

August 2022

**The Art of Life -  
Cultivating  
Creativity**

Presented by Stop Breathe Believe®  
& Dianne Morris Jones

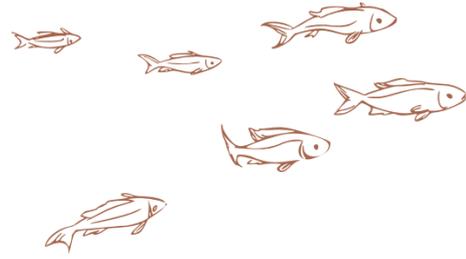
May you be encouraged to cultivate creativity in your everyday and extraordinary world. May our Art of Life imaginings and beauty blossom and bloom in our hearts and courageously through our hands as we embrace the concept of cultivating creativity.

The Art of Life: Cultivating Creativity blog may be found here:

<http://diannemorrisjones.com/blog>

To learn more about the artists and their perspective on The Art of Life, please check out the Featured Artists section of my website here:

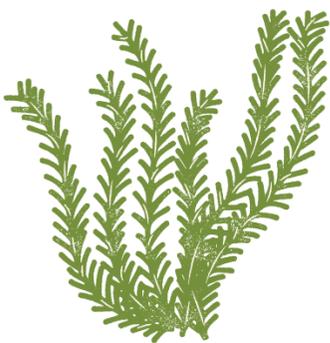
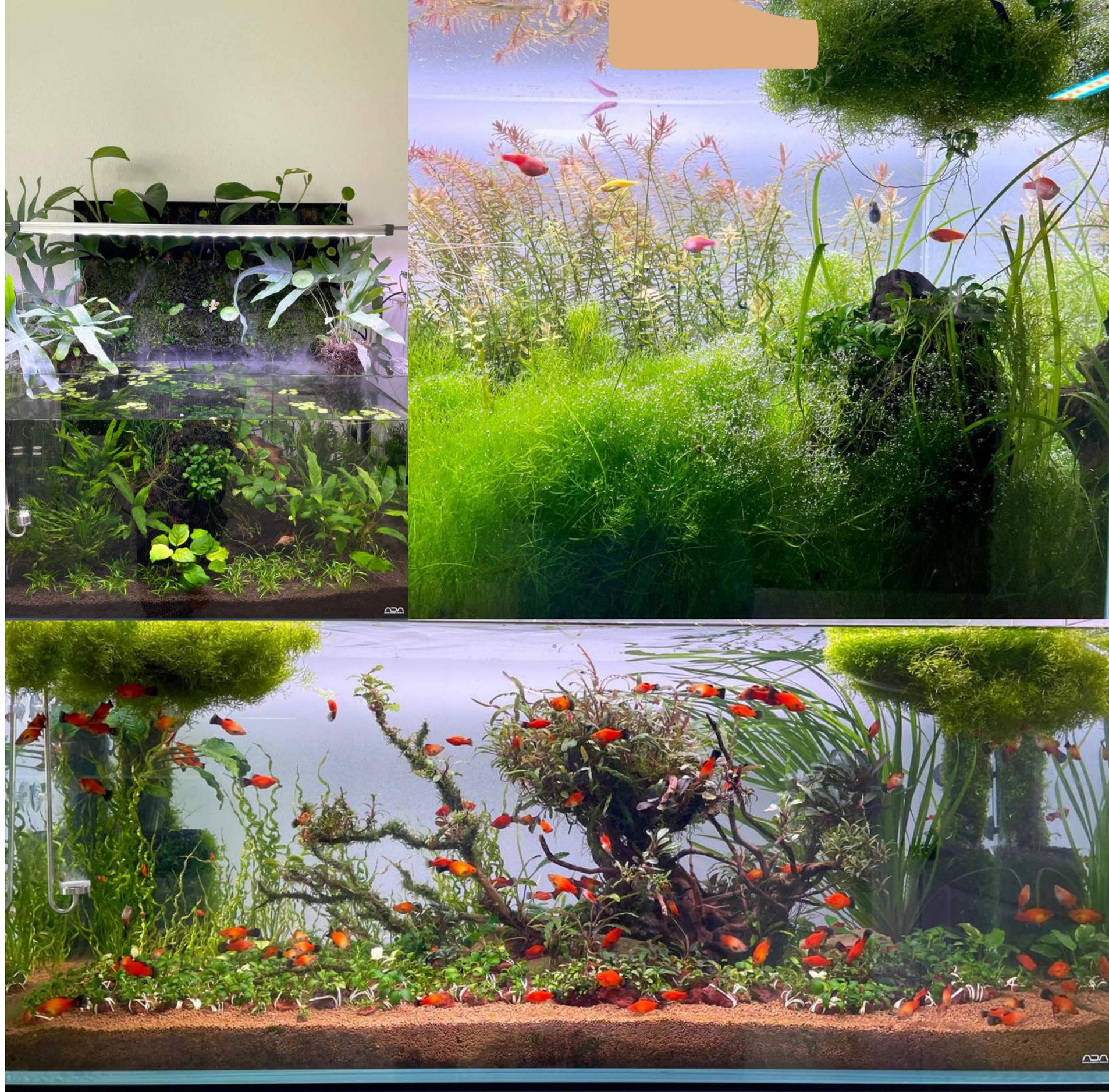
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# Monika Agic

Art: Aquascapes

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**Words from the Artist, Monika Agic:** “Aquascaping is a form of art not well known. It is about creating underwater ecosystem which also represents scenes from nature using live plants, rocks and wood. The art originated in Japan and its father is Takashi Amano. This is truly a live art that is always changing, maturing, and becoming better with time.

Yes, it’s very creative with a complexity that we cannot fully control nature. Visual art like a painting is in your complete control. This type of art doesn’t always do what you want so it’s more a collaboration - artist and nature together. Aquascaping is a luxury living art with ongoing maintenance.”

**About the Artist:** Monika is a lifelong artist with background in fine art and antique furniture renovation and in the last 5 years, her interest is in aquascaping.

I first met Monika at Starbucks in Des Moines, IA as I had commissioned her to paint an abstract image of a stoplight to represent the concept of my book, Stop Breathe Believe™. She listened very carefully to my heart, to my love of color and incorporated it in the art she created.

