

Biography and Social Art

What is this work?

On my 50th birthday I looked for a training in life that would make me stretch. I had a sense there was a new challenge coming for me to take up. Having sent my children to Waldorf School for their early years, I decided to gift myself that schooling. In reading about the Biography and Social Art course given at Sunbridge College by Signe Schaefer and Patricia Rubano, I saw the combination of learning that included art, movement, human development, and spiritual learning. Three years prior to making this commitment I had looked at this course, but it seemed too big for me to take on. At 50, I was ready, willing and able to leap. The application was my first trial. Write a brief autobiography. Hmmm. Did I have the right words? What were they looking for? What was the right answer? Ah, yes, I have come from public schooling. Well, I must have written the “right” words because I was accepted into this program. Happy Birthday to me! (I have such a different understanding of “right” now.)

As strangers, we entered into a circle and were brought together in such a gentle and meaningful way. By revealing the origin of our name, our pathway to this work and beholding the beauty of the physical space we were sitting in, our journey of trust and safety began. Some of the topics we explored were, Biography and Destiny, The Phases of Human Life, The Human Senses and the Uses of Enchantment, and the Evolution of Consciousness Through Art. This work was brought to us through reading, sharing from our teachers, stories, fairy tales, clay modeling, pastel drawing, painting, spatial dynamics, eurythmy, mask making, festivals, poetry writing, nature observation, and drama. After this 3 year experience I have now gained confidence in my ability to express ideas through these different media and to see how these artistic practices reveal another level of knowing. My observation skills have grown and I now carry a sense of a connection to the universe,

to a blade of grass, to a stranger on the street, to our ancestors and the spiritual world.

Each time we entered a week long block, I was struck with the awareness that this is what my children received when they were in Waldorf School. Such a balanced way of learning where experience was the teacher and each subject was explored fully. I am so grateful and in awe of this gift my children received. The difference between awakening knowing within and filling one with facts was apparent.

Through my years in this program, I found the thread that runs through my life and what I bring to this lifetime. I learned that I could present before a class and create an exercise to enliven a learning experience. I learned to see myself in the other and love both. I gained skills I needed to go out into the world with this love of humanity. I learned to experience what Rudolf Steiner spoke of in having a spiritual experience by simply looking in the eye of the ticket taker on the train. I gained a deep friendship with my classmates and teachers. We opened our hearts and shared our life sorrows and joys with each other. We were held and challenged by our teachers. They held out hope and potential for each of us as we looked within and without, above and below, as we awoke to our true selves.

What is this work? To answer I take a bit from each of my classmates' writings:

-creating and holding a sacred space, a place where individuals can learn, share, grow, develop and learn to really listen and to speak

-finding the soul in the world-finding the self in other and other in self

-this work brings people together and out into nature , into a world of color and forming, of deep ideas and laughter, and tears, too

-this work encompasses the whole human being as we live in

expanding circles of influence right out to the cosmos

-it is finding intention and destiny in the events of our lives

-it is the experience of becoming and the holding of another's becoming.

-this work is connection, inclusion, past, present and future

-an exercise of constantly thinking, feeling and willing

-this work is group involvement to share, explore, come up against and find the 'highest' within the self, the other, and the group

This professional development training allows students to bring this work into their own world. For example, my classmates and former graduates are using the skills learned in their work with Hospice, a woman's prison and a homeless shelter. Others now have individual coaching practices and use Biography work in their psychology practice.

I will take this work out into my community in the form of workshops and will take up an internship when the next Biography and Social Art Program begins this summer.