

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close

NUMBER 14, WINTER 2015

# SAGE-ING

WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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



A PUBLICATION OF THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [www.sageing.ca](http://www.sageing.ca)

# The Voices of Creative Aging

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

**This is the first book to document the movement.**

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

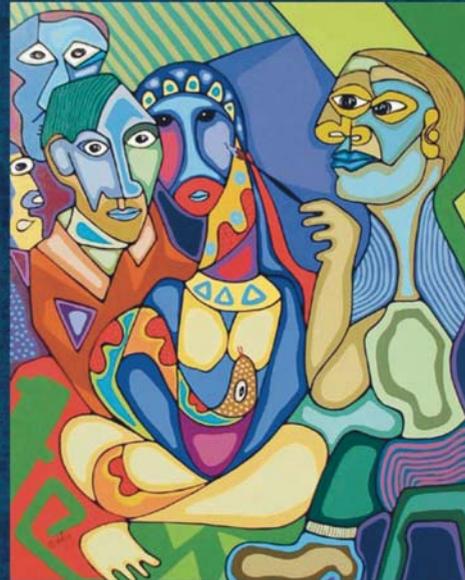
Sage-ing is about seeking – satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Aging can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to Know Thyself and contribute that

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

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

## CREATIVE AGING

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



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NUMBER 14, WINTER 2015  
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A PUBLICATION OF THE

### Okanagan Institute

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Cover image by Sonia Cornwall, *The  
Onward Barn*, oil on canvas, 1969.  
Collection of the Sonia Cornwall Estate.  
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## FROM THE EDITOR

A solstice or equinox, those official  
calendar dates that mark season  
change also mark the release online of  
each issue of the Journal. Life flows in  
a continual cycle of change and new  
beginnings, for each of us and for the  
Journal.

In January Wood Lake Publishing  
will release *Creative Aging*, a hard  
copy publication with a collection of  
articles from our first 12 issues. This  
book has been carefully crafted by  
editor Carolyn Cowan and it marks her  
departure from the Journal. Carolyn's  
dedication to detail and 'eagle' eye for  
editing will be sorely missed. Thank  
you Carolyn.

A primary goal of The Journal is to  
articulate the change possible when  
individuals embrace creative expression  
- spirit is enlivened, possibilities open  
and humanity evolves. Thus each  
generation nourishes the next, as each  
season supports the next. ART IS  
MAGIC OR IT IS NOTHING by Julie  
Fowler presents a beautiful account of  
how generations can build on each  
other's creative output to create  
meaningful community support and

growth. The exchange possible  
through intergenerational creative  
sharing is approached in several  
articles in this issue. In WRITING A  
FRIENDSHIP Amanda Kelly and Lesley-  
Anne Evans share how each is learning  
from the other while writing poetry. In  
SAGE-ING THROUGH A WORK  
SHOPPING CLASS Jeff Stathopoulos  
reflects on how he is learning by  
creating with a younger generation of  
aspiring writers. In BEING WHO I AM  
Carolina Sanchez de Bustamante  
suggests she is about to face her most  
important responsibility and biggest  
challenge as she and her son co-create  
an art installation. My conversation  
with David Askew in SEEING THE ART  
IN SUSTAINABILITY made me acutely  
aware of how eight decades of a  
family's values can manifest in the  
creation of a building that will impact  
the future of a community. Meaning-  
ful creative cultural sharing from  
generation to generation enriches  
change and growth for all of us. The  
Journal is proud to share stories that  
harvest the bounty of creative expres-  
sion.

– Karen Close

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## BEFORE I GO

Carolyn Cowan

For me, it's that time. After three years as an editor with the *Sage-ing* journal, the Fall 2014 issue was my last. It is time to focus on my own creative aging.

The irreplaceable bit in the process of being an editor of the *Sage-ing* Journal came that day, every three months, when all the preliminary work was finished. The moment arrived when I could open the content folder, and begin to read my way through stories that would become that quarter's issue. I knew each story would read different from the stories that preceded it from earlier Journals. Each would capture and explore the writer's unique interest and resourcefulness with words, paintings, photographs and poems. I knew that the stories, for the main part, were written by people for whom writing was not their primary skill. Indeed, their main accomplishment was as a painter, photographer, actors, teacher, or some other specialization. To Karen and me, the fact that the voices were authentic and not polished prose was a distinguishing badge of pride and proof of departure from other publications.

I know the Journal's contributors invariably loved the art of being creative. Most of them have developed their artistic side later in life. A few come from families that nurtured them in the arts as children. Looking back with the benefit of age, I say they were lucky to be able to practise their vocation or avocation into adulthood, and as seniors, with all the ensuing

benefits to mental and physical health now being proven by science.

And so, if there is one hope I have for the readers of this Journal, it's that you invest in your own core originality and creativity. Be certain, though, in the knowledge that, first, most of you will have to disconnect that dominant, critical voice, if only for 30 minutes at a time. It will attack you mercilessly and negatively on why you're not artistic. Disregard that voice. Then, you'll have space to nurture the small flame of originality inside until you have the opportunity to practise whatever unique artistic talent you possess. The *Sage-ing* Journal is filled with true believers; people who have taken the bold step. Is it possible for over 200 contributors to be wrong? Maybe, but I don't think so. If there is one consistency that the stories here reinforce it's that we are all born creative. But like any gift, creativity needs to be nurtured and cultivated. It needs an unrestricted space to evolve. Why bother?

We're all heading to the same destination. We can let it happen, or design the journey. That's our decision, our choice. Creatively mapping and having control – as much as anyone can – of the design of the journey can lead to a healthy, more vibrant quality of life. No one has a say over how much time is left to us, but we do – and only we do – have control over the quality of time left. That's aging creatively. And that's my hope for all of us who welcome change in life."

# ART IS MAGIC OR IT IS NOTHING



## Julie Fowler

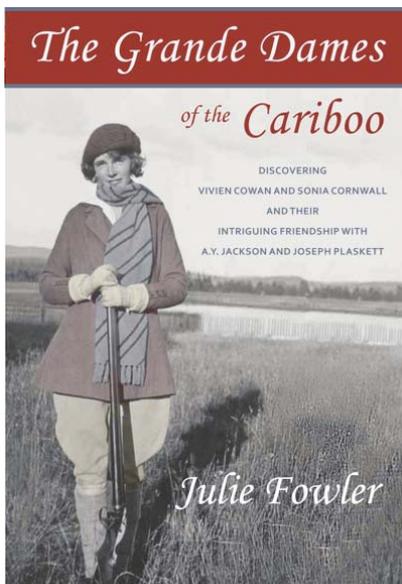
*“Art does not seek power; it seeks only to understand, to increase our emotional and spiritual experiences. In a world in which science progresses swiftly and disrupts society by the application of its discoveries, art shows us order which is to be found nowhere else, except perhaps in mystic experience, and which will endure as it has in the past, when the rest of civilization decays. Therefore and because art increases our knowledge, it has power to sustain and support.”* – E.M. Forster (1879 –1970)

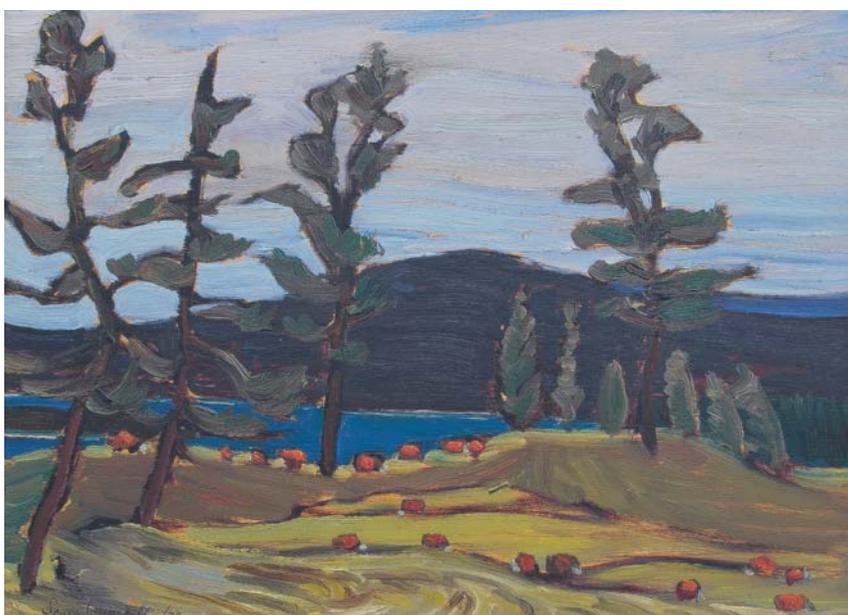
I copied this quotation from the notebook of artist and teacher, Vivien Cowan (1893 – 1990), a woman I never met, but who has become my mentor and friend. Vivien had many such notebooks where she would record her favourite passages from books she was reading. Though she lived on a ranch in a remote part of the Cariboo, Vivien was eager to stay connected to current conversations in art and philosophy and was passionate about the practice of art. She was also dedicated to sharing her practice with her community.

I forged a kinship with Vivien through the research of her family’s life for my master’s thesis in creative writing at UBC Okanagan in Kelowna. That thesis went on to become a book called *Grande Dames of the Cariboo*, a creative non-fiction novel about my experience uncovering the lives of this ‘grande’ family of artists. My interest in the subject stemmed from my own creative work. I work for an arts organization called Island Mountain Arts in the Cariboo town of Wells, right next to Barkerville Historic Town. Through Island Mountain Arts I organize art programs such as the *Toni Onley Artists’ Project* where professional and emerging artists spend nine days in the studios under the mentorship of senior artists, as well as, the *ArtsWells Festival of All Things Art*, a weekend festival of music and art that draws over 2000 people to our tiny town of 250.

I was drawn to learn more about this family of women, who more than fifty years before me had done similar work to develop and grow the arts in the Cariboo. My awareness started when I went to Sonia Cornwall’s memorial service in 2006 with my husband, art collector and curator of the Penticton Art Gallery, Paul Crawford. I never got to meet Sonia either, but Paul had known her for many years having curated an exhibition of her work. Sonia, who was Vivien’s eldest daughter, was clearly inspired by her mother’s passion for the creative act, painting right up to the end of her long life, and passing away only days after returning from a trip to Mexico where she was practicing her watercolour technique. She was 86 years old. And though she didn’t live quite as long as her mother Vivien, who lived to 97, both women

*Grande Dames of the Cariboo* book cover, Vivien Cowan c. 1920, Photo by J.J. Embury (1889 - 1985). Collection of the Family.





Top: Sonia Cornwall, *The Onward Barn*, oil on canvas, 1969. Collection of the Sonia Cornwall Estate. Reproduced with permission. Photo by Lisa Anderson.

Above: Sonia Cornwall, *Cows, Jones Lake Ranch*, oil on board, 1972. Private Collection. Reproduced with permission. Photo by Lisa Anderson.

were fuelled by art; it built their communities and opened up an unending world of discovery.

Attending Sonia's service was my first window into her world, and as I heard the stories from her life and saw the amazing paintings that hung around the 150 Mile Hall, my admiration and interest to know more, grew.

As my research began, my first interview was with Vivien's youngest daughter, Dru Hodgson who was living in Williams Lake. Dru was an artist as well, mostly pottery, but she had just finished a course in life drawing when we sat down in her apartment in March of 2008. Her small home was filled with art, pieces by Sonia, by her mother Vivien, by her great aunt Sidney Strickland Tully and by artists that had visited the Onward Ranch such as the likes of A. Y. Jackson, Takao Tanabe, Joseph Plaskett and Liliias Torrent Newton. Dru excitedly showed me her pottery collection, gathered from all over the world, as well as some of her own pots. "We used to dig our own clay," she said.

As Dru spoke, I began to understand the enormity of the artistic impact that her family had upon the Cariboo. From starting the Cariboo

Arts Society in 1945, to running many art workshops in the community and starting the Station House Art Gallery in Williams Lake. "The first exhibition we did at the Station House was on Emily Carr," Dru explained almost nonchalant as if it was no big deal to have exhibited the work of BC's best known painter. As the stories unfolded, it was clear that much of the inspiration behind all this activity was Vivien. Vivien was keenly aware that art "has the power to sustain and support."

In 1945 Vivien made her first trip to the Banff School. Art had become a healing force in her life after her much older husband, the world famous hunting guide, Charles Cowan (1868 – 1939) had passed away. Art gave her the capacity to deal more sanely with her grief, as well as, all the new responsibilities she now had to shoulder alone, such as looking after the 11,000-acre Onward Ranch and her two young girls, Sonia, age twenty and



Top: Three Generations: Drusilla Hodgson (1930 - 2009), Sonia Cornwall (1919 - 2006), Alice Emily Tully (1860 -1957), Vivien Cowan (1893 - 1990) at the Onward Ranch house circa 1950s. Collection of the Sonia Cornwall Estate.

