that since we all have a part in the making of our community, perhaps the horse should be made from donations of all Yukoners. In this way, the sculpture would incorporate the community's personal histories in the making of The Whitehorse Horse. I arranged for volunteers, drop off places in every community (not all that many up here) and advertised the fact on radio and in newspapers that went around the Yukon.

At first, it didn't look very hopeful, but the trickle began with a set of horseshoes from Watson Lake, the Gateway to the Yukon, and proceeded slowly from there. By the time we started on the horse almost one year later we had enough donations (miraculously in my view) to do the whole sculpture. I remember Roger's words when he surveyed the mish-mash of ferrous metal laid out over his yard where we were working. "We can do this." Oh, I can't describe the blessing of those words and the load it lifted off of me. Indeed the whole project was a pleasure.

There is much I could say about the creation of the horse which spanned two and a half years from the soliciting of donations to the final installation. Much was a journey of faith for me. Perhaps, because this was all new territory I was launching out on, spiritually I really needed extra help, confidence and courage. Before I went to work each day I would take a few



Top: Roger surveys the mishmash of metal donations before we get started.

Above: The sketch that Daphne worked from for preliminary proportions of the horse.



The Whitehorse Horse overlooks  
Whitehorse Photo by Douglas Hnatiuk

moments to invite God's spirit to be with us as we worked, protecting and inspiring, guiding and showing me what to do. I remember a few mornings when things weren't going so smoothly and I realized I had forgotten to pray. I would pause and ask for help quietly within myself, then keep my inner ear cocked for that small inspiring voice. The day always changed for the better.

In the process, new skills surfaced and the melding of the two disciplines created something way beyond what we could have done as individuals. When we installed the "horse", Yukoners immediately adopted it as their own. When the public takes ownership of its public art, for me, this is the greatest accolade I can receive.

The lessons I learned that I would like to leave with you now would be as follows:

Try to be open to learn new things; apply courage, perseverance and the

other virtues that our years have taught us; and resist the pull to say to yourself that your creative time is up. When all is said and done, not everything has been said or done.

RAISING THE HORSE <http://youtu.be/h5ptnGzOyO0>

Daphne Mennell has been a Yukon artist for close to 40 years. Her inspiration comes from the many diverse and beautiful landscapes that make up the Yukon and Alaska. She has conveyed this love of nature and the wilderness in a number of mediums; various painting mediums as well as metal, silk and stone.

Daphne enjoys painting plein air and sketching outdoors. She uses these sketches to work on her compositions in a larger format in her studio. By painting or drawing from nature directly she finds she connects more deeply with the subject.

She has become a well-known Yukon artist for her last two large metal sculptures that were public art commissions for Carcross and Whitehorse. Her work is represented in the Government of Yukon Art Collection, as well as, other public and many private collections. You are most welcome to visit her studio if you are in the area.  
[www.daphnemennellyukonart.com/](http://www.daphnemennellyukonart.com/)

# THE CHRIST OF COLMAR

## Antoinette VouÛte Roeder



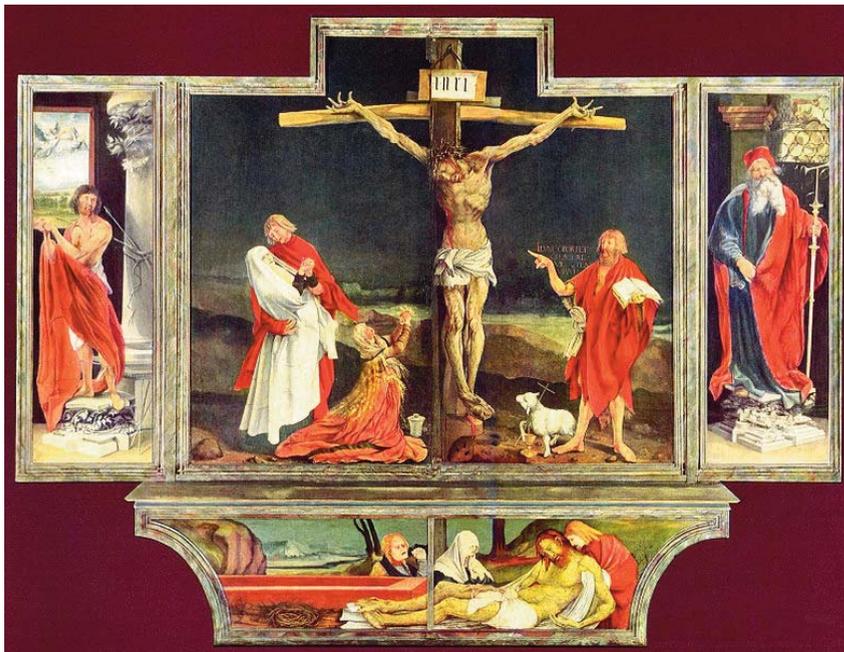
**The fact that my sister and I went on this holiday was not a foregone conclusion. My parents often vacationed by themselves.**

In the summer of 1950 I was six years old. WWII had been over for five years and our emigration from The Netherlands to America was still three years away. In that relatively peaceful time my parents decided to take a family holiday with a trailer, something we'd never done before. My little sister, four years old, and I were included. This was a source of elation for us children. The fact that my sister and I went on this holiday was not a foregone conclusion. My parents often vacationed by themselves. We were accustomed to staying home with a caregiver or a neighbour.