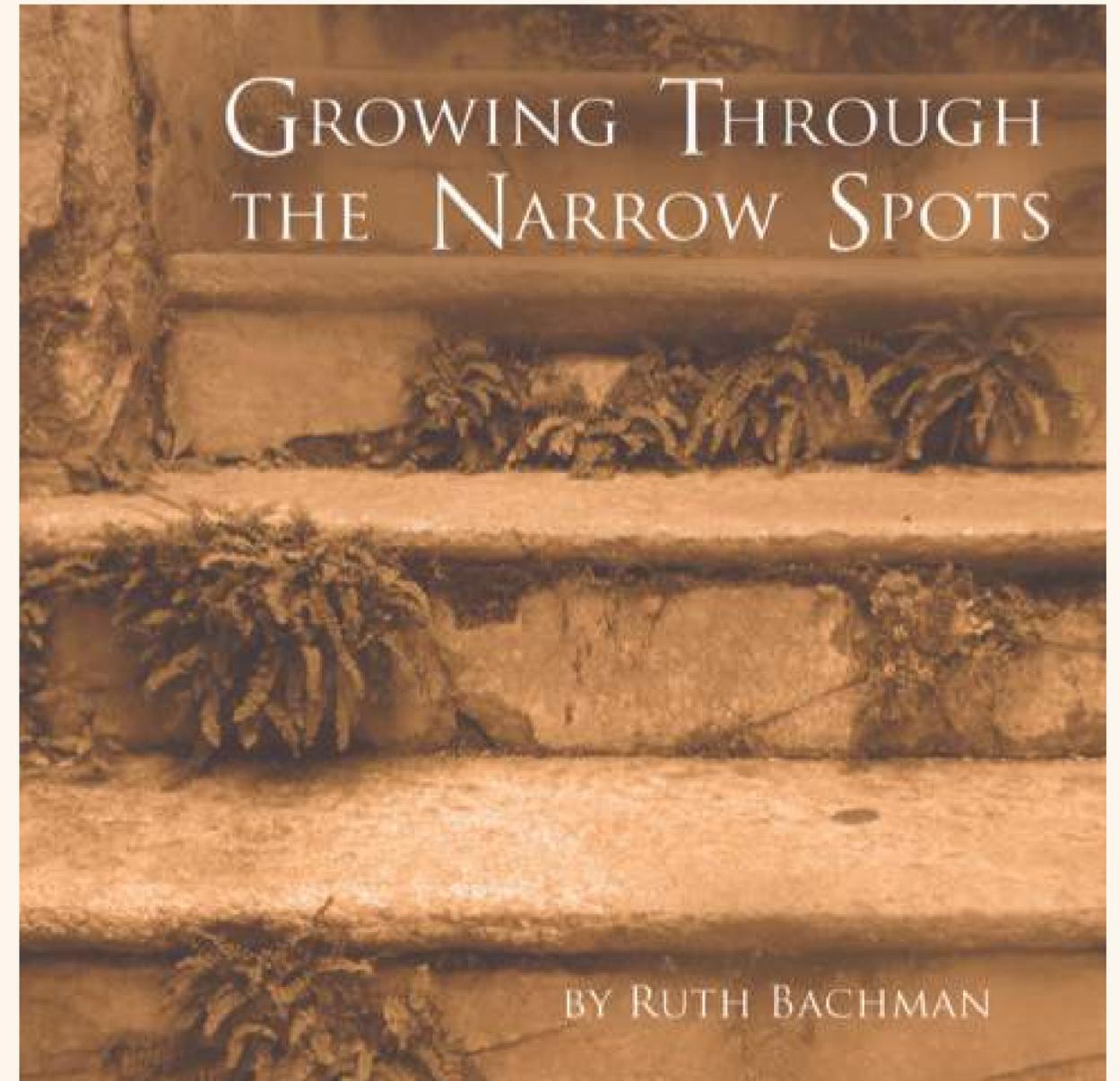
# Ruth Bachman

**Art:** *Growing Through the Narrow Spots*, a book by Ruth Bachman

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**Words from the Artist, Ruth Bachman:** “As a cancer survivor. I created this book in response to people asking me for a tangible reminder of my core message: If cancer is the narrow spot in the hourglass and I am the sand, then I have travelled from the top, through that narrow spot to the bottom, the same sand but with a different arrangement.

My book is a roadmap of sorts, encouraging/inspiring the reader to look closely and patiently at all of life’s challenges – narrow spots – to discover the resources, both internal and external, that are present to help navigate the passage. Change is inevitable. No one and no thing is permanent, except the presence of the divine.”

**About the Artist:** Roger and I first met Ruth at an Above and Beyond Cancer event in Des Moines, IA as she was the keynote speaker. Ruth is a cancer survivor, a right handed amputee due to soft tissue sarcoma and was speaking of her experience hiking Everest Base Camp Trail. Her resilient mindset was evidenced in many things, I recall she even learned to tie her hiking boots with her teeth and left hand. We were moved by her tremendous courage. Her book, *Through the Narrow Spots*, is beautifully written and creatively utilizes the metaphor of the hourglass.

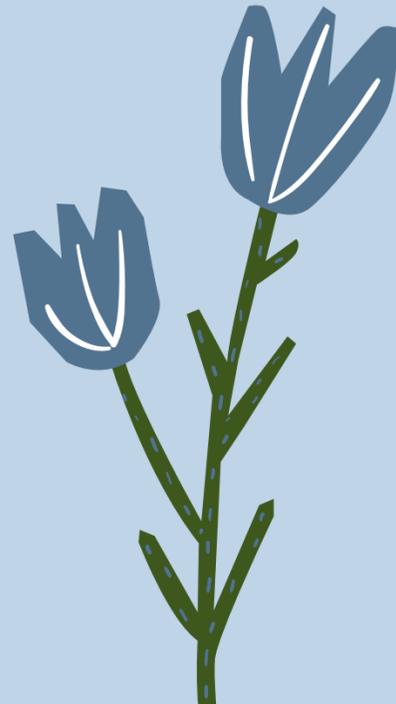
# Becky Bamsey

**Art:**

*Breckenridge Hike*

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**Words from the Artist, Becky Bamsey:** “I try to find beauty in everyday activities, and I believe that the world would be so empty without the art that is inspired by it; everybody has a gift of some kind to share, and I am happy to show mine.”

**About the Artist:** Becky has been creating art throughout her life. She works primarily with pastels or charcoal and prefers to focus on landscapes as her subject. Becky also makes mosaic frames and boxes using pottery and found objects in a whimsical folk art style. Becky and her husband Randy live in Johnston, Iowa.

The gifts of friends are treasures to the heart. One day Becky presented me with a personalized gift that she had created for me. The beautiful mosaic art represented so many facets of my life and were carefully portrayed in her art. Becky and her gift made me feel seen, heard and understood – a gift I received by having a friendship with Becky. Being her friend is also a gift.

# Mike Brangoccio

**Art:** *Passion Fruit*, Acrylic on  
Canvas, 44" x 48"

A painting about death, life, and  
salvation.

**Contact Information:**  
[www.brangoccio.com](http://www.brangoccio.com)



**Words from the artist, Mike Brangoccio:** “My Inspiration: For me, the creative process has always been about the relationship between: trial and error, error and discovery, discovery and learning, learning and contradiction, contradiction and conflict, conflict and resolution.”

**About the Artist:** Mike is a Colorado native currently living in Des Moines, IA. He received both a B.A. and M.A. degree from the University of Northern Colorado. Mike has shown art extensively across the U.S. with one-person exhibitions in galleries nationwide, including Denver, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Chicago. His works are in public and private collections across the U.S., China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, and Australia.

Roger and I are grateful to be friends with Mike and his wife, Kim for many years. Kim, also a therapist, was integral in supervising my therapist licensure. Mike and Kim are exquisite dinner hosts.

# Kaitlyn Busbee

Art: *Bed Bugs*, a  
Short Film

Contact Information:

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**Words from the artist, Kaitlyn Busbee:** “When someone has reached a point of artfully handling anything in life, be it a craft, instrument, or expression of a feeling – there is a driven intention, focus and passion behind that act. For me “the art of life” is about human purpose and energetic connection. Those moments of spark with people we love, strangers, and everyone in between.”

**About the Artist:** Kaitlyn Busbee is an Iowa-bred, now Brooklyn-based artist. She's an award-winning filmmaker and current MFA candidate at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in Graduate Film. She's a Graduate Associate and the recipient of the Maurice Kanbar Scholarship, the Martin Scorsese Scholarship Grant, and awardee of the Black Family Film Prize for her most recent short film, Layaway (currently in post-production). She's served as writer, director, director of photography and editor on numerous projects including: feature films, short films, music videos, commercial and episodic content. Most notably, Busbee was Co-Director/DP/Editor for These Hopeless Savages, an independent feature film shot guerrilla style in 7 days on the road between Iowa and NYC. Savages has played over 30 festivals worldwide and is now available on Amazon Prime through the film's distributor. The Legend in My Heart, her feature shot in China, won Best Documentary at the Los Angeles Universe Multicultural Film Festival and her short, Sexpert Franzen, played Tribeca's 30 Under 30 Film Festival where she was recognized as "one of the next wave of gifted young filmmakers."

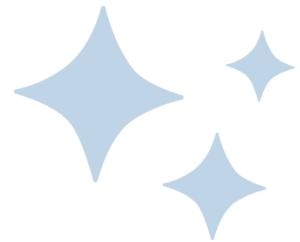
She served as DP/Field Producer for Episode 2 (Uprooted) of the show Through Our Eyes, an HBO Max and Sesame Workshop documentary series about the climate crisis through the eyes of children. Her last short, Bed Bugs, is currently playing film festivals and recently won the Audience Choice Award at the Hudson Valley Film Fest, Best Student Film at NYC Shorts, and Best Iowa Film at Interrobang Film Festival.

Roger and I know Kaitlyn, a friend of Jill (our daughter) from Valley high school days in West Des Moines, IA. The films designed and produced in our basement from their created film company were amazing! What a delight it was to be the food provider for their creativity projects! We are grateful to know Kaitlyn! Kaitlyn is now based out of Brooklyn, NY.

# Barb Clark

**Art:** *Night Musings*, a  
Poem

**Contact Information:**  
BClark131@aol.com



## NIGHT MUSINGS

When I toss and turn in the middle of the night  
My God comes to me in a hovering presence.  
Is He a stranger asking for lodging?  
Why do I hesitate in the shadows of darkness?

I yearn for nearness, familiarity  
in the silence of a world standing still...  
where the nakedness of my soul  
has no defense against my aloneness.

Would that our rendezvous be father and daughter  
running toward one another with arms outstretched...  
after a season of dryness, parched grass...  
approaching the scent of dew drops dripping from  
April's flowers.

The pervading rope-tug between awe and familiarity  
stretching the threads of human frailty  
against the arena of complexity I cannot completely  
understand.

A child lost in the crowd amidst the circus of life!

I breathe in. The Trinity is alive within my heart. It is still  
night,  
and my eyes open to the vastness of God's universe.  
His presence seeks my being  
And I am found.



