



Creative by Nature Art

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An Introduction

LISA LIPSETT

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Lisa Lipsett, Ed.D.

“Life’s solutions lie in the minute particulars, involving more and more individual people daring to create their own life and art, daring to listen to the voice within their deepest, original nature, and deeper still, the voice within the Earth”.

-Stephen Nachmanovitch

For years, I dabbled in drawing and watercolour painting, carefully recreating the beautiful plants and trees around me in finely wrought images, but something always felt missing. I longed for deeper connections, joy, presence and art-making in my day to day. I longed for creativity to become a way of life. It was not until a cool rainy morning in 1997, when I drew and painted a vase of tulips, that everything changed. The tulip painting was technically fine, and the colours were beautiful, but somehow both the act of painting and the resulting image didn’t express the life I could sense in those flowers.

Out of sheer frustration, I followed the impulse to paint the way the tulips felt instead of the way they looked. Until that day, it had never occurred

to me to paint a resonant feeling connection with another living being. I simply set that intention, sat quietly, closed my eyes and using my hands, painted whatever came. The painting was not what I expected, yet I loved it instantly. It was not only the vibrant colours and unique shapes that I loved, I also felt blissfully nourished by the process itself.

I was enchanted by the sense that something normally unseen was magically brought to light and was excited by the infinite possibilities that feeling painting provoked. I was inspired to explore further.

I wondered what would happen if I simply began recording feelings, then painted with no plan. Each day I began with a journal entry and used that writing as a jumping off point for a painting. Over time, I developed tricks (like closing my eyes and using my non-dominant hand). This painting process helped soften my planning mind, and guided me to trust what came spontaneously. Practising the process slowly released the tension between what I was taught to think and do when making art, and encouraged me to pursue what felt natural in the moment. Paint gave colour and form to my felt experi-



first tulip painting





second tulip painting

ence. I watched in rapt fascination as images transformed over time. Thinking was balanced with feeling, sensing and intuiting. I learned how to attune to nature using art as a bridge. Soon I came back to life with renewed connection, creativity and gratitude.

Now I share what I've discovered with others through Creative by Nature Art - images, programs and classes in nature inspired activities to ignite a new creative habit.

The life spark of a seed at the moment of germination, the undulations of a pine bough in a stiff breeze, the meandering line of an ant in the

cool earth, the spontaneous play of a child and human creative expression are all part of nature's creative language; a language which is spontaneous, embodied in the moment, engaged, and artful. It is a language that nourishes a resilient fit between all members of the earth community. Through creating, we not only express our fit with nature in the moment, we also strengthen this fit as we develop a habit that nourishes us for a lifetime.

In his book, *On Creativity*, physicist David Bohm describes art making as a "fitting together" or to "fit", and "beauty" as "to fit in every sense". By creating *with* nature and self we not only gain aesthetic satisfaction by making something we love, we speak nature's language and feel the beauty of connection with other beings. Archetypal psychologist James Hillman says, "Beauty is not physical, it is within the act of connection, it is breathing into our beings other life".

Wherever I go I carry around an art kit comprised of a folded watercolour book, a paint box, two pens and a water container. *Directions and a video on how to fold a Creative by Nature book can be found at www.creativebynature.org* With my kit readily available, I can drop deeply into any setting to connect, and then create. I renew my energy, soften my heart, deepen my connection to other living beings and quiet my mind. Drawing and painting for the last 15 years has strengthened my sense of belonging, deepened my understanding of nature, sparked my curiosity and wonder about how nature works, and heightened my sensitivity to patterns, textures, and cycles of the living world. I have been awakened to the potency of creativity to attune ourselves to the world around us. I now have immense respect for art as a way to know. I firmly believe in the necessity of everyone strengthening their creative fitness as a way to enrich their emotional and spiritual well-being.

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Red Granite



Seafoam II

THE CREATIVE BY NATURE ART, PROGRAM

There are three ways to work introduced in the Creative By Nature (CBN) Art program. First, we spend time learning to track something we love with our senses, hands, eyes, and bodies while we express our experience through drawing and painting. We track a plant or animal in the moment and keep track of the encounter with colour and image. Then, we spend time working from the inside-out exploring our inner landscape through spontaneous drawing and painting as it relates to body sensation, feelings, inquiry and intention. In the third phase, we intertwine outside-in creating with inside-out spontaneous creating to experience the boundless fluid dance between the two. I also emphasize the following four ways to work.

