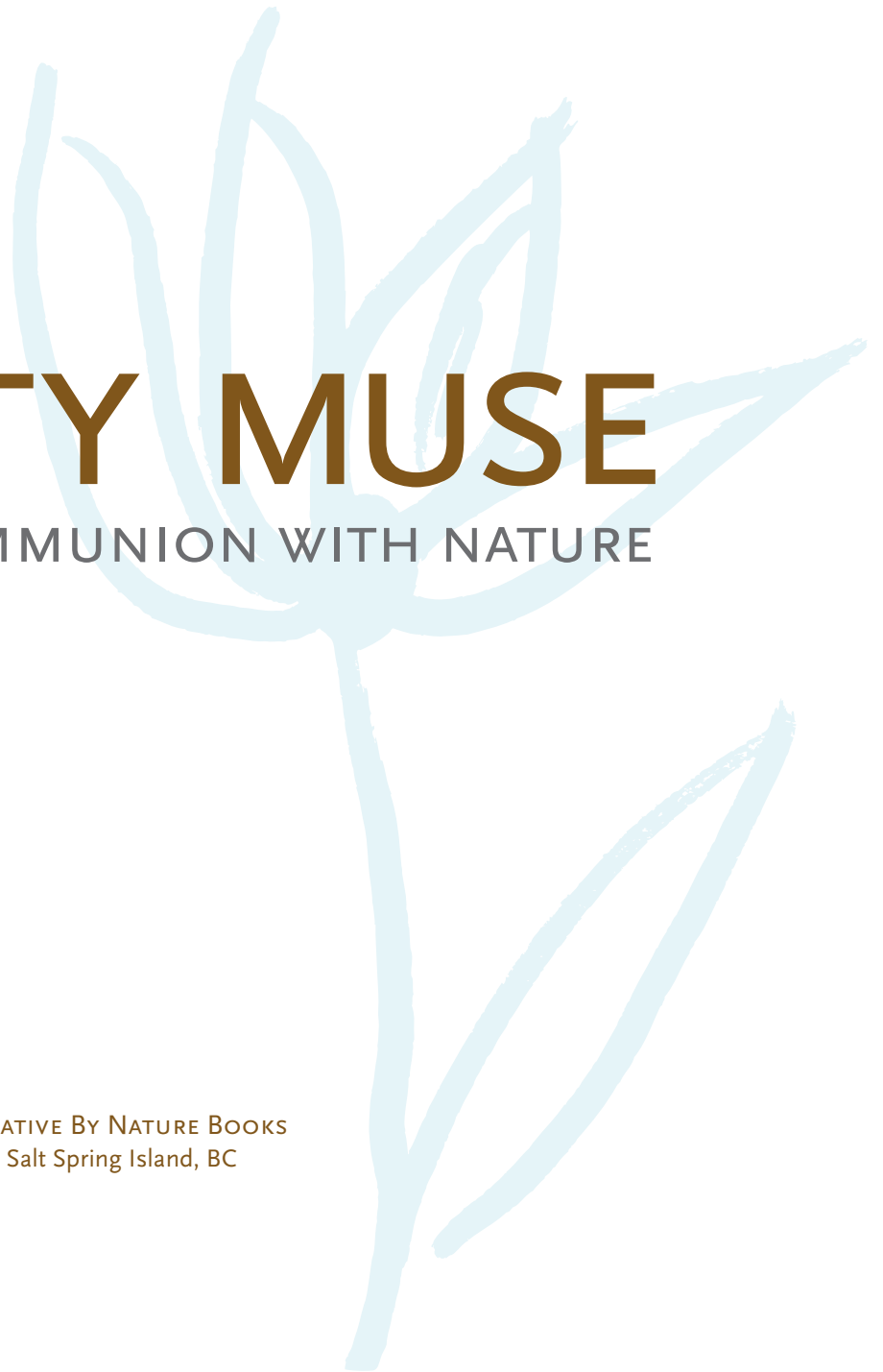


LISA LIPSETT

BEAUTY MUSE

PAINTING IN COMMUNION WITH NATURE

CREATIVE BY NATURE BOOKS
Salt Spring Island, BC



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USDA Forest Service www.bugwood.org