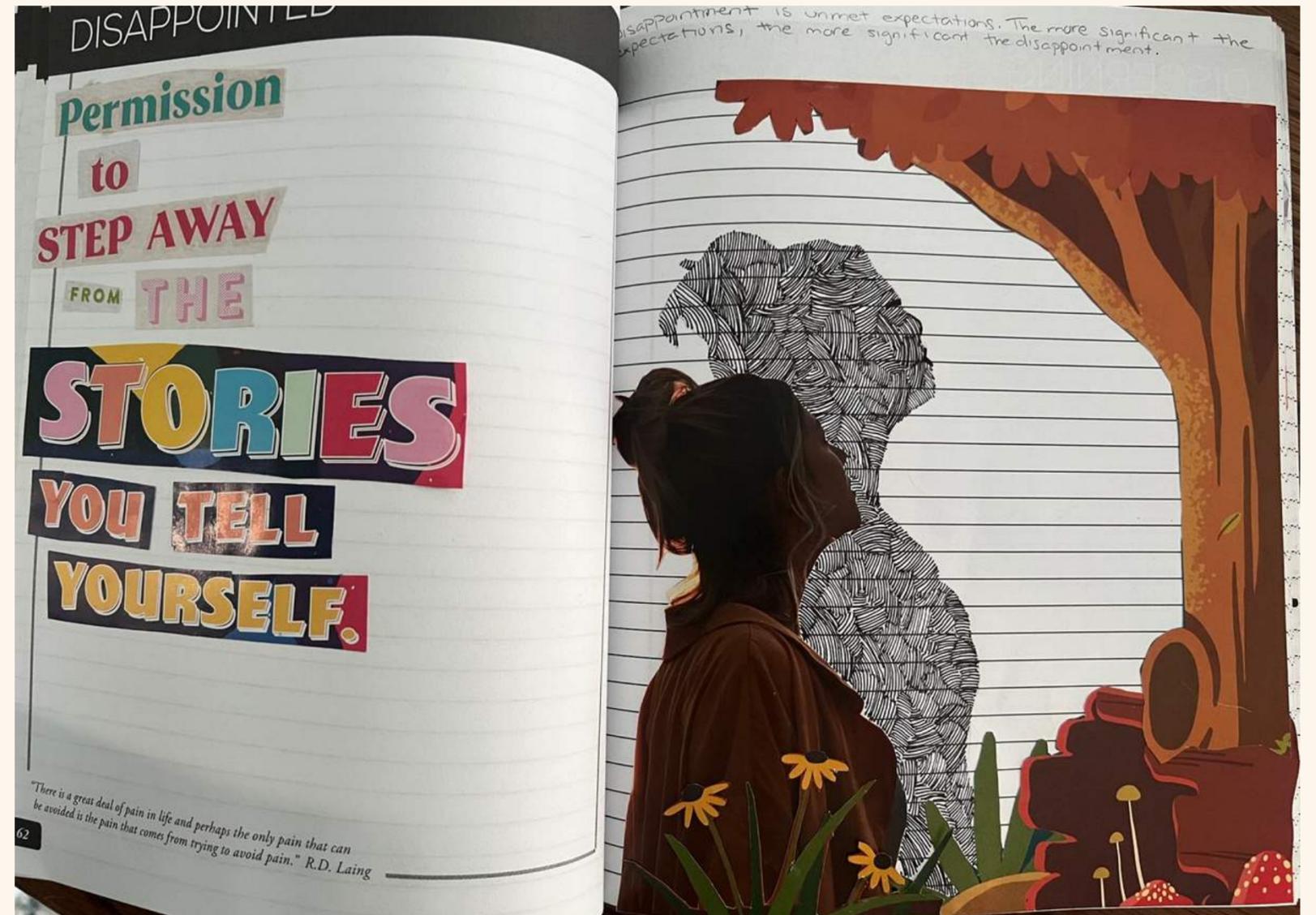
**Words from the artist/poet, Barb Clark:** “The Art of Life: I love to tie my life to the essence of God's gift to each of us: seeing, feeling, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting! This particular poem was formulated as I woke up one night and started thinking about His presence with me. All art is connected to the five senses.”

**About the Artist:** Barb is a writer. She has been writing off and on her entire adult life. Barb has joined a couple of writing clubs and often shares her writing as personal gifts. Barb and her husband, Bill, have recently co-published a book “Turtle on a Fence Post.” (2021). Barb is a dear friend. Barb and Bill are lovers of art. Barb’s love of words, poetry, books, scripture, and art is mesmerizing. As you can see in her poetry, her heart is genuine and rich. Barb is an author, mother, grandmother and friend extraordinaire. Just as Barb and Bill treasure art, Roger and I feel their friendship is a treasure to our heart. Barb and Bill were longtime residents of Perry, IA and have retired in Carefree, AZ.

# Josie Day

Art: *Acceptance*

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[myjosieday.com](http://myjosieday.com)



**Words from the Artist, Josie Day:** “The Art Of Life gives me hope there is a future for me full of art, full of creativity, of working with my hands and collaborating with others. I cannot imagine a life where I don't make a collage or take a beautiful photo or simply sit and listen to grasshoppers and write a poem. Art of Life to me - means hope.”

The title of my image is *Acceptance*. I view this piece as a self-reflection of understanding that there is pain in life. While it's ok to be scared of feeling that pain, I believe it is cathartic to embrace the pain in order to truly move forward and find freedom and peace within.

**About the Artist:** Josie is from Florida but doesn't claim the state as hers. She considers herself a true Californian having lived the majority of the past 20 years in that great state. She works in all areas of production from live music shows to television. In between her multitude of careers Josie makes space to create her own art and sometimes she takes the stage for her own performances. She enjoys creating art pieces with her hands, from resin art to collages, to creating different worlds on a single page. She has yet to finish her "Great American Novel" but she doesn't believe in rushing, all great works take time.

Roger and I met Josie, through our daughter, Jill, in CA. Josie exudes creativity and enthusiasm for life. We are so grateful for our friendship with Josie!

# Bess De La Cruz

*Art: Giant of the Forest, a Digital  
Painting*

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Instagram: @b.a.delacruz





**About the Artist:** Words from Bess about her art: “I am a freelance illustrator and elementary art teacher. I graduated from Indiana Wesleyan University in Illustration (B.S.) in 2012 and a Masters of Science in Education and Learning with an endorsement and license in Art Education in 2021. After working with a corporation for over 4 years as a Marketing and Design Coordinator, I began teaching art to elementary students. My drive in teaching has been to enable elementary level students with the building blocks of art and visual communication. Through the practice of art, my goal is to instill students with a sense of agency over their lives as they develop skills in communication, problem solving, and identity.

In my illustration work, I enjoy creating images that merge imagination with telling a story. In particular, images that show oddities; beauty in details; and act as a collection of things I notice in the world and want to share with others. I strive to create a mood to each image that is both an escape and a calling out of all the amazing things in our world.

The rest of my time is spent reading, sipping tea, and enjoying time with my husband and cats Sherlock and Watson.”

Roger and I are so grateful that Bess is part of our extended family. Jill, our daughter, is married to her brother, Brent. Bess has been a huge help in my creative world and is the designer of my web site banner. Bess has a zest for life and for all things creative! As we traveled together for Jill and Brent’s wedding in Nepal, I daily marveled at her fashion style... that too is her creativity!

# Sonja Devaney

Art: Mosaic



**Words from the Artist, Sonja Devaney:** “I would love to share with you “The Art of Life” and how I came into admiration of the beauty of mosaic art. Since I was a child I was inspired by the colorful patterns, symbolism and storytelling they represented. I would check out and buy several books, and read a magazine article (National Geographic) on Mosaic art work. I would also have the opportunity to travel around the world to places and experience in person and be in awe with this form of art (to name a few Greece, Rome, Ravenna, Croatia, and various art museums).

Once I discovered the medium of mosaic it just kept resonating with me as a way to express conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings. Mosaic incorporates all things with texture, color, perplexing thoughts, intricate concepts, movement and most of all story. In addition, mosaic art is what happens in the spaces/gaps between the material being used (ie.-marble, smalti, tile, recycled materials, found objects and personal pieces/items). Perhaps these interstices offer a clue to what lies below the surface of the artist, things we sense but don't know for sure.

All mosaic pieces are unique. I can say that when I create mosaic art there is an inherent vulnerability as this form of art is focused on others and every piece that I set (in glue/thin-set) is expressing a different aspect at the moment it unfolds the gradual creative narrative. That said, mosaic art is extraordinarily time consuming. I have been known to take an entire day to do a really detailed square inch(es) of mosaic. LOL.