Above: Vivien Cowan (centre) surrounded by her fellow Cariboo Art Society members during a workshop circa 1960s. Collection of the Sonia Cornwall Estate.

Dru, age ten. Going to Banff was an important step in her healing and her creative growth.

That first year at Banff, Vivien connected with a wider world of art, meeting well-known artists of the day such as A.Y. Jackson of the Group of Seven, Walter Philips, renowned for his watercolours and a young Joseph Plaskett. She was also able to completely immerse herself in art - painting every day and staying up till the wee hours discussing art with her fellow students and teachers.

“You can’t imagine how my life was completely altered when I entered my rightful element: painting!” exclaimed Vivien in a BC Archives audio interview from 1975. She was forever changed and would, from then on, dedicate her life to creative pursuits. When she returned from Banff, in order to continue cultivating this newly found community of artists, which had provided her a vital well of inspiration, Vivien invited all she met to visit and stay at her Onward Ranch in 150 Mile House, just south of Williams Lake.

A.Y. Jackson came to stay that first fall. Vivien, Sonia and Dru, as well as Vivien’s mother Mrs. Tully who also lived at the ranch, were excited by his visit. “Tales of

Algonquin Park and the boxcar Lawren Harris got the CNR to put on a siding, where they could camp while painting; Tom Thomson and his cabin beside the studio building in Toronto, and canoeing with him; his student days in Paris and early days staying in the villages in Quebec. It was fascinating,” Dru told me during the interview I did with her in 2008.

“When A.Y. came up to stay, while he was here at the ranch I thought there must be other people in the Cariboo who were interested in painting, so we formed the Cariboo Art Society on his first visit in 1945 right there in my sitting room. He was honorary president, and I was president, and Sonia was secretary, and we sent out our brochure, telling our aim—that we just wished to meet, and give mutual help in painting—and the Art Society has never looked back,” said Vivien in that same 1975 interview. This past year the Cariboo Art Society celebrated their 70th Anniversary Art Show and Sale – a ‘grand’ legacy indeed for Vivien Cowan.

“Creative arts are a way of life and it is not what you do for posterity, but what they do to you in the way of enriching your life, by more appreciation of pictures and more awareness of your environment,” wrote Vivien in some notes that she gave out to her students.

“All are artists in some medium, who respond with sensitivity to beauty, and if it is painting one chooses, it is just a matter of developing it and this can be very rewarding. But no talent can be developed without effort – prolonged effort at that.”

Vivien bestowed on me a great deal of wisdom through the course of



Top: Vivien in her studio at her house near Williams Lake where she moved when the Onward Ranch was sold in 1965. Circa 1975. Collection of the Sonia Cornwall Estate.

Above: Joseph Plaskett and Vivien Cowan in London circa 1950s. Collection of the Sonia Cornwall Estate.

writing my book, I even painted my first painting, which helped me to realize how art could be a lifelong pursuit. As Vivien says “no talent can be developed without effort – prolonged effort at that.” I think I could spend a few lifetimes just learning how to mix colours. In addition to the sage wisdom I gleaned, I also was introduced to an amazing community of artists, both local and professional, who became friends. One such artist was Joseph Plaskett, one of Canada’s finest painters. Joe, as I came to know him, made many visits to the Onward Ranch starting in the summer of 1946. I met Joe on his ninetieth birthday tour through Canada in 2008, holding exhibitions at galleries across the country. A gracious and generous man, Joe helped me with my research by both doing an interview and giving me an astonishing archive of original letters. He had kept every letter he had ever received from Vivien.

Joe just passed away this year and only a few weeks ago I attended his memorial service in New Westminster, he was 96 years old.

“Art is magic or it is nothing,” said Vivien.

**Julie Fowler** recently completed her MFA in Creative Writing at UBC Okanagan and has a background in art history. *Grande Dames of the Cariboo*, which was published by Caitlin Press in 2013, is her first book. Passionate about art and the Cariboo, Julie is the Executive Director of Island Mountain Arts in the tiny historic town of Wells, BC, where she helped create the ArtsWells Festival.

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Island Mountain Arts [www.imarts.com](http://www.imarts.com)

ArtsWells Festival of All Things Art [www.artswells.com](http://www.artswells.com)

# RESURRECTING A DREAM



**Linda Grant**

“Consciousness can be anywhere it wants to be.”

This is a quote from a character in *Timewatch*, my novel about a group of people who travel back in time to some critical points in history where they must thwart the attempts of certain forces to change the past and cause catastrophic changes to the present.

The events I wrote about were based, in many cases, on actual events such as the Roman invasion of Britain and a woman’s trip to Turkey in 1717, which resulted in her introducing to Western medicine a way to save future millions from a terrifying disease.

My story is speculative fiction, but many of the concepts are not. For example, to say that, “Consciousness can be anywhere it needs to be”, sounds a little crazy, doesn’t it? But one of the best proofs that this idea is true took place back in the 1970s. It began when the Americans, hearing that the Russians were using psychics as spies, thought that they might do the same thing in order to obtain intelligence about secret projects in the Soviet Union.

A member of the CIA read a paper written by Russel Targ and Hal Putoff, laser physicists at Stanford Research Institute. The paper outlined the idea of quantum non-locality, which suggested that everything is connected. Theoretically, it might be possible to project one’s consciousness to remote targets. The CIA liked the idea well enough to provide seed money for a program in which individuals learned to “. . . use only their minds to perceive

physical things that were hidden from the normal five senses.” (Paul H. Smith, *Reading the Enemy’s Mind*)

This program used long-accepted standards for scientific research, such as double-blind conditions. The process involved giving the recruits sealed envelopes containing certain coordinates, which were unknown both to the recruits and the experimenters. The recruits were then asked to draw whatever came to mind. In one case, Joe McMoneagle, a former army intelligence officer, drew a picture of the control panel of a tank. His superiors were ready to dismiss his drawing as a “miss” when it was eventually discovered that a tank with this control panel had just been developed, only it was so secret that very few people knew about it.

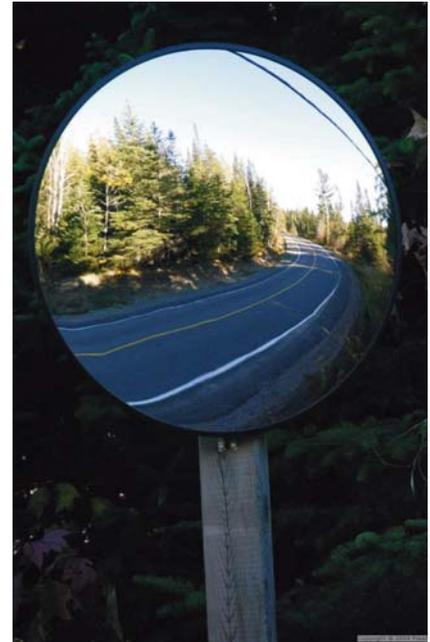
The remote viewing program showed that consciousness can access information from anyplace and anytime as long as one can be still and focused and release one’s

Universe





Above left: Mysteries



Above right: Snapshot

**This proven ability of people to access information not normally available to our five senses leads to important questions about the nature of reality and how we perceive it.**

preconceived ideas. The program was eventually shut down. It's interesting that although some information has been released, about 70,000 pages are still classified. So what is the government *not* telling us? After analyzing a small portion of the declassified material, Jessica Utts, a professor at the University of California-Davis, wrote, "The statistical results of the studies examined are far beyond what is expected by chance."

Jules Verne may have done something similar to remote viewing when he wrote *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, which he sent to his publisher in 1863. The reason you've probably never heard of it was because the manuscript was never published. Why? Too far-fetched was the reason given. Verne wrote about travel by subway, gas-driven cars, computers, the streets lit up by lights and electronic ads, and so on.

This proven ability of people to access information not normally available to our five senses leads to important questions about the nature of reality and how we perceive it. An article in *The New Scientist*, Dec. 20, 2008–Jan. 2, 2009 said, "Much of what you think you see is invented by the brain. Perception is not about capturing a full picture of reality, but taking snapshots of the world and making the rest up."

There's a Hindu parable about some blind men who take hold of different parts of an elephant. Each one describes the elephant differently. To a limited degree, each is correct, but not one of them had the full concept of an elephant.

Similarly, each of us has different ideas or snapshots of what reality consists of. As writers and artists, I believe that it is crucial for us to extend the boundaries of our thinking. Yes, there will be resistance to alternative ways of looking at things, but in their day the Impressionists and Cubists were mocked, too, for their insights.

Annie Dillard, a novelist, poet, and essayist wrote, "Why are we reading



Hands

**As I grow older, I can more clearly see patterns evolving from the chaos of life, giving me a broader vision of what is truly important.**

if not in hope that the writer will . . . inspire us with wisdom, courage, and the possibility of meaningfulness and press upon our minds the deepest mysteries ...”

And who can do that so well as our elders, whose insights—collected over lifetimes – can pass along their wisdom to young people? As I grow older, I can more clearly see patterns evolving from the chaos of life, giving me a broader vision of what is truly important. Florence Rikards in the 2014 issue of *Sage-ing* magazine wrote, “It’s never too late and you are never too old to realize a dream.”

This has certainly been true for me. After all my efforts to realize my dream of being a published author proved futile, I gave up. Life was full with my new husband, Ron, and our blended family of six daughters and four cats. Then things changed. My stepdaughter, Karen, told Ron about a fiction contest being held by Balboa Press and suggested I enter it. Why not? I did have a suitable manuscript ready.

Before entering the contest, I realized that my motives for writing had changed from egocentric ones to wanting to bring important concepts to a wider audience than the classes, which Ron and I were conducting at the Society for Learning in Retirement, a non-profit organization where peer learning is the order of the day.

Subsequently, I did win the Grand Prize of \$5,000 and a contract from Hay House. At last, my dream of being a published author has been resurrected.

**Linda Grant** was the winner of the first Balboa Press fiction contest. The Grand Prize included a contract from Hay House for her novel, *Timewatch*.

She has taught gifted children in public schools as well as developed and led courses on personal growth and self-development for adults. The highlight of a brief stint in film and television production was working as the Production Coordinator on the Imax film *Heartland*.

Linda and her husband Ron currently live in Kelowna. They are Life members of the Society for Learning in Retirement, where they have developed and led courses on a wide range of social and metaphysical topics.

[www.lindagrants.ca](http://www.lindagrants.ca)

Linda can be reached at: [lindagrants@shaw.ca](mailto:lindagrants@shaw.ca).

The Launch of Linda’s book, *Timewatch* will take place on Saturday, Jan.17th, 3:00 PM at the downtown Kelowna Library, 1380 Ellis St. Books will be available for purchase.

# SEEING THE ART IN SUSTAINABILITY

## Karen Close in Conversation with David Askew



“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” ~ Winston Churchill

In 2007 David Askew, then CEO of the family business Askews Foods began to shape plans for a second store in uptown Salmon Arm, British Columbia. He'd seen a write-up on the award winning Vancouver structural engineering firm Fast + Epp. The firm has established a reputation for fresh thinking and holistic solutions that push the design envelope in the interest of sustainable, economical and expressive architecture. A sense of shared goals sealed the union and the project began. The new store opened in 2012, forty-three years after the foundation for the Askew family enterprise was laid in 1929. This new store is a beautiful statement of the care David Askew, with the support of his board, put into its planning, and is a reflection of three generations of sages. The building gives contemporary form to the company's long term commitment to selling local food to local people, from stores designed for sustainability that are located close to where the majority of residents live.

As one turns into the parking lot of the new uptown location, the sense that you are entering a special place is immediately apparent. Although perched on a piece of land that slopes up from the picturesque shoreline of Lake Shuswap, this organic horizontal structure integrates; it doesn't dominate. One of the pioneering masters of modern architecture, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe proclaimed, “God is in the details.” Authentic creativity is about paying attention to the details of a broad and comprehensive vision. Every-

where I looked confirmed my sense that this place was not just a grocery store, but a work of art. As I set out to speak with the man who had conceived its construction, I wondered if his inspiration had somehow evolved from the Constructivist's art movement, strong in the decade when the Askew family's business was initiated. The movement was in favour of art as a practice for social purposes. Leaders of the movement argued that the particular material properties of a work, or indeed a building, give strength to its spatial presence. It seems, without conscious knowledge of the Constructivists, Uptown Askews Foods

Uptown Askews Foods, northside - taken by Derek Lepper





Uptown Askews Foods, westside - photo by Sherry Kaufman for Salmon Arm Observer

**Although perched on a piece of land that slopes up from the picturesque shoreline of Lake Shuswap, this organic horizontal structure integrates; it doesn't dominate.**

actualizes the movement's beliefs and intentions.