The trailer became a big adventure, for many reasons, one of them being that my father had no experience whatsoever pulling a trailer. And also because in 1950, formal trailer parks were still in short supply. My dad would park at the side of a rural road and on one occasion got us stuck in the mud in a farmer's field. The farmer was very kind (and that on a Sunday morning) and got on his tractor to help pull us out. There were many anxious moments when my father would have to back the trailer out of a narrow rutted dirt trail with overhanging trees, times when the car overheated on mountain passes, times when it rained so much and got so cold that we were all miserable.

The joys and trials of camping were new to us. No outdoor toilets, we bathed in rivers, we pumped fresh well water and picked blackberries. But the things I remember best about traveling through France on that trip were related to the Catholicism practiced by most rural French at that time. We kids had grown up with my mother's English prayers (she was British and remained a devoted member of the Church of England, i.e. the Anglican Church). We had enjoyed being read to from a children's bible and I even remember a Christmas service in the Anglican Church in Amsterdam. It was the midnight service with lots of candles. The celebrations all being in English made it even more magical for me, a Dutch-speaking child. I had sensed early on that something special happened in church, that Jesus was someone to revere and love. But I was not prepared for the revelation I received on this trip through France.

I was a child with a vivid imagination and a sensitive nature. I made it a practice of showing my respect for the dead by holding my breath whenever we passed a cemetery. And there were many cemeteries in post-war France. We also encountered the loveliest little chapel-like shrines all along the way, reminders of the faith, in the form of statuettes and figurines. They were often of Mary the Virgin, attached to the trunks of trees. Occasionally there would be a life-size shrine with Mary and Jesus among flowers or a rock garden.



Matthias Grünewald painted the altar paintings between the years 1510 - 1515.

So it was that we entered the small town of Colmar where there was a museum my parents wanted to visit. The museum housed a famous triptych of altar paintings by Matthias Grunewald. The center painting was of the crucified Christ. I had never seen a depiction of the crucifixion before and I did not know that particular story. I did not understand what was going on in the painting until my mother tried to explain it to me. How does one explain such a horrible death so that it makes sense to a six-year old? I stood in front of that painting and was so overcome by the horror of it that I burst out crying. My mother

had no alternative but to hurry me out of the museum. To this day I recall the rush of light as I emerged from the dark building into the reality of a sunny French day.

I think my parents were taken by surprise at my emotional outburst. My sister, two and a half years younger, showed no response at all. I was later comforted with the purchase of a little suitcase for my doll clothes, but the experience itself never left me. This depiction of the suffering Jesus would spell the beginning of my own faith journey which eventually brought me to enter the Pacific Jubilee Program in Spiritual Direction. That course of studies prepared me for what I have been doing for the last twenty-two years: accompanying folks in their own quest for the Sacred, wherever It is to be found.

Memory is a fickle thing. It plays tricks on us. When I inherited my family's photograph albums upon my father's death, I spent time paging through the sepia-coloured snapshots. Among the albums was a manila envelope, bulging with something that turned out to be my father's travelogue of that holiday. It was type-written (thank goodness, because I would never have been able to make out his doctor's scrawl) and all in Dutch. When I sat down to read it, I was delighted to find an exact account of this museum visit, just as I remembered it.

Antoinette has a Master of Music degree and is a published poet and writer. She has been a spiritual guide for more than twenty years and is passionate about the sacred in the cosmos, poetry, music, people, and the earth. Her two books of poetry, *Weaving the Wind*, and *Still Breathing*, are available at [www.amazon.ca/](http://www.amazon.ca/) She can be reached at [a.roeder@telus.net/](mailto:a.roeder@telus.net/)

# THE ART IN DREAMING

## Angelika Reitze

“The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purpose within him.”

– Carl Gustav Jung

I am undertaking the adventure – and it will be one – to write in English as my second language, about the importance of Dreams in Jungian Psychology. I need your patient willingness to follow me. Since the full scope of the subject is beyond the frame of this article, I intend to focus on just a few topics.

Dreams as the language of the soul

Dreams as a source of creativity

Dreams as a way of healing body and soul



Fishing In the unconscious

As Joseph Campbell said: “Dreams are private myths - myths are public dreams...”.

Dreams and mythology are the homeland of the muses, the inspirers of all art forms. They provide that secret opening through which the energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Carl Jung stated that if we bear in mind that the unconscious contains everything that is lacking to consciousness, that the unconscious therefore has a compensatory tendency, then we can begin to draw conclusions.