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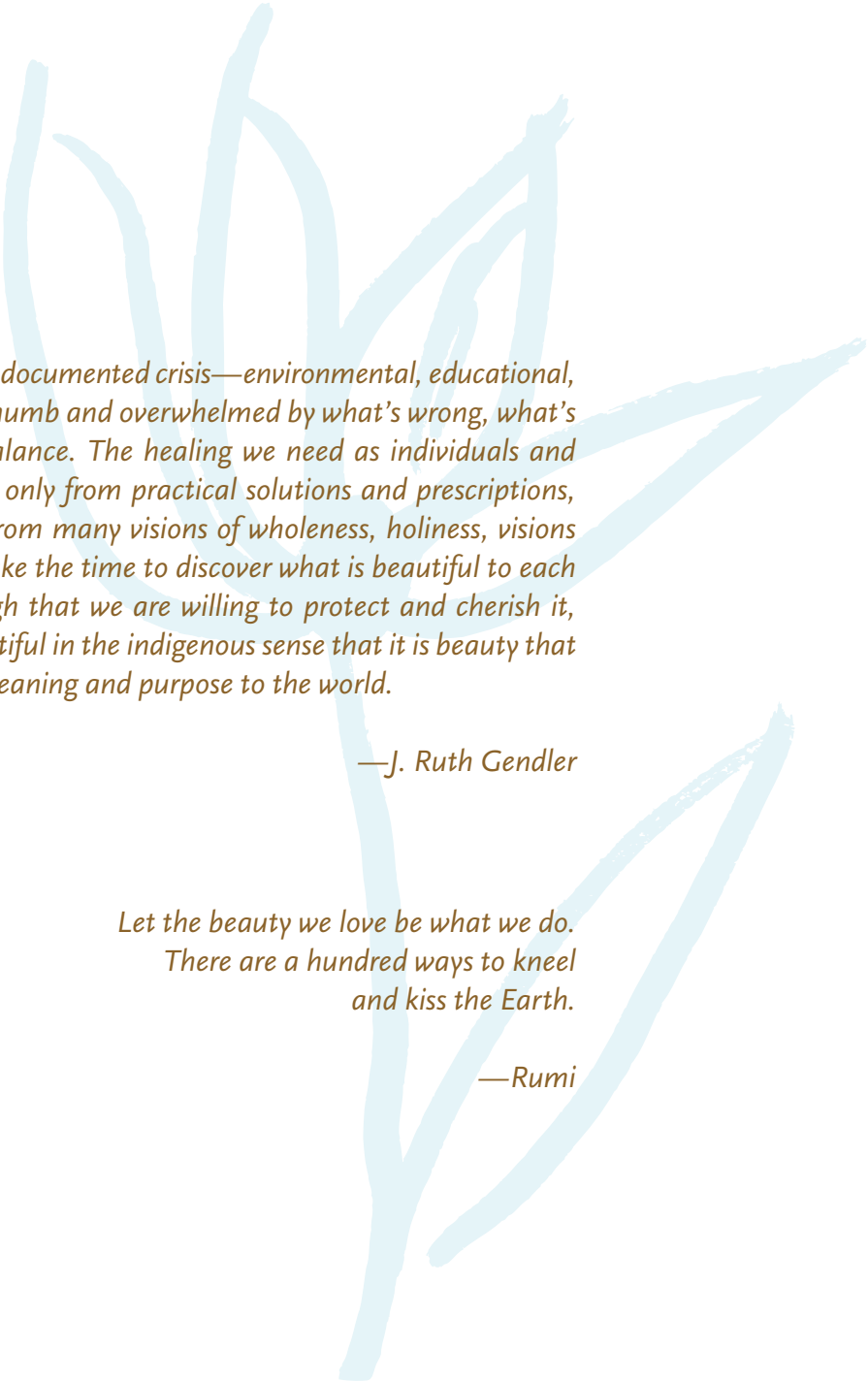
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Living in a time of well documented crisis—environmental, educational, social—we are often numb and overwhelmed by what’s wrong, what’s ugly, what’s out of balance. The healing we need as individuals and cultures cannot come only from practical solutions and prescriptions, but must also come from many visions of wholeness, holiness, visions of beauty. We must take the time to discover what is beautiful to each of us, beautiful enough that we are willing to protect and cherish it, change our lives; beautiful in the indigenous sense that it is beauty that organizes and gives meaning and purpose to the world.

—J. Ruth Gendler

*Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are a hundred ways to kneel
and kiss the Earth.*

