



AGELESS CREATIVITY

with Deanne Fitzpatrick



I have never felt more creative in my life than I do right now. I fully expect that I will be able to write this same sentence next year. It is because midlife for me, contrary to what I was ever told, is a time full of hope. It is a time full of creativity, beauty and freedom and abandon.

I was told that it was a heavy time. A time that you slowed down. A time that you felt mixed up and confused.

It's all lies for me. It is a time for you to make whatever it is you think you need to make.

It is a generous time in life, not the stingy time I imagined it to be.

There is confusion and there is resolution.

There is a slowing down and there is offering up.

Honestly, I have never felt more beautiful (never having been a great beauty this is easy to say) more productive, more kind, more creative than I do right now.

I owe it all to art.

Art nurtures you.

It does not age. It does not get old. It is eternally young.

Your creativity is one part of you that never ages.

It is one part of me that never ages.

It is eternal and that's what I believe.

I believe it connects you to your own light. It connects to the light that surrounds you.

I believe it connects you to the divine.

I believe it connects you to the source of all things whatever you believe that source to be.

DEFINING MIDLIFE

What is the middle, it is not 40, or 50, or 60. There is no age that defines us. It is the in-between, the centre. After the beginning, before the end. It is a time to be. It is a space sometime between the beginning and the end and we define it ourselves for ourselves.

I feel at fifty seven I am in the middle. But I have no idea really what the middle is. I just know that somehow at this time and for the last five years or so there is a creative space that has opened inside me like never before.

I have time to think. I have time to be. I am grateful for it, so grateful because I know what it is to be without this. To struggle for time, to compete for physical space, to own my own life. Now I can. Now I can in a new way. A way that is whole hearted. A way that is free from guilt.

It is also a time in life humility and confidence co exist together. We see our own weaknesses and flaws more easily with greater acceptance. I find that though I have clarity on this I also have the confidence that comes with aging and that acceptance.

And it is strengthening and freeing and exciting. I feel like I am soaring above all the life I have lived before. I carry it with me. I loved that life. Raising children, loving others, caring for parents. I am so grateful for it but now is another time. I cannot say it is a better time. But I can say that it is a time when what I want matters more than it did before.

It is just a time that is more about me and less about others and because I have put in the time to love and care and be there for so many. I feel it is ok to put in the time for my own creativity. A time to ignite this flame inside me that wants to burn a little brighter. I time to feed the embers. A time to spark more joy, more truth, more art.

I have some freedom and I am grateful for it. So the timing of your midlife is for you to define. What does midlife mean to you? Do you have more or less time now than when you were younger? Are you able to choose how you fill your days? It is about tuning into your creativity and making time for yourself is now possible in a new way.

It is midlife focus rather than midlife crisis for many of us. That is not to say that I and many others have not felt a reckoning in our middle years. We do. We begin to come to terms with ourselves on many levels. We think about the big things, faith, mortality, love and loss. This is all part of life. But I like to steer away from the idea of crisis because I think for many of us it is a time of focus. A time to ask ourselves big questions. A time when we can ponder the answers.

I believe that creativity is a good way to answer those questions. Perhaps creativity is the answer to those questions for many of us. And it is not the only answer. I am not a fool. For some the answer is meditation or medication. But those are not the only answers either. Because there is no one answer to any problem.



The thing I love about creativity as an answer is that it allows us to put out what is in us. It allows us to extract what we have been holding onto. And not just the negative stuff we have been bottling up. It's not that all. It's just the stuff, the good stuff, the love the joy, the familiar, the easy and of course with that comes some of the hard. And that's ok to.

And I am not saying midlife isn't hard because it is. And there are long sleepless nights. And there is loss. So much loss. It is hard. And when things are hard there is no one answer. It requires multiple efforts on all fronts. Creativity is one of those answers.

Creativity is nothing if it's not therapeutic, and my middle years have required some of that. It has made me release, let go, and compromise in ways I would never have imagined as a younger person. And I'm ever grateful. I say yes to things now that I would have definitely said no to years ago. In the same way I say no now to things that my younger self were sure were a hard yes. Being creative has made me ask the question, Who am I?

It's impossible for me not to ask myself this question. I am an artist and for me that means that my story and my personal experience is at the soul of my work.

As I have aged I have a better understanding of my life. I reflect upon my childhood differently than I did as a woman in twenties and thirties.

I am more accepting. I am kinder.

I also suffer less. I have no patience for foolishness. I love a good story but don't bring me gossip. I find it hard on the ears and bad for the heart.

"I am an artist and for me that means that my story and my personal experience is at the soul of my work."

Yet I like to know stuff. I am nosy as hell. But I have learned that knowing is not always better. And I have learned so much more because creativity has begged the question from me.

Resolution has come for me with age. I feel as if I have finally been able to clear my head and release more of my spirit. The anger and grief that I carry has become something for me to make beauty out of. It is the job of my artists spirit.

THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE

The sadness I feel
when I hear a friend has cancer.
That deep deep loneliness
that she might go before the rest of us.
It is the difficulty of being in the middle.
These stories land upon your heart more often.
Tales that are so sorrowful you can only weep.
Some might be leaving before they want to.
Some might be struggling. Some may even suffer.
And we get this news regularly.
We carry around these thoughts like prayers.
Prayers on the edge of our seats.
Holding people in our hearts.
Carrying the stories
of loved ones,
knowing that we are so fragile
so we handle each other carefully
and we bend knees and lift our heads
to whatever we believe is above us.
This is a lot to carry
in the grace we have been extended.







ART AS POULTICE

“But Art is a poultice for a burn. It is a privilege to have, somewhere within you, a capacity for making something speak from your own seared experience” Molly Peacock in *The Paper Garden*.

In midlife we face many hard things, often it is said we come to terms with our own mortality. As we get older we often think a great deal about the past, the experiences that have shaped and as Molly Peacock says, the experiences that have seared us. It is a difficult time in many ways and we face hard things, unavoidable things.

We begin to feel the first, and ongoing signs of weariness in our body. The hips we may have shook so freely in youth are now talking back to us. They might even groan. We understand now that a body needs more tending than it once did.

One of the hard things about growing older is hearing about death and sickness. One time these were the stories of others and now they are the stories of us. It is no longer the realm of the older. It is no longer our parents friends, it is our friends.

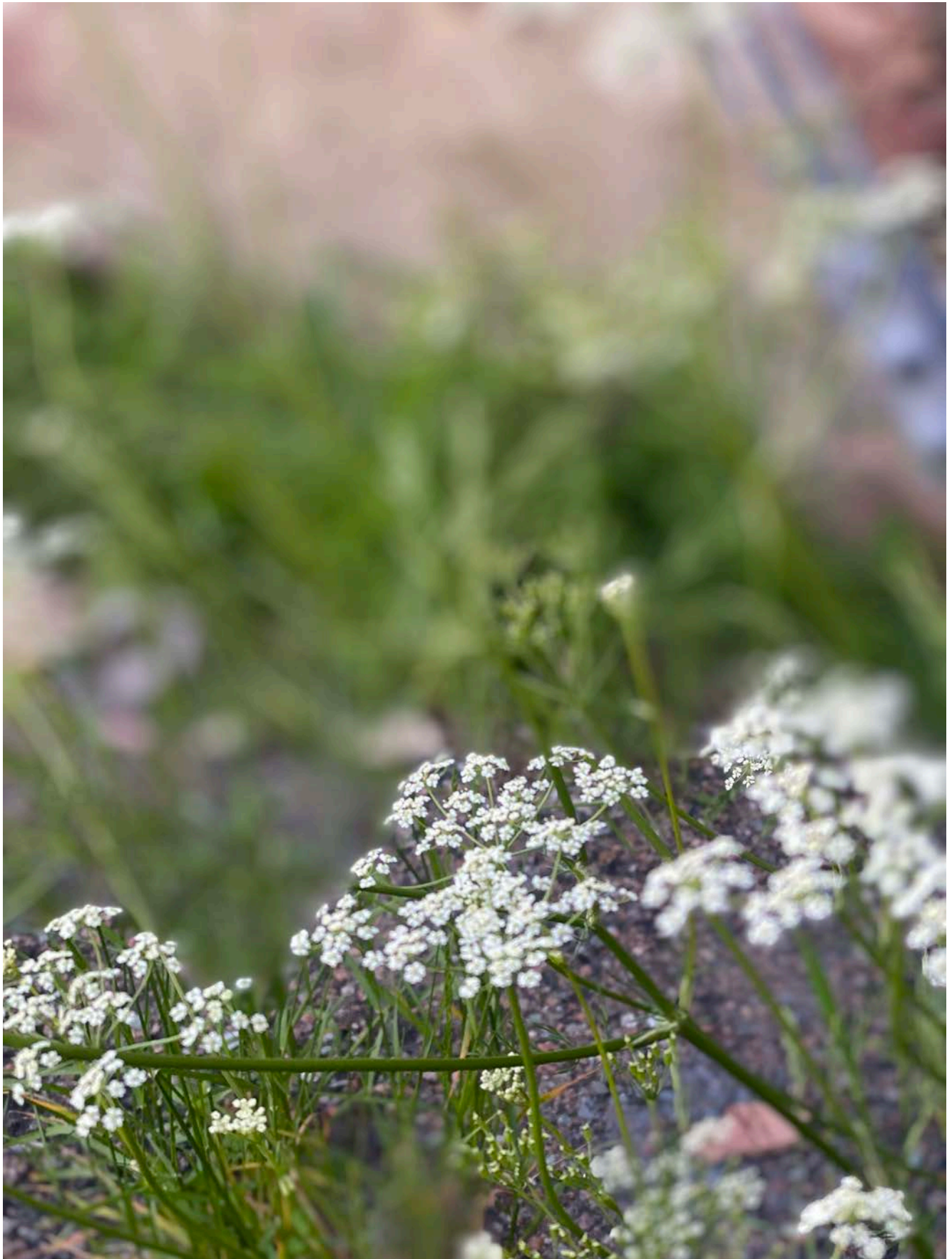
As we get older more and more people are diagnosed with illness, we know more and more people who have passed. We see more struggles. We witness loss. This is a lot to carry. We have to prepare ourselves. We have to coddle ourselves because it isn't easy.

We learn so much from loss. We are more aware of loss and of living and we have more empathy for people struggling. Suddenly we understand there is not them and us, there is only us.

So with all this sadness how do we carry on, because we do carry on. We lug around these stories, these aches, these ashes, these mysteries and still we manage to love and find delight in the everyday.

It may be that creativity gives us a place to go to get lost in the flow of life. A place where we no longer feel the same heaviness because we are lost in the doing, and at the same time, as happens in any artistic pursuit lost in the being. Making does that for us. It gives us a kind of higher sense of purpose, or at least a sense of purpose in the midst of loss or confusion.

I think perhaps it might even be why we are more attracted to creativity in midlife because it offers sense of solace, a sense of purpose. Creativity is a place to go, a sacred place, that is both inside of ourselves and outside of selves.





MAKING SPACE
INSIDE OURSELVES
**FOR
CREATIVITY**

And so here I am this very morning by the sea.
I hear the birds. Someone is hammering in a post outside. A car drives up the lane.

I think I am middle aged but when I do the math the sums sound funny.
If I am middle aged that means I will live to 112.
That is possible but most unlikely.
I am beyond middle age.
Perhaps a good ways.
There are things you cannot not know.
Things that you best not know.

I think about youth and creativity. I think about musicians and how they wrote the most poignant lyrics in their early twenties. Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez , Neil Young. These words were so learned. So much wisdom for so little living.

Then I think of Margaret Lawrence who said, "You're young. You know things now yo won't know later."
And I know this true.

But I also know that I know things now that I didn't know then. In fact I know a lot now that I did not know then. I feel somethings a lot more now than I did then. And, yes , Margaret, I feel some things less, and there are things I knew then that I don't remember anymore.

There are things we know at every stage of life that we won't know later.

There is wisdom at every stage. There is knowledge that comes with being a certain age in a certain time and place. There is a code to youth that their elders don't understand.

Codes are not exclusive.

There is also a code to aging that just bewilders the young.

We talk in tongues to each other. It is not just our language but our experience of life that is part of the code. Codes however can be broken. They can be studied and they can be understood.

Right now I am reading a book about feminism by a twenty three year old woman. As I read it I am thinking this is no different than the work I read thirty years ago. It is just dressed up differently. There is new language, and new concerns. That's why I need to read it. I need to understand the code I guess. I want to understand how a young woman sees feminism today.

Just as there is a certain wisdom at every stage of life there is possibility for creativity at every stage of life.

Just as person does not know when they are in midlife, we do not know when are at a creative peak. We do not know at what point in our life we will be most creative. Actually there may not even be such a thing as a creative peak. We do not know.

We just start to create at some point. We just make. We show up , put our hands to the task and get on with it.

If our young life never gave the opportunity to play with our hands, to write, to make music then often times in mid life and beyond (midby) we find new spaces inside ourselves and in our day to day for making. Often times we come to an opening point in our lives where spaces opens up inside of us for new things. Sometimes we come to a point where we realize that we need to open up more space for old things.

That is the change for many of us. We make space for that insistent desire that is inside of us. We take time to finally listen to the song inside of us. For years we carried it around thinking that's for later. We think we have lots of time. That's the blessing of being young. Time feels infinite.

Near the middle we begin to see that our time here is limited. That things need seeing too. That bucket lists can just be pieces of paper left behind in a desk drawer.

We begin to see that we must listen. We begin to see that we must act.

That we must make space to breathe life into ourselves.

Many of us learn that we must make space for creativity.