The company has a history of sustainable actions through the years. They are known to be instigators of recycling initiatives and energy efficient construction. When their first supermarket was built in 1967, Lloyd Askew incorporated his wholesale meat department and locker plant. As a result, he had much more horsepower in his refrigeration equipment than the average store. He decided at that time it would be worthwhile to

put in heat recovery, to use the waste heat from the refrigeration cycle to heat the store in winter. Askew's new store has a heating system to heat the store that requires little if any extra energy beyond that purchased to run the refrigeration system. An intricate solar efficient roof designed to make use of natural light subtly changes with external conditions. Other sustainable measures include retention of storm-water to be used for irrigation of the landscaping.

Through the years Askews has developed relations with hundreds of local suppliers in the food industry. During construction a sign read: "Local contractors building community." Local building products were sought out whenever possible. In reflection, David Askew believes his time away from the family business evolved his social conscience and prepared him for the creation of this store. Prior to his return to Salmon Arm in 2007, he was a career counsellor at the University of Toronto. In his latter years he was elected by staff to the position of president of the U of T Staff Association. He learned about people and evolved a social philosophy aligned to his family's values. He says the building in many ways arose out of intuition. Because of this process, the design with its many curves challenged the tradespeople and required them to find innovative solutions. As a result each participant in the construction can take great pride in the accomplishment. The bar was raised. Colleague Barry Siebenga, founder of The Mission Group developers describes it as "a great gift to the community". The process of shaping this building is a legacy that will shape the future, both visibly and invisibly.

American sculptor Robin Antar says, "Life is an empty square unless one fills it up with matter." Life is just waiting for our design. Manitoba founder of Circle Design Incorporated, Robert L. Peters says, "Design is the application of intent. Design creates culture. Culture shapes values. Values determine the future." After listening to my praise of what he had directed and created with the support of his sister and co-owner Colleen Askew Davis, David Askew modestly explained, "Well our family believes in enlightened self interest. I do think that if I create something that is good, it is good for all of us."



Uptown Askews Foods, southside - taken by Shana Oberst

**Intuitively David Askew seems to have understood he wanted his creation to be brave, on a par with those who dare to design first inward, from their spirit, and then outward.**

Our family has a long history in this community; we are proud of our success and wanted to express our gratitude and have this building be a statement. When we developed this piece of land we wanted what we created to serve a number of intentions and we gave a great deal of thought to how best to meet these. Our intentions were to create a building that is aesthetically pleasing, effects sustainable energy practices, be located to integrate with community, facilitate a people pleasing spot, and of course, work well as a retail location.” On a personal level David says he has always been more conscious of pleasing spaces where people felt comfortable with their environment and that he has a feeling for the proportions of a room. “I have seen how good rooms make meetings better. The feeling of a space, its shape and its light are important.” When I laughed that he seemed aligned to the architecture of Gothic cathedrals, he too laughed. My friend calls the store “David’s Cathedral.”

The idealists among us believe that with considered intention a life by design is within grasp - so is a world. We need leaders with the right intentions. Authentic artists know they must continually remain in the practice of understanding how to be true to themselves and they know, as American designer Charles Eames noted, “The details are not just the details. They make the design,” Intuitively David Askew seems to have understood he wanted his creation to be brave, on a par with those who dare to design first inward, from their spirit, and then outward. For a period Cathedrals shaped communities and much of our global landscape. They shaped us. After a period of sterile, sprawling development more concerned with cost than spirit, this Journal seeks out those, like David Askew, brave enough to be *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit Grace and Gratitude*. David Askew is of the generation that believed we could and should create *A Brave New World*.

*“Architecture, of all the arts, is the one which acts the most slowly, but the most surely, on the soul.” – Ernest Dimmet, French priest, writer, lecturer, and author of The Art of Thinking (1928).*

# WRITING A FRIENDSHIP

## Amanda Kelly and Lesley-Anne Evans



Top: Amanda Kelly



Above: Lesley-Anne

### Lesley-Anne

We meet at Third Space coffee shop to write. I have fluttery angst in my stomach, nervous excitement. I bring rough notes and ideas for our assignment, an article about “us.” She texts to say she is almost here, apologizes for bus schedules, and guilt pricks at me for not picking her up.

Then she is here, and we are all hugs and smiles and laughs and hot drinks and a comfortable corner. We sit, breathe, settle in. I look at her and think how beautifully full of potential, what a gift she is. What is she doing here with a middle aged woman with very few concrete answers to anything? What do I bring to “us”? What is this all about?

We talk about our article, types of questions we should ask to unpack who we are, format for an interesting interview style piece. We take photographs of each other. We talk about a silly misunderstanding we had, frustrations around spoken communication, future plans to add fun to the mix, and how we might take our relationship deeper. As we talk around the subject of us, we both arrive here: that we are not “a writing circle” or even “friends in poetry.” We are *friends*.

Amanda and I continue to discover and nurture and know one another. Similar interests and sensibilities create our foundation, but we are finding much more. This is but a chapter in our friendship story.

Q: What is the most important piece of advice you’ve ever received? How has this changed how you live?

A: My father, ever unaware of his own wisdom, has refocused me countless times with two words “just be.” A liberating phrase that always reminds me of the pulsating centre inside of me, often clouded by the expectations I have for myself, my disposition to clench up my soul like a squeezed fist. These two words, versatile in their brevity, can mean so much no matter the situation; to “just be” authentically present with people, or to “just be” no more than myself, what I am and simply no more. My self-acceptance has been cradled by those two words and not surprisingly, these words are often my soothing mantra when writing... “just be, just be, just be...”

LA: “Show up!” Not with all the right answers or appropriate experience or great talent or impeccable honesty. It’s about being dependable. A mentor friend shared this truth with me when I wasn’t sure I had anything to offer. I’m still unsure at times, but I show up, bring myself and my story, and have seen how providence orchestrates the rest. There’s always more to it.

**What is she doing here with a middle aged woman with very few concrete answers to anything?**

**From our first meeting I was drawn to Amanda's quiet spirit, genuine warmth and heart for growth; she brought out a complementary set of feelings in me. We've been friends for almost a year now.**

Q: How did you first meet? What fueled your desire for more?

LA: Amanda and I met for coffee after her mother attended a talk I gave on creativity. Her mom shared that her writer daughter could use some support, and I said I would meet with her. From our first meeting I was drawn to Amanda's quiet spirit, genuine warmth and heart for growth; she brought out a complementary set of feelings in me. We've been friends for almost a year now.

A: Lesley-Anne and I met a little under a year ago during a season of my life where, as a timid novice poet, I was quietly petitioning for a kindred spirit passionate about words. I was connected to Lesley-Anne through my mother and an email address. I eventually mustered enough courage and composed an email which I laboriously edited. Then we met in a little nook in Starbucks and I immediately discovered a heart connection that often is as invisible as air yet as tangible as rain. I left feeling full and awakened with a rare sort of hope.

Q: Do you find there is a single unifying theme or tone that is found in a friendship with another writer?

A: Writers convey their core motivation in many different ways, but I believe that we all just want to be heard in the larger conversation that is being entertained. We each want our lives to both be recognized and to recognize the other person. Our friendship is a kind of invigorating, sustaining force.

LA: I believe introspection and introversion leads writers to be incredibly honest when we do speak up. We are not about the light things as much as the deep thoughts expressed. We probably need extroverted sport enthusiasts to encourage the fun out of us! Also, there is a theme of growth for us. We want to improve our craft, somehow know we are good enough, getting better. We want to attend a writing conference together next year.

Q: What is your biggest struggle as a poet/writer?

LA: Isolation, feeling like I'm not contributing to "real life." or what I'm doing has value. I think we all need folk to remind us that we are not alone and what we do really matters.

A: My Achilles heel as a writer is a paralysis that often comes out of the exhausting demands of my perfectionism. When I have my fingers poised over the keyboard, my mind twitches and suddenly my chest feels as if it is contemplating collapse. In desperation I ask myself is what I have to say even worth saying and will it be what I want to say? I eventually regain my breath, whether it's five minutes later or the next day; I keep going. Writing will always hold insecurity, yet it is often one of the few things I feel is feeding me nourishment.

Q: How does this friendship translate into the creative process? Does it?

A: I believe that being intimately known and affirmed by another person

**I believe that being intimately known and affirmed by another person motivates you to tell your story. Opening your soul up to another gives you the courage to similarly, through your writing, give your reader a small piece of your soul.**

motivates you to tell your story. Opening your soul up to another gives you the courage to similarly, through your writing, give your reader a small piece of your soul. I think friendship is like poetry, you are offering both your confidant and your readers, a chance to wade out past the shallows and into the depths of who you are.

LA: We have never discussed our poetry or invited comment. We connect on life, faith and the general experience of being a writer. We cheer one another on. We only just began to talk about how sharing our work might take our relationship to a different place, and we are considering if this is a good thing for us.

Q: What would you like to do together that you haven't done yet?

LA: We have danced around the idea of collaboration for some time now. I don't know what specifically, but I do know we are made to create meaning outside ourselves, and usually with others, especially those who are similarly passionate. Synergy naturally happens when creative people get together with an eye for possibility. Our faith comes into play, our world view. Something will happen. We both expect it to.

### **Amanda**

In relationship, we cannot click or scratch away the words we say. It takes courage to come together in unedited draft form. It is quite breathtaking to engage with another and to tell the story of our lives in the greatest creative act we can ever offer. I'm striving to hear Lesley-Anne's story. She is leaning in to hear mine. This dance of friendship is dynamic and impossible to slot into a perfectly crafted static label.

With tenacious longing, I want to support Lesley-Anne in her poetic endeavours and be a sounding board for future pieces. Poetry, to Lesley Anne and myself, is an integral aspect of our lives. It is something woven into our experiences so naturally that we bring it into our friendship. We are both there, showing up, seeking oxygen that is the fuel for our words.

Real time immediate intimacy is a continual practice. This can be a cycle of lost and found in the realm of our fast paced and technological age. We can become starved individuals when we forget to seek nourishment in just being with another person. It is a daily practice, a chosen custom, and one I so desperately try not to forget.

## Fading Twilight

The swarming bustle blurs,  
bathed in the opaque tint of a glistening gold glow,  
accompanied by our ever lengthening shadow.

Camaraderie alight betwixt each sun cast illumination,  
brief moments exchanged through the chain link.  
As your carved strides on the frosted surface glide,  
a woven thread,  
singularly defining each moment,  
captured in fragment then swimming in the whole.

Forays contained within a rink,  
the cyclonic cycles,  
imitate water that rushes down the sink.  
Figures once basked in in the finale dance,  
marks a day softly blending in the silent arms of night.

Floating amongst the stars,  
in the freshly conceived breath of twilight,  
each showered with a translucent moon lit grace,  
that only the soft white night can create. ~ Amanda Kelly

## Migrations

Remember the time we were in Portland, rain  
pissing down and me mad as hell over some silly thing  
I can't remember anymore. Kids in the back seat,  
you in the drivers seat, you preferring  
the drivers seat. I don't know why  
it seems so funny now, your wide eyed surprise  
and my door slamming stomp down the road  
one block, then three, cursing the day and  
the turn back, the car still there by the curb  
so quietly magnetic as I got back in, said  
nothing. We laugh now, you and the kids and me  
as you say, *remember the time Mom walked off*,  
remember how you asked if she was  
*ever coming back?* How we migrate, strengthen  
our wings, rise on thermals. The Vireos, strokes of yellow  
on raw canvas sky, congregate in the backyard Katsura,  
find seed inside husks on bare branches. For a few days  
in January, Trumpeter Swans tip themselves in the shallows  
off Sarsons Beach. They stretch necks under ice water  
eat what clings to the bottom, what they need  
to sustain flight. ~ Lesley-Anne Evans

**Amanda Kelly** is a novice poet and spoken word performer whose poetry can be described as sensory and contemplative. Amanda began writing poetry a little over a year ago when she was suddenly diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy and has continued to write and find good in her loss. Amanda enjoys immersing herself in spiritually unconventional memoirs, practicing yoga and getting down to the nitty gritty in conversation. Amanda is an Educational Assistant at Heritage Christian School and shares her love of tea at a local tea shop.

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**Lesley-Anne Evans** is a Belfast girl, Toronto raised, and Kelowna transplanted. She graduated from the University of Guelph with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, designed international theme parks for several years, then moved west to where the wild things are. Lesley-Anne lives an Okanagan life with her husband of 27 years, three young adult children and hound. Lesley-Anne is published. She pursues poetic activism and public engagement through her initiative, Pop-Up-Poetry. Lesley-Anne sees poets as cultural philanthropists, and poetry as witness, influencer, and healer. Lesley-Anne is a humble advocate for truth and beauty.

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# HEALING MY RESTLESS SOUL

**Gwen Martinuk**



**As a universal means of communication art in the form of fibre/textiles has provided a route to the healing of my restless soul.**

Albert Camus wrote that “Autumn is the second Spring where every leaf is a flower.” These words resonate with me as they are a reminder that my journey towards home bears the fruit of promise and hope. At 67 I am in the Autumn of my life. As far back as I can remember I was intuitively aware of the connection between the desire to express myself creatively, and the presence of the ‘healer’ or ‘spirit’ within. Toxic genes and broken birth parents were my foundation for the journey forward. Nonetheless, the gift of a vivid imagination, an endlessly inquiring mind, and an introspective personality provided me with some of the tools necessary to walk this difficult path. I am often reminded of Albert Einstein’s words: ‘In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity’. The path was of my choosing.

