

Rin Shin-ji Voices

No. 3 ~ 2009



Four Stars, Alphonse Mucha, 1902

This year-end issue of Voices is devoted to poetry, articles, photography, and artwork which explore seasons ~ of the earth, of life, of practice ~ and community.

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Seasons



Spring: Printemps, Tamara de Lempicka, 1928



Seasons Around the Marsh - Spring

Denise Homer

It was sunny yet not too warm, but more significantly, it wasn't windy. Definitely a day for a lunchtime walk around the marsh. I had read about taking a walk of exactly one thousand steps and it was perfect weather to try it out.

Manjusvara in his book, "Writing Your Way", suggests, "Take a walk of exactly one thousand steps. Stop every one hundred steps and write about your experience of walking, such as the thoughts and feelings that have arisen, and/or what you now see and hear in your immediate surroundings".

Feeling partly like a pirate and partly like a Buddhist monk I set out around Allen Marsh counting my steps, one, two, three... The air was full of the sound of Marsh Wrens and Song Sparrows. I began watching the Marsh Wrens and I wondered if I could find a nest. My strategy was to find a Marsh Wren singing on the top of a cattail and then look in the vicinity for a nest and most of the time I spotted one. In fact I counted thirteen full nests and two partial nests on my one thousand steps walk.

The nests are lashed on to the cattails and made out of cattails, cattail down and grasses, which makes them hard to spot, as they just look like debris that has accumulated. The domed nests look like a snug little basket with a hole in the side for entry. The males build a series of nests, one of which the female selects and lines with cattail down, feathers, rootlets and fine plant material. Three to six cinnamon brown eggs evenly sprinkled with dark brown dots or spots will be laid.

At one stop I heard peep, peep, peep. Looking around I saw one very young Mallard duckling alone out in the middle of the pond. I looked for the rest of the family and spotted a female Mallard with seven ducklings at the edge of the pond swimming swiftly to the rescue.

I saw a River Otter in Gearheart Marsh diving and returning to the surface with something to eat in its mouth several times. First you see a furry little face crunching away, then a sort of brown sea serpent like hump as it dives and finally with a flick of its long tail, it's out of sight.

Much of the time we are not reflective about our environment. We have seen it so many times before that we start to take it for granted. I have the advantage of talking to people every day who are seeing the marsh for the first time. This gives me a continual fresh perspective on what is my daily life. Taking a walk of one thousand steps gives me an experiential fresh perspective. I never knew there were so many Pacific Tree Frogs on the cattails before this walk. Manjusvara sums up, "The ordinary and the extraordinary: only a short prefix distinguishes them, but the time it takes to see the difference changes our world."



Summer: Summer Scene, Frederic Bazille, 1869

Sesshin on the Lost Coast--May 1997

Bill Devall

Fire on the ocean, fire on the mountain, fire circle of Sangha
“And a stone woman gave birth to a child in the night”
Swallows returning to the barn
deer on the flat
douglas iris, California poppies, fremontia blooming in the garden

kinhin in the meadow, crushing chamomile with our bare feet
the upwelling flowing through our bones and joints
upwelling of being and nothingness.
upwelling of rich nutrients as continental plates collide
Physical suffering manifest in our practice
Mental suffering manifest in our practice
Radical suffering in the depth of desire.

work practice

Annual Flatheads burning rituals

collecting clippings from the garden
collecting driftwood
collecting branches from trees blown down in winter storms
collecting corpses
collecting desires
collecting ignorance
collecting illusions

Burning in the meadow
Burning to heat the hot tub
Burning for the Sangha campfire

circle around, circle around
brothers and sisters
circle around
owl and whale, feather and fin
circle around
circle around

Attention!

Flatheads are calling us to Attention!
attend to our breathing
attend to our despair
attend to mindfulness
attend to the Metta Sutra

Bowing to the tathagatha buddha
Bowing to the mountains
(volcano quiet awaiting his next eruption)

Bowing to rivers
(don't fall off the log
crossing Big Flat creek)
Bowing to ocean
("We build our little boat, sail
out into the middle of the ocean,
and drown.")

Attention!
Lost Coast welcomes us
we are lost, perhaps to be found
lost on our way?
Searching for a way?
The Lost Coast welcomes us

Attention
consequences follow causes
rattlesnakes co-inhabit this place
poison oak co-habits this place
spiders dwell in this place

"Are we returning Home?
Yes, child, we are home.
Home in the boneyard
select a bone
whale bone
bird bone
dolphin bone
human bone?"

bones of our ancestors
Gray whales salute us as they cruise northward
salute the bones of their dead comrades lying on the beach

the great swells rolling onto the point salute us
surfers--ghosts of surfers long since drowned
surfers of earthly delight finding the ripcurl
all surfers salute us

bones of our ancestors
select a bone
bones bleached from wind and salt and sun

In the long Spring evening
the last bell sounds.
Beginners minds stumble out from zazen
into the flash of green light at sunset
into the boneyard
coming home, always coming home.



Autumn: The Home of the Heron, George Inness, 1893

Zendo

Michael Quam

Solid redwood two-by-fours side by side,
Maybe old-growth, what they were cutting
Back then before the forest wars. In one,
An opening like a cavern leading inward

To another heart, perhaps a wound by fire
Or a fault in growing that couldn't be
Filled in but only covered up until
The saw did its work. Then, thirty years

Of humans looking inward, listening to
The ravens' clatter and croak, soaked
In the dew of stillness, without a map,
Together, finding a way back home.