COMMITMENT

I have always wanted to make. From the time I was a small child I had this desire to sew doll's clothes even though there was no one in my house who showed me these things. I remember looking at the blue and yellow felt dress of a Barbie and thinking I could do this. I cut up old clothes and my mother showed me how to thread a needle.

In my early twenties I found rug hooking. I have never had to make time for rug hooking. I have never had to create a habit with in my schedule to make it easier for me to commit to it. I have always been drawn to do it since I learned that once simple stitch. One the other hand, writing and drawing two other essential components of my art practice have always required me to find a way to commit to them.

I am not one thing. I am not only a rug hooker. I am not only a writer. For me they are intertwined. In my midlife, the later has become more important to me. I have much to say that I cannot express in a rug. However I do not find it easy to sit and write. I tell myself I don't really like it that much. I used to talk to myself in sentences like...
Writing is hard.
You don't like to write.
Maybe you said it all.

It is the War of Art as Steven Pressfield says in his book of the same name. It is a culture of avoidance that you create inside yourself for something that might be more essential to you than you know.

So in midlife you know that if you don't get to it, you won't get to it. The things that come easy, like hooking a rug for me, I will always get to because I am drawn

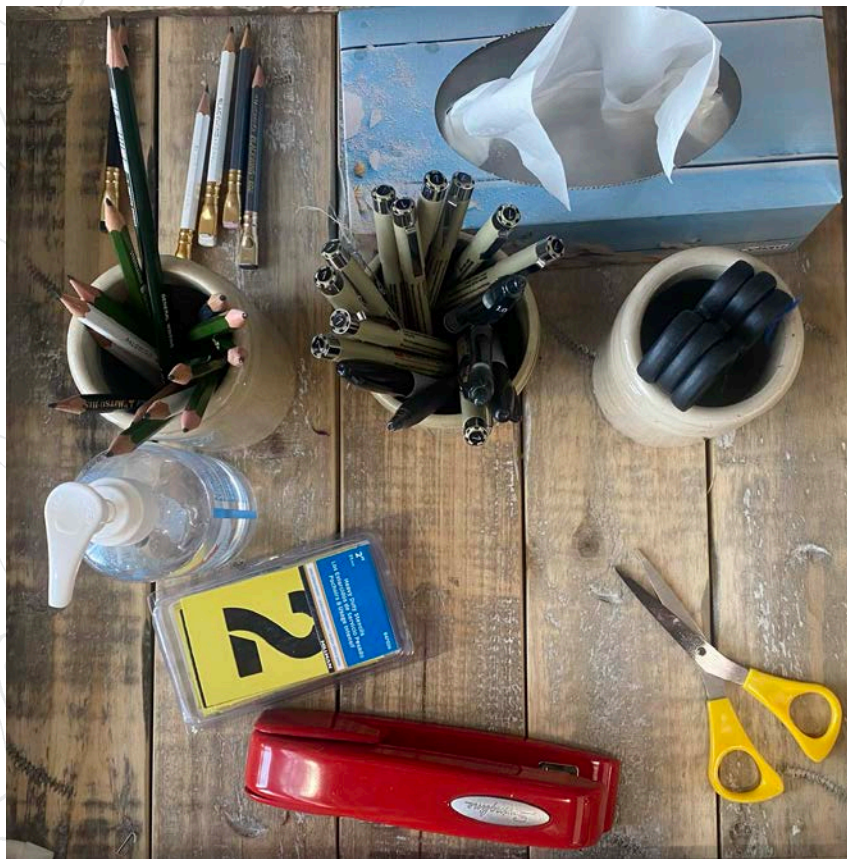
to it like a moth to the door light. I am also drawn now to make other things important. Perhaps they are just important to me, it no longer matters. These days I have learned to build them into my life. I do them first thing, in the time that is right for me. We are old enough now to know our best times, the times we have the most to give our art, and we choose that the and we build structure into our days that include the important things that don't always come naturally first to us.

I make time for writing. I want to show up for myself. For my own story. For the work I want to do. And in these fifties, my beautiful years, I feel, if I don't show up now when will I? When will I? This question is more real now than it has ever been. So midlife has forced me to reckon with it.

It has forced me to change my sentences. I like to write. Writing comes naturally to you. I even lie to myself sometimes until I believe it. Writing is easy for you I said, until it became that. Until I believed it. And I do here today, with you, as I write this, I believe that it is easy for me.

Your medium is a choice. Whether you hook, paint, write, play music. It is all a choice and the way you talk to yourself about it matters greatly. It matters greatly. It is a great thing that matters. You must choose to make the thing that will help to make you. Once you choose it and become habitual about it, it will become easier and easier.

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HABITUAL

You need a habit. Once you have a habit you'll show up for it and the work will get done. And you'll know it's getting done. And even if there seems like there is less time over all, the time you have will seem more important, more valid, more real because you did the thing that mattered to you.

Habits have shown me that even the parts of my creativity that I am less engaged in can become more engaging. They hold more promise through a habit than they even did through a connection with the muse or from sudden desire.

So even in it seems hard to show up for something, it really isn't. You might just be telling yourself it is. Try that, see if it makes any difference. If you never show up for the thing you say that matters then maybe it does not really matter at all. Maybe you just thought it mattered. Or perhaps you wanted it to matter. Or it sounded to you like something that should matter. There are things we want to do that we never seem to get to. Or perhaps there are things we say we want to get to that we never get to. There is a vital difference. We need to decide which it is. Do we really want it or do we just think we want it, or has it just become part of our conversation with ourselves and with others.

The thing I know is that now is the time to show up. Now is the time to make the time. Now is the time where we get to prove to ourselves what really matters. One of the ways of proving this to ourselves is by creating a habit. Showing up in the same way everyday, perhaps even at the same time for something is an action that speaks louder than words ever will.

Make it easy to begin with, just five or ten minutes a day, five days a week. Stack it onto another habit. Before I watch the news I will draw for five minutes, or I will hook while I wait for supper in the oven.

Simple things like this have proven to work. Twila Tharp, the famed choreographer said the hardest part of her workout each morning was calling her taxi to take her to the gym. And I agree with her, the hardest part of writing for me is opening the document and sitting at the keyboard.

I am still working on habit development myself. I struggle with various aspects of my creativity. Writing, drawing, speaking, are all things I avoid, yet I know they are essential part of the thing that I love. They deepen and enrich my rug hooking. They are an art practice in themselves and they are important to me. When I show up for them I feel better. I also remind myself of this when I am thinking about it. I remind myself how good I feel after I do it. This dopamine that I get from showing up is a powerful motivator.

So we talk about it at lunches and dinner parties. We can breathe it out as a hope to our trusted friend and sisters. We can see it in our imaginations but we will never be it unless we do it. This is a powerful truth that we need to tell ourselves. Writers write. Artists make. Musicians play. If we want it, we have to do the work. We have to commit more than our thoughts and our voice and our hope, we have to commit to the act of making the thing that matters. Alternately, I think we should find something else that matters and do that. The real work of a life is in the doing.

Love is never found in the gifts you did not give, or the words you never said or the song you never sung. Love is not found in talking about doing something. Love is found in the doing. And trust me, there is love to be found. When you commit to an artistic work, and you show up and you make that thing, love will flow in to it and when you share it, love will flow out of it.



THE ESSENCE OF TIME

When we look at an artist we see so much creativity. We hear their music, we see their art, we read their words and we feel that they are gifted. And they might be. But mostly they work. Mostly they show up. Committed day after day to what might be some seemingly unimportant thing. But they have made it important to them. Because they have, it has become this important thing that you are seeing, or feeling or hearing.

It grew out of habit, out of hard work, out of commitment, and yes of course out of love, because love knows how to nurture the seemingly small, the seemingly unimportant, the least of things, and bring it into the light. That is what love does. Lovers also seek to nurture all the seeds of their creativity. Even the ones that take a bit more work.

If time is of the essence, than it is time we get to its essence. No more meandering through days as if we

had all the time in the world. Instead this is a time to live purposefully, joyfully, with clear intentions. We plan our days around what's most important. For those of us that choose the path of the creative, the journey of the maker, the life of an artist, we make room for making.

We can prioritize our making time with a kind of sacred grace. It needs to be done, like we need to feed ourselves. We make to make our lives. We make to bring our reality home. We make to meet grace at the door of our lives. This is as essential to us as water. We need it to survive.

Yet like the best of them, we can fall off track. We can get bogged down in hurry, or life, or commitments, or sorrow, or even love. For love remains our greatest competitor. Because we love sometimes we lose sight of our own sustenance. And love is important too. Our friends, our family, we'd be so lost without them, but

love being infinite means that there is plenty of room to love both of them, our creative work and ourselves. There is no harm in getting caught up in other things outside our creativity as long as we come back to ourselves. As long as we meet ourselves home time and time again at the door of our studio with the same grace we give to others.

We have limited time. Even though we may have more time than we used to, we never know how long we have so it is more important than ever to come back home to your art soul.

There are simple things we can do here. Small trivial things that will make all the difference. They will keep us on track.

We can prioritize our making time with a kind of sacred grace. It needs to be done, like we need to feed ourselves.

Here are some of the things that I think will keep us showing up, even when it doesn't feel easy.

We need a little journal or day book and we need to track the days we show up. I keep a calendar and every day I write what I did that day. It's a simple practice. Even if I hook for ten minutes or write for five, I write it down. I showed up bravo. That little piece of writing it down reinforces the habits that I need for my creativity. It may seem silly but it is not. It is like the star I got in grade one, the silver star that I wanted so badly. It reinforces my good habits and practices.

I leave my work out in the open so it can tempt me. Even if I do not have time to be in my studio for an hour I visit that room. I make it the place where I read, draw, write. I make it the place where I do many things that contribute to my artistic practice. At night, after the light has left the day I'll relax there with a snack and a show if I want. I make it my place. Whether you have a whole room or a closet, it does not matter, you need to make it a space that beckons you, a space where you belong.

At night I make sure things are ready and in place for the morning because that is my best time for creative work. I leave my pencils and sketchbook on the table so it is there waiting for me.

Sometimes things such as wearing the right clothes puts you in the mindset to get to work. I keep a long sleeved roomy smock in my studio so I can always work. Even if I am in my good clothes I can simply pull on the smock and they won't get all messy. It sounds like a small things but I cannot count the times that wearing my good black sweater would have been a deterrent to sitting at the frame. Instead I just hauled on my smock.

Many authors in the field of habit buildings encourage you to build one habit upon another. So drawing while you drink your morning coffee, or hooking while you wait for supper in the oven. They say that associating one thing with another increases the likelihood that a habit will stick.

At the studio we encourage the ten minute a day habit. It is not enough of course to build your true creative muscles but it is the beginning of a serious commitment. And of course the truth is that for most people ten minutes turns into half an hour.

It is very important for you to think about what is the best time for your creativity. When do you have the most energy. Are you a morning, afternoon, or evening person? We all have the time of day that best suits us, where we get the most done. Think about what time of day is best for your creative habits and build them in.

Don't leave you creativity until after everything else is done. It wants more than that. It is not just here for the leftovers. It is a special guest. And if you had a special guest coming you'd likely make them something fresh and special. Think like that. Give it some of your best time.

When I look at my own creative habits, writing and drawing are probably the most important but I continuously leave them for the times when I most tired. I think I can fit them in anytime. Over the last weeks I have used the time in the early morning that I usually reserve for my hooking to write and draw. It ignites me for the day. Suddenly I have tons of ideas for

hooked rugs in my sketchbook. The books and courses I am working on are slowly building. I am happy if I write 500 words a day. I am thinking of it as blogging or journalling. It is a new habit but one I am really pleased with because it is changing my creative flow for the better. The thing is I am so passionate about making rugs that I will always find time for it. I am compelled to make rugs. Realizing this helped me see that changing around my schedule a bit and creating a habit of writing and drawing, the two important things that feed my art will make my rugs better. I still save some morning time for hooking of course but I know positively that I will always come back to the mat. It is my home, my safe harbour.

It is important to think about what feeds and informs your creativity. What are the things you need to be doing to make your art work better? For me without any doubt it was writing and drawing. Reading also informs it but like my hooking I am compelled to read. Perhaps it might be the thing that you find hard to get too, like me. Slight changes in your schedule or building a habit around those things can add a lot to your creativity. They inspire you and strengthen your artistic muscles. They are a work out. Then your favourite activity becomes the reward that it is.

I always like to think about what it feels like after I have finished drawing, hooking, or walking. I like the after feeling. That sense of wellness, of goodness, of accomplishment. Giving myself a taste of that if I am looking for motivation is always good. Remembering how good something makes you feel is a powerful motivator to create and continue a habit.

Honestly, I have so ingrained these kinds of habits into my life that I don't need much motivation. I am set up and ready to go most always. The patterns I have created day after day have lead me to continue. That's true for hooking and walking for sure. Writing and drawing are still practices that I need to work at

to make them more habitual. And I am working at that. The more I see how they are helping me make better rugs, the more I am compelled to do them.

Sometimes I fall off the wagon, but I just get up and get back on. No recriminations. If I have a trip or a busy week, or a holiday, it's okay, Five days a week is good enough. I never say I have stopped for two days so why bother. I remember the feeling of accomplishment I felt when I did it and I go back to my desk.

I have also stopped thinking negatively about my skills. I used to say and think that writing was hard for me. I also told myself that I write in big spurts and then did not show up

for ages. Now I tell myself that writing comes naturally to me. I tell myself I write a little everyday. Self talk and the little mantras and sentences that we create for ourselves have a powerful effect on our brain and our actions. Make sure you talk to yourself kindly and in the right tone. No negative self talk. No saying "I don't like to write." or "I am not a good drawer." Find new messages that encourage and support you. Think of what you would say to a child or a sister that

is trying to learn something new and say those sentences to yourself.

