

Creative Expressions

Inspiring vibrant and positive aging ∞ Promoting participatory arts ∞ Engaging civic stakeholders

The Official Newsletter of the Creative Aging Calgary Society

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Imagine: A Place Called Home

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Imagine going where your eyes see what they have never seen before, where your heart feels what it has never felt before (Gracian, in Phillips, 2000, p. 51)¹. Imagine an experience profound enough to leave you with the awareness that “the seat of the soul is not inside a person or outside a person, but the very place where they overlap and meet with their world” (Nerval, in Phillips, 2000, p. 43)¹. Imagine having only a camera to bridge the gap in language and culture. Imagine photography making visible the “illusions of difference, uttering what we have long forgotten – that there is only one human nature and each of us is a single facet, constantly changing, reflective each other’s light and shadow” (Phillips, 2000, p. 143).¹

For me, this was the experience I had when I visited

the Jamgon Kongtrul III Memorial Home in Kalimpong India last year –feeling what I had never felt before, seeing what I had not seen before. Through the connections of a friend and colleague, I was able to spend one month of my research and study leave from my home university living with the residents of this home, a Home for Destitute Elderly and Children with the intention of completing an arts-based research project. While many people questioned what I was doing and said “it must have been depressing”, I must confess that I had the completely opposite

experience. The people and the place captured my heart.

The Home was established in 1995 in memory of the Third Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and it was a fulfillment of his compassionate vision to have a place that would provide shelter and compassion to destitute elderly. Soon after the Home was established, it opened its doors to children who had been abandoned or destitute and a wonderful synergy between the children and elderly was soon evident.

Continued on page 2...



OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- Creative Aging Calgary Society AGM September 7, 2011 – all are welcome to attend!
- Submissions to our newsletter are welcome! See page 4 for details.
- Watch for our next issue in December



An older woman passing on her skills as she teaches these children how to pick insects out of the rice.

Imagine ... from page 1

My beginning thoughts when I arrived at the Home were to photograph the older persons there and try to reflect the spirit of aging through my photography. After spending the first five days (without taking out my camera) trying to connect with the people and become part of the Home, I quickly realized that the culture and spirit of these people were not just evident in the people themselves but in the rhythms of life reflected through the activities and interactions of the elderly, the children, and the staff. The rhythms of life soon became apparent and unfolded in ways that allowed me, the visitor, to experience the “spirit of place”.

Krist (2000) says that capturing the “spirit of place” is “where everything comes together in a harmonious fashion and makes you feel what it was like to be there” (p. 8). Throughout those few weeks that I was at the Home, I was invited to bear witness to joy and sadness, dreams and disappointments, gratitude and humility, and compassion and grief.² I cannot tell you how touched I was to listen to and feel part of the stories that both the children and elderly shared -- 15 year old Chunta who came to the Home four years earlier from a small and very poor village in northern Nepal where there was no school and no health care. This bright young woman had studied exceedingly hard and completed eight grades in four years. Her ongoing dream is to finish

high school and study to be a nurse so she can go back to her village and start a health clinic. To watch Metok at age 95, the oldest person in the home strap on her backpack and walk three kilometers to town several times a week, inspired me to do as much as I can to try and ensure that I can follow her example when I get to 95. And to sit with Doma, who four or five times a day walked up 22 steps for meal and tea times with her dishes tied in a plastic bag to her walker and sit beside her gently massaging her painful knees. These are the kinds of moments that I was privileged to share.

I tried to make photographs that represented the rhythms of life and the digital camera allowed me to show the photos to the residents. Many people “chased” me down to have their picture taken so they could see themselves. As the days passed, I came to understand that “in contrast to the spoken and written word, a picture can be understood anywhere in the world. It can bridge the chasm created by differences of language and alphabet. It is a means of universal communication. It is the language of One World” (Feinenger, in Phillips, 2000, p. 25). As the people of the Home increasingly allowed me into *their place, into their hearts*, a place where one can only go if invited, I began to feel one with the spirit of the people, and the place.¹

Imagine what it would be like to live there, beautiful gardens cared for by

two of the elderly men who loved to garden, simple but usually nutritious meals prepared by one cook with help from children or another staff person, a shared bedroom but a place of one’s own, a sense of meaning and purpose in life for many who had been living on the streets or as outcasts, the opportunity for older persons to teach younger children and pass on important life skills, a chance to go to school and to look forward to life. Compassion was evident in the staff and hope was renewed in the lives and hearts of some of society’s most vulnerable. A few months after leaving the home, I received an email from the director which reflects this sense of hope and compassion.

We have already admitted two new gents, one a 65 year old man from a remote village was carried in because he was totally blind for the last three years. Because of his blindness he was very frail and did not talk, it seems he had given up hope to live. After a check at the eye centre he was diagnosed with very mature cataract in both eyes. Two weeks later following cataract surgery, Bhakta Babadur is walking around with a pair of dark glasses and looking very cool. This morning he came to ask if he could go back to his village because he is worried about his little vegetable patch and it seems he wants to start a new life and he was very confident. This is one of the rare moments of pure joy in my life. Our Rinpoche's vision surely brings immeasurable bliss to the poor and downtrodden.

References

- (1) Phillips, J. (2000). *God is at eye level: Photography as healing art*. Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House.
- (2) Krist, B. (2000). *Spirit of place: The art of the travelling photographer*. New York: Watson Guptill Publications.

Footnote

From *A Place Called Home* (p. 1) by S.L. Moore, 2010, California: My Publisher. Adapted with permission.



Save the Date!

CACS 2011 AGM

The Creative Aging Calgary Society will hold its 2011 AGM on Wednesday **September 7, 2011** from 7:00 - 9:00 pm at the Garrison Green Seniors Community, 3028 Don Ethell Blvd SW.