The common denominator throughout the journey has been my absolute love of all things in the natural world. As a preschooler I was a tree hugger long before it became a cliché. God does not make junk and so my mentors were always present in the natural environment in one form or another. The constant was always that if I did but listen, the universe held messages for the path that I should follow. However, listening has not always been my strong suit. Busyness and mind clutter are the potholes on this path. Still, as long as I remained open to the infinite possibilities presented to me, I had access to the core life force of universal healing. As a child singing, dancing, and pounding on piano keys with complete abandon were joyful. Collecting leaves and pressing wild flowers allowed me to keep them close to my heart as winter storms pounced on my spirit. As a young adult paddling alone among islands on the West Coast I was enchanted by the whales and sea birds that swam and danced with complete abandon on the waves and wind. At these times of pure awe and wonder there exists a unity of spiritual energy that is beyond words. In these later years, the graceful movement of the kayak still provides many hours of enjoyment as it silently glides along the shorelines of lakes and rivers in the central interior. Often during these times there are moments that time stands still as I am overwhelmed with thankfulness for the gift of the pure unfiltered energy of the natural world. These are precious moments when time does not exist as we have know it.

As a universal means of communication art in the form of fibre/textiles has provided a route to the healing of my restless soul. I do not see myself as an artist in the formal sense of the word. Whatever that label means I have never really understood? The butterflies drawn on the walls of Dachau and Auschwitz are a universal message of hope and the indomitable spirit of mankind in the darkest hour - Is this spirit not the essence of art? What I have



always understood, intuitively or otherwise, is that the very process of artistic expression in whatever form my spirit might be driven is the route to the core of who I really am. Sometimes I choose to let go and listen to the messages. More often than not, I try and control the creative process by 'thinking it out'. The latter has rarely worked for me.

For many years now I have worked with natural organic fibres such as wool and silk in the form of felt. Together they provide a route of communication that is both highly expressive and interpretive. This ancient process of felting is orchestrated through the symbiotic relationship between my heart and my hands. An alchemy of water, gentle massage and soap, coaxes the tactile, sensual fibres to morph into endless creative possibilities. Sculptural wall hangings, wearable garments and home décor pieces all provide different and unique technical challenges in which I explore this exciting medium. Remaining true to myself, and the belief that all things are connected, I use my senses to absorb the song of the seasons as they unfold and provide the materials with which to work. Just as it was in ancient



times, natural dyes are extracted from flora, bark, and minerals from the earth through a long process of steaming. If I have listened well to the secret metaphorical language of these materials, they will communicate their DNA memories of universal connectedness of all things in the natural universe.

This happens when the creative process is ideal. The reality is that the birthing process can be very difficult and painful. During these times the creative process is disrupted or distorted by my legacy of insecurities that manifest through the blockages and toxic barriers of perfectionism, fear of exposure of self and considerable self doubt. The more I try to control the outcome, the less the core life force responds. The result is a felt creation that lacks soul. Nonetheless, I still recognize that there are always lessons to be learned from each piece that my work has created.

Despite setbacks, I remain faithful to the process of weeding out, through the felting process, the long ingrained coping strategies that inhibit my personal growth. These beautiful and sensual organic fibres are my medium of growth and healing. And so, with each attempt to design and create a piece of felt that speaks of the heart, the essence of the true spirit within grows, and confidence builds. With nature as my collaborator the wearable pieces of art represent a second skin that provides warmth, healing and a message of hope to those that include them to wear on their own personal journeys. I was

Top: Felt studio

Above: poncho adobe



Top: Mary Jo's Coat

Above: Vest

delighted to receive these words from a recent purchaser:

"Like many, when my eyes caught sight of both the vest and the jacket at ArtWalk I wondered: Art? Fashion? Fusion? Then I thought: naturally, perfect. Wearing my felted jacket, infused and informed by nature, creates the sense, as you had suggested, that "I am lovingly wrapped in the healing power of nature." It is true. Your passion for living things, and knowledge of process have created incredible one-of-a-kind statement pieces. The natural print design coaxed from a wide variety of plants native to central BC celebrates this region and the creative forces which exist, when one truly just simply connects with nature. Hope abounds. Thank you. Mary Jo Schnepf"

And so, I continue on my journey. For me, the life song sung is not so much based on chronological age, although six decades of living have slowed my energy down a little. The creative process of felting is a portal for my spirit to journey inward – fired by the elements of earth, wind, fire and water. My creative process is a conduit to the ultimate goal of love of self and others.

Yes, Fall is the second Spring where every leaf is a flower and each day I give thanks for the blessings I have been given on this journey. Happily, there is still some

quality time and energy to use the gifts that nature has provided as a means to the end - bringing me full circle and into enjoyment of all that I am.

Born in Burnaby, **Gwen Martinuk** has spent all but four years of her life living and working in BC. Retired from a late bloomer career in social work, Gwen and her husband Dave have lived and raised a family in the Shuswap for the last 35 years. Fibre art in one form or another has been an enduring interest for most of these years with the most recent years focused solely on felt as an avenue of expression. Drawn by the versatility of the natural, organic materials gifted from the environment, this medium of creative expression perfectly suits her need for connection with the natural world.

Self taught in the beginning to obtain the basics of this ancient art, Gwen soon went on to explore more advanced felting techniques via workshops with a series of masters level international felt artists; each shared their unique skills invaluable for growth in this medium. The use of natural dyes and the design of distinctive, quality felted garments is her primary focus.

Gwen has enjoyed showing her work via several juried seasonal artisan venues including the annual Okanagan Artisans Guild, as well as via juried shows in the Salmon Arm Art Gallery, the Art Walk in Winfield, the Vernon Community Arts Centre and most recently the Armstrong Spallumcheen Museum and Art Gallery.

Memberships include the Courtyard Gallery Artists Initiative, the Craft Council of BC, the Vernon Community Arts Centre, four Okanagan/Shuswap public galleries, as well as with the Shuswap Spinners and Weavers guild.

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# SAGE-ING THROUGH A WORK SHOPPING CLASS



## Jeff Stathopoulos

I've been stuck at a crossroads. I believed the craft of writing was best practiced in free fall, unencumbered by the staid chains of formal grammar, punctuation, tenses, points of view and plot developments. The more I write though, the more I see this free falling approach for what it really is: a way to avoid the hard parts, a convenient justification to avoid evolving. It was time to re-learn the building blocks of creative prose. I've realized talent will only take one so far; in the end if you want to improve, you must bow to the institutions your discipline is built on. You can go against the grain later, but only once the reasons why the structures are there in the first place are understood.

This past September I arrived at FIP121, also known as the place where first year creative writing at UBCO, University of British Columbia Okanagan, is taught. I parked my car in the visitors lot because it was right across the street from the Fipke Building where my class was located. I arrived early so I could scope out the room and satisfy my curiosity as an observer; also, I wasn't going to be the one showing up 5 minutes late and spending the rest of the semester coming from behind.

When I walked into the room, the Rolling Stones were just beginning *Sympathy for the Devil* on the public address system. There were a few people there, but the class was mostly empty. I picked a seat that seemed to hold the right balance of objective distance and respectful attention. I sat down, took out my notebook, a pen and sat still as the other students arrived. Closing my eyes, I tried to isolate each of the different sounds in the room that were playing harmony with Mick.

Text message notifications, dinner containers, papers, laptops, clothing, books and notes all battled for attention. Chair legs grinding against the floor, whispered conversations, phone chimes, metal water bottles, and the shuffle shuffle of soft-soled shoes sliding across the floor added to the cacophony. Then a different sound joined: a rustle of movement faster and more purposeful than the rest, the presence of a new energy in the room. Everything else fell silent except for the music.

I opened my eyes to the arrival of the Doctor: an old scratched and discoloured, brown lawyer's briefcase in one hand, a stack of papers wedged under the other arm, a lanyard with classroom keys around his neck and a

**This past September I arrived at FIP121, also known as the place where first year creative writing at UBCO, University of British Columbia Okanagan, is taught.**



Street Vendor, Paris

**True thoughts, both good and bad, are shared. This is the advice that will help me to become a better writer. These are the words that will give me a more precise picture of what I'm really putting down on the page, and how other people see it - people who aren't my family.**

fresh Starbucks. His greyed hair was the only head that shade, besides my own, in the room.

He didn't address his audience right away; instead he busied himself getting ready. He laid his briefcase on its side, popped the metal latch and opened the flap, the slot-thing banging the tabletop. He next fumbles around inside without looking, and finds nothing he needs. Sorting through the stack of papers, he arranges them in an invisible order, then takes off his wool jacket, and drapes it on the back of a chair that was tucked

under the table in front of him. Closing his eyes for a brief second, he savours this first sip of evening coffee. Opening his laptop, he plugs in the adapter link to the overhead and sets the screens to unfurl. The Stones do an 8-second fade, followed by the hammered A minor F and G chords of *All Along the Watchtower*. He kills the audio by half, looks up to the attentive crowd, and begins with a smile, "Any day with Jimi's a good day!"

A young man behind me leans forward, "Who's Jimi?" I shrug my shoulders, not sure where to begin. So starts my first day of class.

This is introductory creative writing; it includes playwriting and poetry as well as narrative fiction. I am realising that really looking, seeing the details that will communicate my perspective is the skill that aids me both as a photographer and as a writer.

This is a work shopping class. For those of you unfamiliar with this sort of thing, you share your written assignments with the members of your group. Their job is to dissect your darling. First rounds are often littered with comments like, "I liked the piece, good imagery and engaging voice." Soon though, students become more familiar with the process and more confident with their voices and the nuggets start to come. True thoughts, both good and bad, are shared. This is the advice that will help me to become a better writer. These are the words that will give me a more precise picture of what I'm really putting down on the page, and how other people see it - people who aren't my family.

I'm confident real value will come from immersing myself in this boiling pot of hopeful writers. Hearing their words, reading their stories, and watching their minds work, I compare myself to them, not for status, but to learn how to be a better writer. The protective walls of social decorum that I dragged into this classroom break down quickly, and free me to drop my defences and soak up the experience.

It's humbling. I show up thinking that my time in the world and the volumes I've written make me special; they don't. In fact, they set me up for



a bit of a fall. The ease with which these young people adapt and flow can be mind numbing for someone not of that age. They accept criticism, offer brilliant out-of-the box-ideas, change direction in a heartbeat and take up a torch without a second's hesitation. They offer friendship, conversation and share experiences with no concern for status or age. I'm in without judgment. Of course, I spend the first class analyzing how everyone else fits in; who's got talent and who's just sporting attitude – I belong to a generation of analysts and it's a hard

habit to break. Fortunately, you can only hold onto that stance for so long in this environment; soon enough I'm just part of the group.

It's November as I write this piece and I've been going to class for two months. In that time I've learned a lot about the craft of writing. I understand the value of structure and why writing is at times part science and part mysticism. The mystical is that place inside where inspiration is first born. The part of me that generates the thoughts and feelings, which become my written work. It is sometimes difficult to access. I used to believe the door could be opened through hard work and persistence; the truth is exactly opposite. I needed to let go of the conditions and expectations I placed on my ideas. Participating in this class taught me to be less serious about myself; my fellow students felt no need to write something meaningful or deep, only a need to write. The moment I started thinking the perfect word or idea would make my work better was the second I'd disengaged from the mystical side of the art. As with photography, the true magic in writing comes from unfiltered honesty.

I was taught to measure my words carefully and consider their impact on others; as a writer I must allow the flow to be what it may and worry about the clean up



Top: Times Square

Above: Mykonos

after. Writing well is the balance between the inspiration that creates ideas and the structure and discipline that translates them into compelling story. The science of writing allows one to present their ideas to the best advantage, enabling the words to speak truly and the characters to come alive. I have come to know a lot of people as well - other writers. I have learned to collaborate and to take criticism. (Now I know how the people who don't win



Red Flyer, Firenze

the best actor awards at the Oscars manage to maintain their composure.)

Most of all, I've found the value of the staid chains I'd tried to avoid. I feel I've grown as an artist. I see that my words were already there; they were just having trouble arranging themselves. They needed guidelines and structures to create order: tools and techniques to help them be their best. They needed a keeper willing to improve their delivery so they could unleash themselves. They needed someone who could be fearless and was willing to let the cards fall where

they may. This is the true reward of education and knowledge: the confidence to trust that things will roll out as they should, that the mysteries are knowable, and that the ability to adapt and flow is less about age and more about a willingness to let go and feel liberty.

Born and raised on the coast, **Jeff Stathopoulos** lives in Kelowna, BC with his wife Tanya, their two university-bound daughters and canine kids. Beyond art and career, they travel extensively, garden without surrender and read insatiably.