Just practice. I just practice. Because practice doesn't make perfect, it makes good, and good is way better than perfect, especially when it comes to art. Art is about discovery. It is about showing up and doing the thing. And practice is about consistency, time and commitment. It is about habit. Beautiful habits make beautiful art. So we need to look at our days here own the middle of our lives and decide how we are going to spend them. You will spend them on what is most important. If you decide creativity is important to you, you will become more creative.



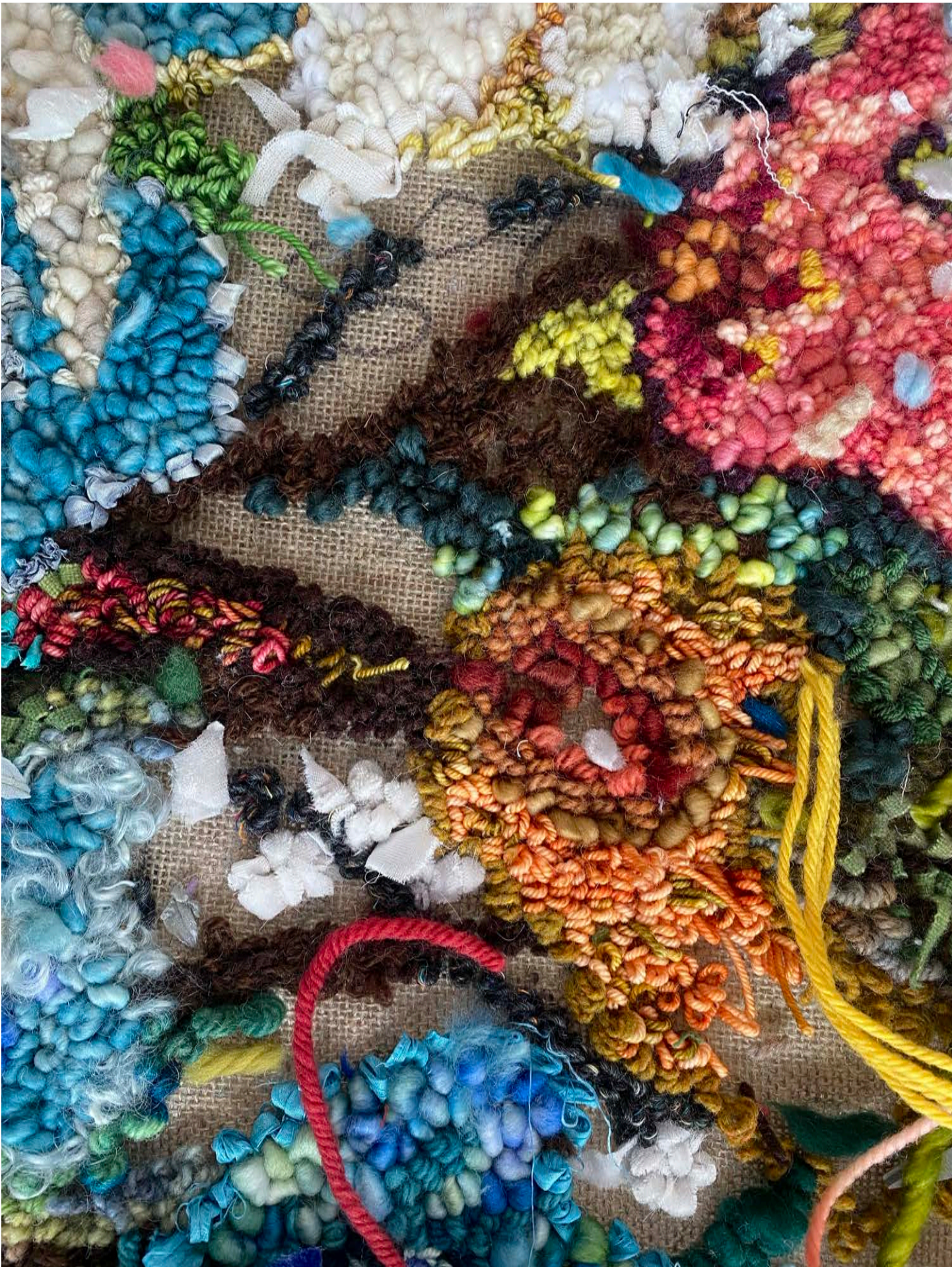
ROUTINE

Routine and habit have built my creativity. Twila Tharp who wrote the book *The Creative Habit* insists that it built her creativity as a dancer and choreographer. Personally, I know that if I spent a lot of time deciding what to do each day I would flounder. Instead I have routines built into my day like walking and reading, and making that give me rest, exercise, and time to be productive. Taking the decision out of whether or not to do these things has given me a lot of power to get things done. They are all essential elements of my creativity. They feed each other and they in turn feed me.

I have morning and evening routines. My morning routine walks me into the day. I stretch, read, shower, walk, have breakfast and make coffee. These things help me get my body and my thoughts together. In the evening I prepare supper, read, spend the evening and then I have a bath to coax me into the night. These are simple, barely worth speaking of perhaps, but they are meaningful. They lend a structure to my day and on both sides they couch my creativity.

And my creativity needs that. It needs the comfort and coziness of routine. I need to make sure that the central time of my day there is room to write, room to make, room to draw.





In the winter each morning I put a log on the fire in the room below my studio. Sometimes the room is freezing and there is barely an ember left in there. Yet if I stoke it gently with a bit of birch bark, it catches. In an interview with Anna Lovind, she said it is so much easier to keep the fire of creativity going all the time by adding a log than it is to start the fire over and over again every morning.

I think of this now as I go back to a project that I have let grown cold. In fact there is a rug on my frame right now that has no spark left in it. I walked away from the energy I was pouring into in about a week ago after I tried and failed with a couple of colours. That happens, often in the middle of a project but sometimes earlier than that. You lose it for the piece you are working on. It would have been so much easier to stay with it, to keep the flame burning but now it has gone out.

When the light goes out for a project it is fine to leave it alone, to take it off the frame, to shelve it. Some things are better left unfinished, especially if they are holding you back from moving on.

I however will move through this project. I'll go back to it and relight the frame, knowing that if I had of stayed right with the spark of inspiration to begin with, it would have been easier. Things happen though. Life happens. There are natural interruptions in our habits, even in our passions. I don't bang myself up about it. Instead I just start showing up again.

I'll push through because that is who I am. I have no expectation at all that every piece I make will be great. In fact I am sure it won't. I remind myself that

even the greatest of artists are only remembered for a few pieces they make in their life time. I am just a blip on the trail of the artists who came before me and those who'll come after. My only job is to make the thing, the best I can, right now. So I'll show up and I'll breathe some spirit into it and I'll make the best of it because that is my way of getting past it. I am not going to let what feels like one dull piece get in the way of the great pieces I have inside me.

In making this rug I'll practice and learn. I know I will and that's why I'll push through. Push through or let it go but don't let it put the fire out on your total practice. Move through it. Move on.

So keep your fire burning.
Make sure you have some kindling if it starts to go low.
Add it to your fire.
Stoke your fire.
Light a match to your passions.
Don't let the fire go out.
Don't even let it get too low.
So easy to add a log on a cold morning to rich red embers.
So hard to start from ashes.
So hold onto your fire.
It's in your heart.
It's in your gut.
It needs to be fed.

KEEP THE EMBERS GLOWING

THE THINGS WE FORGET

Oh the things we forget
the pleasure of wild strawberries,
early July laying in a field.
The berries still bloom but where are we?
Oh the things we forget

the pleasure of watching a soap opera
with someone who really loves it
and talks to the tv
like the characters
are from down the road
and when the show is over
comes back to you
like she had been away.

SMALL TALK

Please don't tell where you are going.
One more story about flights and connections
and real flamingos around the resort.
Tell me about where you are.
The truth.
Simple or shattering.
The words that know you
are the words I want to know.
I cannot bear the banter
though after years of talking about
trips and the weather
and the need to lose ten pounds
I should be prepared
for yet another time



when we skim the surface
of a life.
There might not be
much time
to talk real talk
the talk I like to talk
and my ears are already full
of stories that do not matter,
like you matter.
Even if you are a stranger
I want to know
the words that know you
for they are the words that matter.

CAN YOU AFFORD IT?

Then there is this thing about being in the middle years and beyond that no one talks about much. Because it's not polite to talk about money. But most of us, not all of us, by this stage have a bit of money saved or tucked away.

We have a home.

We have some financial security.

It might be a pension, it might be a bit of money you saved.

And I know this is not true for everyone. But for some I know it is true.

Likely, no matter how small a bit it is, it is likely more than you had when you had children and had to buy Pampers.

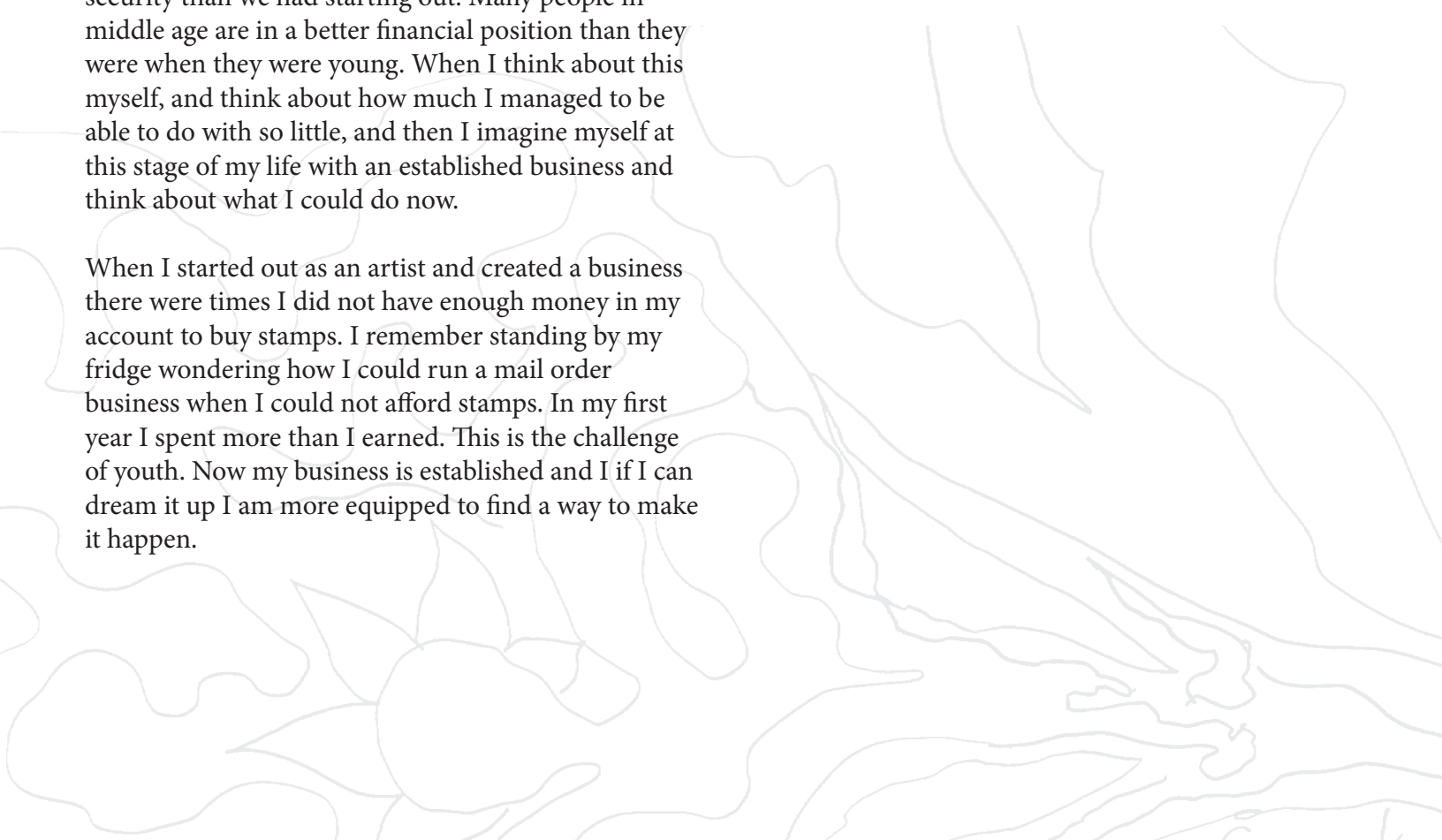
I remember always spending my last \$20 on diapers. For some of us this time of life comes with more security than we had starting out. Many people in middle age are in a better financial position than they were when they were young. When I think about this myself, and think about how much I managed to be able to do with so little, and then I imagine myself at this stage of my life with an established business and think about what I could do now.

When I started out as an artist and created a business there were times I did not have enough money in my account to buy stamps. I remember standing by my fridge wondering how I could run a mail order business when I could not afford stamps. In my first year I spent more than I earned. This is the challenge of youth. Now my business is established and if I can dream it up I am more equipped to find a way to make it happen.

So is money really power? Does it add any creative power to your life? Well I don't know about that. I guess it really depends still on your creativity, your willingness to use whatever it is you have to feed that creativity.

Money itself won't make you creative. You can buy all the art supplies in the world and build a fantastic studio but if you have to show up and use your hands consistently if that money is going to have been well spent.

All I know is that now I have a bit more more to work with than I did then. And with that comes opportunity that I did not have as a younger woman. That for me is a gift of being in the middle. If I need a supply I can buy it. If I can imagine something I have some resources to bring it to life. Though the most important thing is a willingness to make.