Even the last step with the grout can produce interesting unknowns that will yield fun surprises with the final segment of the mosaic art. Love that part. Lastly, often when I created a mosaic art piece it was unique for an individual(s) that has (or currently) traversed through the spirit of my life journey.”

**About the Artist:** Sonja is a respected therapist for a non-profit agency in Spokane, Washington. She provides adult, individual and family counseling. She strives towards ways for improving methods to help relieve the problems and obstacles that come with mental health problems and common life struggles.

I was fortunate to get to know Sonja through our work with The Daring Way™, certification program of Dr. Brené Brown. I recall the day I opened an unexpected gift, the featured mosaic art image, a gift from Sonja - I was in tears....she had so creatively woven many facets of my work into an incredible art piece. Her art has a special place on the bookcase in my office - a tribute to friendship, connectedness gratitude and creativity.

# Grace A. Flott

*Art: Ascendant, Portrait of  
Claudia, Oil on panel, 27x  
37.5 inches.*

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**Words from the Artist, Grace A Flott:** "For me, the Art of Life is a way of being that allows me to be my most honest self. Being an artist not only in the studio but in the world at large is about fighting to be seen and honored for who I am and make space for others to do the same."

**About the Artist:** Grace Athena Flott (b. 1990) is an emerging figurative painter from Spokane, Washington. Her current project is a collaborative portrait series with her community: burn survivors. The project celebrates and documents folks with visible scarring through realistic portrait painting, audio interviews, and scar prints. Southwest Arts Magazine awarded her First Place in Artistic Excellence in January 2022. Major exhibitions include *Figurativas 2021* at the Museum of Modern European Art (MEAM), Barcelona, Spain; *Shades of Blue* at Equity Gallery, NYC, NY, 2021; and recurring exhibitions at Maryhill Museum of Art, Goldendale, WA, 2019, 2020, 2021. A finalist in the 2020 BP Portrait Award and Art Renewal Center competitions, her work has appeared in *Fine Art Connoisseur*, *The Artist's Magazine*, *Realism Today*, *Seattle Refined* and numerous print and online journals. She is a graduate of the University of Washington and the Juliette Aristides Atelier. Her first solo show *Exposure Therapy* exhibited in May 2022 with Figure|Ground Gallery in Seattle, WA. Grace was an artist-in-residence at The Hive (Spokane, WA) in June 2022.

Grace is currently a teaching artist with Terracotta, Gage Academy adult and youth programs (since 2016), AIGA (since 2018), and Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (since 2019), in addition to teaching privately online. Her work is held in public and private collections internationally.

# Nawal Ghali

*Art: Belonging*

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**Words from the Artist, Nawal Ghali:** “The Art of Life for me is a way of living intentionally engaging the creative energy within me.

This energy is within every created being waiting to be recognized, awakened, engaged, released and in doing so, multiplied.

To me it means that I cognitively engage my true self that desires to express its creative energy whether it be creating in my art studio, planting my flowers and vegetables, creating a healthy meal, arranging a colorful appetizing dinner plate or decorating my home to provide a hospitable, restful warm environment for my family and friends.

The creative energy within me and every created being, is an energy of joy, playfulness and delight that we can intentionally release as we engage our daily tasks.

This particular painting, I named it “Belonging”.

It was created at a workshop on Monhegan island, Maine. A group of women whom I have never met before, gathered with and under the leadership of my mentor, Marianne Mitchell ([MarianneMitchell.com](http://MarianneMitchell.com)), an amazing human being and a great abstract artist.

Marianne had created an environment imbued with and conducive to the flow of creativity. In this relaxed beautiful atmosphere surrounded by the Atlantic waters, we all came to create, learn, share, release, and unleash our creativity and bathe in the beautiful energetic field that engulfed us all.

To my dismay one of the two wood boards that I had ordered to paint on during the workshop was delivered damaged!

Marianne offered me one of the boards that she had used for a demo. Her creative energy had already been released on that board before I made it my own.

This painting happened to appear for me because of the board, the air, the people, the energetic field, nature and the environment that was collectively created by the individuals who came together for me in this painting.

Whenever I look at that painting hanging over my mantle, I recall the experience of belonging, love and joy and it reminds me to live the Art-filled life in my part of the world."

**About the Artist:** Nawal Ghali has painted for many years and has drawn on her extraordinary talent and creativity to produce many paintings. She describes her process as follows: “I have been drawn to painting by a longing to create and by my love of color. The process of creating an abstract painting begins by intentionally entering to give myself to the process. I try to quiet the environment and my mind by excessing and focusing on my breathing. Basically, going inward and attempting to listen to my own heart and access my inner journey.

Ideally, I take time to sit a distance and let the colors, marks and shapes that appeared lead me to the next step. I work with it asking it what needs to come to the forefront and what needs to recede to the background. What area calls for my attention and where would the focus point or entry point to the painting be. It is a dialogue between my heart and the piece of art that is in progress.

When I struggle with the different stages of creating a painting, I no longer give myself discouraging messages to give it up or quit. I embrace the realization that the struggle is part of the journey as much as the successes and the joy.

I allow myself to stand back and look with patience and compassion. I strive to embrace what is at hand without judgement or condemnation and give the painting, or the circumstance for that matter, a chance to develop, evolve and in the process the painting teaches me the lessons I need to learn.

My hope that the paintings speak something to others. Most often it speaks something to them that I have not even thought about but meaningful to their own journey. My satisfaction comes from seeing a glimpse of joy or hearing a word of understanding from another person's heart.”

Nawal and her husband, Magdi, have been very close friends the last 22 years. They helped us adjust to our move to Iowa and we have many shared experiences of biking, kayaking, dinner together, hosting parties, laughing together, crying together, celebrating and figuring out life together. We love Nawal's creativity and passion and we have several pieces of her art in our home. Nawal and Magdi live in Clive, Iowa.

# Elizabeth Hixenbaugh

Art: Pottery

Etsy:

HomeGrownCeramicsLA

Instagram:

@homegrownceramics\_la



**Words from the Artist, Elizabeth Hixenbaugh:** “Connection is what the Art of Life means to me. I enjoy knowing my pottery is being loved and used by people everyday around the world.”

**About the Artist:** Elizabeth took her first pottery class in 2016 and loved it so much she built a pottery studio in her backyard in Los Angeles. Elizabeth loves the process of making pottery, each step having its own challenge. Elizabeth shares, “The most rewarding part about being a potter is being able to share my work with others for their use in everyday life. Being able to take clay and transform it into someone’s favorite mug or bowl is truly a gift.”

Roger and I have watched Elizabeth’s artistic and creative passions blossom and grow through the years as she and Jill, our daughter, have been friends and made many films together in our basement in West Des Moines, Iowa. We all cherish the memories of the laughter and fun! Elizabeth and her husband live in La Canada Flintridge, California.