Our soul dreams, or our psyche, are the language of our souls, or as some say,

God’s forgotten language because these thoughts God placed inside us have been forgotten by our conscious mind. I suggest, after reading this article, this might be the right moment to set up your own faith-book-account where you record your dreams and start some soul-twitter!

Dreams are one of the most creative products of our unconscious because they are direct expressions of the unconscious and have a personal purity. Dreams are not, as Freud suggested, just veiled desires. Rather, as Joseph Campbell explained, imagination, the source of dreams, is grounded in the energy of the organs of the body. Still today, to neuroscientists, it is unclear what part of the brain produces the images that form our dreams.

One can interpret a dream by association, figuring out what it is talking about in your own life, or in your relationship to your own problems. When doing association, it is important to respect the dream by sticking to the image that you saw while sleeping because the image is more important than words – even healing words. Only in the dream image can the unconscious

**Still today, to neuroscientists, it is unclear what part of the brain produces the images that form our dreams.**

**The creative fire in us wants to be expressed, and if we do not give form to the formless, it might even lead to depression and addictions or illnesses.**

instinctive energy, libido, be preserved and used for healing purposes. On the other hand, I have to admit that there are many ways and forms to express that unconscious energy. Those who are interested in their dreams will express those images in their best ways and possibilities – be it painting, writing, sculpturing, music, or dancing. The creative fire in us wants to be expressed, and if we do not give form to the formless, it might even lead to depression and addictions or illnesses.

A saying in the Thomas Gospels, a collection of early Christian wisdom, goes like this: “If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.” I would like to illustrate those words with a dream of mine which actually encouraged me to write this article. In my dream, I was on a search for a flame or light and learned that I needed to look for natural gas close to my house. My dream showed that the gas could be found in the earth around my house and that I could light that natural gas. Then I saw a beautiful blue flame close to me. As I thought about this image from a Jungian framework, I came to the conclusion that the flame might be a symbol of some kind of enlightenment, and since in my dream I found it close to my house, it meant to me that I had to *use* the natural gas – be it for cooking or to shed a light on something. If the gas had just leaked out, it could have destroyed the house.

The way we express our dreams seems to be connected with what Jung describes as *typology*. In identifying an individual’s typology, Jung considers our attitudes of being extraverted or introverted human beings, combined with our four functions: sensation, feeling, thinking and intuition. Usually one of these four functions is the dominant or superior function, and the least developed one is the inferior, less used, function. It is one’s typology that influences our creative expression.

The great Canadian poet and singer Leonard Cohen puts ideas into words, cloths the words with music and finally uses his paintings on his book covers and CDs. Leonard Cohen is an artist able to work with and through more than one function available to him, a talent that has made him one of the most important and influential writers/songwriters of our time. His deep understanding of humanity and depth psychology is visible in his words and music when he writes,

“...from bitter searching of the heart,  
we raise to play a greater part...”

Or,  
“ ...ring the bell  
that still can ring  
forget your perfect offering  
there is a crack, a crack in everything  
that’s how the LIGHT gets in...”

As most of us might know, C.G. Jung was a Swiss psychologist who broke away from Freud and the Psychoanalytic Society to start a more humanistic and imaginative approach to psychology. The Jungian Analytical School saw, and still sees, dreams as part of a natural process of healing and wholeness, a process that leads us towards our own individuation and unique being. Jung coined this as the “Individuation Process”.

Eric Neumann, an Israeli analytical psychologist, who Jung regarded as one of his most gifted students, devoted much of his later writing to the theme of creativity. Neumann found his examples not only in the work of writers and artists such as William Blake, Goethe, Rilke, Kafka, Klee, Chagall, Picasso and Trakl, but as well in that of physicists, biologists, psychiatrists, and philosophers. Neumann stated: “Whether or not humanity can be restored to health from its present situation as a self-endangered species depends on whether we can experience ourselves as truly creative, in touch with our own being and the world’s being.”

I would like to come back to dreams. Since science does not really know why we dream, the theories on dreams range from the idea that they are a meaningless left-over, to the hypothesis that dreaming serves a critical role in the cyclical structure and maintenance of physical and psychological well-being. These are some of the more popular science theories on dreaming:

- to restore our body and mind
- to help with learning and memory.
- to keep the brain at the right level of awareness/rest during sleep
- to allow the mind to handle disturbances in the night without waking up
- to keep our sense of self and wholeness through sleep
- to allow ourselves some time to explore new and unusual areas of ourselves
- to resolve conflicts that occur during the day
- to contextualize emotions from waking
- to practice dealing with threats

Perhaps, now, it is for the reader to ask what to do, how to proceed. Well, I learned a good English expression in the last months: *one practical step at a time*. All you have to do is to remember your dream in the first place and *write it down*. Then, take a little fraction of your dream, one or two images or ideas and associate with them, review them in your conscious mind. Write down what comes to your mind, and again what comes to your mind, and again. Soon the next dream will come along and will go further. From my own inner experience, the *dream maker* honours every honest attempt for being online with your soul.

“Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.” – C.G. Jung

Coming back to the creative expression of dream material, a fellow Jungian friend of mine lives in Switzerland, and she paints out of that inner source. She

**“Whether or not humanity can be restored to health from its present situation as a self-endangered species depends on whether we can experience ourselves as truly creative, in touch with our own being and the world’s being.”**



allowed me to use one of her picture, *The Birch*, [www.bribli.ch/kontakt.html](http://www.bribli.ch/kontakt.html) as a symbol for individuation.

On closer examination, one can see that the birch bark is open; the inner layers are visible; the juice (of life?) is dripping. The use of the birch and its juice has spiritual and medical importance in several religions, both modern and historical. In some cultures the birch symbolises growth, renewal, stability, initiation and adaptability. The birch is highly adaptive and able to sustain harsh conditions with casual indifference. In her way, my friend expresses, and gives form to an inner

situation – what it means to be vulnerable, laid open to pain and to heal again.

“When an inner situation is not made conscious, it appears outside of you as fate...” – C. G. Jung

Perhaps, as my friend is discovering, it is better to bring the unconscious into consciousness through creative exploration.

I am grateful to the *Sage-Ing* journal for allowing me to be passionate about the topic of my life – dreams.



Top: Birch Tree

Above: Close-up

In her business life in Germany, Angelika Reitze worked for advertising agencies and studied the structure of organizations. Life took a sharp turn when she found out that her inner life seemed to be more important in structure than that of the outer business world. From the *Psychology of Organization* she found her way to the Analytical Psychology of C.G. Jung.

Angelika holds German and Canadian professional counsellor certificates and continues her studies in further education programs in the Fundamentals of Analytical Psychology at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland.

Angelika's main interest is dream analysis. She works in private practice in her town of choice, Vernon, British Columbia. She has been loving and living with her husband in the beautiful Okanagan Valley since 1999.

She collects dreams and can be contacted by e-mail at [Angelika.Reitze@gmail.com](mailto:Angelika.Reitze@gmail.com) or [Creative.Introversion@gmail.com](mailto:Creative.Introversion@gmail.com)

# WORDS FROM THE HEART - POETRY

## A BODY IN PROGRESS

Shirley A. Serviss

Something can be done about my spider veins, a pamphlet in the dermatologist's office claims. I can even have tattoos removed should I happen to have the name of an old lover or a snake inked on my left breast. Body sculpture is literally a dream come true, promises the literature. The cosmetic results continue to improve for a year or two.

I'm here only to have a suspicious looking mole examined, not for a complete makeover, but can never resist the printed word. I can have my skin resurfaced with laser light, I read on. Replacement therapy can be done during a lunch hour to eliminate marionette lines and depressions in my cheeks. I knew I was depressed, but I didn't know it showed in my cheeks.

Apparently I can keep a youthful appearance all my life, though why I would want to is not explained. I want my body to reflect the woman I'm becoming, not someone I've never been. I want the people I meet to be able to read between the lines.

**"I can't think of a case where poems changed the world, but what they do is they change people's understanding of what's going on in the world."  
– Seamus Heaney**

## ALBUM

Antoinette Voûte Roeder

My neck aches from craning,  
from peering at photographs,  
yellow and faded and indistinct.

My mother at sixteen,  
at twenty-three: tall and slender,  
a crown of waves standing out from her head,  
slim legs clad in stockings, with buckled shoes,  
wearing gowns she fashioned herself.  
A year her senior, my father's

bold eyes and upturned chin  
face the camera with confidence:

**“The aim of poetry and the poet is finally to be of service, to ply the effort of the individual into the larger work of the community as a whole.”**  
**– Seamus Heaney**

one hand thrust in his jacket pocket,  
 the other holding a cigarette;  
 dapper in tweeds, in his plus-fours,  
 his hair already beginning to thin.

My grandfather sports a walrus moustache.  
 In several pictures he has his arm  
 around a lady, I know not who.  
 Is it my grandmama? Someone has failed  
 to fill in the labels and she remains  
 a mystery.

My granny on my mother’s side  
 appears many times, in gardens, at home:  
 holding my brother as a baby,  
 resting her hand on my father’s arm,  
 sitting gracefully, long legs crossed,  
 on the railing by her front door.  
 She died while I was just an infant,  
 her husband years before that.

My eyes are relentless in their quest  
 as if they could force the images  
 to give up their secrets and wrest from them  
 the family I yearned for over the years.  
 Even now the ache of its absence  
 holds me captive more than it should.

## **DIRT**

Lesley-Anne Evans

To break her crust  
 bare fingered,  
 the warming earth,  
 this loaf of bread,  
 one must tear through  
 thumbs pressed in  
 to encounter root, rock, worm,  
 the soft centre of things,  
 one dark, one light  
 hidden, then exposed  
 by work of hands.

One must prepare for  
 dark circles under nails,  
 the definition of finger creases,  
 crumb confetti on the lap  
 and, with hands raised to open face,  
 the smell of history; this land  
 broken for you.