Annual reports will be presented based on the 2009-2010 operating year. Directors will stand for election or re-election.

A Laughter Yoga sampler by Fif Fernandes, Certified Laughter Yoga Leader and Teacher and her husband, playwright and actor Hamish Boy, will follow the AGM. Membership renewal or signup also available at the AGM or online.

Please reserve by September 1: info@creativeagingcalgary.ca.

Upcoming Event



The Music Care Conference identifies and integrates common themes and issues using music across the care spectrum and highlights the social implications of music in care. Participants experience music in a way that contributes to body-mind-spirit care.

<http://www.room217.ca/index.php/music-care-conference>

Early Announcement. . . . Save the Date

The Creative Aging Calgary Society presents the 3rd Creative Aging Calgary Symposium

Date: Thursday April 26, 2012

Location: Ross Glen Hall,
Mount Royal University, Calgary, AB

Keynote Speakers:

~Jeff Nachtigall~

Jeff Nachtigall earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Regina in 1993 where he studied printmaking and sculpture. He employs an intuitive method of mark making; obsessively layering colour, line, and shape until a recognizable image appears. Nachtigall's subject matter is

catapulted from the seeming chaos of the subconscious, to centre stage of the picture plane. The result is an engrossing and sometimes raucous ride down the back alleys of popular culture and contemporary art.

In 2006 Nachtigall developed an "Open Art Studio" model at Sherbrooke Community Centre, in Saskatoon, Sask. His innovative approach and philosophy has helped revolutionize the traditional clinical approach of art therapy and push the boundaries of art in health care. Nachtigall is the inventor of the Mobile Painting Device (MPD) which turns a power wheelchair into a giant paintbrush, giving people living

with neurological deficits opportunity to express themselves on a very large scale. Nachtigall currently lives in Saskatoon. For further information visit www.sherbrookecommunitycentre.ca/main.php?id=3566

~David Dworkin~

David Dworkin is a graduate of the Julliard School and Columbia University. He began his career as a clarinetist, serving as principal clarinetist for the American Symphony Orchestra. Later he was a maestro for orchestras across North America and abroad.

In his early career, he was devoted to working with young people. After "retirement" he reflected on the fact that he always felt energized after conducting, and noted that waving his arms and creating motion to music was a workout. So he built a fitness program, called Conductorcize™, around the high energy and intensity of classical music. Currently in his 80s, David continues to lead Conductorcize™ classes and share his passion with people of all ages. For more information about David Dworkin, visit www.conductorcize.com/maestro.html

Concurrent Sessions
Workshops & Creative Expression
Showcase will also be offered.

Details will be posted on
www.creativeagingcalgary.ca.

Laughter Yoga

Laughter Yoga is an exercise routine that is sweeping the world. It combines unconditional laughter with Yogic breathing. It simulates a physical exercise program providing many of the same benefits.

- It helps to improve mood by releasing endorphins from your brain.
- It's a cardio workout because it brings more oxygen to the lungs, body and brain.
- It strengthens the immune system, and helps to reduce hypertension, depression and pain.
- It creates positive energy that helps to connect people quickly and improve relationships.
- It creates and leaves you in a positive and optimistic mental state.

Laughter yoga is about playfulness. You don't have to be in a good mood to attend a laughter yoga session; as a matter of fact, laughter yoga will put you in a good mood. It's appropriate for use with people of all ages, including seniors.

From official website of Dr. Kataria, *Laughter Yoga International*
www.laughteryoga.org/

Creative Aging Calgary Society

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Steve Sabjan, Treasurer
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Sandi Hirst and Rebecca Stares, *Membership*
Carole-Lynne Le Navenec, *Sponsorship & Funding*
Jock Osler, *Marketing & Promotions*

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Strategic Priorities

Advocacy

Enhance awareness of participatory arts and aging programs with a variety of stakeholders

Practice

Foster connections between older adults, artists, professionals and interested community members

Research

Clearly communicate cutting-edge research specific to arts participation

Education

Share information about local arts-based programs and opportunities for learning

Governance

Generate an effective Board with membership that reflects our diverse community

Membership Info

Memberships are available at no charge online:
www.creativeagingcalgary.ca.

Members receive event and information updates as well as quarterly newsletters.

Creative Expressions

Creative Expressions is the official newsletter for the Creative Aging Calgary Society (CACS). It is published four times a year and distributed electronically (www.creativeagingcalgary.ca). Questions regarding article / photo contributions should be directed to the editor at editor@creativeagingcalgary.ca or 403-836-5631. **Please note**, the information and opinions in this newsletter are subject to change, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the publisher, the editor, or the CACS Board of Directors. **Disclaimer:** Any advertisements, businesses, or other parties listed in Creative Expressions should not be interpreted as recommendations or endorsements by the CACS, the editor or the publisher. Re-publication of the Creative Expressions Newsletter (in whole or part) requires the expressed written permission of the article's author and the publisher. Please direct republication requests to editor@creativeagingcalgary.ca

Volunteer Here

The Creative Aging Calgary Society is relatively new group and is seeking volunteers to help with our various committees. Please contact: info@creativeagingcalgary.ca for more information related to *Education & Programming, Communications, Membership, Sponsorship & Funding, Marketing & Promotion or Research*.

Submissions Welcome

Articles, book reviews, event and special interest items related to Creative Aging are all welcome. Please contact the editor at editor@creativeagingcalgary.ca for more

Your Business Ad Here

Business ads are welcome. Special introductory rate available: \$10/issue for 40 words (first ad free for members). Graphic ads, 1/8 page size, also welcome for \$75 per issue (members receive 20% discount). Please contact the editor at editor@creativeagingcalgary.ca.