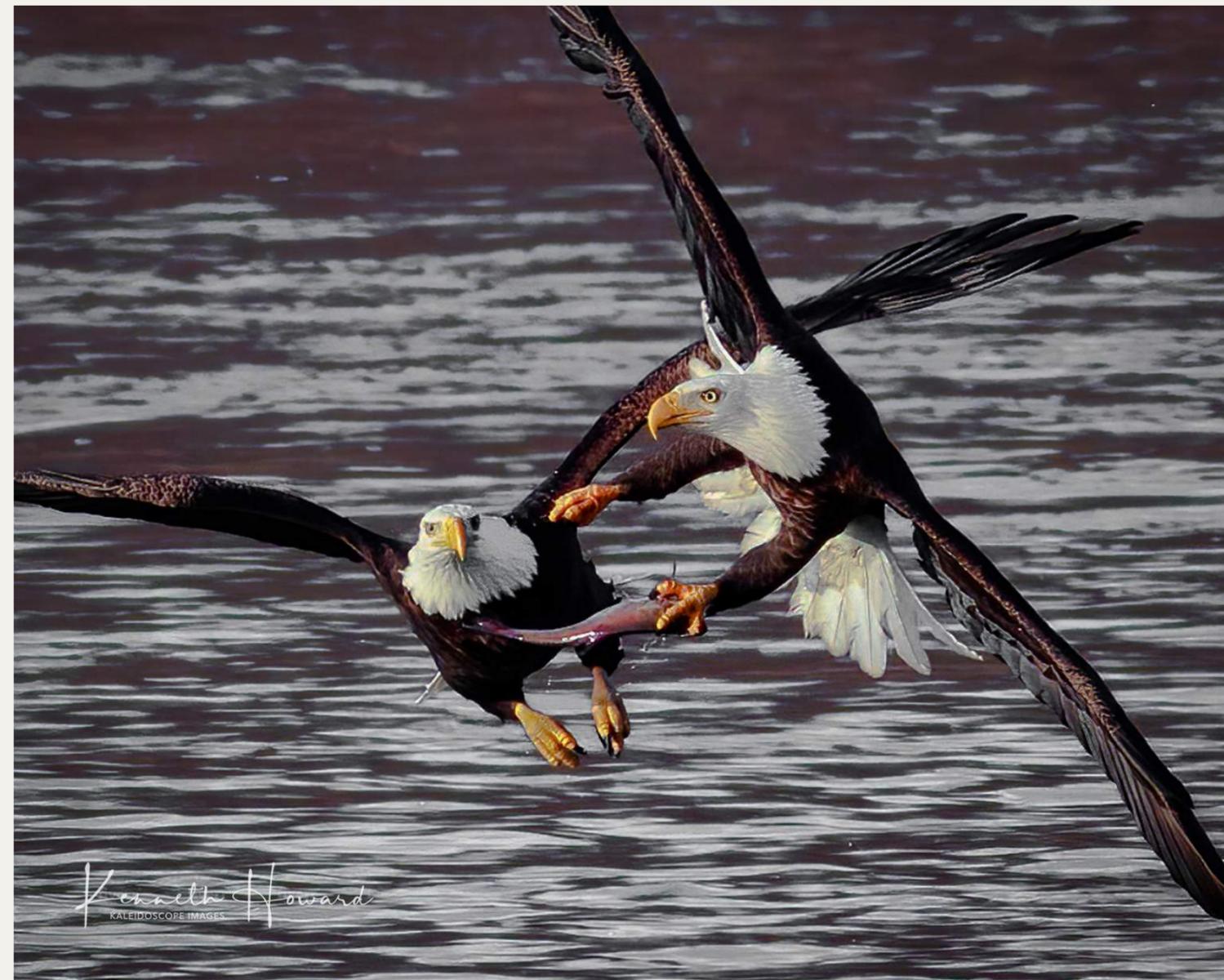
# Ken Howard

*Art: Patience*

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**Words from the Artist/Photographer, Ken Howard:** “The Art of Life has many "hats". The most meaningful to me starts with our Creator, who created heaven and earth and all life contained within them. Through my photography, I attempt to capture and share the art work of His amazing, expressive and creative hands to give hope and encouragement to others.”

**Art:** Title of image: "*Patience*". It took over two hours sitting in freezing 20 degree temp to capture this amazing image of two Bald Eagles fighting over a fresh catch. My patience paid off!

**About the Artist:** Ken's journey into photography began as a teen with his first film camera, a Minolta SRT100 and the world has not been the same. Roger and I met Ken through family friends. He was working at Red Rock Lake in Iowa and we connected over our love of photography, love of nature, and love of Red Rock Lake. On a warm summer day we enjoyed a day in our boat together with Ken and his wife, Colleen. Needless to say, Ken's camera equipment has expanded since his teens. I was impressed with the magnitude of his camera lens. I am even more impressed with the proficiency of his photography.

# Meg Hulse

*Art: Papa on the Beach,*  
watercolor on paper  
18" x 18"

## Contact Information:

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**Words from the Artist, Meg Hulse:** “This painting illustrates a sunset on a small island in the Caribbean. I was walking to meet a friend for dinner and paused when I passed Papa, an island potlicker, 'pahtlicka' as we pronounce the word in Creole, a local stray dog.

The sky was fading from bright cerulean blue to a soft violet hue that illuminated the sea.

I ended up seated on the stump of a coconut palm, joining Papa as we breathed in the energy while the sky fused from day to night.

To me, the "art of life" means that we have the ability within ourselves, to create memorable moments through mindfulness. We have the choice to allow life to pass us by, but we also have the choice to take a moment to breathe it in, sit in it, and experience it in our own, unique way.”

**About the Artist:** What Meg says about herself as an artist, “As a painter, writer, and designer, I use a variety of mediums to inspire my viewers to venture out from their shadows into a place of strength and beauty.

I began writing my first novel, 'Sketches from the Heart of a Texas Artist', as a cathartic exercise to help me navigate through a traumatic event, and discover my voice as an advocate for women. My novel quickly became an illustration of the journey we're all faced to explore after we've endured trauma.

Just as my stories are set between Texas, the Caribbean, and New Orleans, my body, mind, and spirit exist in these places as well.

As my creative mentor, Georgia O'Keeffe, was drawn to the desert in New Mexico, I find beauty in the endless turquoise waters of the Caribbean, the vast landscape and vegetation that makes Texas so alluring and the rich images of the French Quarter, fused with the mossy swamp lands of the Atchafalaya Basin. From the stories hidden in the depths of these settings, I've committed my creative vision to passionately share truths that can be connected to universally.”

Roger and I are grateful that Meg is part of our extended family. Justin, our son, is married to Meg's sister, Callie. Meg and I have fun sharing our love of all things creative! Meg has done numerous commissions for my blog and social media – so grateful for her talent!

# Emilia Jones

*Art: Silly Flamingo*



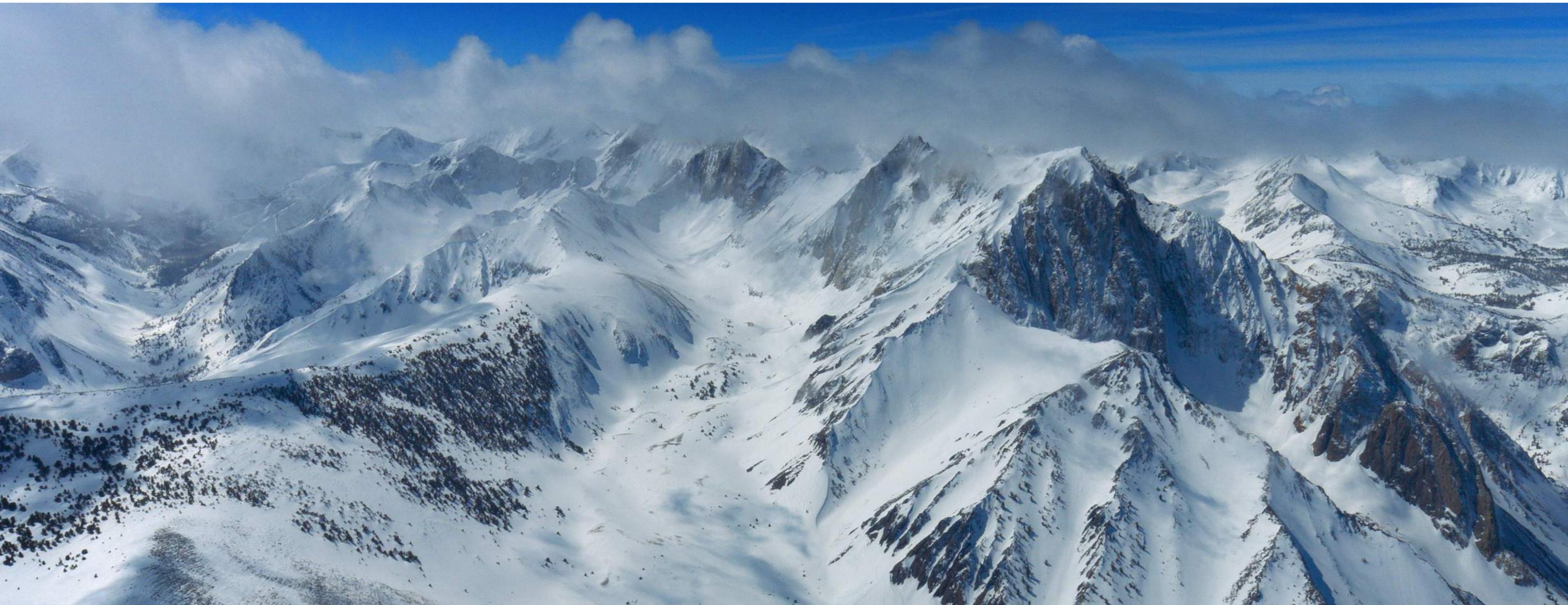
**About the Artist, Emilia Jones:** Emilia is 3 years old and has such a playful spirit. She loves to draw, color and do crafts. She also is very expressive of her creativity in her daily choice of outfits. Although Emilia is very strategic about her choice of colors, she is very carefree while creating her art.

As the proud grandparents of Emilia and Joy, Roger and I embrace every opportunity to provide creative opportunities for the girls. They continually amaze us with their creativity and I think teach us to be more creative and playful in life.

# Jill Jones and Brent Yontz

Art: Still Frame from the Documentary film *SNOW TO SAND*

Contact Information: [www.clayoriginal.com](http://www.clayoriginal.com)



**Words from the Artist, filmmaker Jill Jones:** "Making a documentary film is a beautiful way to explore the art of life. The process allows us to capture what we see and to hold the story up to the world - to show its beauty and ask what we want to do with our time here."