—Rumi

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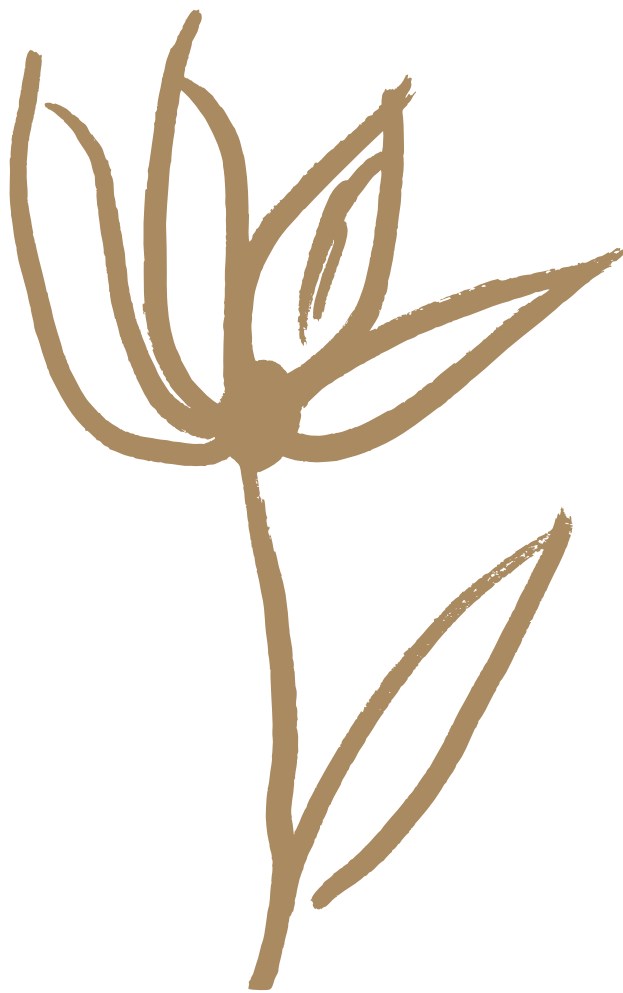
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FOR KUNO, RUBY, HARRIET AND THELMA.
YOU BRING COLOUR AND LOVE TO MY LIFE.



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Lost Rainbows

My six-year-old daughter loves to paint, draw, and sculpt. Ruby especially loves to create rainbows. She draws beautiful vibrant marker streaks across previously barren pages. She can mould amorphous mounds of brightly hued Plasticine into a free-standing rainbow in an instant. Rainbow is her muse.

Since starting Grade One, I've noticed she hasn't drawn rainbows in a long time. The most interesting drawings she has brought home this year were drawn on the back of her Minute Math sheet. Lately, her class has started something called Directed Drawing—the teacher sets up a still life display of fruit or objects and walks the children through the steps of accurately sketching the scene.

In the last couple months, Ruby has displayed increased resistance in going to school. This is a child who in Junior Kindergarten insisted on going even when a broken toe made her foot too swollen for her boot. She loved school so much that she practically crawled on her hands and knees to get there that day. It turns out that last week while I was busily writing about creativity as a key to maintaining our connection with self, others and Nature, she was chastised in front of her class for “scribbling” on her math school work. She tells me she wasn't scribbling, rather she was drawing loops, that she needs to draw in order to think and that she was simply making an otherwise very bare page look beautiful. I doodle all the time. I've found that while the mind is occupied, the doodling hand rejoices in its creative freedom.

Yesterday, much to my joy, Ruby came home proudly carrying six sheets of newsprint, each displaying a beautifully rendered vibrant rainbow. She said she was going to post these all over town. Then I noticed the message:

lost radbo if you see one col 537-

Apparently, she was originally going to write “extinct rainbow.” I was relieved. There is still hope.

BEAUTY MUSE: PAINTING IN COMMUNION WITH NATURE is for all of us who lost our rainbow along the way. Like an explorer coming home to share marvellous adventures after a long solo journey, I hope that by sharing my creative recovery I inspire and energize your own exploration.



Ruby's hands

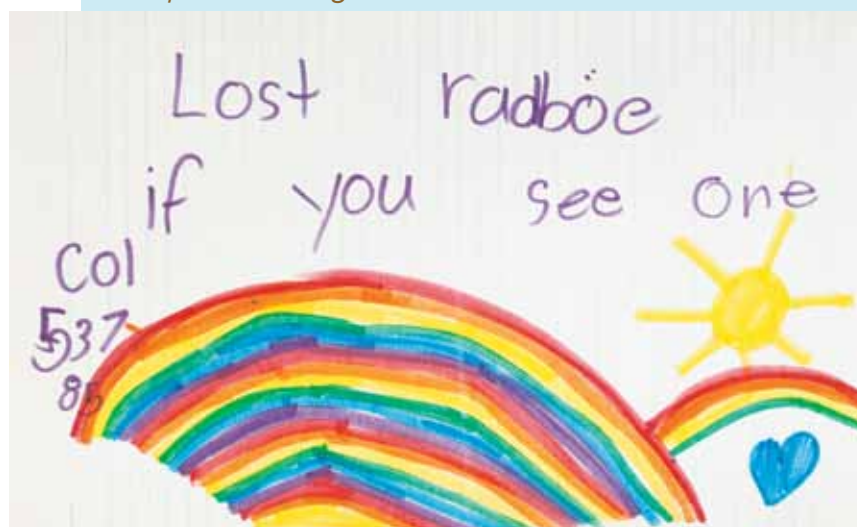
I have woven easy-to-try painting activities, quotes from the fields of ecology and creativity, with narrative on the process of Natural Painting. This book will appeal to educators eager to explore creativity and personal transformation, artists interested in ways to bring art-making back to its living roots and everyone aspiring to live more creatively, harmoniously and naturally. It is especially valuable to parents and teachers committed to honouring and preserving children's natural impulse to create.