# ON ART ... FROM MY UNDERSTANDING OF CARL GUSTAV JUNG



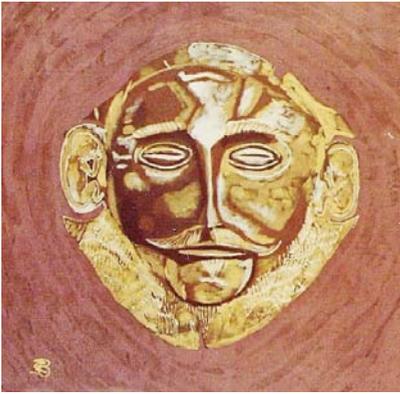
## Brigitte Schmidt-Bliesener

Nobody can adequately define art and I don't think anybody should define it for others. At the root, art is very subjective. I am not a professional, but I remember that I have liked to paint since I was a very young child. Maybe my interest has to do with feeling a bit lonely sometimes for whatever reason. Maybe I am just enchanted by colours and have inherited a certain talent to put things on silk, paper or canvas.

When I was a young housewife, I didn't have much time to paint, but I made sketches from landscapes and collected them in a box. Later, when I went back to this box, I wondered why I did not find my paintings so inspiring any more. At the same time, I was reading books from C.G. Jung. I was deeply impressed when I learned that often you paint an inner situation which you have unconsciously projected into something you see in the outside world. This could explain why one gets a strong resonance with something one sees, and the desire to paint it. Suddenly, it clicked why certain sketches had lost their importance for me and others had not. I think I lost interest in the ones that showed images reflecting inner problems I had solved, while the others resonated with problems that were still acute. My desire to try to find an answer was my incentive to paint a scene where I still felt resonance.

To put things on canvas, for me, means to feel a strong resonance with the motivation for choosing a particular subject. Regardless of whether it is pretty or not, the subject motivates a kind of deep attraction or love. There will be hard work ahead to carry over the fascination into the picture, but also happy moments. Sometimes, I feel like I have scooped my possibilities right into the paint. Nobody can help you, or decide for you how to paint, or what you want to say. In authentic honest painting, you are totally responsible for yourself! As I paint, I try to keep my brain from analyzing. Only when the picture is finished do I allow myself to find out the revelation behind it.

The reason I did not go to an art school was the fear of being pinned down to a system. Art for me is a field of freedom: no rules, no chiefs, and no exams. You are completely on your own. Maybe you are lacking a certain technique, but you will solve that with your own inventions. Maybe nobody likes your pictures. This can be very hard on the ego, but totally understandable when



Batik on silk from Masque of Agamemnon -  
New Land

you realise that others might have another resonance, or we can say another constellation, different psychic complex, inside themselves that is seeking different answers. Some artists are lucky and their works are expressing something that is in resonance with others who are experiencing the same problem. Then you will be collectively successful.

After finishing a picture, I begin to look carefully at it, and to reflect on it. Generally, I get answers as to what is going on within me. I have read in books that art makes the invisible, visible, and for me that is true. Making art allows you to turn the unconscious into consciousness. I have also read that the artist always paints himself or herself; one's insides. For me, this is also true. I notice that once I have gotten the insight I need, I often lose interest in that particular subject. My resonance is over because that particular riddle is solved. Fortunately, soon there will be another fascinating motivation that will appear and the same procedure as last time starts again. Fascination is the first step towards getting more consciousness.

You might ask what happens when you do not get the insight you seek from a painting? In my case, I start another picture of the same subject from a different angle. This does not mean that I am hunting for insights; I still have to feel the resonance with the subject and I feel urged to go on and explore this new angle. It is a good feeling, not a must.

In the first place, my motivation for painting is fascination, which is unconscious, but in the second place it is to look into myself, which is a conscious process. After I have painted quite a few pictures, I lack room to store them, and also I am curious about how others like them. This is when I make an exhibition. If somebody is fascinated and wants to buy one of my paintings, I can be sure, that he / she senses a secret in my painting and perhaps is facing something that for them is yet unconscious. Art is an offer for perception.

From a creek in southern Switzerland -  
"Aging"





Female Buddha - oil painting of Buddha

I was fascinated by the gold mask of Agamemnon in the museum in Athens. I did not know why and it kept haunting me. I searched history books to find out more about Agamemnon. All I could read was that Agamemnon was gaining new land. I was still puzzled, because the mask did not seem to have to do with me, but then all of a sudden it clicked, and I realized that 'inner land' was perhaps what it meant for me. That made sense! In this case, I made the batik after I had understood what it meant to me. It was hard to get it over! Maybe one needs a little knowledge of symbols to get the meaning of some sources of fascination, or perhaps the ability to turn material things into abstract meanings such as happens in dreams. A little child can mean 'your new possibility', or a tree can mean 'you're developing life', or a mountain can represent 'a challenge'.

My personal associations to this picture, and in particular the central shape, are an Easter egg (something new and good), or the philosopher's stone (achieving the union of opposites). I feel this image as a face: me, worked on by water which is the unconscious. There is decay, the natural process before something new is created. I sense the opposites of rocks and water (water gets strong and rocks weaken) could also be the male and female sides. In short, I am facing age and decay and at the same time I gain wisdom and I make a new creation.