THE CHANCE

Then there is the chance to give
that comes with abundance.
Not keeping it all for yourself
knowing that to share is grace.
that having lots leaves you with more
to place where it needs to be.
It is easier to give now because you have enough
more than enough
and you know for certain
that enough is an abundance

QUESTIONING IN THE MOMENT

There is so much talk about being in the moment. I feel as if I am bombarded by it. How can you be in the moment when you are feeling pressured to be? Nearly every celebrity tells us how it has changed them, and no doubt it has. It seems to be sold as a cure all for everyone for everything. And I believe it is helpful.

I believe meditation and mindfulness are great things. I practice them myself almost unknowingly. I think women who have done handwork have practiced it for generations without naming. I think my grandmothers hooking rugs by the stoves in their kitchen were mindful without ever naming it.

I meditate when I walk, not consciously. It is not a decision, it just happens, walking down the road, the trees rattling a little, thoughts coming and going.

Nevertheless, as interested as I am in it, there is something about the whole idea of a movement to be in the moment that is unnecessary. Trying to be in the moment does not always work. I myself have always found that exercise or making something puts me in the moment, and in a meditative state without thinking about it. When I sit quietly to meditate without my handwork I find it much harder to let my thoughts come and go. I am too conscious of my sitting, my body, my thoughts, the four walls around me, the ant on the floor. I find it difficult to focus.

When I put a hook or a paint brush, or a knitting needle in my hand I loose myself in the process. I go to a different level of thinking. My thoughts flow freely as I meditate on what I am making and that works for me. When I was younger I would try sitting meditation. I bought the cushion. I even went to a meditation retreat. I was more willing to try things on. I was more willing to try to mold myself to what fit for others.

Now that I am beyond midlife I am more open and less open at the same time. I know myself better, and I accept myself. I love that sitting meditation works for others. Try it if you never have and see. It is important to try things. But I also know that if something does work for you in one way, there are other ways.

Creativity itself, in all its forms leads us to a higher level of consciousness. It takes our hand and leads us into the moment without ever saying those words. It may do it without any reverence. It can happen as a skill buzzes around us, or cars are driving past. If you commit yourself to a creative practice you will be in the moment because when you get lost in your work there is only the moment. There is no sense of time. This is one of the beauties of the creative life, we get lost on a path of making, and it's there we meet the divine, whatever that is for us. For me it is God, for you it might be the universe. It doesn't matter. You are at one with yourself and your creator.

This is powerful language because it is a powerful experience. In these middle years I still try on some hats. I am still willing to learn but now I have years of self understanding to add to my palette. This is a powerful gift to bring to whatever you are making. I am willing to accept myself and see things the way I see it. I no longer feel the need to jump on a bandwagon. There are many ways of achieving the same goals. My creativity sees me through this.

Still I question, Was I doing it right? Did I miss something that everyone else is receiving? But then I laugh at myself a little and remind myself that it is good to wonder. Getting old and certain can be a good thing, it can also be a bad thing.

THE PHEASANT IN THE YARD

The middle is a place.
It's a place where
things like opera
start to make sense.
It is a place
where clothes
that make you look fat
are sometimes ok
because you know
what's underneath
is what is anyway.
It's a place where
a pheasant in the yard
with his green choker necklace
makes you glad you are home.
Where you wait for the ducks
who are flying overhead
to make there V.
At the middle you find the time
to be, to say, to show
because it is the only time
that you have right now.
It can be the beginning of time
for some who have lost
count of the days
that no longer matter
the way they once did.





COMPARISON

I know we are old and it shouldn't matter anymore. I know you have said I don't care what others think anymore. You may have said it lots of time and believed it while it was coming out of your mouth. But then some day you look at instagram or facebook, or even at the woman who lives down the road and think, "Oh look at her." or "Look at her art. She's burning it up."

Well the answer is simple my dear if you have this problem you can fix it.

It is a two word answer that fixes the problem. Simple as anything.

Stop looking.

Look at the fields instead. Is there a fly on the window you can watch? Is there a bug crawling on a leaf in your garden that needs to be seen. You will learn more here.

Bake a pie instead. I once read you cannot be sad when you bake a pie. I don't think it's true but I love the idea of putting love into action. There is always someone who would like a piece of pie. Perhaps you will learn that the secret to a good crust is lots of lard or butter or shortening. You will learn that pie making is not for them, the others, but for you, the pie maker, should you want to be one.

You will also learn to share unless you are like my friend Lynda who once baked a lemon pie one morning and through out the whole day ate it all, then baked another so her husband could have a piece. Once it was baked she said, "I have to have a piece of this one too because he'll never believe I did not eat a piece of that pie sitting there all day." And then of course, even better than the pie was her telling her husband the story after their dessert, and then telling the story again and again and making everyone laugh. So pies are good for sharing stories and love. They are way better than instagram.

Or perhaps you'll get frustrated looking at all the wonderful people who do wonderful things with their wonderful lives and you'll take a walk down a dirt road or a city street and you'll listen to birds sing sweet songs and smile at people in cars who might wonder why you are smiling or they might smile back at you.

Perhaps your mind will wander back to your own life and you'll see it all for what it really is. And you'll think of the poet Mary Oliver and all the words she wrote. The millions of sentences she built like a carpenter coming to work everyday and you'll realize that still in all those sentences we only remember such a few. She wrote and wrote and wrote and all we can think about is what we will do "with our one wild and precious life." And then we'll forget about Mary and think of children's author Sheree Fitch, who everybody loves so much they drive for miles to find a dirt road with a barn full of books and magic fields and skies that have stars even in the day because she is so good and kind they shine above her all the time and we'll remember that for years she was troubadour lugging books on planes to the arctic circle. We'll remember her as a single mother driving boys to basketball with just enough to get by and we'll be glad she worked so hard to be so blessed.

And then we'll remember that Sheree and Mary were never much of a big deal on instagram and we'll smile because we are on a walk and other stuff that don't matter doesn't matter any more and a bird will soar above us and we'll think it might be time to go home because birds remind us to go home. We always seem to think they are flying to their nest.

And we turn around and we find ourselves in our own lives.

We feel the blessing of the day.

We remember what we need to be thankful for.

We are on our way back home.

"Comparison is the thief of joy" CS Lewis

UNSURE

I still feel as if I am not enough,
sometimes
in the presence of
good people who would be sad to know
I feel such a thing.

If I am doing enough,
seeing enough,
being enough,
having enough.

With some people and not with others
I have this question
And I know that the difference is not
between the people.
It can only reside in me.

In this woman in the middle
who still struggles
with her centre.

Whose solid core
can still tremble
just because she is.
Don't tell yourself

SPEAK

you are not enough
that someone else
would be better suited
to the task at hand
when you know full well
you want the chance to speak.
Speak.
Say the words.
Express yourself.
Write.
Make.
Be present for your moment.
Where ever and how ever it arises.
Words in wool or paint or wood or fabric.
These stories are your stories.
We are waiting for them.



ORIGINALITY

You are an original and whatever you know right now, in the middle, in this very middle of your life is enough. You do not have to search for more meaning, more stories or more life outside of your own. That is the beauty of being an artist, you already have the narrative, the ideas within you.

You are enough. Already.
You have the story, the image, the beauty, the ideas.
Your job is just to express them .
Your job is to free them from the confines of your heart and mind and share them.
They will be original when they come from you.
You are the source, and your spirit is the source of your originality.
It is time now to share your source.
You might as well. It is right there.
Within you.

You have a story that begs to be told. A truth that others would be grateful to behold.

We are all artists. We all have vision.
We all have spirit.
We are all able to put it into action.

Have you spent a lot of time nurturing other peoples stories and not your own?

Do you not know where to begin?

Does the idea of finding your own voice sound like garbled nonsense? It might but it isn't.

There is a story in you that is all your own. Each of us is born with our own story. No two of us are the same. That to me is amazing. It is in truly understanding this that we get to speak with our own voice.

Part of understanding it is mining our stories and experiences and finding a way to keep a record of them. It is also about recording our own responses to our experiences. How we feel, what we think, what we know to be true for ourselves.

You see it does not have to be true for anyone else to be important. It only has to be true for us.

Years ago I learned the word metacognition. This means thinking about the way you think. It happens when we step outside ourselves and objectively look at the way we think. In doing this we can see and understand ourselves better and in a more comparative way. It removes us a little from our reactionary selves and lets us take some space. I kind of think of it in terms like body and soul. I have my reacting everyday action brain, then I have this objective brain that can look at what I am thinking, doing and saying.

This way of thinking has really helped me examine my life and my experiences. It has fed my imagination a steady diet of ideas and imagery for years. It has also let me blend my own experiences, thoughts and ideas with any inspiration I find around me.

From the very beginning of my work I have been inspired by the work of others. I can name so many artists and writers whose work I admire and been influenced by.

The key to this is to let the inspiration filter through your own set of experiences. Filtering can take time. It is sometimes a process that takes years, other times it happens in a spark of inspiration when you cross the street. I get so many ideas when I walk because my mind has time to wander and in wandering I filter.

I have talked to people sometimes who are uncertain of what to make because they are afraid of copying someone else. I think when we see something that inspires us it is important not to copy.

We can ask ourselves some questions though about other's art.

What is it about this piece that I find to be beautiful?

What is it about this piece that inspires me?

What is it about this piece that I connect with?

These are real questions and they have real answers within you.



Perhaps you will find that it is the colour palette you love, or the way she handles her lines or the subject matter. Remember that these things are free for you to explore. In exploring them you will ask yourself your questions, you will draw up sketches, you will add your own story. This is how you become original. This is your story. This is your life. And this is your art.

Don't be afraid to make the mark because you are unsure. Make the mark over and over again. Make the mark so often that your lines, your colour, your subject matter become your own.

We all start out with influences. This is normal. But going beyond influences is when you begin to make art that speaks and resonates and leaves behind the copy habit.

Begin with a sketchbook. Begin by drawing or sketching out ideas. Begin by writing down what you know about yourself. You have a story. I know you do. And I want to hear it more than I want to hear you tell me someone else's story, and certainly more than I want to see you repeat back to me my own story.

If you are hooking from patterns and you want to keep doing that, I applaud you. Go for it. You want to make and that's perfectly okay. You don't really care about expressing yourself or making art. I get that. I love a good recipe from Half Baked Harvest or Micheal

Smith. I am not a chef. I am a cook. They are different things. I love the process of making food but I don't feel I need to express myself with it or speak my cultural self you know. I just want to cook. They are two different things making and making art.

And they are both so wonderful. So when I write here about originality, I am writing to the artist who wants to break out and share their voice.

This morning I called Joni, a woman who has taken classes from me for years. Once she told me "I don't want to draw my own designs because I feel like I might be copying one of yours." I said you can do it. A few years later she posted a rug of a woman's body holding a house in her hands. I was blown away. I could see influences of things I taught her over the years. But mostly what I saw was originality. This morning I told her how much I loved that rug and that I was jealous that I had not made that truncated woman holding the house first. She laughed and said she had often felt that way about my work.

There is imagery out there of women holding houses in their hands but none like Joni's because this is her story. It came thru years of practice. There is no magic potion. It takes work. It takes time and it takes dedicated and sincere intention. That is what she puts into her piece and that is what resonates with it.

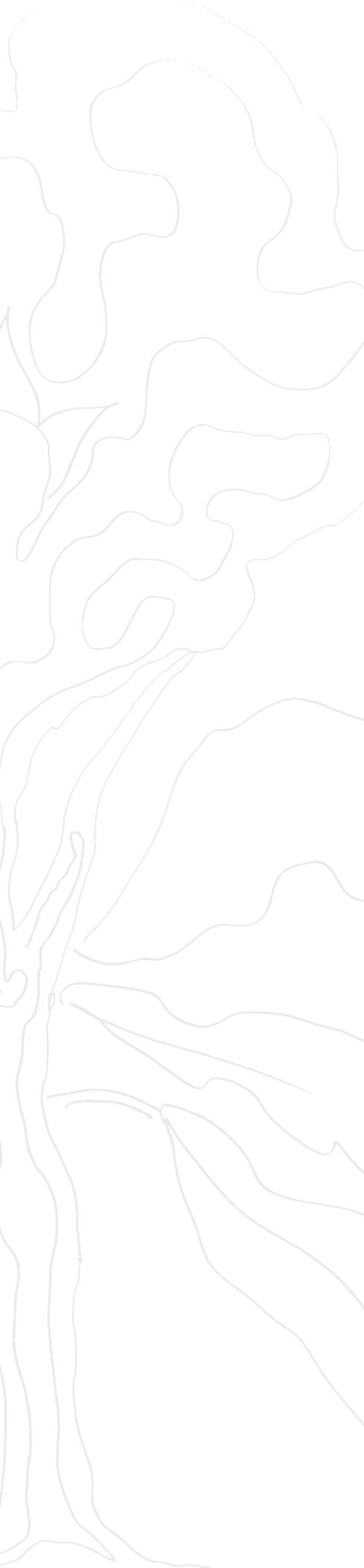
It is ok to play with the idea of women holding houses. I will play perhaps with the idea of women holding houses because it is such a great metaphor but if I do I will push myself to move beyond what I saw in Joni's work and go back to my old work, my own experiences and put my spin on it. Also if I do create a piece of art and I write or speak about it I will cite Joni's influence on it. This is fair. Thankfulness for good inspiration is important, so it is kind to cite your influences.

So back to your story. I told you about mine and about Joni's. What is important to you. Your values, your beliefs, your thoughts, experiences and ideas. This is where the real work of an artist begins. It is in our minds and our hearts that we first begin to create. This is where what ever it is that inspires us is ignited.