Becoming a painter has taught me that creating naturally strengthens an enduring sense of ecological self. We can create with Nature and find ourselves. We can also dive deeply into ourselves through creating and find Nature. We can see our own natural patterns, colours and forms emerge on the page. Painting clears out old blockages, transforming old habits and making space for new connections. We can see tensions soften and resolve as painting both illustrates and changes how we feel. We learn to melt into change, admire delicacy and vulnerability, accept the unknown, feel our way through and resonate with the energy of the day and the season. We paint ourselves. Not the outward tracing but rather the fullness that lives within the surface.

Through painting, we can better understand natural principles and processes such as self change (metamorphosis), developmental periods and cycles, part-whole relationships, natural pattern, and the creativity that emerges from holding oppositional tensions.

Painting soothes the weary soul, deepens our commitment to Nature and helps us to understand Nature's creative processes from the inside out. When we create with Nature, we access a rich source of knowledge about our environment. When we re-learn this creative language of life

Ruby's rainbow sign





and become deeply rooted in its governing creative principles, we live in harmony with Nature and self once again.

Natural Painting is an inside-outside-in dance. Soon after beginning to paint, I was opened to a whole new way of seeing and feeling self, others and Nature. The lines between inner and outer were forever blurred. Childhood Nature memories bubbled up and interwove with painted images, dreams, stories, and Nature encounters.

In the first section of *BEAUTY MUSE*, I take a brief look at childhood creating and Nature connection. There is much to be gleaned from a glance back to where we left off.

The *Process of Natural Painting* follows with an introduction to the practice and process. By painting what feels right and fits in the moment we are led. I share ways to help the thinking, planning mind to soften so you can trust your hands instead. For this practice you need nothing but a small selection of watercolour paints and some paper, combined with a willingness to explore. After painting regularly for even a short while, you may be surprised at how quickly your own natural patterns are revealed. A muse may come out of hiding as images emerge, develop and evolve.

Over a few seasons of painting, you may notice that images change over time. By simply following what attracted me in the moment, I unknowingly painted the metamorphic cycle of a moth. In *Artful Self-Change* I share images of eggs, caterpillars, cocoons and moths, which tell of a personal creative cycle that animates my approach to painting. Through her naturalness, my muse taught me how to approach creating. All living beings have much to teach us about creative process.

Soon after I remembered a pivotal childhood *Cecropia* moth encounter, a long lost relationship with Silk moths was rekindled. I visited with a *Cecropia* moth who stayed for hours in my yard, and inspired a whole new way to artfully connect through drawing and painting. In the section *Artful Nature Communion*, you are invited to give colour and form to a co-creative resonance with another living being. When we set the intention to create with a tree, a moth, or even ourselves, we move beyond thinking about Nature to learning *with* and *through* Nature.

After painting a feeling connection to Cecropia, I followed the impulse to paint myself. In *Painting in Communion with Self*, I share how having a friend outline your body can lead to an exciting painting adventure. For me, what began as an outer body tracing became a window into the resonant interrelationship of many earlier paintings. It was as if I was seeing the wholeness of myself through Nature's eyes. You can do this, too.

The final section of this book, entitled *Beauty Muse*, shares how even years after our first encounter, a muse can continue to guide our process. Images evolve over time, yet the essence of our own personal connections remains relatively stable. Like the trained Silk worm who transforms into a trained moth, the entrainment withstands even the most complete melting down of old structures. The essence of who we are remains unchanged.

A Resources section completes BEAUTY MUSE with helpful information on books, institutes and websites that will inspire and support a Natural Painting practice.

Last summer, I noticed beautiful jewel-like balls of rainbow coloured dew decorating blades of grass in the early morning sun. I was mesmerized by their poignant placement and inherent delicacy. I had never seen them before. The more I swayed and turned my head, the more their colours came alive. Throughout this book, I've included small, blue bubbles with activities to try. Many will help your creative process bubble to the surface. The activities are meant to spark your process, so use them as a jumping off point for exploration. Some may feel familiar, others may ask you to try something very new. I invite you to follow what attracts as you navigate using your own compass and map. By staying focused on your own experience, you will discover what inspires and sustains.

Although painting is the core of the creative practice shared here the principles are natural and may be applied to any medium. The key is to set the intention to follow where the hands lead while creating. I invite you to experiment and create a natural practice of your own.