Art for Jeff, whether it's photography or the written word, is a medium to isolate perspective of everyday things; a way to interpret and see them anew, unrecognized - as if for the first time.

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# COME LITTLE LEAVES

## Grace Frank



Each week, as part of the heArt Fit program our facilitator sends out an email with creative inspiration prior to our Tuesday gathering of art making. This particular week, she suggested we think about autumn, its colours and associations related to those colours. I don't have a specific idea of what I will do in class, no result in mind, but rather I try to let my creative process take the lead. Let the mind relax, think of an idea—in this case autumn—and see what comes of it. Here is the mental journey I took that morning on a path of leaves and a lullaby:

For me, autumn is both beautiful and melancholic. An autumn leaf, magnificent and ephemeral is both breathtaking and sad. Why would nature put on such a show for something in its last stage of existence? A leaf's purpose is to provide photosynthetic energy for the tree, and does so in a mass of green alongside other near identical leaves. When that work is accomplished, nature rewards the leaf with fancy colours, each an individual show as it flies off in the autumn wind. The same ought to be said of a human being. In our

Come Little Leaves



productive years as we work and raise families, our individual identity is often sacrificed for our own greater good. As aging adults we recapture that sense of our own individuality, the one we began with as children. Like autumn leaves, we can now don the full spectrum of colour, fulfilled in our final dance.

As a child, my mother sang a lullaby, *Come, Little Leaves*, learned from the rocking chair of her father. It made me feel both sad yet comforted. As I drew with my oil pastels, I thought of the dancing and whirling leaves of my childhood imagination, of my 88-year-old mother with dementia, of her sister lost in a similar fog, who yet joined while I sang the lullaby of our respective childhoods. I thought of the snow laying its coverlet over the still beautiful and content leaves.

heArt Fit focuses on creative process taking the lead, rather than technique. For mature adults, with plenty of life experience to tap into, art making can be deeply satisfying. The shared wisdom of age, in this group setting, fuels my own creative journey.

### Lyrics from *Come Little Leaves* by American poet, George Cooper (1838-1927)

"Come, little leaves," said the wind one day,  
"Come o'er the meadow with me and play;  
Put on your dresses of red and gold.  
Summer is gone and the days grow cold."

Soon as the leaves heard the wind's loud call,  
Down they came fluttering one and all.  
Over the brown fields they danced and flew,  
Singing the glad little songs they knew.

"Cricket, good-bye, we've been friends so long;  
Little brook, sing us your farewell song.  
Dear little lamb in your fleecy fold,  
Mother will keep you from harm and cold."

Dancing and whirling the little leaves went:  
Winter had called them and they were content.  
Soon fast asleep in their earthy beds,  
The snow laid a coverlet over their heads.

**Grace Frank** was born and raised under the wide-open skies of southern Saskatchewan, observing the minutiae of life among the grasses and the grand spectacle of sky and weather. Compulsively creative her whole life, she took up painting and drawing in her early 40s, acquiring a certificate from the University of Saskatchewan Certificate of Art and Design program in her mid-50s. With her husband, she shares her time between Saskatoon and their new home in the beautiful Okanagan Valley.

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**As aging adults we recapture that sense of our own individuality, the one we began with as children. Like autumn leaves, we can now don the full spectrum of colour, fulfilled in our final dance.**

# HEART MESSAGES

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ALBERTO AZZI



Karen Close interviewing Alberto Azzi

### Karen Close

About four years ago Alberto arrived at the door of our drop-in class of spontaneous process painters; we meet weekly at the local arts centre. Our group is called heART Fit and is open to all ages and levels of experience – to those who have never picked up a paint brush and those who are experienced painters. Alberto had read about us in the newsletter and thought we might be what he was looking for.

“I came to Canada when I was 66. I went to Port Coquitlam first, but 10 years ago I moved to Kelowna because there was too much rain. I had to use an umbrella the size of a parachute. I still have bad conversation. It is hard for me to communicate, but I am very happy to be in Kelowna. I left Italy because it - really all of Europe - is overcrowded. There is too much traffic and pollution. Kelowna is very similar to my region with the mountains, but less people.

When I was in the eleventh grade in school I started to take drawing, but I wanted to draw a hippopotamus and the teacher said, ‘What are you doing?’ After he told my friend I should pay more attention to him and the lesson. My own drawings I should do at home. So I did and then my mother bought me paints. Later, as a working adult, I would stay up until 2 or 3 in the morning painting. It was my relaxation. I learned to paint from my grandmother, the mother of my mother. She was a great painter and I still have the work she gave me. My grandfather, the father of my father, painted too. I am not a professional. I am a dilettante, but I love to paint. In my profession I was a dentist.”

Alberto declines to give his age, but he eagerly shares the enjoyment painting has given him. Throughout his professional years painting was a refuge from the demands of his practice and afforded a time to retreat into his love of detail and inventiveness. “Sometime I would get out of bed to paint into the early morning.”

When he joined us we were all captivated by his skill. Through the years as I introduced him to others I would say, “we have our own Italian Renaissance master.” Always deferential and very modest, he would demure, smile, and shrug off our compliments. When we ask questions about his paintings, he says his English is not good enough to explain and that he just wants to be with us and learn with us. We laugh. What can we teach him? We continue to be fascinated by the fine brush with minimal hairs that is his favourite and we are intrigued to watch a painting slowly emerge. Alberto is quiet, but happily he has stayed with our group over the years to share his works, colour combinations he particularly enjoys, photos of his home area in the beautiful Dolomite mountain range and bits of anecdotes about his

**I am not a professional. I am a dilettante, but I love to paint. In my profession I was a dentist.**



Top: Cat In The Dolomites



Above: Alberto at work

family and his new life in Canada.

I have hiked among the Dolomites in Northern Italy and became entranced by these ancient peaks and the sense of calm endurance manifest in their strong presence. They have survived the eons. In 2009 the Dolomites were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The sense of them has stayed with me and I felt an immediate kinship with this man who came from these peaks. When he showed me his surreal painting of these powerful mountains diminished to a background stage set dominated by a solemn cat posed in the moonlight I was filled with questions. Alberto smiled, and said he likes cats.

“I don’t like to copy. It is too compelling to copy because it is easier. The landscape is a very difficult subject for me. I like to look in my mind. That cat is not one cat. It is all the cats I have seen. He is a symbol. His colour could never exist in reality. I put the flowers in because there was too much space at the front; still, I think they give meaning.

I have a lot of passion when I paint. A lot of times I don’t have passion, but I do when I paint. I see. However, sometimes I would like to finish and with my small brush it takes so long. Those are the mountains of my country. The Dolomites in the morning take this rosa colour.”

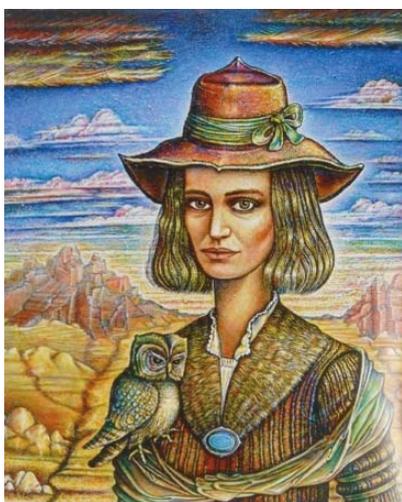
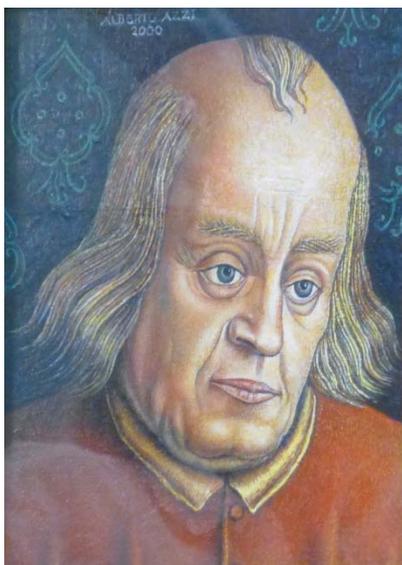
When I asked if he knew the work of Salvador Dali and Surrealism, he became animated.

“Yes I believe art is beyond reality. It is beyond because the artist gives his own reality and goes into his own sense and sensibilities. If I am able to send a message, it is a goal, but my purpose is to give the message of who I am, of my sensibilities by how I paint.” His small brush requires great patience. His paintings combine patience, passion and precision.

These words were spoken to me by a stranger with whom I shared a bus seat several years ago: “And what is as important as knowledge?” asked the mind. ‘Caring and seeing with the heart,’ answered the soul.” At the time his abrupt gift of these words startled me, yet through the years their message has become increasingly meaningful and indeed given me purpose as I age. I share them with Alberto. He nods.

Encouraging others to look at each other’s art with “caring and seeing with the heart,” was my intention with the creation of the heART Fit painting group. I believe art is the language of the heart. How we use our hands and what strokes we make as we paint communicate the creator’s intention perhaps even more than his or her choice of subject. A member of the group shared her thought that, “When you extend your hand to another, when you express, when you create, consider your hand not just skin and bone, it’s your heart and a way to bring even your quietest heart messages onto the world.”

Watching Alberto build the surface of a work, I hear these words. His hand projects the affirming calm of his measured nature on to the surface of his work. There is really no impasto, just minute particles of paint. Patiently, thoughtfully and slowly he builds stroke upon stroke. He is crafting life, the experience of his life, into his paintings.



Top: Old Man

Middle: Wise Woman

Above: The Whirlwind

Although they appear almost photographic, he says his portraits are of no one in particular. When I suggest the old man looks like him, he shakes his head, and again the shrug and the smile. “But he is old. I was trying to just make a human face. It is not a modern man. It is all a fantasy. I didn’t copy. Sometimes I did look in the mirror for symmetry.” I see it is not who it is, but rather the texture of the skin, its wrinkles, the bulging, but non-judging eyes, and the lips as though biting back words that have been his focus.

Many of us in heART Fit work non-representationally, yet as we’ve continued to paint together over the years we notice that each of us has a distinct style, ways of applying the paint that become recognizable. The technical skill demonstrated in Alberto’s portraits is greatly respected by us, but he wanting to show us that he liked our work, brought in some of his abstract compositions. His style is consistent. It is still the building up of minute dabs of colour coalescing to create form that intrigues him.

“All painting, no matter what you are painting, is abstract in that it’s got to be organized,” said American painter David Hockney. “Balance, vibration, weighting, form and eye control, mastery of colour, areas of visual excitement and areas of paucity, grey to rest the eye and gradations: These design elements, when intuitively understood, can create a stand-alone magic.”

When I muse aloud that his strokes are like the many fragments of thought that coalesce to shape an idea or concept, Alberto declines speculation, pointing out the language barrier that prevents deep discussion. He is very polite, but silent about many things. He is like the mountains of his homeland.

However, he is keen to express his appreciation for being able to paint with us and to hear that we admire his works. Although he can’t communicate verbally as readily as he might wish, his art has helped him to create friendships and to know he has a place where he feels supported. A community art group is fertile ground for exchange. I surmise how lonely it must have been to come to a new country as a senior and have to learn a new language. Painting is a universal language. It is beautiful to watch Alberto communicate and share who he is with each stroke of his brush.

Alberto can be contacted at [azzis.aa@gmail.com](mailto:azzis.aa@gmail.com)

# BEING WHO I AM

## Carolina Sanchez de Bustamante



At the Studio Door

**I was brought up in a family setting where education and culture in general were seen as an important assets for the development of a child.**

My name is Carolina Sanchez de Bustamante, born in Argentina. When I arrived in Canada in 1989 to visit a scottish friend, Robert Sterry, who was living in Canada at the time, life took over. I got married to him and we have a son; Max is now 18 years old.

It was a lot of adapting and learning, but I am grateful to have had the right set of circumstances to be able to live in such a beautiful country like Canada, especially in the Okanagan Valley.

I grew up in an equally amazing place in the centre of Argentina, surrounded by the beauty of the landscape and the allure of its people. Unfortunately, there was as well the not so desirable political circumstances that my homeland went through in the '70's and '80's. Fortunately, I was brought up in a family setting where education and culture in general were seen as an important assets for the development of a child. I remember being a child of 7 or 8 years old, and sitting with my father at his drawing table to copy whichever plans he was working on at the time. At that age I was without understanding that this action would open a path into architectural design. I still have etched in my mind those plans my father used to draw based on the "famous Canadian igloos". I had the opportunity to live part of my childhood in a home such as those. Already in those days I was being influenced by my surroundings to think outside of the box. I feel myself amazingly lucky to have grown up in a place where knowledge was passed on while allowing me to grow and fly with my own wings.