**About the Artists:** Jill Jones and Brent Yontz are filmmakers based in Los Angeles, CA.

Roger and I are so grateful for the creative work of Jill, our daughter, and Brent, our son-in-law. They are so gracious to include us in pieces of their projects – like hiking a piece of the John Muir trail alongside them (maybe I should be clear here...behind them) as they filmed segments of SNOW TO SAND. It is a joy to watch them create and produce documentaries and films that matter.

# Joy Jones

*Art: Pinky*



**About the Artist, Joy Jones:** Joy is almost 5 years old and has such a creative spirit. She is often found “writing” her films in her mind – acting out each scene, posing, taking mental images, playing the role of each character. Recently when we were in California, Jill and Brent, our daughter and her husband, both filmmakers, taught Joy about storyboards. It was obvious, Joy had the whole film in mind and it was just a matter of getting each scene drawn out.

Joy, rather serious about her art, plans every detail out and is very exact in her ideas about her creative endeavors. She seems to know from the beginning what she wants her art to look like when complete.

As the proud grandparents of Joy and Emilia, Roger and I embrace every opportunity to provide creative opportunities for the girls. They continually amaze us with their creativity and I think teach us to be more creative and playful in life.

# Roger Jones

*Art: The Art of Our  
Lives, a Poem*

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## The Art of Our Lives Roger C. Jones

Our art begins when we examine  
our lives

The mastery of that art is the labor  
of our lives

Our journey of the art endures  
all our lives

The discipline of our art yields fruit  
in our lives

The array of our art bears spice  
to our lives

The delight of our art decorates  
our lives

Destined we are to create and unleash  
the art of our lives

**About the Artist: (His Perspective):** Roger Jones is a late-in-life poet having taken up poetry writing after his retirement. His reflections are from his extraordinary experience from an ordinary orbit. His highest learnings linger on love. He has self-published 2 poetry books--no sales are pending.

**(My Perspective):** We have loved co-creating life together with our precious family for 40 years. I am just ecstatic that you all are getting to see into Roger's beautiful, compassionate and loving heart as he courageously shares and expresses his soul through his poetry. I love you Roger – thank you for your extravagant tenderness!



# Wanda Jones

Art: *Raider Red*, the mascot  
of Texas Tech University,  
Lubbock, Texas.



**About the Artist:** Wanda Jones, Roger's mother, was a creative woman. From many of her former student's recollections of "creative" ways she taught typing and accounting all of those years at Gruver and Spearman High School to her lovely gifts she created for her children and grandchildren through the years, she was an artist who loved to create. Her artist group in Spearman, TX had many shared art methods AND they shared many time of story and laughter. Roger's choice of his favorite piece of Meme's art, was of course, none other than Wanda's depiction of Raider Red, personalizing the piece with his Texas Tech football jersey number, #47.

# Natalie Key

*Art: Just Breathe,*  
Photography

**Contact Information:**

**Email:** [Natalie@isalt.org](mailto:Natalie@isalt.org)

**Websites:** [www.missionarymeans.us](http://www.missionarymeans.us)  
[thebighousephotos.com](http://thebighousephotos.com)



**Words from the Artist, Natalie Key:** "To me the "Art of Life" is being able to see God's beauty in the steps we are blessed to take each day. When we take the time to stop and really look beauty surrounds us. In the happy, sad, broken or whole God is creating our story moment by moment."

**About the Artist:** Natalie was born and raised in Chicago, IL. Twenty years ago God first introduced her to Bulgaria, the Eastern European country she now calls home. Since 2015, she and her husband have run the BigHouse Foundation, serving orphans, marginalized and homeless people and advocating for adoption in Bulgaria. They have a teenaged son and a Jack Russell named Mila.

Natalie is an amazing photographer! Her love of beauty and nature is evident in her work.

I met Natalie and her family when I traveled with my friend to Bulgaria. What a wonderful time! Natalie and I share a love of photography and she was a wonderful inspiration for me.

We laughed so much as we were hanging out a train window taking pictures – we just couldn't get enough!

# Sabrina Mar

**Art:** California Pepper Wood Bowl, turned with wood from the tree that stood in front of my house for 50+ years after it died.

**Contact Information:**

**Etsy:** ParkStreetGoods

**Instagram:** @Parkstreetgoods



**Words from the Artist, Sabrina Mar:** “The Art of Life is best recognized when we allow nature to inform us. Wood is always changing within its environment, long after a tree dies. For me, its unpredictability is the most appealing part of creating in this medium. How a piece moves and changes over time, as it ages and grows old is analogous to life as anything can be. I like to think that wood expresses, in its form, all that Nature has so generously offered us.

Woodworking teaches you how to adapt and adjust to challenges, to slow down and enjoy the process. Getting to share my pieces with people who love them as much as I do is something I cannot imagine living without.”

**About the Artist:** Sabrina Mar, part-time television producer/full time-time woodworker who has found a way to share her love for all things wood.

I first became acquainted Sabrina after receiving her works of art as a gift, a beautiful wooden holiday ornament and an adorable wooden salt cellar. Upon receipt of the gorgeous gift, I contacted her to create a wooden vase that is in our kitchen window sill. I often marvel at her handiwork and have fun finding “just the right flowers” for the exquisite vase. Sabrina lives in Torrance, California.

# Lisa Mason

**Art: Watercolors:**

*Heartflowers, Sunflower with  
Bee, Sunflower, King Charles  
Cavalier, Red Drum*

**Contact Information:**

[dlmason6@gmail.com](mailto:dlmason6@gmail.com)

Instagram: @Lisamasonart



**Words from the Artist, Lisa Mason:** “The truth about The Art of Life is it’s everywhere you look! God’s creation IS art...In nature, birds, fish, mountains, humans, etc. If you can’t see it, you can feel it, hear it, smell it! If you choose to acknowledge the beauty, you will experience daily surprises.”

**About the Artist in the Artist’s Words:** “I started a beginner class at Amarillo College about 10 years ago. I loved it! I had always been creative, but had never drawn or painted. The process became a journey of teaching myself and occasionally finding a lesson to sign up for. There is so much I would like to learn about art and about watercolor!”

Lisa paints watercolor art such as dog portraits, house portraits, cards, announcements, invitations, calendars, nursery art, alphabet booklets & posters, etc.

Roger and I have known Lisa and her husband, Donny for almost 40 years. We are so grateful for their steadfast friendship and have done life together in multiple ways over the years. Lisa is such an inspiration to so many! I so respect Lisa’s resilience and her phenomenal attitude towards life! Lisa and Donny live in Canyon, Texas.

# Alanna McNeill:

Art: Compilation of Cookies

Contact Information:

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



**Words from the Artist, Alanna McNeill:** "I love designing and baking cookies for others. The smiles on the faces at a birthday party, the nods of "this is yummy" as someone is tasting one of the cookies, the joy during the creativity piece of designing just the right cookie for an occasion - this all feels like art and why I love what I do!"

**About the Artist:** Words from the Artist: “I am the owner, baker, decorator, etc. behind Sweet Little Treats by Alanna. I live in Lubbock with Beau, my amazing husband and our daughters, Maryn and Lainey. We love being outdoors together and spending time with our family and friends. After graduating from Texas Tech University, I taught Family Consumer Sciences (Fashion Design and Culinary classes) and Special Education in the Lubbock and San Antonio areas. Our family recently moved back to Lubbock and I am getting to operate my business while staying at home with Maryn and Lainey.

My love for baking started at a very young age with my grandma and mother. We would make cakes, seasonal sugar cookies, pecan pies and so much more! I have always enjoyed making desserts for events or small get togethers. I started my business, then orders started rolling in and I have enjoyed every second of it. I have always loved creating, designing and being artistic in any fashion so getting to do that with sweet treats is the best!”

Roger and I have the honor of being Alanna’s aunt and uncle. Her mom, Annette, is my sister!

What a joy to watch Alanna utilize the creativity she has been gifted! I might be prejudiced but her decorated cookies are the best – beautiful AND delicious!

# Jeanye Mercer

*Art: Inhale the Wonder*

24x18 acrylic on cradled wood panel

**Contact Information:**

<https://www.jeanyesart.com/newsletter-sign-up>

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



**Words from the Artist, Jeanye Mercer:** “The Art of Life ....I say I am an artist and creative companion but really I’m obsessed with feeding my soul and giving others permission to do the same ... because I long to live in a world where people are free to show up fully embodied in their own worthiness. And what particularly lights me up is creating art that loves you back as a mindful approach to living a quieter, gentler, more grace-filled life.”