Living with pictures (or other kinds of art) means to me to feel at home, to be in resonance with what surrounds me, and this makes me happy. Art is the visible picture of our inner evolution.

Brigitte Schmidt-Bliesener (Britti) was born in Germany in 1936. She went on to study food chemistry in Germany and Switzerland. Later, she married and raised two children in Switzerland. After a divorce, she studied at the C.G. Jung Institute in Kusnacht, Switzerland. While working in her profession she began oil painting in her spare time and experimented with batik and clay. Brigitte continues to live in Switzerland, but exhibitions have given many opportunities to share her work also in other countries. Several times she was a guest of the International Artists Atelier in Seguret, France, and most recently participated in the first International Artists Workshop in Latvia.

Visit Bridgette's website at [www.bribli.ch](http://www.bribli.ch)

# WHY SYLVIA COULDN'T DRAW THE CLOWN

## WHEN SHE COULD PAINT THE CHERRY BLOSSOM - PART 2

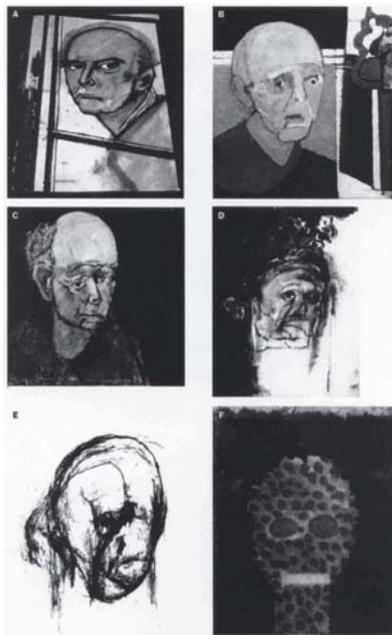
**Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka, PhD**



In the first part of this series, see Part 1 in the Summer 2013 issue, [www.sage-ing.ca](http://www.sage-ing.ca), I described Sylvia's life before the onset of Alzheimer's disease. In this second part, I explain my perspective on why Sylvia could not draw the clown while she could paint the cherry blossom. When I made this discovery, I decided to compare Sylvia's artwork to art of other artists with dementia. They had been tested in depth by renowned dementia researchers, like Dr. Bruce Miller, in the University of San Francisco in California. It was only by sheer fluke that I saw amazingly similar artworks by another artist with dementia in Dr. Miller's office when I visited him in California. The eerie resemblance with Sylvia's artwork begged an explanation that was more than just a coincidence.

To begin, I introduce the well-known artist, Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) who exhibited symptoms of dementia in his later life. de Kooning was an artist who contributed significantly to the Abstract Expressionism movement in the United States. Born in Rotterdam, Holland, he had formal training in fine and applied art, before he emigrated to America in 1926. de Kooning began to show signs of probable Alzheimer's in the 1980s, which brought on a *major change in his art*. About one to two years after the diagnosis, with help from his wife and friends who encouraged him to stop drinking alcohol, he regained his energy to paint. "It was an exuberant, carefree art, full of life ... His technique had evolved, perhaps improved," some critics suggest.

In his article *de Kooning's Late Colours and Forms: Dementia, Creativity, and the Healing Power of Art* (1996), Espinel Carlos Hugo wrote that de Kooning produced 254 paintings between 1981 and 1986. Espinel reported that, even at times when de Kooning was confusing his wife with his sister, he still was "able to perceive, recall images, and decide each detail, and, in each brush stroke, select the correct color, swirl, thickness, touch, and shadow ...". Espinel was of the opinion that de Kooning recovered from his bout with Alzheimer's and therefore was able to produce art in his later life. He suggested that perhaps de Kooning's years of training in the arts withstood the insult of the disease. However, at that time, Espinel was not aware of dementia research done by Dr. Bruce Miller from the University of California at San Francisco who suggested that frontotemporal dementia may facilitate 'artistic skills'.



Top: Willem de Kooning - Legend and Fact

Above left: Willem de Kooning - The Marshes, 1970

Above right: Self-portrait series - painted over a period of six years by Willem Unter Mohlen, a patient with dementia.

While some critics did not see artistic value in de Kooning's late artwork, others like Robert Storr, curator of the 1997 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York titled *Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings: The 1980s*, saw in the late paintings "an astonishing determination to his work. He sought not only a renewal of his work but fundamental changes in its procedure and poetics as well". [www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object)

Now, I'll consider three cases of people with dementia, two who exhibited artistic talent before the onset of dementia, and one who exhibited new artistic skills with no previous history. Dr. Sebastian Crutch from the Dementia Research Centre at National Queen Square Hospital in London, England, discusses Willem Unter Mohlen, who was diagnosed with probable Alzheimer's at the age of 61. Unter Mohlen had shown a desire to draw since childhood and, off and on, engaged in producing art. The

Crutch article documents the link between Alzheimer's disease and fronto-temporal lobar degeneration and visual disorders. This condition outlines the impact of dementia on the artist's ability to paint and the possible representation of weird and scary images as the disease progressed.