Original thinking:

- Don't look at another persons artwork as you are creating your own. If something inspires you look at it, study it, enjoy it and savour, it but close the book on it before you go to create your own.
- Listen to the bard. "Know thyself and to thine own self be true" William Shakespeare.
- Think of other peoples work as a spring board, a place to start, and remember to add your own ideas to it.
- Draw an idea many times in many different ways with rough sketches so you can get your own hand in it.
- Figure out what inspires you. If it is the colour palette, for example, then you can apply that on completely different imagery.
- Know that most everything has been done before but not by you.
- Creativity is about blending ideas to gather. Take what inspires you and mix it with other things that inspire you to create new ideas and combinations
- There are no new ideas, but when we truly bring ourselves to an old idea we can make it new.





MINDFUL

Mindful
of the books on the table
that carry me away.
of the yarn between my fingers
that slips and slides me
to other places
inside and outside myself
of the grace of my footsteps
on the pavement
of the people who tell me
to be mindful
of my hands
one lifted over the other
in a form of prayer
that makes things
for there are all kinds
of prayer
and meditation.

JULIA CAMERON ON CREATIVITY

Julia Cameron has written extensively on creativity for adults, including a book on creativity in midlife. In many of her books she suggests a trilogy of activities to help you become more creative. It is important, she says, for artists is to write, to walk and to take art dates.

Her morning pages was first made famous in the artists way. She suggests that you start each morning and write three pages of long hand with in an hour of waking up. She has testimonials in her books of people who said that this helped them find their way to and through creativity. She also suggests walking three times a week alone with no devices to let your mind wander. And once a week she encourages you to go alone on an artists date and do something that is playful, interesting or fun. She also encourages you to check on yourself to see how you are doing with these three things.

In my midlife it has been much easier to take off on an artist date whenever I want, to walk out the door for a walk routinely. However, I have never gotten used to morning pages they are not for me. I don't love to think about my dreams or write freehand even. Nor do I want to spend my morning thinking about my interior life. I like to feel the day. I like my small routine, a shower, a walk. So morning pages are not my thing. I do however believe that writing and self reflection is an important part of self understanding, and that self understanding is an important part of making art, so I do write at other times when it suits me.

I think the idea of a trilogy of habits like these support us in our creativity and that it is important to figure out what are the three things you need to sustain and nurture your creative life.



GETTING SOAKED

Then there are things we sometimes forget
like the importance of getting caught in the rain,
of walking out the door in a light shower
or a cloudy day and allowing
what might happen to happen
and then learn again
that to get soaked
is just that, a soaking.
Your hair flat to your head.
Your clothes like a sheath
protecting your child heart.
And that after it you find comfort,
in the shelter of home
in a hot shower with a warm towel
as you listen to the beating rain
knowing that once you were a part of it
and could be still.

INSPIRATION

Henri Matisse is an inspiration. Through years of illness he continued to make. When he was having trouble painting he turned to paper and scissors and began making his famous cut outs. I wonder if I would have that sheer doggedness to keep making art regardless. I have to believe I would. That making would still matter regardless. That the power of making art to renew me would sustain me.

There is so much inspiration in the lives of other artists. Those who struggled through mental illness like Vincent Van Gogh, those who kept working all their lives like Louise Bourgeois, Alice Neel, Georgia O'keefe. Those women became forces to be reckoned with in the art world. As they grew older, their work matured and remained fresh and new at the same time.

Then there are the artists that most of us have not heard of. They are all around us, writing, painting, making. They stay connected to themselves and the community through their work and their passion. If we start looking we will find them.

I have always looked to other artists for inspiration. I like to see their source, look at their influences. If I like what they do I'll translate it into my own experience, my own medium. For example, I will often look at a painter's brush strokes, or the way they illustrate. Then I will incorporate little ideas of theirs into my own subject matter, blend it with my own experience. There is always influence from others work.

I love to sit with an art book and draw. I don't draw what is in the book but I look at what the artist drew, and then I imagine how what I know or see in my life could be drawn like that and I try it. Most of these drawings never seen wool. They will never be rugs but they get me thinking and preparing possibilities.

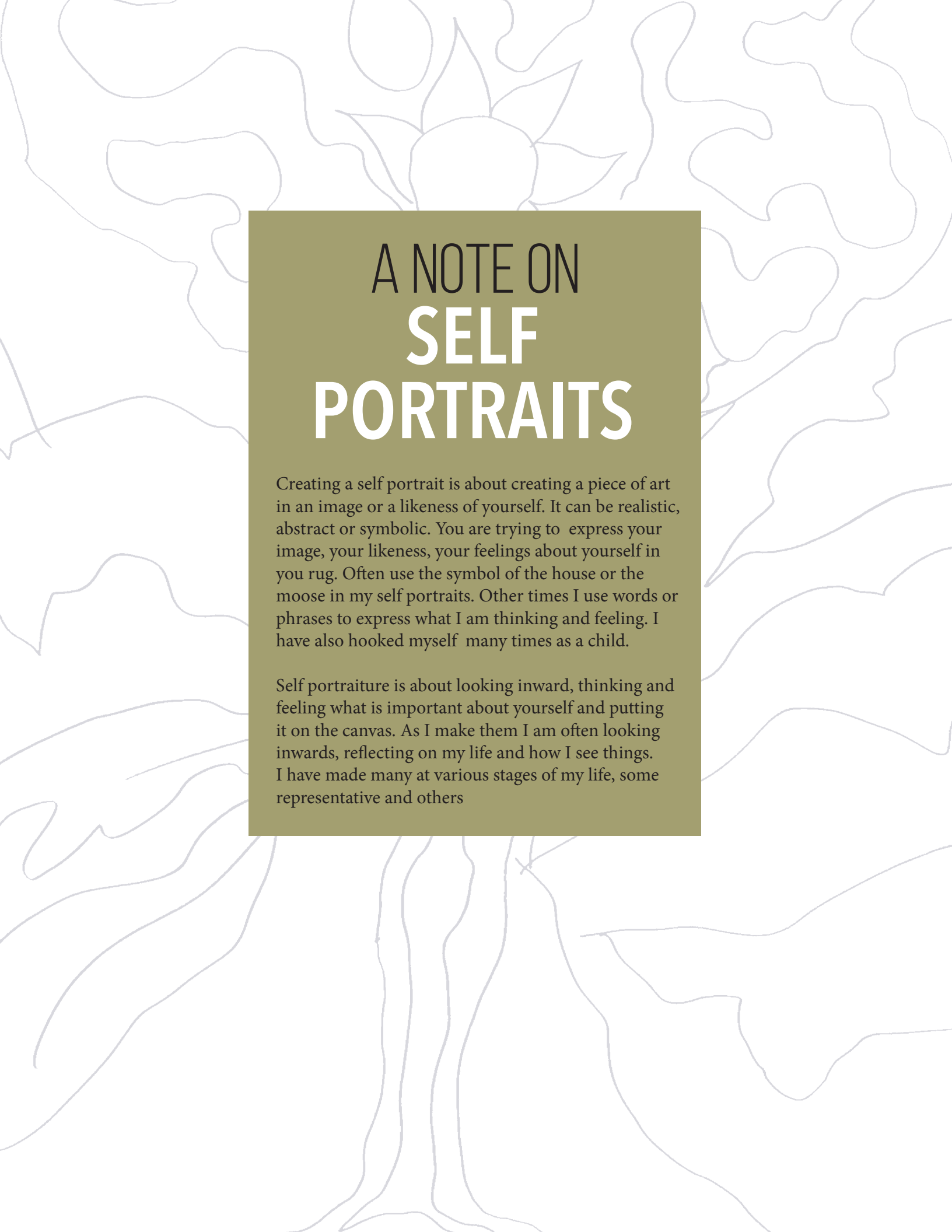
There is inspiration everywhere. In the work of others, in the landscape, in the light, in the house, in the eyes of others. I see it all the time. Yet there are times I go to the frame uncertain or even empty. There are times when inspiration flows like milk and honey and there are times it is like March Molasses. Still I make. I make rugs I do not love. I make rugs to make rugs because every one I make leads me somewhere. Every one I make is part of this path that is leading me creatively to somewhere.

I look for inspiration but I don't depend on it. I just make regardless. This you know is important. You know it because you are here reading. One of the beautiful things about becoming more creative in midlife is that it is likely you have more ideas than time. It is likely you have been saving ideas for years and now finally have the time to get to them.



GETTING THERE

I stepped onto Sable Island
this place of childhood dreams
and shipwrecks.
Home base reminded me
of Argentia,
an American navy base
on the wild coast of
Newfoundland that I called home.
Those square buildings of the nineteen
fifties, white clapboard with a bit of red.
I thought of Uncle Andy
his straight square house.
The drizzle on my face
the cream sand
and bunches of grass
chomped down
by wild horses
Chestnut, brown, black
wild manes
mangy and beautiful
and I felt as strong as them
because I had gotten here.
To this place that has been
both long forgotten
and well remembered.



A NOTE ON SELF PORTRAITS

Creating a self portrait is about creating a piece of art in an image or a likeness of yourself. It can be realistic, abstract or symbolic. You are trying to express your image, your likeness, your feelings about yourself in you rug. Often use the symbol of the house or the moose in my self portraits. Other times I use words or phrases to express what I am thinking and feeling. I have also hooked myself many times as a child.

Self portraiture is about looking inward, thinking and feeling what is important about yourself and putting it on the canvas. As I make them I am often looking inwards, reflecting on my life and how I see things. I have made many at various stages of my life, some representative and others

WALKING

I walk in the mornings for a hundred reasons It seems. Well at least ten.

If I did not walk in the morning I would be stiff. My joints would take hours to wake up. I am not even certain they would. I feel sore when I get up. Like there is no water flowing through my muscles. Walking helps me feel good.

It is the way to bring me to the day. To feel the weather, to see the sky, to breathe in. I walk so I can begin to love the day.

I walk to clear my head.

I walk to see.

I walk to think.

I walk to lose my thoughts.

I walk to lose myself.

I walk to visit.

I walk to listen.

I walk to pray.

I walk to love my body.

I walk to love my heart.

I walk for joy.

I walk for sadness.

I walk to be seen.

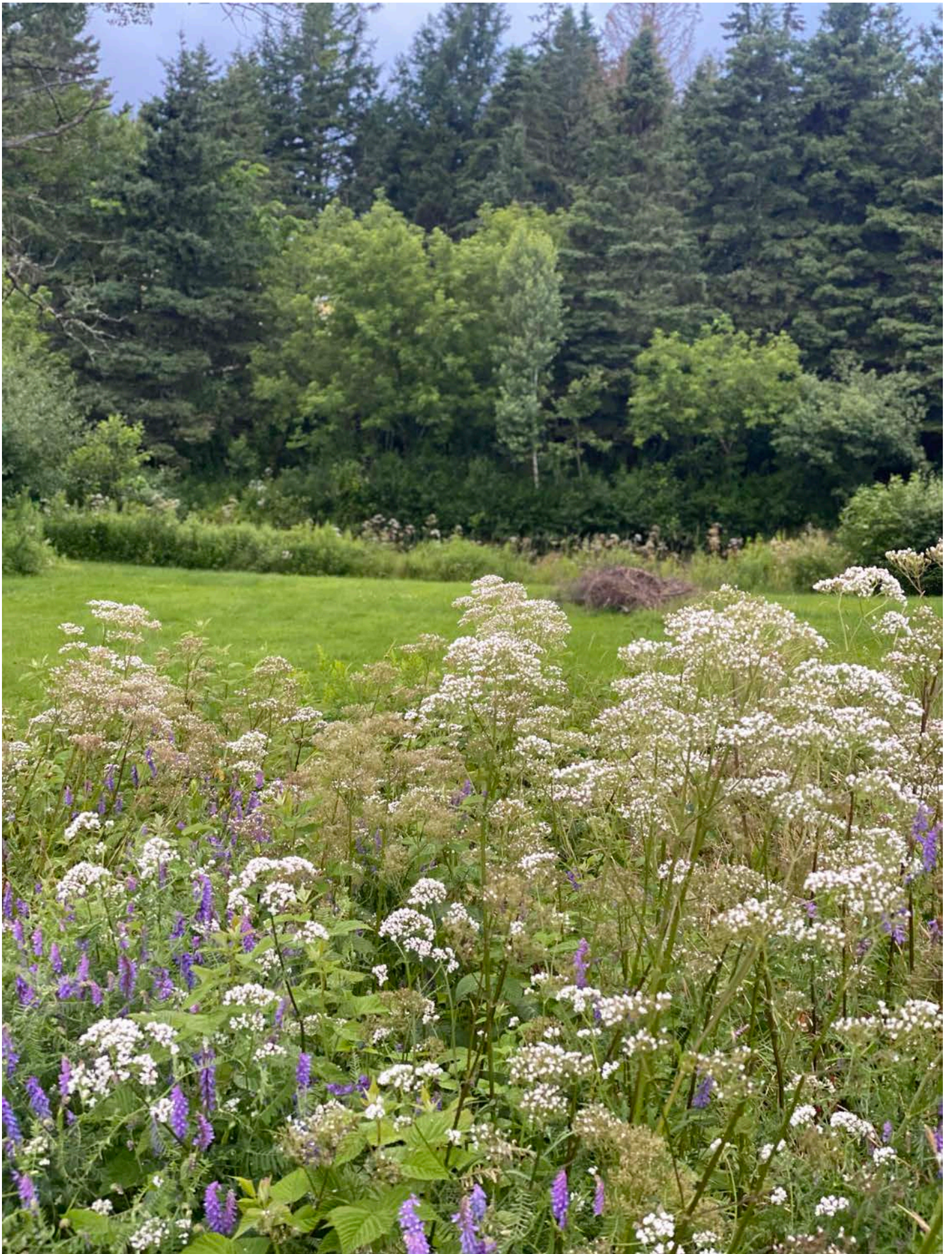
I walk to be.