**About the Artist:** Jeanye is a Texas artist whose work is dedicated to celebrating life's glorious messes. For more than 20 years, as a professional counselor and educator, she shared her effervescent spirit and creative approaches to exploring courage, kindness and compassion with kids of all ages. Her students’ enthusiasm for living bravely inspired Jeanye to discover the transformative power of making art. She dove in wholeheartedly! Jeanye’s paintings embody her energy, enthusiasm and freedom of spirit and foster deep connection with the hearts of her community. Jeanye’s life’s work is to be a healing presence in the world. She is grateful for the opportunity to share that presence through art.

I am grateful to know Jeanye through The Daring Way™, the certification program of Dr. Brené Brown. Jeanye exemplifies wholeheartedness and courage in her work and in her life! Jeanye lives in Waxahachie, TX.

# Christy Miller

*Art: Raccoon Vacation, a  
picture book*

**Contact Information:**  
[RaccoonStories.com](http://RaccoonStories.com)



**Words from the Artist, Christy Miller:** “On the art of life: I’ve been writing, or at the very least imagining, stories since I was a young child. I tend to be reluctant to share what I write. But a few years ago, I was determined to make the Raccoon Stories series into something tangible. I had never collaborated with an illustrator before. I felt vulnerable and reckless handing over the reins of a character I could already visualize in my head. How could anybody else know Raccoon like I did? Those insecurities, like most insecurities, were unfounded, and I discovered immediately that collaboration isn’t just necessary means to an end; it’s incredibly affirming and exhilarating. My illustrator, Mashanda Lazarus, is a gifted artist and her funny illustrations always become my favorite part of our books. I have learned that being overprotective of my vision for things only hinders what an experience can be. This lesson served me off the page, too, when I had to rely on a surrogate to bring my daughter, Teddy, into the world. Sometimes you need other people to reach the finish line, and celebration is much sparklier when you share it.”

**About the Artist:** Christy E. Miller is an author and copywriter from Madison County, Iowa. She has created original content for Mary-Kate Olsen and Ashley Olsen's Dualstar Entertainment and The Walt Disney Company. Christy lives in Burbank, California, with her husband, Stuart. She loves chips and guinea pigs.

I have known Christy since she was in high school/college as she would come over and have dinner with us as she and Jill, our daughter, would be collaborating on film projects together. Christy is a strong woman who always wears a kind and caring smile and carries herself with elegance.

# Carli Northfield

**Art:** This piece "*Naptime Views*" is a reflection on the first stanza of the hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth" by Foliott S. Pierpoint.

**Contact Information:**

<https://adoreablevoices.com/>

**Instagram:** @carliann.northfield



**Words from the Artist, Carli Northfield:** “The ‘Art of Life’ is the struggle in real time to creatively solve problems, reflect, and connect with those you love, care for; and those little mundane details of making dinner with toddlers, or trying to organize your home.

I often use hymns as an inspiration for my work, and a starting point to reflect back on my own life.

The image of the mother and son is my rendition of a photo of my son and I at a meeting, taken as I hurried on to the next portion with him fast asleep on my shoulder. I find it hard in motherhood to slow down and savor the little moments quickly passing before me. Here I am caught in the busy, yet one of my favorite photos taken by a friend who made sure I didn't miss the moment. How I wish I took more time to slow down and savor the view on my shoulder and all around. I've then changed the view to one of serenity and beauty. The hymn echoes in my heart,

"For the beauty of the earth,  
For the glory of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth,  
Over and around us lies."

**About the Artist:** Carli shares about her art and her inspiration, “Adore(able) Voices, her company name, was born one night after singing several of my son’s favorite song picture books. I wanted my son to be engaged in the hymns we sang for family worship and knew a picture book would be a great supplement to engage our children in the hymns. I jumped on the internet to look for a book or two and just couldn’t find one.

I also wanted to help support other families in engaging their children in the deep theological truths found in the hymns.

I am simply a stay-at-home mom, passionate about planting seeds of truth, with a background in teaching elementary music.”

Carli and I have been friends for many years and I have admired her talents – as a teacher, as an accomplished musician, a voice that is incredible, her art, her creative vision. And now, it is a delight to watch her as a mom as she pours 100% into her family in a creative way that others benefit from as well.

# Betsy Peterson:

*Art: It's a Gift*

**Contact Information:**  
[www.betsypetersondesigns.com](http://www.betsypetersondesigns.com)



**Words from the Artist, Betsy Peterson:** “The Art of Life is such a deep theme! Thank you for bringing it to the attention of many! The title of this work is ‘It’s a Gift”. There is an old Shaker Hymn that I used to play this song on my dulcimer. I love the words. Influenced by artist Edward Hicks (1780–1849), this painting reflects using words and images to tell a story. This painting came at a time the pressure of performance and expectations were overwhelming my soul. I read in Colossians that there was a new way.. A message of Hope. I felt free. Free to fly in this Hope. I had to paint this new feeling of freedom! I work hard to reveal in my artwork the thoughts and feelings that go on in my soul. It’s not always easy. But that is my aim. I will offer this quote, “Bless this work of creation that by my labors I might craft a thing that sings with the very substance of my Hope. ...that whisper to the soul of the beholders stirrings of Eternal things that words cannot convey.”

**About the Artist:** With bright colors, whimsical figures, and meaningful words, Betsy's art draws from her soul. Her love of words, color, and childlike spontaneity pour into each piece creating art that inspires generosity, gratitude and joy. Whim

Art has always been a part of Betsy with early expression naturally spilling out as she experienced the world around her. Following a formal art education at University of Iowa, Betsy taught elementary art before home-schooling her two sons. Inspiration was everywhere and Betsy continued to express what she experienced in soft-sculpted figures with twig limbs, paintings and drawings.

Beyond the gallery, Betsy has created commissioned work and public art with the talent and heart that are a part of each project she pursues.

I have known Betsy for over 20 years and have always found her presence to be similar to her art – full of generosity, gratitude and joy. Betsy is quick to smile, has a beautiful laugh and a warm heart. I am a better person having known Betsy!

# Kirk

# Richards

*Art: Copper Pot and Pampas*

*Grass, 2005 oil on linen*

22x28 private collection

**Contact Information:**

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



**Words from the Artist, Kirk Richards:** “A summary of the beauty I pursue in art could be described as follows: Beauty of design – the orderly direction of the viewer’s eyes while maintaining a dominant focus; beauty of workmanship – technical proficiency in handling the artists’ materials; integrity – which insists that a work of art must be complete to be fully beautiful; clarity – which requires that what is seen is comprehended and communicated without confusion or difficulty. If all of these are present, how may we express the elemental search for beauty in art?”

**About the Artist:** Kirk Richards studied with prominent American painter and teacher Richard Lack in Minneapolis from 1976–1980 after earning his BFA and MA degrees in art from West Texas State University. Kirk returned to Amarillo with his wife Linda in 1981. The following year he founded Atelier Richards and taught there until 1988 when he was commissioned to paint three murals for the centennial of First Baptist Church in Amarillo. From 2013 to 2017, Richards worked for Old Parkland, Dallas Texas, executing several historical paintings.

Also well known for his still life and genre paintings, Richards was one of only 24 artists nationwide to be certified by the American Portrait Society. He has exhibited in prestigious exhibitions including a 4 man exhibition with artists Richard Lack, Don Koestner, and Stephen Gjertson; an exhibition of the American Society of Classical Realism (ASCR) Guild; a private showing at Sotheby's in New York City and many others.

Roger and I first met Kirk and his precious wife Linda in the early 80's. Kirk was the first “real” (professional) artist that we knew personally. Our sons were the same age and we attended church together. I was always amazed at his courage and perseverance of following his passion. Kirk is a man of strong faith and deep dedication to his family.

# Nancy Roth

*Art: Jesus Loves the Little Children  
of the World, (27 x 37)*

**Contact Information:**  
[nancysroth@gmail.com](mailto:nancysroth@gmail.com)



**Words from the Artist, Nancy Roth:** “My art has always been more realistic. I love faces most of all. My dream is to someday draw people to make them look just like the person does. However, I think all art is life to me...even abstract art is a reflection of an artist’s thoughts or dreams.”

**About the Artist:** I began drawing and painting as grief therapy after our Kyle, our son, died. I can’t believe it has nearly been 16 years ago already.

An art project always starts out with me feeling like I can’t do it. But when it starts falling into place I can relax with it and end up feeling confident and good about myself with the finished picture.

I haven’t painted as much since Cliff, my husband died 4 years ago – I suppose there is a time and a season for everything.”

