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Elise Peters: Conduit of Creativity

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Elise Peters: Conduit of Creativity



By Karuna Glomb

Walking into the Heart & Hands boutique downtown has a way of uplifting the spirit. It's more than the infusion of beauty that fills the senses—the jewel-toned garments in sensuous velvets and silks, the sparkling jewelry and vibrant artwork. There's a soulful quality to the wares: each piece is a unique creation, designed and made with someone's heart and hands. Store owner, curator, and designer Elise Peters has a deep love of artistry and a passion for bringing creative work out into the world. "Creativity wants to be shared," she says. "It's a gift—and gifts are meant to be given!" At Heart & Hands, the creative impulse flows from the designer to the customer, who adopts a piece of wearable art as part of her own creative expression. It's a complete creative cycle, and one that Elise loves to facilitate. "My desire is to be a conduit of creativity," she says. "I believe the world is a better place when we are all bringing forth our gifts."

Heart & Hands celebrated its 25th anniversary this year. Elise was just 25 herself when she launched her business venture. "Back in '90 I was just starting to sell my jewelry," she recalled. "I was working for a friend who was an amazing fashion designer, traveling to trade shows to help sell her work." The trade shows were inspirational, exposing Elise to a world of talented independent designers and artists. "That was also where I realized that artists aren't always the best people to sell their own work," she added. "Because creative work is personal, it's like putting a little piece of yourself out in the world, and that can be hard to do. But I had a natural enthusiasm for these beautiful creations and the people who made them. I am so inspired by the many ways that the creative spirit manifests itself through people." When a storefront opened up in downtown Ashland, Elise followed her inspiration straight into business. "I am driven by inspiration," she explains. "I have to be inspired by what I'm doing, or it just doesn't work."



Fortunately for Elise, creative inspiration seems to course through her veins. A life-long, multi-talented artist, Elise overflows with creative ideas, which she expresses through a variety of outlets, from jewelry and fashion design to painting and music. “I was a child when I first started learning to make stuff, to bead and to sew,” she says. “That was a hugely important experience, to know that I could make something beautiful with my hands.” Like many artists, Elise was shy at first about sharing her own work. “For years I wanted to hide, I was too sensitive about it,” she admits. “Presenting what’s in you to the world takes guts. But it’s really about getting out of your own way and honoring the gift. Sharing your gift is how you show gratitude—it’s like bowing to the inherent generosity of spirit,” she says. “Once I realized that, it really changed my worldview.”

Our cultural paradigms about artists tend to confuse matters, Elise says, by treating creativity as something self-indulgent. “I used to be really uncomfortable with the idea of having gifts,” she explains. “We get so confused and think it’s an ego thing. But creative inspiration isn’t ego, it’s spirit! Connecting to that channel is like connecting to the divine.” It’s also a myth that only some people are creatively gifted. “I’m always encouraging people to express themselves, even if they don’t think of themselves as creative,” she says. “We do such a disservice to ourselves, labeling ourselves that way. We’re all creative beings. All of us have something alive inside that wants to be brought forth. Honoring that gift is a way of staying true to yourself and living a creative and authentic life. If you bring forth what’s within you, you will thrive.”





Heart & Hands offers a platform for Elise to champion creative expression, both for her artists and for her customers. “For many women, dressing is a creative act, a way of expressing ourselves authentically in the world,” she points out. “When a fashion piece speaks to us, it’s calling out something inside that wants to be expressed. It’s such a joy for me to support women in that creative and empowering process.” Helping women to connect with the right fashion piece is also fulfilling for Elise as a designer. “One of the mysteries of the creative process is that when a piece is created, it’s sort of destined for someone,” she says. “When I’m designing a piece, I know that I’m making it for someone particular, even if I don’t know who yet. I love that magical moment when a woman tries on a piece and it suddenly clicks, and some quality about her blossoms before my eyes.”

As her work has evolved over the years, Elise has gradually brought more of her own creative work into the store, from jewelry to clothing to designs to, most recently, her paintings. “I started painting about ten years ago,” she says. “I had no formal training, I just discovered it and ended up needing to do it. It was so thrilling, that immediacy of color and texture right at your fingertips.” She describes her process as very intuitive, “just listening and feeling, letting the piece reveal itself. I don’t know what it’s going to be until I do it. It feels like connecting to a different realm, almost like a portal to another world.” At the encouragement of a friend, Elise began bringing pieces into the store just in the last year. “People have really been responding to them,” she says. “It’s been a process being able to let go and



sell something so personal, but if it speaks to someone I want to honor that energy.”

Another of Elise’s artistic passions that’s been developing in the wings is her music. “I’ve always been sort of a closet singer-songwriter,” she says. “I started making up songs when I was 5. Now I’ve got a full body of work that I would love to bring into fruition.” Six years ago, she started singing with the Rogue World Ensemble as a way to start giving music a larger presence in her life. “Music is such a source of nourishment for me,” she says, “and singing in a group really helped me gain confidence as a singer.” Now, she’s excited to start focusing on her own original songs. “I’d love to do some recording,” she says. “It’s not really about performance, for me. I just want to put it out there, to honor the gift.”

For Elise, creativity is ultimately a form of service. “My deepest desire is to tie myself to a greater vision, to be able to offer my gifts in service to humanity,” she says. “I think that’s what everyone wants, actually.” Her newest vision is a platform that would facilitate just that, inviting creative collaboration on a global scale to help solve problems and support inspiring causes. “It would be a way for all of us to bring our unique gifts to the table to make a difference, serve a larger vision, profit and celebrate together,” she says. “So much good stuff can happen from working together.” For now, it’s an idea gestating in her imagination—but the domain name OurWorldWins.com (Wins = Wise Investment Network Synergy) has been reserved. “This has now become my most impassioned, driving vision,” she says. “I’m all about following the inspiration, wherever it leads. That’s my greatest joy.” ❖

S H A R E

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Each month we will feature a family from your neighborhood, or one like yours—Billings Ranch, Riverwalk, Pompadour, Emigrant Lake, or above the Boulevard. Would you be interested in sharing your story with your neighbors?

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