Winter: Rain, Frederick Childe Hassam, 1890

Sounds

Judith Louise

Under the cycling percussion
of refrigerator,
racket of thoughts,
soft rush of breath:
faint call of foghorn
from the sea
beyond the bay.

Second Storm of the Season

Judith Louise

Steady motion in the air
plum tree branches suddenly
without leaves.

Community

Community, Erika Makino, 2009

Community...

Erika Makino

This large, outdoor clay sculpture is Erika's first commission. In a note accompanying the picture, she explains its origin. "My friend suggested to build a sculpture expressing "Community" for her. I was excited about the challenge. ... It is now finally finished or almost. ... It was such a big undertaking though I got some help from friends and daughters." She recently had the chance to sit with us again at the Aikido Center on Sunday, and writes, "It felt good to be part of the Arcata Zen Group once more. I hadn't meditated in a large group since my retreat in Thailand. What a difference! There: colors, smells, music, here: black pillows, a wall in front of your eyes. It amazes me how many paths can lead to the same goal."



...and Other Sculptures



Old Cats Dream of Buddha
Suzanne

We hold ourselves, suspended,
cushioned in fluid reality,
by amniotic memory
of what has and will come to be,
like old cats sleeping soundly,
moving only to keep in the sun.



Delilah, Bill Devall's old cat, who now lives with sangha member Mitch Trachtenberg. She's healthy and happy, stays indoors, and sleeps all day.

Other Voices
photographs by Pete Kayes

These are the work of some of our less-seen artists; they are from behind the Bayshore mall in the old dry kilns of the Hammond Lumber Co.:



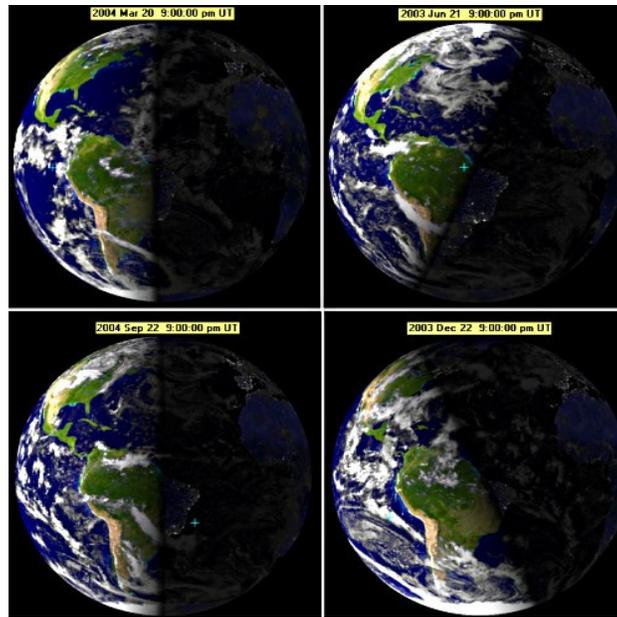


Being
Toby Griggs

When the path disappears and
There's no turning back.
When what was is no longer and
What will be is not known,
Now is forever.
We step one foot after another
Into blinding darkness
For ever and ever.
There is no going back,
No stopping,
No knowing.
We fall like rain here for days,
Years and hours.
We are soaked into earth,
Every molecule of our being,

Pulled into the core of it believing,
Spun round the sun,
Round the core of this galaxy,
Hurling through time,
Space and reality.
Yet in all this chaos and
Confusion we can listen,
Look and see,
For a moment find shelter,
Be reborn here and
Breathe
In clear calm air
In the eye of the storm
In the dawn of a new day
Touch everything in everyway
With everything everywhere.
What was will never be and
What will be we may never see.
Taste this moment as if it were the only one and
Breathe
Balance upon the peak of impermanence.
When falling dive,
Tumble and twist,
Twirling space time eddies round rumble like thunder
Cross oceans of everything and
Everyone with wonder.
Ring loudly,
Reverberate harmonically resounding
Like ripples cascading,
Echoing,
Abounding.
Dive into deep pools of water dissolving
Like atoms revolving,
Spiraling into whirlpools of living,
Loving and giving,
Sharing and caring.
Fly head over heels all topsy and turvy,
Upside-down, tipsy, itsy and curvy,
Right down the middle,
The center,
Perfection,
Trailing sparks of stardust and life and intention.
Breathe deep,
Deeply and deeper
To depths so far unfathomed
Through crystalline caverns of consciousness
To dimensions unimagined,
Beyond dreams and illusion,
Every perception and passion,
No ending, no beginning, no reality, no solution.
No hope, no nothing,
Just you and everything
Alive and living,
A being being.
And there we are,
No matter where we go.

Be it desire and delusions,
Awakening and dying,
Breaking and mending,
Laughing and crying.
We open our eyes,
Our hearts and our minds
To it all every moment and
All at one time.
Then our lives with great glorious wings,
Take to the sky every molecule sings
Soaring softly almost effortlessly
With every little thing,
Everyone, everywhere, seeing, believing.
Breathe
Breathe great blessings of air to be what you are and
You are what you breathe.
Breathe
Breathe blossoming, beginning,
Becoming be everyone,
Be everything,
Be everywhere being.
Being what is being is being.
Breathe
One more lifetime,
Year and second of being.
Breathe
Another second,
A lifetime can be everything being.
Breathe
Another moment is this moment in this moment
Being



Seasons on Earth: The Earth's sunlight on the solstices & equinoxes
Tom Ruen, 2005