A love for textiles and ceramics —traditional latin american arts— has been part of who I am since I can remember. Since I was a teenager, I have been researching and experimenting with these two disciplines, creating and participating in different art exhibitions in Argentina, and internationally. Being self-taught in textiles and ceramics, and having participated in archaeological research, has allowed me to create my own artistic path, and to express my own voice with a South American cultural connotation. I have used my creativity to express my inner voice regarding the role of culture in society and the state of world affairs. My work speaks about political and environmental concerns.

With certain understanding of working with clay and the passion for design in architecture, it was not difficult to go into Architectural Ceramics.



Inside ASHPA NAIRA

When I had the opportunity to open a studio in the Okanagan Valley, located on the westside of Okanagan Lake, in Vernon, BC, I created ASHPA NAIRA Studio.

I have been working with architects and designers to create original and custom tile installation since 1995. Indeed the name ASHPA NAIRA is taken from the indigenous quechua language of the Incas and means “fired earth”, which is exactly the process that transforms raw clay into ceramics.

Another aspect that fascinates me is the dealing of other artists’ artwork. In the middle of the 1980’s in Argentina, I started what now is called a ‘pop up gallery’. These gallerie were done out of my passionate need to bring original art from the bigger centres to the interior of the country. My passion for witnessing the energy that is trans-

ferred continues. I love the curiosity for the message that is generated when people see authentic art. This passion has taken me once again to be part of art dealing in the place I now call home, the Okanagan Valley. There is a certain energy in this valley which attracts creative people in different disciplines, such as the visual arts, music, dance, and writing. I am thankful to live in a country like Canada, which gives the opportunity to artists to make their creations a reality.

I consider myself to be part artist, part art dealer. These two are of the same, but different, aspects of my life journey and have allowed me to make the balance in the manner in which I see the artist as an important part of the commercial galleries system. I want to make a statement not only of how gallery spaces should look when artists’ creations are displayed, but most importantly, how the space should feel both for the creators and for the viewers. It is said that positive energy attracts and I want that for my gallery.

There is a mystical word in ceramic art; that word is ‘Alchemy’. It refers to the magical power or process of transmuting the mud, which is really of little value, into a creation of great value. I believe strongly in another process of alchemy - creating value between artists and the society we live in; I want this transmitted energy to affect us all in a more positive manner. The creative influence a work of art generates is a way of connecting people to their surrounding space, whether it be indoors or outdoors. We are not only spectators to the artwork, we are participants to the concept. It has been demonstrated throughout the world that community cultural art is not a luxury or a sign of opulence, rather it has an important role in bringing balance to us both within our private surroundings and in the environment. This balance will help to create by nature a more unpretentious society. I believe the role for an artist/dealer is to collaborate with others and to



ARTE funktional, Kelowna

**I firmly believe that when we use the mystical side of life to create – whatever it is that we choose to make – we are surprising ourselves.**

facilitate, in any measure possible, the achievement of a more harmonious society within our communities. Many times I have been asked by those creating: “How do I know what I would like to achieve with my art and how do I know when it is done?” For me, the answer comes from these considerations: It feels right and it is within the same philosophy of how I conduct my life. I try my best to live in harmony with the intention to open the path to, what I personally call, “the alchemy of life”, the magical creation of value.

If I may reflect upon the message of my work, I should say that each work is a personal interior exploration.

It is my intention to open paths with the possibility to connect them to joyful discoveries. My art is a constant search as a human being, seeking to provoke closed observation and sustained thought. The world and the self are one and perfect. Only our attitude is inadequate and needs readjustment.

I firmly believe that when we use the mystical side of life to create – whatever it is that we choose to make – we are surprising ourselves. The point is to stop being who we are, and to start being who we want to be. This winter I will be given the opportunity to explore this belief. It is said that mothering is the act and practice of love and the passing on of knowledge. Personally, I feel that the continuation of what was given to me and what my son will pass on to his children is my important responsibility towards my son, Maxwell. During this winter, Maxwell and I will have the chance to work together in an art installation of his own creation, to be featured in the Courtyard at the Kelowna Art Gallery in the spring of 2015. During the next five months of creating all the elements for the installation, a 57 year old mother and an 18 year old son will put to the test the practicing of understanding, respect and collaboration, with the vision that the installation will be conducive to love for all.

**Maria Carolina Sanchez de Bustamante** brings a rich heritage of traditional South American ceramics and textile skills to her works. Her imagery moves from representational themes dealing with the environment and politics to non objective subjects interwoven with a wealth of colour and style.

In 2004 Carolina became a contemporary art gallery owner with the establishment of *Ashpa Naira Gallery* in Vernon, BC. In 2013 she opened *ARTE funktional* in Kelowna, BC. Her galleries represent emerging and established Canadian artists in fine arts, functional art and architectural art.

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# SNOWFLAKES, CREATIVITY AND PATTERNS THAT CONNECT

**Lisa Lipsett**



Art making with nature can help us experience the living world in inspiring new ways. From watching the unique trajectory of a falling leaf to noticing individual ice crystals on a snowy slope for the first time, taking even a few moments to create with nature helps us to slow down and really see her patterned beauty.

What happens when we take this one step further and impersonate the way nature creates, for example by drawing and painting spontaneously with no plan? Like when a snowflake’s intricacies are revealed under magnification, do our unique patterns reveal themselves onto the page, thus affording an opportunity to see and feel anew? Maybe art making based on natural principles then becomes a sacred practice that connects us to all life.

## Artful Snowflakes

Pattern contains the nature of nature. Via pattern we see nature at its most wondrous. – Soesu Yanagi

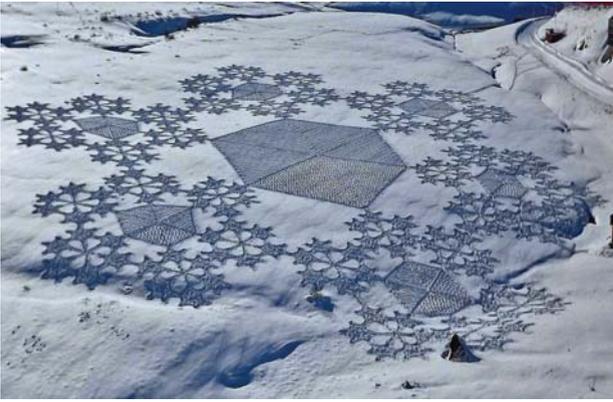
Almost a decade ago when I still lived in central Ontario, the first snowfall would often make me anxious. I never quite adjusted to the six-month hibernation snow imposed on my life and the first snow heralded the arrival of a long confinement. Now that I live on Canada’s west coast, snow is such a rarity that I stop whatever I am doing and simply stand in the road to let flakes land on my face and hands. I’ve come to appreciate these snowy interludes for the treasures they are. Sometimes I even get in the car and drive

for hours just to be with snow for a day or two.

Like a vast white canvas, snow now calls out to me for an artful response. I create with snow whenever the opportunity presents itself. From pouring paint on its surface, to moving colour on the page with packed handfuls, tracking flake trajectories with eyes and drawing hands, stomping out patterns, making snow angels, sculpting burrows and beings, rolling or sliding down a hill, snow presents many hands-on opportunities. Late last fall we had a particularly poignant snowfall characterized by giant flakes floating down from the chalky grey sky. I was fascinated with the

pattern in a track and snow crystals





Top: Simon Beck snow art

Above: Kljatov snowflake photograph

**We all know that each snowflake is a unique crystal, but I never imagined they could be so beautiful with such delicate structures that each looks like a little ice palace.**

beauty of these individual flakes.

It was at about this time when the internet was abuzz with Russian photographer Alexey Kljatov's gorgeous macro photography of individual snowflakes. We all know that each snowflake is a unique crystal, but I never imagined they could be so beautiful with such delicate structures that each looks like a little ice palace. Kljatov brings them to life with three dimensional vitality. <http://chaoticmind75.blogspot.ru/2013/08/my-technique-for-snowflakes-shooting.html>

As far back as the late 1800s Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley was photographing and sharing images of snowflakes to the amazement of the public <http://snowflakebentley.com> In fact in 1885, using a specially designed microscope coupled with a camera, he became the first person to successfully photograph a snowflake. He enthused, "*under the microscope, I found that snowflakes were miracles of beauty; and it seemed a shame that this beauty should not be seen and appreciated by others. Every crystal was a masterpiece of design and no one design was ever repeated.*"

More recently Canadian photographer Don Komarechka has gathered all things snowflake into his book *Sky Crystals* where he documents both science and photography techniques used to learn about them.

Then there is British snow artist Simon Beck who makes and then photographs giant crystal-like geometric shapes in the snow. The Koch snowflake inspires his work, a geometric fractal creation that uses repeated mathematical iterations to generate a crystalline pattern of great complexity and beauty. By working on the scale of a snowy plateau Beck brings the normally unseen fractal nature of flakes into clear view by using his unique form of magnification that yields dramatic results see <https://www.facebook.com/snowart8848>

Fractals are never-ending patterns that are infinitely complex and self-similar across different scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an on going feedback loop. Nature is filled with examples of fractal patterns many of which, like snowflakes, are either too small to see unaided or are revealed only when we step way back to look. For instance: trees, rivers, coastlines, mountains, clouds, seashells and hurricanes are all fractals. To get a small taste of their beauty and abundance have a peek at these wonderful satellite images of Earth fractals. <http://paulbourke.net/fractals/googleearth/>

## Creativity and Natural Pattern

"We see ourselves mirrored and potentiated in the myriad patterns of leaf and limb, of animal totems, of spirals, the ripples and meanders that carry us downstream. Our own true natural selves are revealed." – Laura Sewell Sight and Sensibility: The Ecopsychology of perception



Patterns in natural painting

**By simply letting go to flow, by following what we are attracted to, and by trusting the process, natural patterns and forms emerge that are seen in the art of many cultures the world over, spanning thousands of years of human image-making.**

Painting with Snow



So I bet you wonder what fractal patterns have to do with creative art? This is where things get really interesting. When we move from creating *with* nature and instead create *like* nature, (by this I mean spontaneously, in the moment with no plan, by simply following what attracts), we enter the realm of sacred art where both universal and our own natural patterns are revealed.

In her book *Sacred Ground to Sacred Space* Rowena Pattee Kryder characterizes sacred art by the universal presence of numerous patterns and forms: subatomic, atomic, crystalline, plant, animal and morphotypes (complex symbiotic forms). She writes about light based forms: the point, the rod, cylinder or column, the branch fishbone or ribbed form, the triangle or pyramid, the radial or cross, the right-angled web, lattice or grid; the forms that subtle energies take: the laminar flow or chaos, the spindle or spiral, the wave, S-curve, zigzag, chevron, the step or progression, the sphere, circle or oval, and the loop, knot or weave; and sacred totemic animal forms that embody spiritual qualities.

By simply letting go to flow, by following what we are attracted to, and by trusting the process, natural patterns and forms emerge that are seen in the art of many cultures the world over, spanning thousands of years of human image-making. These forms and patterns can also be seen in children's spontaneous artwork in addition to being the forms and patterns that comprise the living world.

When I began a painting practice in 1997 I painted spontaneously for almost 3 months then I laid all my artwork out in a circle to better see patterns. I wanted an overview. As I carried on with my practice that year it became clear that I was both feeling and painting the stages in a metamorphic cycle, something I may not have been fully aware of if I hadn't gotten an overview (see my *Beauty Muse* book to learn more). Indeed I experienced first hand through spontaneous creative art what science writer Philip Ball observes to be true about nature: "*nature's language may be spontaneous, but it is not arbitrary*". The Self-Made Tapestry: Pattern Formation in Nature,

Discovering this merging of scientific fact with artful expression brought me wonder, joy and a profound humility - all the spiritual rewards of an ongoing nature-based art practice. I believe we are inherently attracted to the beauty of nature's patterns, though at times we must alter our view in order to really see. Whether this means looking deeper, using all our senses, bringing the unseen to light through magnification or creativity, or looking at change over time, when we see the pattern of things we feel reverence and

awe. Gregory Bateson calls this the pattern that connects - the life force energy of all beings made visible, made tangible.

Our appreciation is further deepened when we see these patterns in our own drawings and paintings. Over time we emerge with a refreshed sense

of our own patterned nature. The beauty of natural pattern becomes more of what we see in daily moments. We no longer stand afar, instead we know how to take our place in the natural order and feel our vital roots as creatures and creators.

**The beauty of natural pattern becomes more of what we see in daily moments. We no longer stand afar, instead we know how to take our place in the natural order and feel our vital roots as creatures and creators.**

### **An Artful Snow Encounter: Try Snowflake Art**

There are unlimited ways to co-create with snow as both material and inspiration. This video entitled Snowflake Art <http://vimeo.com/111952884> demonstrates how to track and create with individual flakes as they fall. Depending on the circumstances you can do this outside while flakes fall on your page or on a particularly cold day, you can observe and create beside a window as the snow drama unfolds on the other side of the glass. No special tools are needed to give this a go, just some pens, paint, paper and a sense of adventure.