CLOSED EYES

“I shut my eyes in order to see.” - Paul Gauguin

When we create with our eyes open, we can be seduced by the idea of creating something in particular. With eyes closed, we flow and feel the sensations associated with a nature connected creating. By moving away from the outward grasping habit of seeing, we open to a fresh way of relating. If we can't see what we're doing, then judgments soften and expectations fall away. Other senses kick in and we pay more attention. We can move beyond surface details and no longer see nature as simply another pretty picture. We let go of our need to control an image and move aside as it is born before our eyes.

BOTH HANDS

“Let your hands be your eyes.” - Ruby Elena

We draw and paint with both hands and paint without brushes. We open to the wholeness of ourselves when we create with both hands. Both right and left brains are invited into the creative process. Materials bridge between the creator and nature when we follow where the hands spontaneously lead. Creating without brushes is often surprising and relaxing as the mind sinks into the textures and sensations of succulent coloured hands and fingertips. We learn to trust the wisdom of our bodies.

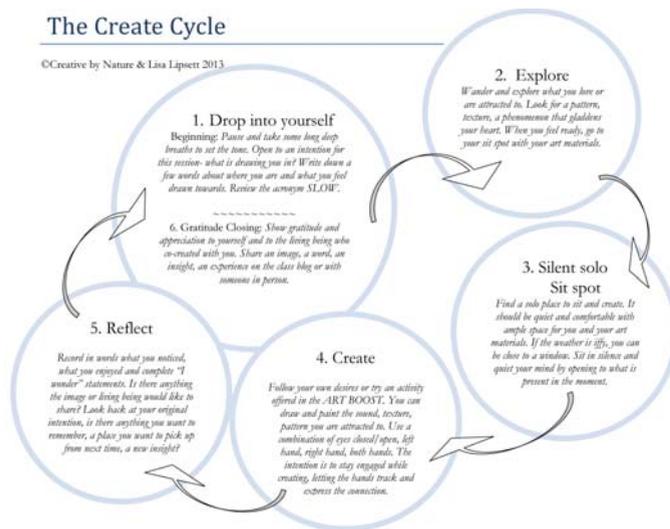
LET NATURE AND IMAGES SPEAK

“Everything has its own voice. Thunder and lightning and stars and planets, flowers, birds, animals, trees” - Thomas Berry

When we are finished drawing and painting, we often ask an image or a natural being if there is anything it would like to share. Then we record the answer. We also take time to reflect when we complete the sentences, I noticed... and I wonder... We develop a new way of listening, characterized by no preconceived notions about what nature might be trying to say and how it might be trying to say it. We open to receive messages and to fully listen again to ourselves and nature.

The Create Cycle

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4. The Create Cycle

we engage with nature with appreciation, wonder, humility and gratitude.

GRATITUDE

“If the only prayer you said in your whole life was thank you, that would suffice.” - Meister Eckhart

We begin and end a session with reverential mindfulness towards nature and the creative process. We ask for permission to engage and we say thank you or express our gratitude in some way when we are finished. Sometimes we can be chosen by a plant or animal. At other times we follow what attracts. Either way we engage with nature with appreciation, wonder, humility and gratitude.

THE SLOW APPROACH TO DRAWING AND PAINTING

S- be silent at your sit-spot. Go slowly so you can remain in connection with a sound, texture, pattern or some other aspect of nature.

L- follow what you love. Work only with what you love. Be loving and kind to yourself and others as you create. When drawing and painting, use one continuous line. Really listen.

O- open to the sound, texture, pattern that you are working with. Work with opposites together (for example draw and paint at least some of the time with both hands).

W- maintain a curious state of mind. Let your senses wander. Use your whole brain by working with both hands equally, and eyes closed part of the time.

I recommend that you keep the basic cycle the same and change only one small thing each session. Don't be afraid to try the same creative task repeatedly over a number of sessions. While creating, be an archaeologist of your own experience. Watch what helps you stay in the flow and what jars you out again. The more you follow your in-the-moment attractions, the less time you spend in the planning mind, and the deeper your connection.

From these beginnings I later develop works in my studio.

If you love nature and seek more creativity in your life, I hope you have found some nourishment here.

Learn more about Lisa Lipsett's work + Creative by Nature Art at www.creativebynature.org

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