Along with distorted images, neuropsychological assessments of Mr. Unter Mohlen "showed a moderate degree of cognitive deterioration especially with the abstract reasoning component. Memory functions for verbal material were particularly affected; there was also evidence of word retrieval and calculation difficulties, and a decline in visuo-perceptual and visuo-spatial abilities." After the diagnosis of Alzheimer's, Unter Mohlen's work was based mostly on self-portraits. Analysis of Unter Mohlen's artwork led to some interesting conclusions: "There is evidence of decline in the ability to represent spatial relations between features and objects, and proportion and perspectives. Backgrounds are either simpler or no longer provided. Brushwork has also become more coarse ..." Although Unter Mohlen gradually lost his ability to process perceptual and spatial information, his visual-memory function was relatively well-preserved" and enabled him to continue to paint. The Crutch study identifies the development of a more abstract theme as the disease progressed, due perhaps to the need to express himself with no



Early Café Drawing and Later Café Drawing, ink on paper

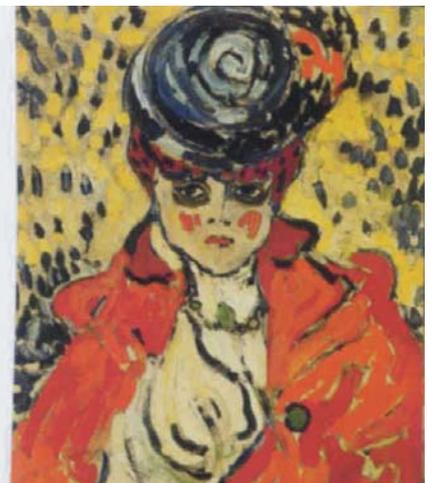
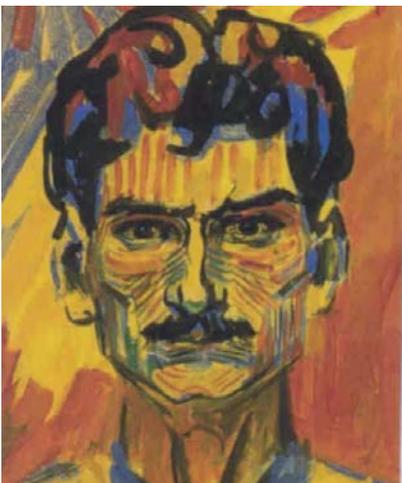
“restrictions imposed by realism and the unattainable accurate replication of colours, forms, angles, proportions, and perspective.” Dr. Crutch’s findings regarding the painting style of Untermohlen could fit with Sylvia’s latest style of painting as her dementia progressed.

A similar study by Joshua Chang Mell, Sara M. Howard and Bruce L. Miller from the University of California presents a 57-year-old woman, who “was evaluated for progressive aphasia syndrome [when language capabilities become slowly and progressively impaired] that had progressed to dementia.” The unnamed woman had emigrated to the United States from Asia as a teenager and had studied painting in college, eventually becoming a high school art teacher. She completed an MFA degree and retired

from teaching when “she could no longer control the classroom or remember her students’ names”. After the onset of dementia, her first artworks were mainly landscapes and representational paintings merging Eastern and Western artistic styles. As her disease progressed, she produced hundreds of drawings in the settings of cafés and concerts.

Ignoring social cues, she would enter into the conversations of strangers. As her painting activity continued, the “figures became distorted and less realistic ... While no longer producing new art, she continues to have excellent memories regarding her pictures and the strategies that she used to create her lifetime of work”. Her artwork became “wilder and freer ... Her

Masks, acrylic on paper





Top: An earlier drawing by Sylvia, before moving into the care centre. Note the very detailed drawing. Note the very detailed drawing.

Above: Later paintings by Sylvia at the moderate stage of dementia

choices of colors changed, with large swatches of red, turquoise, and purple now dominating the pictures ... Release from the constraints of formal training became clear, and her last pieces were no longer realistic, reflecting an intensely emotional and impressionistic style, with less details". The researcher continued to explain that the painting style went from precise realism to a more surrealistic, but appealing style.

The last article I studied looks at the painting of a person with dementia who had no previous history of talent. This is the one that surprised the scientific world and the care providing community. Dr. Bruce Miller and associates from the Department of Neurology and Psychiatry, School of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, discovered that patients with frontotemporal dementia (FTD) "developed new artistic skills" and some "became accomplished painters" after the appearance of frontotemporal dementia. Three patients in a study group improved their skills during the onset of the disease and through the middle stages of it. One patient in particular, with no interest in the visual arts in the past, drew for about 10 years from the time of the diagnosis, gaining increased "precision and detail". He used bright colours and painted his first paintings fast, slowing later and paying more attention to them. As his disease progressed to its final stages, he started to draw "bizarre doll-like figures."