An exploration of your own patterns can flow naturally out of a snowflake encounter, or can begin as an intention to paint 2-3 times per week for 30 minutes, simply following what attracts your attention. Maybe set the task of dreaming into the snow surface out your door or on the page. What lies beneath? What lies within? What do you see when you step back and take a larger view?

#### **Resources:**

Sky Crystals: Unraveling the Mystery of Snowflakes- Don Komarechka

Beauty Muse: Painting in Communion with Nature- Lisa Lipsett

**Lisa Lipsett's** work focuses on the transformative potential of hands-on art with Earth in mind. Visit [LisaLipsett.com](http://LisaLipsett.com) and [creativebynature.org](http://creativebynature.org) to learn more about Creative by Nature Art resources, articles, blog, classes and paintings.

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# AT MY AGE IN CREATIVITY



## Kevin Ade

I've lived in B.C. for forty-one years and now I'm leaving. I'm going back to the UK. I never intended to stay here for as long as I have, but when love comes calling we are powerless to resist and I fell in love like a lemming. Not only with people, but with the country. And I never realized how deeply until I decided to leave. So what has this to do with creativity and aging? Actually, a lot.

Firstly, and perhaps superficially, the decision to leave, which did not come easily, has led me to review my past and examine the products of my history. My house, which is small, is like a pigsty just now – junk everywhere, piles of books, records, shoes and suitcases and easels and drawings scattered about, upstairs and down, like remnants from a bomb blast. And I have been sitting in the midst of all of this, usually on the floor, searching through the boxes and folders of everything I've saved or produced which has somehow remained with me since 1968. Yes, 1968! - before I came here in 1973. And that has shown me how my creativity has evolved in the last forty-five years.

Now I don't really consider the issues of aging and creativity to be very important. I consider art (creativity) to be important, and people are important (mostly because I am one and I've discovered that the other members of my tribe are both entertaining and useful). But to make an issue out of 'oldness' and art seems a little bonkers to me. They each exist as the sky exists and to describe the sky as old or young, and imply that there are differences according to the designation, and furthermore that those differences should be examined according to those designations, amounts to a whole heap of wasted energy. We are as we are and our art is as it has become.

But here I can see people saying "Yes, but don't you think our creativity changes with our age? Isn't that important?" Um...no. It's not important. Our creativity doesn't get better or worse as we pass through more experiences in life, even if it does change. And however it may change that is not caused by or influenced by age, but by experience.

At this point in the discussion (which I am having with myself) I should say that I don't believe that there is such a thing as a bad poem, only a better poem. This applies to all our creative efforts whatever our age.

I find that I am annoyed by this age thing, mostly because I feel that there is an undercurrent of resentment that older artists are not respected or recognized or paid attention to - because they are old. I may be wrong about that, but if I am right then I think it's rubbish. No-one deserves extra respect or attention because of their age. In the field of art we earn it not by the fact of our survival, but with our voice. And the voice will speak with its own style

Old Man, 1984





Top: Margaret Atwood, 1984

Above: Girl Dancing 2013

and timbre whatever we may wish of it. I cannot paint as Picasso did, nor colour as Matisse nor write as Edna St. Vincent Millay. My voice dictates to me, not the other way around, and though experience has influenced the product, age has not changed the language or accent in over forty-five years.

When discussing this with a friend he made the point that youth's creativity suffers because they are so distracted with having to make a living and finding a way to live their lives. I suppose there is some truth to that, but for me the greatest difference between youth's creativity and that of the older folk is that youth revel in the novelty of it all; whereas, we revel in its continuing richness. Like a young man who plants his first seeds is excited at the appearance of the seedlings and their vibrant growth as compared to an old gardener who has come to know his land and its flora, but is continually in awe at the beauty it returns to his garden. Neither is more important than the other, and like the poem neither is better than the other.

And now I have to address that thing which I have been trying to avoid, but which this publication has asked me to address – i.e. aging and creativity as a means to wisdom. Oh, boy! Well, I'd better dive straight in. I don't believe in wisdom. The idea of it is a conceit, to claim it is an arrogance, to allot it is foolishness. Of course, the irony here is that by saying that I imply that there is something undesirable, even condemnable, about conceit, arrogance and foolishness. Surely that means that there is something preferable in their opposites which we could call wisdom? Call it what you will, neither art nor age will take you there. Neither art nor age will make you 'wise'. They won't make you anything. Only the art will show you up as you are, and if you or others wish to judge that then do so. But remember, you are not defined by the audience's approval, but your own.

Finally, I know the adages say that experience comes with age and wisdom from experience, but there are no fewer fools or more sages among the elderly than there are among youth.

And finally finally, a note: I think this article is inadequate. Like a spring rain it brings forth more weeds than flowers - more questions than answers. Meaning demands great language, and even greater patience. I have a feeling that I have failed to adequately fulfil the demands of any of those three conditions. Sorry about that. Perhaps it's something to do with age.

**Kevin Ade** is a father, artist, writer, fisherman, and idiot. When he was five years old he decided he wanted to pursue wisdom. At forty he realized there was no such thing. Nonetheless, he has continued to pursue the esoteric and continually rediscovers that there is an unlimited world of insight beyond the limited concept of wisdom. Of course he may be wrong.

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# NURTURING MY CREATIVE SPIRIT

## THE CAREGIVER WITHIN

**Janice E. Dalton**



**I use my hands to harness my creativeness into tangible products that will tell others who I am.**

I turned 50 years old this year. With this milestone came a need for self-reflection. Who am I? What makes me who I am? What do I want to be in my future?

On the surface, I identify myself as a daughter, wife, mother of four, past caregiver to my father and a health care professional. Threaded throughout these titles is caring and nurturing. To add context to my caring roles, I have four children ranging in age from nine to twenty-four, am currently married and was caregiver to my father for five years prior to his passing in 2003. Throughout my career I have worked in long term care programs providing services to the elderly and their caregivers.

These roles define what I am to others, but what about the other facets of the self - my passions and those things that bring me pleasure and feed the inner soul. I look inward to find the answer and realize I am a creator: a quilter, knitter, needle worker, rug hooker. I use my hands to harness my creativeness into tangible products that will tell others who I am.

In the past I have always viewed the two, my caregiving role and creative inner soul, as separate – co-existing within, but not intersecting. As I dig deep, I realize that this is not the reality. My caregiving experience has fed my inner soul, while my creativeness has helped shape my caregiving experience. This revelation did not come easily, but with age I have honed my self reflection skills.

Last fall, while surfing the net looking for quilting related inspiration I hit upon the Ottawa Guild website and a reference to a touch quilt project, a project promoted by the Alzheimer's Society of Manitoba. With a little more surfing I learned that touch quilts are constructed to stimulate the senses, especially the touch sense, and that these quilts often provide comfort, calming and stimulation for people with mid-to late-stage Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Senses are stimulated by these small lap size quilts through the incorporation of colour, texture and the addition of items to fidget with such as zippers, laces, tie ends and pockets.

As I work within a Long Term Program, the touch quilt project peaked my interest. I know that over half the resident population in long term care suffer from some type of dementia. Would touch quilts be beneficial to some of our residents?

With information on the project, I approached my quilting guild, the Ocean View Quilter's Guild, and proposed that we would create Touch Quilts to donate to local Long Term Care facilities as our charity project for



Top: my quilt

Above: my quilt close-up

2013-14. The response was overwhelming. At some point in their lives everyone has known someone living with dementia.

In preparation for leading the touch quilt project, I began reliving my experience as a caregiver to my Dad. Diagnosed originally with Parkinson Disease, his condition deteriorated with overlays of cognitive impairment. A later diagnosis of Multisystem Atrophy manifested itself in forgetfulness, confusion and agitation, along with other physical symptoms. Would Dad have liked a touch quilt?

As I embarked on the journey to create a touch quilt, I would have given him, I reflected on my caregiving experience. A small quilt composed of 36 six inch squares would have draped nicely over his lap, providing enough variety to stimulate, but not overwhelm. That size would have provided a sense of comfort and warmth, however, it would not have posed a safety hazard as I wheeled him from his room to visit in the common area.

What colours would he have liked? Bright, contrasting colours to catch his eye with a sprinkle of his favourite colour, blue, to provide a calming effect. Yes, this would be reflective of his quiet personality, re-

minding him of the clear blue sky and swirling ocean that he could no longer freely view inside the walls of the long term facility.

For tactile stimulation, I chose corduroy, denim, imitation fur, satin and soft fleece. The bumps and ridges of the corduroy might remind him of the pants he wore to the classroom he taught in year after year. The imitation fur, soft and fuzzy, might have triggered a faint memory of Libby his much loved canine friend. Would the satin trim have brought him back many years, to a time when I toddled around dragging my satin bound blankie behind me?

To calm fidgeting fingers, it is important to incorporate embellishments such as rick rack and a denim pocket. I imagined if he had owned this touch quilt, he would have spent hours plunging his finger into the recess of the

**As I designed and constructed the touch quilt, memories of my Dad swirled in my head. As a caregiver and a quilter, I celebrated his life.**

pocket, looking for that pencil stub to mark a piece of wood in his workshop. He would have found relief from mental anguish and agitation, stroking the varied quilt stimuli.

As I designed and constructed the touch quilt, memories of my Dad swirled in my head. As a caregiver and a quilter, I celebrated his life. The touch quilt is now complete and ready to find a new home. I realize that its creation was shaped by the reciprocal relationship of my caregiving experience and my creative spirit. While I am sad that my Dad will not reap the pleasure of my toil, I find comfort in knowing that who I am, a caregiver, has informed my art. I also recognize that my art has retrospectively informed my caregiving experience. Caregiving for my father was often a difficult and stressful task; however, creating this touch quilt has allowed me to relive my past caregiving experience in a positive and meaningful manner.

As I move into the future I recognize that the caregiver within me will continue to nurture my creative spirit and define who I am and what I create. Sharing my story has not been easy; however, I am hopeful that it will inspire other caregivers to draw upon their caregiving experience to enhance their artistic expression and create something of beauty and comfort.

## **A Caregiver's Touch Quilt**

Janice E. Dalton

My fingers fumble across the stack of textiles,  
Which one will speak to you?  
Corduroy, fur or satin.

I stack and sew the squares,  
Which one will provide comfort to you?  
Corduroy, fur or satin.

I lay the quilt upon your lap,  
Which one triggers a faint memory?  
Corduroy, fur or satin

I see a glimpse of calm,  
My toil is for not  
I am your caregiver

**Janice E. Dalton, RD, MHS**, is a past family caregiver, who presently works as a healthcare professional in the Long Term Care Program, Eastern Health, the largest integrated health organization in Newfoundland and Labrador providing a full continuum of health services to communities in their region.

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# MY THIRD ACT

## Judy Steiert



“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” – Mary Oliver

In my third act I have had a marvellous time exploring many options - my company is called Elderquest Options. Having had an adventurous experience in what Jane Fonda called “Life’s Third Act,” I am in the process of inventing my “fourth quarter.” As I reflect on my 66 years of life experience, the choices in the past 15 years have been particularly rich and profoundly satisfying. In 1999, at age 51, I left my career as a Math educator – this event ended my second act. Yes, the left brain had been highly developed over those years but the other side was calling for attention. What to do, who to be?

Since I was not eligible for a pension at 51, I pursued many career opportunities to add to the family finances. At *The Skill Factory*, I was an instructor to teenagers who had fallen through the cracks and required some basic skills in Math and English to qualify for job training. Creativity had to kick in immediately and it did not fail me. We learned basic math skills through activities. A sewing project was initiated to create simple “zany” dolls for children in shelters. The boys were as captivated as the girls by this endeavour. The joy expressed by the children when we delivered the dolls was worth every hour spent creating them.

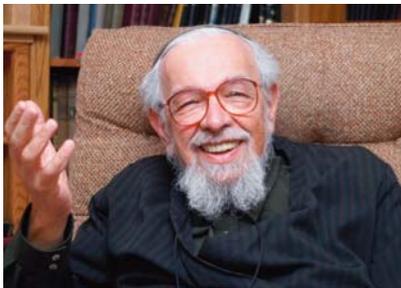
Other career pursuits included adult upgrading in Math, Education Coordinator for the Alberta Real Estate Association and Continuing Education Instructor for the Teacher Assistant program at the U of C in Math Methods, Ethics and Communication. The latter position allowed me to create projects for the mothers “called” into the classrooms to help out high needs children. The spirit of this group was so amazing that imposing the regular routine of papers in the usual university style was not an option. Story books, puzzles and games made Math real and we discovered ourselves through *Myers Briggs*, the *Enneagram*, *Multiple Intelligences* and the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. The group overcame personal fears of the subject and went on to provide the same assurance to the young students they helped.

“Zany” dolls created by students to engage their creativity and self-worth.