Walking carries me home.



WALKING POEM

I feel so small walking along the side of the road
next to the golden stalks.
They are taller than me.
Like a child in a forest of blooms and seeds.
Here I am watching children build big lives.
With so much opportunity.
There is pride. There is regret.
I could have been a better mother. Surely.
We all could have been I tell myself and I move on.
Knowing, like my own mother, I did my best.
I tried as hard as possible.
And now I am a woman.
Always a mother but now a woman
walking down the road
full of wild caraway
wanting to be relevant
at every age.
Wanting to matter.
Watching as some people recede
while others embrace
the miracle of every day
regardless of age.
It is wonder they see in front of them.
I will look for wonder.



SPACE

Well Virginia Woolf thought every woman should have a room of her own and Agatha Christie said she could write anywhere as long as she had a steady surface.

In our midlife we finally get space. Sometimes there are even empty bedrooms. But space is really not about where you create. Neither Virginia or Agatha had it figured out for anyone but themselves. So on their lead we need to figure it out for ourselves. What do you need in terms of space to make? Do you need a whole room or is the dining room table really fine. That's a real question.

If the dining room table or that chair in the living room seems fine, than what would it be like if you were in a room or a space of your own. Would that be fine too? Or would it be finer?

Imagine the perfect space for yourself.

I can see mine, in a house painted by Andrew Wyeth, overlooking a bay, a torrid kind of bay with long grasses growing in the acre down the hill that meets the rocks. I imagine that but it is not what I have or what I need. What I have is actually good enough for me, more than enough really. I feel quite grateful for it.

So grateful that I am constantly refining it and making it the best it can be because that's the artist in me, I am a tweaker.

But space is more than physical space, as important as that is. Space is also time. We say those words together so often, time and space. They are adjunct to one another, joined at the hip. They belong together.

Time and Space.

In midlife many of us aware that though space may have become available time has become limited. But is it? Some of us at sixty have twenty good years ahead of us, possibly more. Twenty years. What a person can do with twenty years, or five years, or ten years. It feels almost limitless. I think of what I did with the last twenty years, and the demands that were upon me during them and I realize how much I could do in the next twenty years.

When we were younger we were sure we had lots of time. But we never really knew. And we don't know now. None of us ever know. So we try to open up every day with a glad heart. We are given time and we had better use it right, whatever bit it is.

So the same for space. It is never about the place you make it in. It is always about what you make in that place. So whether you are a Virginia or an Agatha, it barely matters, what matters is you make, in your time and place.






SACRED **TIME**

Bless this space in the middle
where I get to blossom.
Thank you for this time
in the centre of life
in the heart of goodness
time to watch children
come and go
into lives of their own
to watch the beginning
bear the fruit we hoped for.
This is a sacred time.
A time to untie the ties that bind
and set ourselves free
from the unnecessary.

Most of you know I am a seeker.
To others it might even look like I am in a race.
A race to get things done, to move on to the next thing. A race.
This came up the other day, and I said it does not feel like it to me.
That every night I sit to read and watch television.
Who would do that if they were in a race.
And my friend, Donny Miller said, "You just keep talking to yourself."
And I laughed. And I wondered. And I loved him still.
And maybe he is right. I don't even know I am in the race.
I think maybe my race is the same as yours.
I wonder if I am enough.
If I have done enough, seen enough, given enough.
By all accounts I have.
We are all enough just as we are.
Each and everyone of us is infinitely enough.
Each of us may already be living our best life.
We do not have to seek. We do not have to be more.
I don't have to be more.
I don't have to race.
But nor do I want to step out of the race, that abundantly beautiful
flow of ideas that can overflow my life.
The thing is I am grateful for the race. Perhaps I am in it and cannot
see that clearly. If I am then I don't care because I got art to make.
And art is just not making rugs or books, it's making a life. It is build-
ing one thing upon another so each can become better and stronger.
The thing is I have more to give. I still have more in me. It never feels
like a race to make, to write, to hook a rug, to draw a picture.
In fact every time I do one of those things more seems to rise to the
surface.
They are like yeast for the bread.
That is why I am still creating and making. Ideas keep flowing because
I feed the yeast.
So perhaps it looks like a race but for me it is just making. A new
course, a new rug, a new pattern. They are all just a part of me that
rises up to meet whoever is there, to meet you.
And when you have more to give you need to keep finding ways to do
that. We all have an abundance of creativity, even those of us who are
unaware of it. It still remains within us, waiting for the race to start, or
the bread to rise, or the heart to sing.
It is in you.
Creativity is in you.
And we are not always self aware. Sometimes things need to be
brought to our attention. I am thankful for friends who do that, you
know the ones, the ones who don't let you fool yourself.
They bring us back to think about ourselves and the way we are.

AM I
ENOUGH



F E E A R

In midlife, at times, I was more afraid that my work was done than when I was younger. When I was young I always felt certain that my best work was ahead of me. In the middle I was sometimes afraid that I had already done my best work. If I had a dry spell or felt like I was repeating a theme I would question myself. Am I relying on what I already know too well? Am I not getting any new ideas?

But I kept working. I worked through those thoughts. I let them come and I let them go. They were like a veil that would shadow me but then the wind would pick it up and blow it off my face, only to settle again, blow again. This went on for quite a while in my early fifties.

I started to feel older and my ideas felt older. I sometimes felt irrelevant when I looked on instagram and saw a wave of interesting punch needle designs. I saw people gain tens of thousands of followers while interest in my instagram was only showing slow, quiet and steady growth. I compared. I wondered what I was missing and I tried all the ways suggested to grow and gain interest from younger women.

Then I realized that there was no point being interested in people who were not interested in you. I decided to focus on working with what I had. Forget what you could possibly have. Forget what you cannot possibly have.. that is I could no longer be twenty eight or thirty five. I could only be what I am right now. I could only experience what it was to be in the middle.

I could reflect and I could remember. That was something I had that I did not have before. There was after all something gained.

There was years of life. There was years of raising a family, years of work, years of love, years of loss. There was so much to think about. And not in a sad way but in a rich way. I had this opportunity to be in the here and now, and really feel what the middle felt like. I had the chance to reflect that back through my creative work.

I had the chance to curate my own work. I could think and feel and I could make. What an opportunity.

I started looking at the things that interested me years ago and said how do I see those now?

This led to my working on a series of house rugs called The Very Mention of Home that became a show and part of the permanent collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Imagine if I had believed my own lies about myself. Imagine if I had let them stop me from showing up to work. There was something so vital in me. It was because I was an older person that I could even have the opportunity to revisit. It was because of my age that I was able to reflect, reconsider and create a new body of work about the meaning of home.

I think we all need to consider what stories we are telling ourselves. What doubts are creeping upon us about ourselves. We need to rethink negative stories about our creativity, our age and reframe them.

I cannot honestly say that with age comes wisdom because I see so much folly in midlife, and I say so much good sense in youth at times. I can say though that we are responsible for cultivating our own wisdom by living a well examined life and learning from it. We are meant to learn and to grow all of our lives.

What kinds of stories are you telling yourself about your creative work?

What doubts do you have about your creative work?

How can you reframe those stories so that you see creative opportunity in them.

THE CHANGE

Part of the beauty of getting older is memory and experience as well as possibility.

I love that I have known people from their birth to full adulthood. I have watched them grow from babies to parents themselves. It makes me so much more compassionate and understanding towards them.

I appreciate people more having experienced losses myself.
I am tender.

When I was in my mid forties I experienced a huge change in my life. I suppose it was menopause but it felt more like a break up with my old self, maybe even a breakdown. I am not sure. I was full of sadness and sleeplessness. I was so uncertain. I lost weight. My stomach was upset. I was unsure of myself. I was lonely for my old self. I would wake up at 2 am scared and worried until mornings sometimes. In a way my heart was a bit broken.

I became very anxious and started worrying about things that could happen.

It was a reckoning.
It was the change.

I remember being a small girl and seeing my mother in her late forties crying and in bed. I only ever saw this once. That one time.

My father was gently and kindly coaxing her out of bed. She was sad for no known reason.

I was not supposed to see this. My older sister was there too. I feel like it was her birthday. My birthday. We shared the date.

I saw the worry on his face. I heard his voice. Anne. He said it with love.

I had no idea what was going on but I do now.

She was in her late forties with a four year old.

It was her in the middle. I was with her.

Sometime that day she got out of bed and I never witnessed that kind of deep sadness again. I remember asking my father and he said “ She wasn’t feeling well.” but there was more to it than that, I thought, even then.

For years after that day, we kept good company with each other, my mother and me.

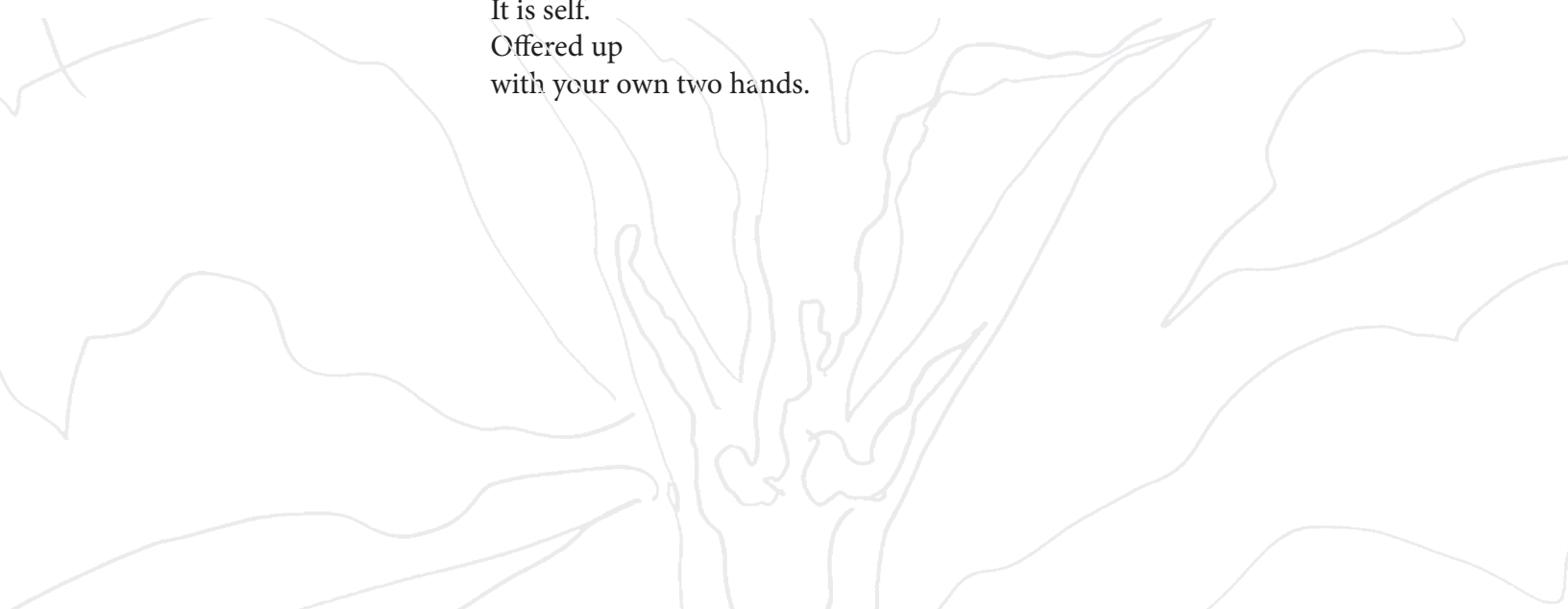
This was her change I suppose. We all experience it in our own ways. I only know what I have seen, what I hear, and of course what I have felt.

And I carry this with me knowing that I have felt the surge of midlife. That I have reckoned and changed, and that I am better for it. I hope my mother felt the same.



OFFER IT UP

Hold the room with your heart
in your hands.
Offer it up.
Pieces of it.
They can have it.
You can let go of it piece by piece
because it just grows back again.
There is always more
where that came from.
This is creativity.
It is the crux of being
It is the heart of the matter.
It does not dry up.
It is self watering.
Self sustaining.
It is self.
Offered up
with your own two hands.





CAN WE EVER BE ENOUGH?

I ask myself sometimes, Am I done?
Do I always have to keep refining myself?
Am I not good enough?

And if I am, why do I have to keep trying to be better.
Why do I need to keep trying to understand myself
more.

When do I get to finish with this personal growth
bullshit.

I look around and tons of people are living good hap-
py lives and they don't need a daily message from the
Dalai Lama or Mother Theresa.

They just live day to day.

Too introspective. Listening to podcasts telling me
how to be better.

Makes me think there is something wrong with me.

And there isn't.

And they make me question myself sometimes too
much.

I'm okay just as I am.

Self Actualization. For some maybe. For us?

We want to be better versions of ourselves.

Life is a journey.

But you need to rest on this journey.

Some people rest a lot. They are enough. They are
content.

They do not need a reason for their existence.
Isn't that self actualization?

What is the difference between contentment and
complacency?

What is the difference between being satisfied and
being self satisfied?

Surely if our goal is to be enough, then good enough
is worthy.

That at some point you get to rest.

Is this the point in my life where I can coast a bit?

My friend said it is good enough to be as you are, and
change as needed.

I like this because it does not speak of resistance, it
speaks of being open, but not so open that you are
constantly evaluating yourself.

I am trying to carry out what I already know instead
of searching for what I don't. I am fifty six now. I know
things. Perhaps I can accept that I am older, that may-
be I even have some wisdom. That I can steep, like tea.