### SYLVIA'S ARTWORK COMPARED WITH OTHER ARTISTS WITH DEMENTIA

Sylvia (1914 – 2013), the subject of my study, was trained in the fine arts. Her works in the past concentrated on landscapes and images taken from nature. When sifting through her previous work, I realized that Sylvia's artwork had many traits in common with the art produced by other artists with dementia.

Like the others, as the dementia progressed, Sylvia changed from realistic images to imaginary ones, and began painting distorted faces with eyes that seem to draw special attention and look tormented.

Examining her work shows that lines grow sloppier, content is simpler in the construction of image and there is a tendency to paint in bright colours. Still, artistic skills are evident. Artists with dementia share these characteristics: the ability to explain the artwork, technique remains intact, and there is a desire to continue to paint up to a later stage of dementia. Still, according to other researchers, and in Sylvia's case, people with dementia most likely will stop their painting activity during the last stage of the disease.

Without medical training, I cannot make the leap to diagnose Sylvia's condition, but I have described the characteristics of her work that parallel the works of other artists with dementia. I'll let you be the judge about Sylvia's condition and her inability to draw the clown.

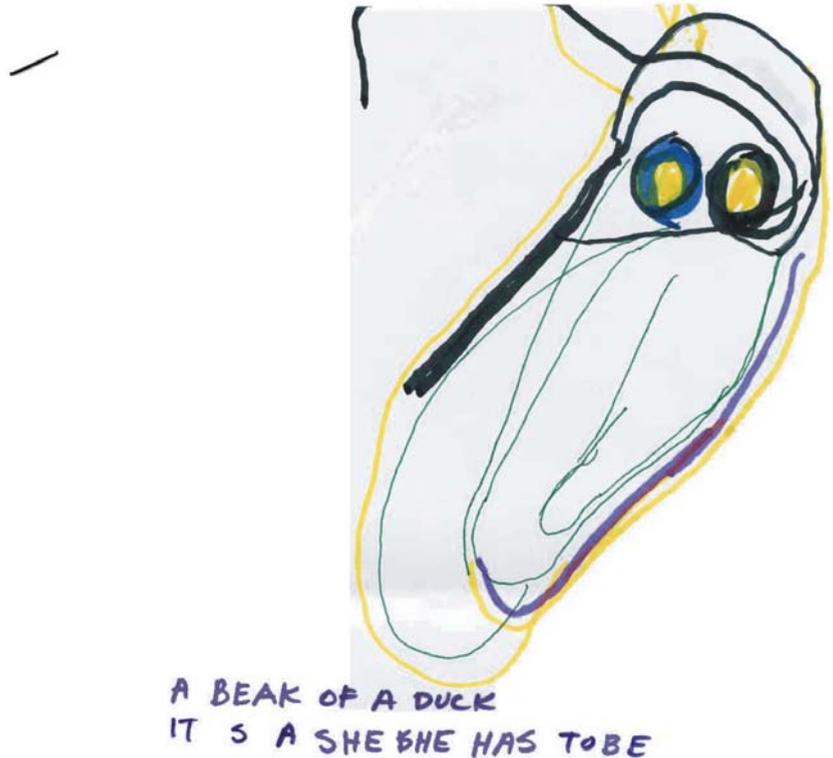
### SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Just like the fluid condition of health/ill health that seniors with dementia experience, I am reluctant to use a title like *conclusions* for fear it may sound



Above: The clown

Right: Sylvia's drawing of the clown



too final, when in reality, life continues to evolve and new knowledge is still being generated.

Even though 10 years have passed since I wrote the original paper on Sylvia's abilities to draw, I believe now, more than ever, that we need to listen to the unsaid and to what may be missing.

Working with Sylvia led to the development of the Creative Expressive Abilities Assessment Tool that was published for the first time in 2008. Another article in this series for the *Sage-ing* Journal will focus on assessing creative abilities and the importance of recognizing them. Sylvia and the other artists with dementia continued to use their remaining creative abilities. They did not diminish; they just took on a different style and form.

Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka earned her PhD from the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 2006 in the Institute of Health Promotion Research and the Interdisciplinary Studies Program. In 2011, she completed a Post Doctorate Fellowship with the Department of Psychology at UBC. In 1976, she graduated from the Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design in Jerusalem, and in 1980 received a Master's of Architecture degree from UBC.

After working in architecture for about 30 years and raising a family, Dalia returned to school to pursue a new direction in gerontology, specifically in the study of creative expression, dementia and the therapeutic environment. The Creative Expression Activities Program she conceived and developed for seniors with dementia won an award from the American Society on Aging and the MetLife Foundation. She continues to deliver presentations and workshops demonstrating the program and her research work in the U.S., Canada, Israel and Europe.

Dalia founded the Society for the Arts in Dementia Care in British Columbia, [www.cecd-society.org](http://www.cecd-society.org), and is the moving force behind the annual international conferences and workshops on creative expression, communication and dementia.

# SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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

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

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