## The Inner Work of the Sage

While searching for my place in this adventurous third act, I completed a three-year program (once a month for 30 weekends) called TEAM: *Together Enabling Adult Ministry* at the FCJ Christian Life Centre in Calgary. TEAM invited us to choose a service we could provide once we had completed the course. As I am part of the boomer group, with its large demographics, moving through society at this time, I researched a connection between



Top: Members of my first group who allowed me to try activities with them.

Middle: Reb Zalman

Above: class from *Choosing Conscious Elderhood*

social justice and pastoral care. What emerged for me was providing a voice for “elders” in a safe place where we could tell our stories and explore this stage of our lives with the wisdom of our life experience. A beloved group in my community allowed me to experiment with activities, readings, collages, videos, and meditation as I unlocked ways to create a meaningful program. The group met for a year and we went on to present other programs in the community. Making a difference became a purpose for the group.

On a visit to Winnipeg MB in 2003, a friend had handed me the book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* by Zalman Schacter-Shalomi and my life shifted. I chose to become a Certified Sage-ing Leader with training provided by the organization Sage-ing International: [www.sage-ing.org](http://www.sage-ing.org) whose logo reads “Wisdom and Spirit in Action.” Reb Zalman passed away this past July, 2014. After 89 years of life experience, he leaves a legacy that will remain with us for many years.

My certification as a Sage-ing leader was completed in October 2004. Since that time, I have created courses for the University of Calgary and delivered 50+ programs at community workshops, churches, conferences, and retreats related to *The Inner Work of the Sage*; *Conscious Aging*; *Aging With Purpose, Grace and Ease*; *Elder Wisdom in Movies*; *Write to Witness Your Life*; *Engaging in Life’s Third Act*; *Redefining Ourselves* and “*Being Well*” in the *Second half of Life*. Participants enjoy being engaged in activities that unlock their inner voice and being heard by a group of individuals on a similar path.

A retreat in 2013 called *Choosing Conscious Elderhood* provided the next stage to my growth as an elder. I was able to declare that, “I am an elder” rather than “I am becoming an elder.” Ron Pevny and Anne Wennhold provided the container for many transformative experiences and meaningful rituals. Ron has recently published his book *Conscious Living Conscious Aging* which I highly recommend as a guide into the spiritual path of an elder.

Other facilitation training includes *Conscious Aging* offered by the *Institute of Noetic Science* or IONS. Its sub-title is *Cultivate Wisdom, Connect With Others, Celebrate Life*. What an invitation to one’s third act! It is self-study and available at their website [www.noetic.org](http://www.noetic.org). I will pilot this eight-week course at the FCJ Christian Life Centre in Calgary in 2015.

Most recently, the Calgary Conscious Aging Network was created to gather interested participants to support each other on our journey, to present topics related to Sage-ing practices, and to extend the invitation to the community to join us. Co-creating this group is a goal as leaders emerge with their many talents.

I am pleased to have had the privilege of co-leading the training of new sage-ing leaders in Denver CO in October 2014. A participant commented “*Thank you for these great resources, and most of all for the great resource of your own creativity, passion, and purpose. Your films were the highlight of the training for me personally, and I do hope they can be integrated into the CSL program for future classes, too. Outstanding.*”

To engage the participants in the concepts in *Conscious Aging*, other



Top: Front of "Explosion Scrapbook"

Middle: back of "Explosion Scrapbook"

Above: SoulCollage Cards

endeavours include making collages; extracting a name for our "calling" from cards illustrated in Richard Leider's book: *Whistle While You Work: Heeding Your Life's Calling* (2001); "explosion scrapbooks" where you create the project from scratch and add any type of picture, quote, or any other creative expression of the theme you have chosen. These activities also work well for decade birthdays, anniversaries, and personal reflections. The photos illustrate both sides of the book.

My "signature" program has become *Elder Wisdom in Movies*. I have always enjoyed "meaningful" movies and in 2008 I was asked by the Sage-ing conference committee to present something related to movies and aging. What emerged was a presentation called *Autumn Wisdom*, a poem written by James Miller with inserts of video clips illustrating the poem. The response to this production has been amazing and I have been able to share it in many venues.

Carefully chosen movies related to the core concepts of sage-ing have become my curriculum. These concepts include: *Expanding Elder Consciousness*: Who Am I as an Older Person? *Reviewing Our Lives*: Looking at the Past with what I know 'Now'! *Repairing our Relationships*: Letting go, healing past hurts and forgiveness; *Embracing our Mortality*: Creating Peace of Mind; *Creating our Legacy*: Ethical Wills, Sharing our Story; *Gifts of the Emerging Elder*: What is the Expanded Life For?

These sessions include an introduction, movie review and viewing, dyad sharing with relevant questions, and then group sharing. What I encourage is, "how did the movie impact you as an emerging elder?" rather than a discussion of who, what and why stuff happened in the movie. Personal sharing has allowed the participants to engage in the inner work of the sage in a safe, nurturing space. Ultimately, a spiritual group emerges and anticipation for the next event is evident.

In the spring of 2014, I trained as a SoulCollage facilitator. Gathering images that depict the many parts of ourselves is the practice. We allow pictures from many sources to "call" to us.

From this collection, 5x8 inch cards are created which address four suits including Committee: the inner parts of ourselves; Community: family, teachers etc.; Companions: an animal related to each of the chakras and Council: archetypes or patterns in our lives. You will never browse a magazine in the same way again. As we speak from the card, the opening is "I am one who ..."

Finally, I encourage you to tap into the wisdom of your life experience and see what emerges. As I said at the beginning of this article, I am having a marvellous time and it is wonderful to journey with other elders as we redefine aging in the 21st century and seek to make a difference.

**Judy Steiert** is a retired teacher from the Calgary Board of Education. She has engaged in the research, creation and presentation of Conscious Aging/Sage-ing courses since 2004. Judy is a Certified Sage-ing Leader with Sage-ing International, Conscious Aging Facilitator in the IONS program and SoulCollage® facilitator. Her courses are presented in various venues, conferences, workshops and retreats. Judy can be reached at [jsteiert@shaw.ca](mailto:jsteiert@shaw.ca)

# PROOF.

## THE CLUB FOR CREATIVES

KELOWNA HAS LONG NEEDED A PLACE WHERE SMART AND INTERESTING PEOPLE CAN GATHER TO MAKE GOOD - IF NOT GREAT - THINGS HAPPEN. PROOF IS THAT PLACE.



[www.proofcentre.com](http://www.proofcentre.com)

The former church building at the corner of Ethel Street and Cawston Avenue in Kelowna is in the process of being transformed into the **Proof Creative & Learning Centre**. In the process, the former sanctuary will also be transformed, into a private club for members of the creative community, the **Club for Creatives**. The Club will be a warm and inviting space, and contain bar and table seating for up to 80 people, as well as a small performance stage. There will be a comprehensive and adventurous lunch and dinner, and special event food and drink service provided by the Proof Kitchen. Membership in the Club is restricted to 200 members, with modest initiation and monthly fees, with special and guest privileges.

### Here's some of the things we have imagined are possible at the Club for Creatives:

design a toy, conduct an experiment, meet interesting people, print a manuscript, enjoy a freshly baked pastry and a cup of coffee, invent a new product, compose a symphony, propose a solution to a problem, build a trapezoid, attend a workshop, present a seminar on the fate of a species, show a collection of bones, show a collection of photographs of bones, participate in a ritual, make a jar of pickles, weave a wall hanging, learn to write poetry, edit a journal, construct and finish a piece of furniture, have a quiet lunch, conduct a roundtable, use a 3d printer, sculpt a face, discuss a manifesto, write a manifesto, play a game of chance, demon-

strate a magic trick, start a business, start a rumour, throw a party, listen, dry wildcrafted herbs, solve a logic puzzle, observe a chemical reaction, shape an argument, conduct a review, curate an exhibition of lithographs of food, create an album of photographs, make a maquette, sing, share a harvest feast, form a group, ferment a liquid libation, foment a revolution.

### Here's what it takes to become a charter member:

**First:** You need to be creative. Tell us a bit about yourself and your current creative activities.

**Second:** You need to pay a membership initiation fee of \$100. Once we accept your membership we'll send you a link to a webpage where you can send us this fee. Once you pay, we'll add you to our membership list and send your membership card and orientation package.

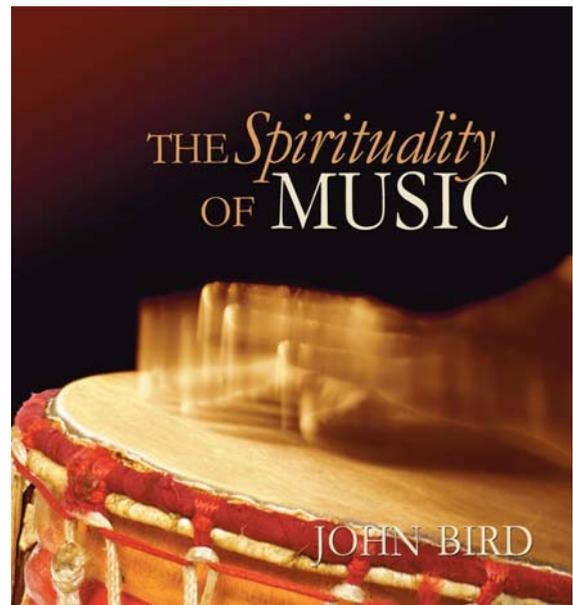
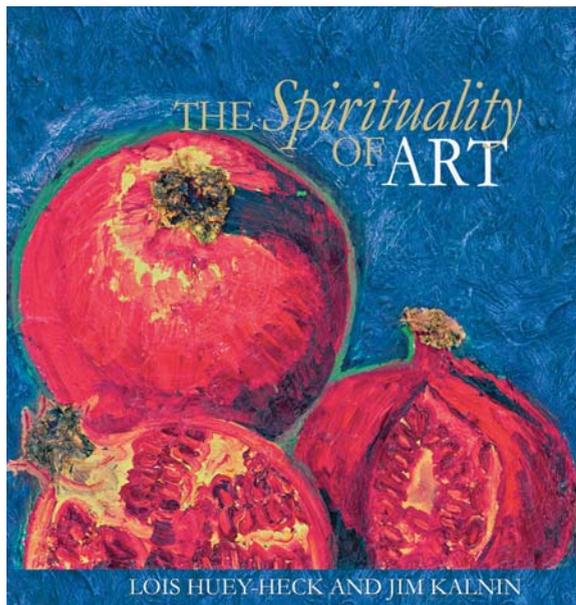
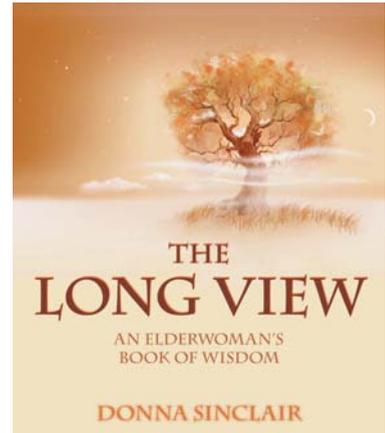
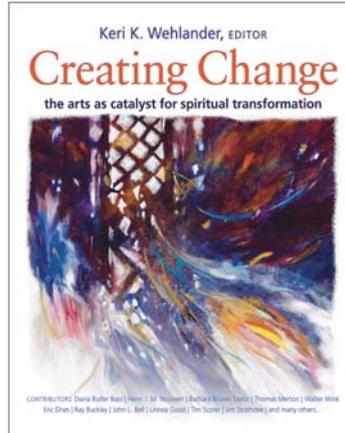
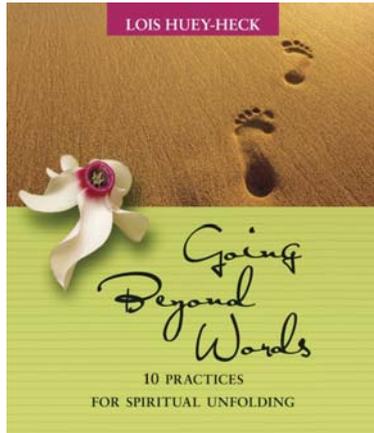
**Third:** You need to agree to pay a monthly membership fee of \$20. Your credit card will be charged during the preceding month, starting February 2015.

**Send us an email today** to [info@proofcentre.com](mailto:info@proofcentre.com), including your creative statement and your interest in becoming a charter member.

That's it. The orientation package will detail all the rules and expectations (there are few), hours, amenities, guest privileges, and other matters. You'll also receive invitations to the pre-launch preview and launch party.

# Creative Aging Books

FROM WOOD LAKE PUBLISHING



Wood Lake Publishing's mission, undertaken through publishing, is to retrieve, reclaim, and renew the Christian tradition of living radical and inclusive love. It is committed to continuing its 30-year history of bringing readers and faith formation practitioners unique and accessible resources that nurture, inspire, and challenge.



# SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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## A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close

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*Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* exists to honour the transformational power of creativity.

It is a quarterly journal intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing. It presents 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. 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.