IN THIS BODY

I am most likely beyond midlife.

There was once a woman who said, "I remember the day men stopped looking at me."

I loved this. I noticed this too. Not the day, exactly. I wish I did but sometime in my fifties, that went away. No wolf calls, no whistles. They looked at my daughter instead.

It is not liked I ever liked men looking, it is just that I noticed they did, then I noticed they didn't.

Immediately in conversations of women talking about this, they will say, "I don't care." Perhaps we don't care. We don't miss what we never wanted. But we do know. We do notice.

It is the cloak that comes upon some of us as older women. We feel the cloak of invisibility. That is a cloak that can comfort or ghost us. We choose I suppose. We decide what this means for us personally.

We know we are not ghosts in our own beds with our own lovers. We know the strength and beauty that comes when we choose intimacy. We are not nobody because nobody looks. We remain the same whether we are twenty five or sixty five. We know this. It hardly matters who looks but it is a signal to us, a personal signal that we are aging. And with that signal comes a certain comfort, a feeling of safety in being ourselves.

And with it, undoubtedly there are losses too.

We matter less to others and more to ourselves I suppose.

We dress for ourselves now. Does it really matter if this outfit shows my waist? I could care less anymore. Now that's freedom. Self Love is where we need to start. Body Love.

Sometime around thirty five I realized that this body I was in was the one that was going to carry me out.

I suddenly understood that whatever it is now might be as good as it is going to be. I knew that there would be a gradual decline. That flesh would shift and fall towards the ground. I knew too that I had never fully appreciated the beauty of my youth. I had never looked at my body in honest appreciation as a young woman.

So I took off all my clothes and stood before a full length mirror and I looked myself over. I tried to appreciate whatever it was that was in front of me, knowing that it would continue to change. Not as a gradual decline, necessarily. I just stayed fresh in the moment and I said thank you to my body.

It was the first time I really understood that it was important to love my body as it was. And that changed my relationship with my physical self. I began to care more for it and criticize it less.



Slowly I began to eat for my body, not mindlessly. This took a long time and I still slide, but I get back up again. I exercised more. I loved myself more through these things. I thought about how food made me feel before I ate it. I thought about how exercise made me feel and it motivated me.

When you hear yourself talk about losing ten pounds, really think about the statement you are making to yourself. Are you loving yourself or are you being critical? There is so much that comes with the intention, the why, that we might undervalue.

Mostly I changed my thinking. And when I look at people who are not at war with their bodies I see people who have become comfortable with themselves.

They are people who have grown.

They began to love their body.

They began to love themselves in a new way.

They began to see that their body was a gift.

It was something that had been so good to them that it needed to be treated with reverence and respect.

This happened to me slowly over time.

Clothing became adornment rather than coverage.

I no longer thought about size 6 or size 12.

It was about wearing clothes that fit and felt comfortable and beautiful.

I began seeing my body for what it was. It was what carried me through life. It took me places. Exercise became routine. Something that was part of my art practice, something I looked forward to rather than something I had to do.

And then my body was suddenly part of my creativity. It was the tool I used to make. It was part of me that every morning I got to dress and have fun with it. It became a soulful act to treat it well, to dress it up, to embellish.

And of course it is ongoing. There are struggles but mostly there is appreciation. I pray for my health with reverence and hope, like I pray for the health of others. I try to treat it with tremendous respect because it is what allows me to make.



QUIETING THE CROWDS

Why do I and why have I judged myself for so long by the standards of others? Who sets the standards?

Gosh, are there really even any standards anymore about how women should look or be? I think now there are so many different standards, but there are always these thoughts and ideas, or standards that slide in amounts us no matter what group we see ours

Most of us have experienced strong ideas about how we should be as women. It goes beyond our families and schooling to the wider cultural norms cultivated for women in the media, and sometimes from each other, sometimes from the communities we are part of. Standards are something outside of ourself. They are not necessarily imposed but as human beings we are often apt to find ourselves following them, perhaps even seeking them out.

As women we have the right to choose what makes us feel good or pretty, we also have the right to decide what that is. We have the choice, that is essentially what feminism was all about.

Personally as I have aged, after years of not shaving my legs I have decided I like the smooth feel of my legs without hair. I also like to wear a dress. I enjoy doing my hair and make up. As a sometimes introvert it is sometimes the best part of a social evening for me. That solitary preparation of myself for myself. In doing this I suppose I am following plenty of traditional standards for women. The difference is though is that is what I am choosing to do, for my own comfort, my own benefit. I am aware,

I would like to tell you I am not affected by traditional standards for women but I know that I am . Even those of us who feel like we are not effected by it, like me, are influenced by it. We are all effected by the culture we live in and social norms.

As feminists we worked for choice. For women to have the choice to raise children and choose staying home as their primary work or to work outside the home. We wanted to be able to decide for ourselves.

As long as we are conscious of our decisions about what to wear, how to be, than those decisions are ours to make.

Until we become
comfortable in your own skin
walking into a room alone
getting noticed
without needing attention
moving gently
into yourself
so much easier now
then it was before
before you were in this state of grace
where people are more likely
to look at your eyes
than your ass
in this time when you can
speak from experience
and in this time when
you can be a woman
in her own time
on her own terms

BE BRAVE

I just finished reading Brene Brown's *The Gifts of Imperfection*. It is a beautiful book. Thoughtful and thought provoking. The woman herself, when you watch her on video she is funny and engaging. So she makes you feel that she herself could never feel unsure and vulnerable until of course she tells you in no uncertain terms that she does. And you feel ok that you feel this too.

Because I do.

Because I believe that some times you do too.

Because we are human.

In this book she talks about what it is to live a whole hearted life. She talks about the importance of faith and spirituality. I love it that she talks about God. She is not afraid of spirituality. In her research and in her writing she has put herself out there. She has not been afraid to be Brene Brown, authentically.

When Brene Brown started studying wholeheartedness over a decade ago she thought her research would confirm that living right and doing well, that is following the rules, knowing yourself better and better, and going by the books would define whole hearted. What she found instead was self love was actually a key ingredient in being who hearted.

As she explains, "How much we know and understand ourselves is critically important, but there is something that is even more essential to living a Wholehearted Life: loving ourselves."

Somewhere along the way I heard her say that you might get criticized if you put yourself in the arena, but that it might be from people who never entered the arena. They never put themselves out there. Still she goes forth and she speaks and she tells her story and shares her research through her speaking, her talks and her books.

Over the last few years I have been writing a book called *Meditations for Makers*. All my books so far have had images of rugs in them. Over the years I have

grown confident in my rugs. I feel comfortable showing them. I remember years ago when I first showed them being a bit unsure and nervous but that subsided from doing it.

Now as I put my writing out there without the rugs to comfort them and me I feel rather uncertain. I feel insecure. I actually feel foolish to think that I could write a book that is good enough.

But I also feel like I am stepping into the arena. Just like Ms. Brown said. I am being vulnerable and that makes me scared, and scared is ok. The book is already written. I actually thought this morning, What if I changed my mind and did not publish it. The publisher would be frustrated. But then I thought about how I would feel if I did not. What would it feel like not to send it out there.

I think I would feel ashamed of myself that I was not brave enough to do it. I write to connect with my community. I write so others will know they are not alone. I write to encourage others to feel, to make, to love their creativity.

I write to speak.

My voice.

I write to speak my voice.

And I hope in doing so others will know that their voice matters too.

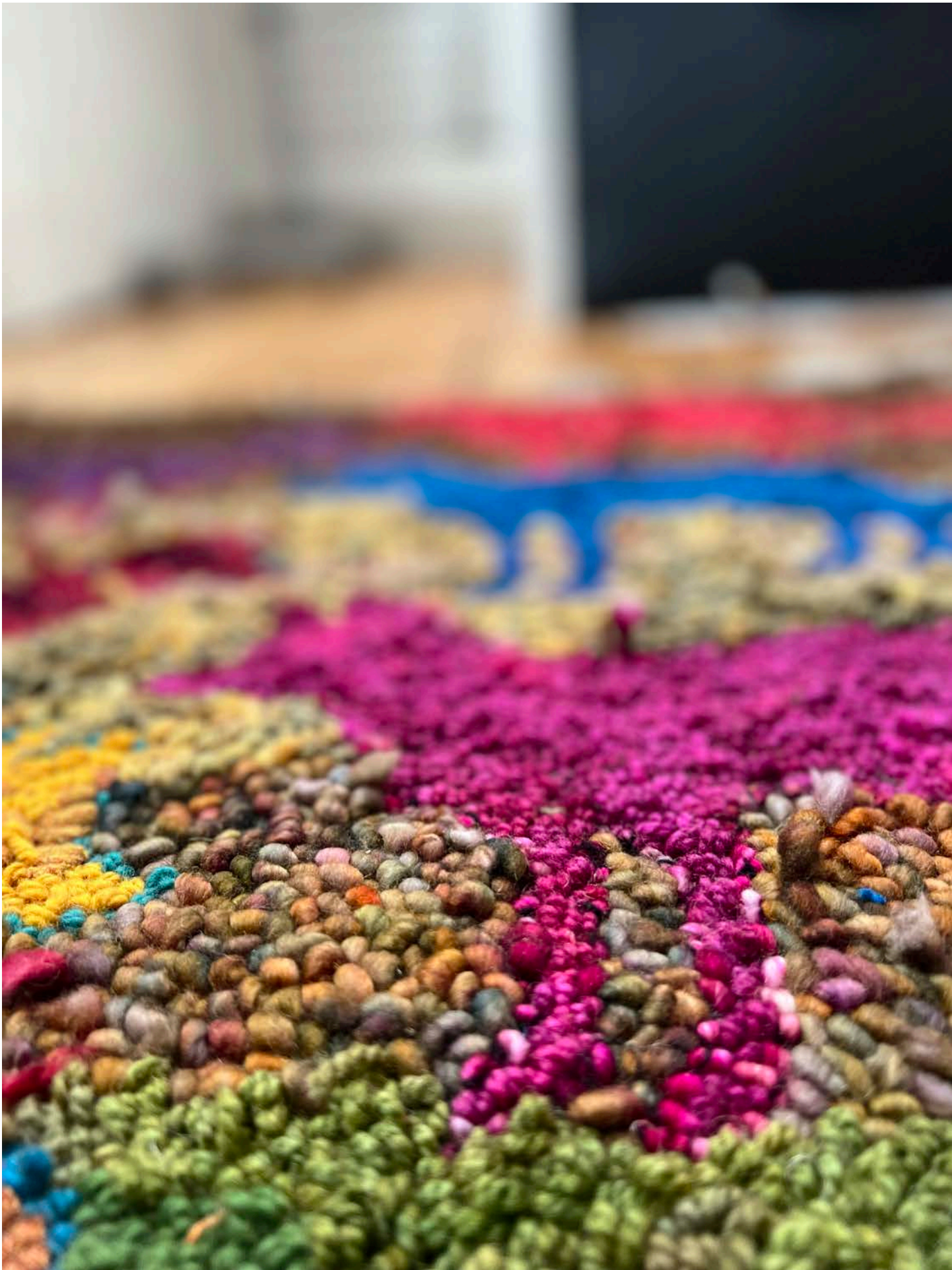
So to keep it in would be denying myself connection.

It would be silencing myself.

It would be silencing my voice.

And I would feel worse about that then I would about someone thinking me too big for my britches, or about someone saying that it is not good enough to be a book.

These things will hurt but not near as much as me denying myself the of the opportunity to speak the truth of my own creativity.



I am not a poet. I am not a philosopher.
I am me. Mat maker, word stringer, walker, talker,
shoe lover, mother, daughter, sister, wife, not in that
order,
but it is all in order
because I express myself.

Being afraid is real and natural. Uncertainty is often
true for even those who appear to be the most certain.
I live daily with uncertainty but when I try something
new and step out of my comfort zone, that uncertainty
rears it's ugly head in a way that you cannot ignore.
Suddenly I am tense. I have obsessive thoughts that
keep reappearing. I start worrying about something
unrelated to what I am really scared of. This is real for
me. It is a pattern.

So sometimes I avoid doing the things I am uncertain
of. Like writing a book with out rugs in it to the
comfort the words because it's too hard or takes up
too much energy until I cannot avoid it any longer.
This is my truth, and I've learned over the years that
my truths are never solitary. They are shared by the
many. Now that the book is off to the published with
my little simple sketches I am resolute. I have got-
ten over the worry part because it is no longer in my
hands. There is no stopping this now, short of me
buying all the books and burying them. Don't laugh, it
occurred to me.

I don't do everything that scares me. I don't feel that
need but I have always done somethings that scare me.
I have always taken some risks. The ones I am most
likely to take are creative risks. I just believe that they
compound and are worth it. I understand how hard
it is to put a price tag on a rug and have it stand alone
in the gallery. I have stood in front of my rugs at craft
shows as hundreds of people walked by unmoved. I
have had them rejected by shows and galleries. I have
seen people walk in to my studio and not even notice

the rugs on my wall. I know that people I love have
never read my books. This is the life of an artist. What
I do , what you do is not for everybody. And that's ok.
After years in the arena, as Brene Brown says, I know
that what I have to say and to express is not going to
connect with everyone. I have long accepted this. But
at first , let me tel you it was hard. I was young and
insecure. I would get angry and frustrated but still I
kept making.


When ever you begin to show your work to the world
there will be all kinds of people to whom it will not
matter. This is art. It is deeply personal. But here is the
big most beautiful thing that makes it worth it. Some-
times in your work a person, sometimes it is just one
person is a sea of people sees themselves in your art.

And you connect.
Connection, that deep resounding flow of meaning
and love, with just one other soul is enough reason to
keep making. And when you make that connection
you will see that it is not so scary anymore.