Roger and I have been friends with Nancy for over 20 years. She is such an inspiration to me. I recall the first painting I saw of Nancy’s – I recall it was a pink floral. My thought was, ‘Wow, I had no idea Nancy painted.’ And then, I discovered she had just began painting and was doubly impressed! Nancy is a woman of great courage and a beautiful and a creative heart. Nancy lives in San Tan Valley, AZ.

# Mark Shasha

**Art:** *Namaste*, (36x48) oil on canvas. Painted in the studio from an original plein air painting.

**Contact Information:**  
[www.MarkShasha.com](http://www.MarkShasha.com)



**Words from the Artist, Mark Shasha:** “For me the ‘Art of Life’ comes naturally. It’s just something that I do every day. I start out on my adventures hoping something will catch my eye. Usually something does.

Lately I’ve been very interested in painting beaches. This scene is an example of what I’ve been working on. Beaches are peaceful places and I find them endlessly fascinating to paint because the light and the textures and the smells in the sounds of the waves are all evocative and calm the soul.”

**About the Artist:** Mark Shasha is an award-winning American artist, author and educator. His work has appeared in museums, galleries and publications for 40 years. His paintings are found in public and private collections around the world. And millions have read his children's books which he has written and illustrated.

Shasha's focus is light and texture in the natural world which he approaches in a traditional style with techniques of 19th and 20th century masters. In his popular video, "Shimmering Light" (Lilidahl Productions, 2021) he elaborates on some of his personal methods to achieve these effects.

He is a frequent award winner in notable art events across the country. Mark's recent awards include The 2021 Museum Purchase Award given by The San Angelo Museum of Art, Easton Artist's Choice Award, Oil Painters of America Award of Excellence and The Alden Bryan Memorial Award for Excellence in Landscape Painting.

Shasha also frequently appears on stage as an actor and singer. Recent roles include Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Best of Broadway*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Twelve Angry Men* and Willy in *Willy Wonka*.

Roger and I met Mark as he was painting on a trail in Bryce Canyon, Utah. I was working on a photography project about hands and asked Mark if I could photograph his hands as he painted. He graciously accepted my request. We enjoyed visiting with him as he painted and we became followers of his amazing talent.

# Patsy Spikes Sherrod

Art: *Selfie*, Acrylic on  
canvas

Contact Information:  
Instagram: @Funkeration



**Words from the Artist, Patsy Spikes Sherrod:** “The Art of Life: I think back to my oldest sister majoring in art, and my father saying it was such a good major because she could use it every day. Those words were huge for me. I twirl the sauce on my pasta in a pleasing pattern, wear coloured socks that don't match my outfit but look good to my eye. Our beds are full of ironed antique embroidered pillowcases because they are beautiful to me. And there are no prettier colours than the colours of flowers. These things soothe my heart.

‘Selfie’ the name of the art I chose, is a peek into things I hold dear-- a resting dog, lively colour, and various treasures that have caught my fancy through the years.”

**About the Artist:** In the artist, Patsy's words, "I grew up in Lubbock, Texas, and worked in the retail furniture business for many years. In the mid aughts, my husband and I sold most everything we owned and immigrated to Victoria, British Columbia with our two sons. I'm a lifelong maker of all sorts of things, but it wasn't until 2016 that I began to take painting lessons with a local group of artists. I absolutely love painting and illustrating, and these days you can generally find me curled up, with a pad and pencil and brush, in a cozy corner of my studio."

Patsy and I are friends from Lubbock, Texas, both attending Monterey High School and Texas Tech. We had lost contact, but thanks to Instagram, I have been admiring Patsy's beautiful art. So, with courage I reached out to her and asked to feature her art. I wondered what she might think of me since we hadn't talked in many years. She responded so kindly and we have enjoyed reconnecting and getting to know one another in this phase of life.

# Pam Thomason

*Art: Silver Steam, a Poem*

**Contact Information:**  
thomasonhome@gmail.com



Steaming, like teapots  
Lined up on bleachers  
Standing in rows...  
In the tiptoe reaches.  
There we are, somewhere,  
In the back, or on the right,  
Perhaps the middle,  
Of the old class photo.  
Not quite look-alikes,  
But both of you, yes,  
I recognize clearly,  
How could I forget,  
Those only-you eyes?  
I remember, too,  
Our bodies of youth,  
Scented with jasmine,  
Lemon, and rose,  
Embarrassed to show,  
Our differences,  
Our woes.

Now the fashion?  
Whatever works,  
Tie it up, wear it  
loose.  
A subtler shine,  
You're changed,  
But the same.  
I marvel at you still,  
Your face, your  
shape,  
How fine, such  
beauty—  
While different than  
mine.

Yes, real silver ages,  
It tarnishes in stages  
With swirls and  
smudges  
Of iridescent blues,  
Almost-mauves,  
Pearl-ish hues, and  
Patterned patinas,  
From countless  
touches,  
Stains from  
steeping,  
The air of aging  
and,  
Too much  
weeping.

Yet . . .still  
At this stage,  
With a little rubbing,  
A tad of warming,  
You'll see in our  
Withered arms and  
Open souls, us holding,  
A yet-present glory,  
For the "knower" to see,  
Still looking forward, to  
More chances to steep.  
Though changed by  
weather,  
The three of us together,  
Brighter and lighter,  
Staid on small feet.

**Words from the Artist, Pam Thomason:** “Author Sandra Cisneros said, “I have a similar wound inside my heart right now. Just as tender and raw, except I have no ointment to salve it. I think it requires poetry. Maybe all pain in the world requires poetry.” Winnie the Pooh keenly understood this, too, and we all could all use a balm and a little honey. Inner pain may stem from loss, rejection, fear, guilt, (and more). Pain can rise unexpectedly, prompted by new awareness, by accident or emptiness--even by excruciating love. Reading and writing poetry, for me, is like a light touch before waking; sometimes I need a shake, because I'm wrestling with deep and forgotten dreams. Knowing that both travelers--readers and writers--on the road that bends in the undergrowth, will speak, listen, and understand, well, that has made all the difference.”

**About the Artist:** Words from the Artist, “I grew up in a family of teachers in the Kansas City area, (Independence, Missouri). After university, I worked in the court system, in various capacities, ultimately, serving as a stenographer, for eight years. While at home with my two children, I began to volunteer in their schools; not long after, I decided to become a teacher. I taught high school Language Arts for more than 20 years, in West Des Moines, Iowa. Over 44 years, my husband and I have lived in five states, most recently retiring in Bend, Oregon, (2018). Other loves: reading/study, gardening, walking/hiking, and traveling/hosting family and friends.”

Roger and I are grateful to be friends with Pam and her husband, John, for over 20 years. We share a love of many things - especially active outdoor adventures and the beauty of nature. Pam is an extraordinary woman, a lover of words, a dedicated companion of others, a deep spirited soul, and full of resilient strength. We are grateful to celebrate life, health and the magnificence of the outdoors with Pam and John.

# Deborah Hartigan Viestenz

*Art: Focus*

72" x 72", Acrylic on  
Gallery Wrapped Canvas

**Contact Information:**

<https://dhvartworks.com/>

**Instagram:** @dhv\_artworks



**Words from the Artist, Deborah Hartigan Viestenz:** “We are touched by what we see every day: Birds, grass, trees, lakes, oceans, stone. Water on our hands and bodies. Sunlight warming our skin. Darkness making us seek light. My art is the only way I know to express my wonder and admiration of these natural elements, events and occurrences.”

**About the Artist:** Words from the Artist, “It seems I never had a choice about being creative. My mind seemed to work differently than other children. I was happiest down at the brook at the end of the street I grew up on, watching water, rocks and patterns created by the shifting water’s path.”

Encouraged by her parents, Deborah joined the Rock Club in the fifth grade. Other kids thought it was a rock music club, so she was the only student lucky enough to have the teacher’s weekly attention.

“I learned more about the effects of water and other abrasives on my treasured stones—tumbling, polishing and exposing their hidden glories.”

She credits her grandmother Rosemary, an accomplished artist, for teaching her the joys of patience, perseverance and pride. At that time, Deborah was also taking oil painting lessons three times a week from a local master. “I wanted to learn to paint what I saw.” After attending Boston College, she received her BFA from Hartford Art School at the University of Hartford.

Presently based in Dallas, Deborah's works are collected privately, nationally and internationally. She also has worked with the Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs, Frisco Association for the Arts, and Fort Worth Community Arts Center in their charitable advocacy, outreach and education endeavors. Accolades include numerous juried exhibitions among others.

Deborah and I met as she was painting a beautiful mural for Thanksgiving Square in Dallas, TX.

I was working on a photography project and asked her if she would be willing for me to photograph her hands. She graciously accepted. Through that serendipitous interaction we have become friends and share a lot of the same loves and energy. I so respect Deborah's artistic endeavors and she has an amazingly beautiful and gracious heart.