



Living the Dream Time is Every Thing: Drawn by the Stronger Pull

by Nancy Nicol

To paraphrase the poet Rumi, "I have let myself be drawn by the stronger pull of what I really love." In the light of this Wellfleet morning life appears as I dreamed it would be – I paint, I write and then I paint some more.

Experiencing my self being drawn in a certain direction is rooted in childhood. A green leather diary - a gift for my eighth birthday - spells it out in big letters...Professional Goal – "ARTIST."

As an only child I learned that with pretending, talking to the girl in the mirror and utilizing an active imagination I could create images. I was never lonely; my parents and the Auntie who gave me that diary made sure I had art materials available and they rarely said "No" to my sometimes wild ideas.



Skiff, Mayo Beach. Oil on Canvas, 2011

I was using oil paint by the time I was nine years old and had weekly lessons with my first mentor, Pauline Ward Mount, who never touched my work.

Just getting to the studio on the third floor of her Victorian mansion became a thrilling, if at times scary, adventure. Once inside the house, I quickly passed through heavy gates of wrought iron with life-size Chinese Foo dogs on either side, typically used to guard temples and palaces.

Chinese armor hung on a headless torso next to a statue of the Goddess Durga depicted killing a buffalo demon. Then I would race up the stairs, brush against African masks, shields and headdresses displayed in the hallway of the second floor and finally reach the familiarity of my stool and easel.

Years later, when I wandered into the Michael Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I was unexpectedly surrounded by beautifully grotesque New Guinea Asmat power figures and pottery containers of tribal magic and I sensed the energy of unseen ritual literally soaked into fibers of regalia.

The force and excitement of experiencing surprise - the unknown and yet unconsciously Known - has had a profound life-long effect on my interest in the styles and symbols of indigenous people - almost doodling, they often show up when I apply pigment.

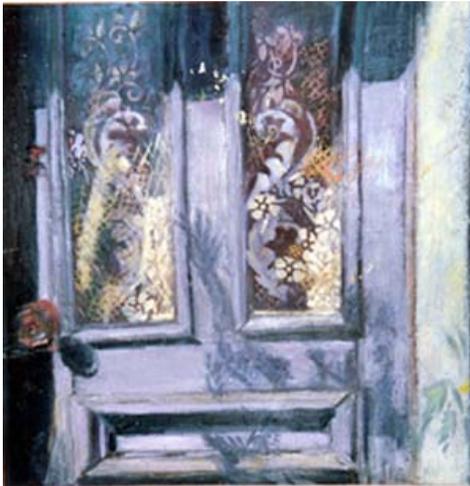
While self-taught, I have had numerous mentors who have been both supportive and critical in positive ways. I commuted from Jersey City to Manhattan for eleven years to attend Friends Seminary (Quaker) where art, shop, and creative writing were considered basic to one's education. I had access to museums, theater, libraries and city life.

I was very independent and grew up with a philosophy of process - whether in decision-making by consensus or in the value of the actual doing of the work, not so attached to the end product. In 2009, I attended my 50th High School reunion.

To support my son and daughter when they were young, I have worked as a certified teacher of art K-Grade 12; a Head Start teacher in both inner city and rural areas and a Head Start Education Coordinator. I have a Masters Degrees in Counseling and Consulting Psychology and am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a private practice.

There have been time periods of very active painting, especially after I moved to the Cape in 1971, where I enrolled in various workshops and found opportunities to exhibit in juried and invitational shows.

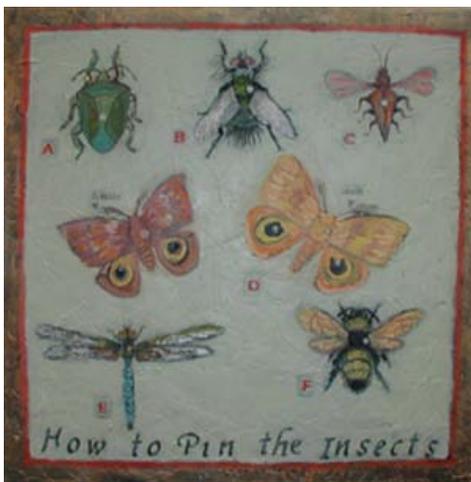
And there have been plateaus when life was simply happening and painting was on the back burner. I never completely stopped creative out-put, although it happened on a kitchen table more than once!



Old Cape Door, 2009, Oil on Canvas

I traveled out West, to Arizona and New Mexico. The canyons in Utah astonished me, and I discovered a totally different spatial relationship between my self and the environment. I painted large luminous oils on paper in those wide open areas, where stars seem to touch the land and Orion's belt followed me wherever I went.

In Costa Rica, I felt amazed by the rain forest plant life. I saw moths so large I could hear their wings flap as they drifted by, and black sand beaches too hot to walk on barefoot with huge exotic driftwood bleached white. The result: fresh openness, pure pigment and a series of bug and moth paintings.



Oil on Canvas, 2009

In Ireland, the mystical energy lifting from peat bogs, the burren and porous rock walls (hand built in the old days, now velvet green, sprouting miniature plants) infused my paintings with poetry and changed my palette choices once again.



Time is everything and self-discipline is the necessary and often missing ingredient. I made a U-turn in 1999 when I moved back to Wellfleet. Without realizing it then, I would soon apply for a home occupation license and open Gallery 5.

A typical day starts with meditation, journal-writing and then two hours in the studio. Each day is an opportunity to investigate and produce in a way I have never done before. Not from urgency, but from purpose.

The subtle beauty of the Outer Cape wetlands, tidal marshes, ponds and sand dunes provides seasonal surprises and challenges. Here is my base camp where I do most of my work now.

I published a memoir cookbook, Atwood Farm Kitchen Secrets, four years ago. I write every day as well as paint. It all happens in a gallery/studio space approximately 14' x 14' – on one side of the room is an easel, on the other, a laptop.

Sometimes I wonder if there will be a duel between pen and brush, but so far both sides of my brain seem to be getting along very harmoniously, learning from each other.



Nancy Nicol owns Gallery 5 at:
5 East Commercial Street in Wellfleet.

Two of her short stories/memoirs have been selected for publication this summer by "Telling Our Stories," Lewisburg, PA. She also joined Nicola Burnell's writing group and is in revisions of her first novel.

For more information about the gallery and to order her cook book check out her website

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5 East Commercial Street, Wellfleet MA
Hours of Operation: Fri - Sun at 10 a.m.

Tues -Thurs by chance

Open year round by appointment

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