When someone wants to take a piece of your art and
bring it to their lives, their home, they are bringing
a bit of your spirit into their lives. This is a beautiful
thing and it is worth standing in front of those glazed
over faces who never recognized what you had to say.
It's ok, because they will hopefully find their connec-
tion somewhere else.

And you'll keep making and seeking connection
because now from that one little soul who loved your
work, you know there are others like her.

So whether you sell your work or just show it you are
in a way standing naked in front of your work. and
that's scary and embarrassing and you might feel a
little foolish but thats ok. You might be afraid but you
are doing it anyway because you know someone will



see what it really is you have to say. And that what you have to say matters.

As we age I think this is just as scary, maybe even scarier. If we have been successful or secure in another realm for years it is harder to cross over. It can be a shock to be the beginner, the unknown, but trust me, if you send it out there you'll hear back. Whatever it is we have to express there are others who can relate. There are others who also need to know the truth that you have inside of you. So don't be afraid. Be brave. Be true, be strong and get on with it. Somebody is waiting to hear from you.

I think we have to look for originally. Sometimes we are lucky and it just falls out of us. Often though it comes from blending our own experience, our own way of thinking with what already exists.

The notion of seeking out new ideas on pinterest seems dull to me. Because of algorithms based on my previous expressions of interest things have all begun to look the same. I also believe that being it pass by on a screen is a completely different experience than seeing not in real life or even in a book. Sometimes I will leave a book open on a coffee table and pass by it everyday for week. I am not studying it but I am building a consciousness of it. This week I left open a page of butterflies from the book, A Cabinet of Natural Curiosities. I had just open the page to it, with n intention in mind. It was beautiful so I left it. Seeing it day after day quickly has piqued my interest in a was scrolling through a website never would.

How we consume the world around will effect our ability as an artist. It will effect the way we see. In fact the more time I spend online the more I value books. William Deresiewicz explains "By spending too much

time on social media and chained to news you are marinating yourself in the conventional wisdom, in other peoples reality: for others not for yourself. You are creating a cacophony in which it is impossible to hear your own voice."

I believe that this is true. If we are always listening to others, a story I have been guilty of at times I cannot hear myself. If I cannot hear myself, I cannot fully express myself. If I cannot express myself fully, I can not fully be the artist I want to be. So I must choose what I take in. I need to be the curator of it. I cannot let Amazon or google do that for me. I need to be consciously choosing. Reading serves me well here, as do art book (which I rarely read), and so does travel, even with in my own little region of the world. I am a strong believer that you can experience as much in a walk in the woods near your home as you can climbing a mountain half a world away. One only needs to read Annie Dillard's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek to be reassured that there is something just outside our door for us if we consciously seek it out.

Original thinking is an important part of becoming an artist. If we have been thinking a certain way for many years, reading similar books, similar, authors, doing the same things, it might be time to insert some new insights, some new stories into our lives. Mostly artists are compelled to do this out of boredom. We are curious by nature and want a continuous stream of new thoughts and ideas. We need to make an effort not to get lost to just what is presented to us. Not to turn to what everyone else is watching or reading, or seeing, or doing. We might want to lift the layers a bit and see what new ideas we can find. This means being less receptive to what pops up on our screens, and less time on social media.

WIND AND RAIN AND MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Sometimes I am afraid
Afraid of the rain
because the basement might leak
like it did when I was a child
Afraid because my mother is no longer her to mop it up.
Sometimes I am afraid because I am so small
and the wind is so strong.
It feels like the big white face
with the pursed lips blowing that I remember
in a book from childhood
and I am not sure
I won't be blown over
or even away
into somewhere else
a place that i don't know
or understand.
Yes I am afraid
in the dark sometimes too
but just in the middle of the night
When everyone is sleeping
but then I remember that others
are awake too looking at the ceiling
and wondering the same things.





CREATIVE
NURTURING
FOR THE
OLD SOUL

Creative Nurturing has become more important to me as I age. Here are some of the things that I want to foster and grow because I know they will enhance my creativity.

1. The Proverbial Art Date

Go somewhere on your own with intention. It could be a button shop, a flower garden, or a bus ride to New York City for seven days. (I actually did that). The idea is that you got alone with the idea that you are seeking out inspiration by just letting the time play out as it does. Alone is important because you experience it on your own and react to things differently on your own. I think this is a once a month activity at least.

2. Writing

It could be a letter, it could be journal, it could be writing freestyle or prose. It helps us sort through our ideas and brings us to our thoughts. It is an essential part of creative work for many people.

3. Art Book Collecting or Library Gathering

Find books about artists you have never heard of and find ones about those you feel you have heard of too much. There are always surprises and joy.

4. Art Book on the Table

Take an art book, lay it on the dining table or some place that you pass through regularly but where it can be undisturbed. Open it to a page that intrigues you. Every few days change the page. Every few weeks change the book. You can use library books for this. It will familiarize you with the artist and lets you study art as you go about your business.

5. New Recipes

Cooking and food are two joys in my life. Finding a new flavour, a new recipe book, a new ingredient adds lots of joy to my life and makes me see things differently.

6. Talking to Strangers

I like to talk to people in line ups, at stores, at restaurants and get their stories. Often they will tell you lots of interesting things about themselves. So often their stories have inspired me and help me see the world differently. I bring this back to my art.

7. Phone Awareness

My phone, social media and the internet can be great tools for creativity. They can also be a huge hindrance. I am really conscientious of my phone use. I keep my notifications off and around the house I keep it in a room that I am rarely in. I have timers set in all my social media to remind me if I use it more than fifteen minutes a day. I love my phone and the connectedness it gives me. I just am careful that I remain more connected to my creativity than any other kind of distractions.

8. Let Boredom Reign

If you feel bored, feel it. Don't immediately try to distract yourself. Sit with it. Let it wash over you. It is at the root of many of our best ideas.

9. One Minute Meditations

Sometimes before I decide to run to town to pick something up, go to the grocery store or distract myself I will sit in a chair and do a 60 second meditation. I will just be still and let time happen. So often when I am done I no longer want to rush out and I go back to my hooking. If I still feel the need to go to town I will.

10. Walking

I cannot say enough about the physical and mental benefits of walking. And of course we have been flooded with research about the value of it. My morning walk happens before I touch my phone or check my email or even eat. It is the one time of the day that my thoughts flow freely with put interruption from anything. It is just me and the world around me. This habit has changed my life and lead to so many good ideas.

11. Little Alters Everywhere

All around my home and studio I have little alters to creativity . They are bulletin boards. They are two rocks on a table. They are an art object I bought somewhere. Sometimes they can even be a piece of jewelry. They are sometimes found items from the beach or the forest floor. I place them gently in my environment. I move them around. I pay attention to them. I find I am intuitively drawn to certain thing and those things bring me closer to myself and my art.

12. Faith

Every time I start a rug I have to have faith that it will work out. And I do have faith./ Faith in God, faith in Art and faith in community. It is a big part of my life and my spiritual life is a big part of my art. I always have a spiritual book on the go as they keep me connected to my faith and my values.

13. Reflection

Asking yourself reflective questions. Having deep philosophical conversations over a pizza. Really examining your life and the world around you are part of making and creating for me. It is not enough to just reflect back what I se I want to show you what I feel about it.

14. Learning

Deepening my knowledge on any subject is worth doing. I am right now taking an iPhone photography course. I recently took a course on setting the table creatively. It does not mater what you learn. It just matters that you learn.

15. Reading

Here's the thing about reading, it expands my visual imagination. When I read I see pictures. I think in pictures. I dream up people, how the look, what they sound like. I create landscapes from the authors words. It is a terrific way to stimulate your visual imagination.

16. Friendship

Keeping in touch with friends and maintaining and deepening social connections is one of the best things we can do for our health and creativity. Research has shown social isolation increases our risk for dementia and premature death from all causes. Staying socially connected is important for me. A lunch with a friend, a glass of wine on a Friday night are great rests from making and allow me to step away from art for a while.

17. Art Friends Online

Many of my art friends are online because there are not a lot of full time working creatives where I live. I meet with one friend once a month to talk about creative business and had several friends and communities over the years that have really helped me with my art and creativity.

18. City Time

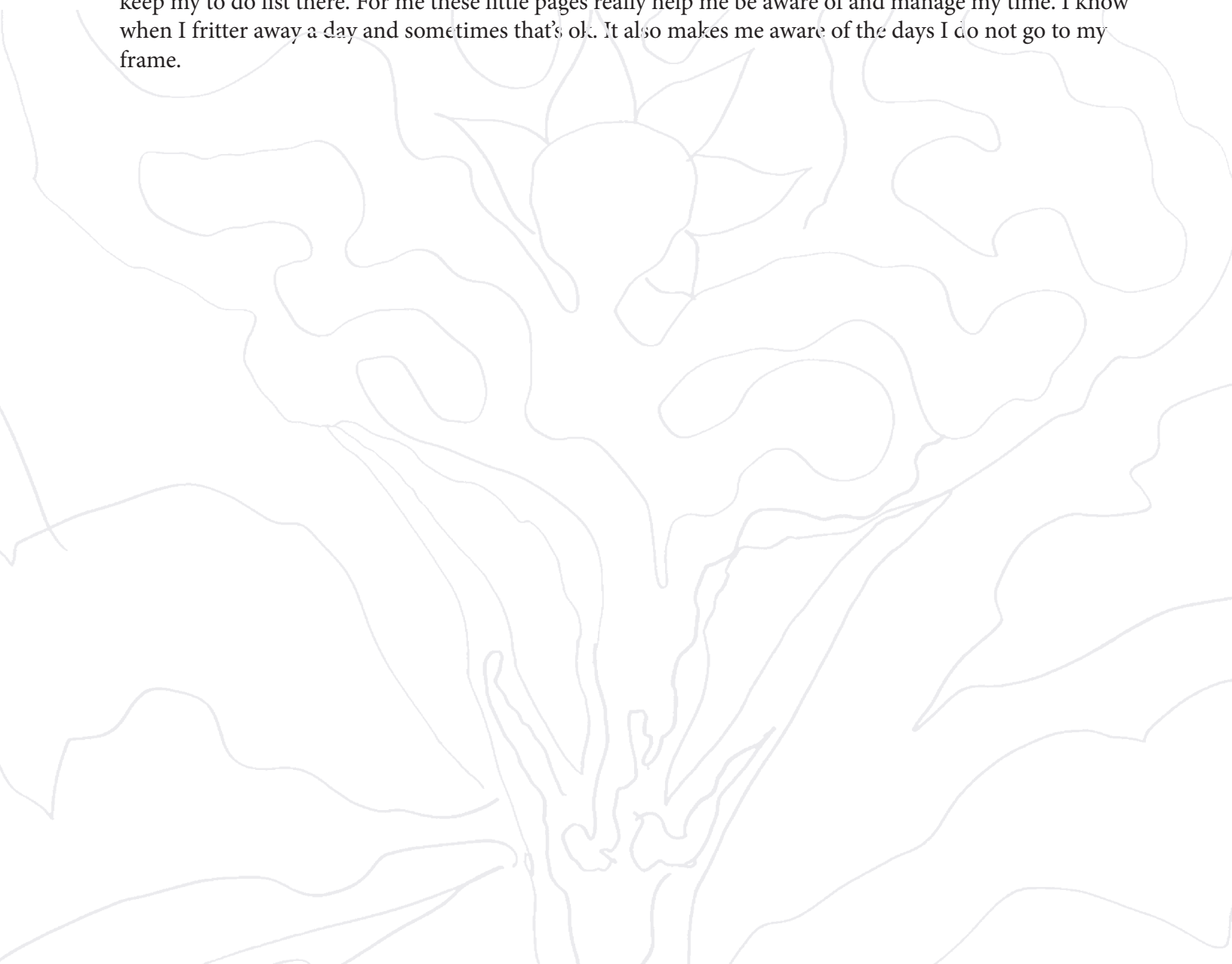
Short visits to cities inspire me. I live in a small town and about twice a year I go to a city for two or three days. I stay in a hotel and go to galleries. I walk a lot. I eat out at different restaurants. For others it may be a day trip to a rural area that inspires them. Short trips to inspiring places as a complete break from your art is a good thing.

19. Paper Ephemera

This is different than little alters... it is the written quotes, cards, notes to myself or from others, pictures that inspire me that I paste around my life, above my desk, on my fridge. Words that remind me what I believe and who I want to be. Images from other artists that make me want to be better. Sometimes these things hang around for years other times they change more frequently. Sometimes they are layers but they are all part of my growth and development as a human being.

20. Making Time

I am selfish about my time. Still keep a paper daily calendar. At the end of each day I jot myself a note about how I spent my day, if I hooked, sometimes what I cooked, or who I saw. It makes me aware of how I spend my time. I keep a little gratitude journal there to remind myself of all that is good in my life. I also keep my to do list there. For me these little pages really help me be aware of and manage my time. I know when I fritter away a day and sometimes that's ok. It also makes me aware of the days I do not go to my frame.





QUESTIONS

How do you define middle age?

How has aging affected your creativity?

How has aging affected your creativity?

Where do you feel you are in your creative journey?

What are you consciously doing routinely to help you become more creative?

What do you say yes to now that once would not?

What do you say no to now that you once would do?

Are you able to be in the moment at this time in your life?

What would you tell your younger self about your creativity?

What is one thing you could do today to open up some space for your creativity?

How are you currently expressing yourself?

What daily practices or habits would you like to develop.

Pick one and track it.

If your creative spirit was glowing, what would you be doing?

What activities make your heart sing?

What stories do you tell yourself about your creativity?

What stories do you tell yourself about aging?

In one sentence for each decade of your life write your creative story.