

Consilience: Inspiration

By Erika Paleck

CONSILIENCE: The joining together of knowledge and inspiration across disciplines to create a unified framework of understanding.

Last time in this column, as part of understanding how it all works and our role within the framework of the perceived universe, we examined being centered in the moment. We discussed light as a tool we use to bring ourselves into the moment in a powerful fashion. One example of being so centered is what athletes call being in the Zone; for baseball players, it's when a ninety-mile an hour fastball looks like a slow pitch softball. Obviously it takes more than a sunny day to make a Sunday jock become Albert Pujols, Ted Williams or Buck O'Neill.



But what is it that encourages us to be more than a nine-to-five/forty-hours-of-week-TV kind of person? What pulls us back up after that famous Great Shovel of Stupidity has whapped us upside the head a few dozen times? What won't let us just sit back down on our rears and say, "You all go on without me. It's just not worth it." From that point on you just watch your life go on by as though it were a bad movie, and you're just waiting for the credits to

roll before leaving the theater.

It's inspiration that grabs us and pokes us and forces us back into the living world. Sneaky thing, that process of being inspired. Usually happens in unexpected ways. Sometimes it happens in the dark. But sometimes it happens downtown on Bridge Street.

Been to Creatures and Flowers lately? If yes, then you've seen the almost full-sized free-standing stained glass room screen featuring a wistful damsel gazing across the open fields. It's a romantic portrait of a woman, peaceful in her situation even as she gazes down the open road longing for escape. Titled "Stuck in Lodi", need we say more?

The artist is Alice Zimmerman, one of our local talents. You may remember her work in one of the stores attached to the old theater before it was flooded out last December. Talk about using light for inspiration. At the very least, it inspires us not to move to Lodi. In fact, it may inspire us to step out of ourselves and view the world through her eyes. We've all been "stuck" at some point in our lives. But here, Alice took her feelings of being trapped and frustrated and turned the emotion to her advantage, creating beauty and helping us unstuck a little bit from our own here and now.

Alice is another one of those wandering souls who plopped down in Vernonia after escaping from Arizona with a few layovers on the way. She had always been attracted to West Oregon; she found Vernonia because one of her daughters lived in Hillsboro. She's had a full life with three daughters, eleven grandkids and four great grandkids to prove it before she moved here.

She's been doing glasswork for about thirty-five years. She comes by it naturally; her grandmother had her own stained glass studio and did church windows, but she was a persnickety soul. Liked her solitude. So while her



work might have been an inspiration, Alice had to find her own way. She took a few classes in working with foil (another technique for binding stained glass other than soldering lead) after seeing some in a store and thinking she could do better. This led her to having her own retail store in the Phoenix area from 1978 to 1998, but "I didn't open the store until I felt I was good enough to do it."

Since then her artistry and skill have evolved. She teaches bead making at Wheaton Arts every year, and she's branched out to working in fused glass. The physicality of stained glass work has taken its toll on her; at a young-looking sixty-five, she walks with a cane because of back problems.

I suspect that it gives her a chance to be her own person, too. Like her grandmother, she likes her solitude and doing things her own way. So much of her work has been done to please customers. If you go to alicestainedglass.com you can check out her portfolio of work. Many of the pieces were done to order. One example includes a portrait of a young woman in workout clothes, along with lots of books and some bunnies commissioned by her husband. Contrast this with one of Alice's favorite subjects: dragons. Why dragons? "They look like whatever I want them to look like." Of course.

She leans primarily toward female portraiture, feeling that the costumes and esthetics of the female figure are more interesting and give better opportunity for creativity. "Woman at the Well" and "Spirit Women" are two of her favorites, and I urge you to check them out. Her women are not your traditional females but tend toward the mythic. Her most popular pattern on the site is "Guardian at the Gate": a woman bracing her sword almost as tall as she is as she gazes forthrightly back at you, her power radiating out from all around her.

Also, for a less traditional look, Alice has some of her fused glass down at Creatures and Flowers. This is a very different medium from designing patterns and cutting glass to fit them. No matter how carefully you work and plan, the end product takes on a life of its own. An artist has to have a little faith in the end product with glass fusion, because it is a long process and once it goes into the kiln, it is out of anyone's control. That's where it gets nerve wracking, but that's where the fun is, too. It's a little like fishing that way; you never really know what you're going to end up reeling in.

Check out this art, and now that you know a bit about it, see if it doesn't inspire you to get back up and try something new. Sometimes, it's okay not to know how things are going to turn out. And sometimes, it's great. Go ask Alice: <http://www.alicestainedglass.com/portfolio.htm>

If you are interested in connecting with artists and crafters in Vernonia, contact Erika Paleck at epaleck@gmail.com or 503-429-0898.



Last Floating Art Gallery of the Season

Vernonia Hands-On Art presented its last Floating Gallery of the 2008 season in Hawkins Park as part of the Salmon Festival. Held in a tent, the participants included: Kathy Larsen, Lori Grimmet, Walter Neumann, Dave Anderson, Beth D'Aubigne, Diane Coughlin, Nicole Grey, and Sally Harrison.

Starting with the May 2nd First Friday and Maypole Dance, the Floating Gallery has been held in the Scout Cabin; on Madison Avenue as part of First Friday; in the Grange during Jamboree, and finished up in Hawkins Park. Since this die-hard local group doesn't have a space to call their own yet, they are known as the Floating Gallery and have donated a percentage of their sales to the Hands-On Art project to fund arts and cultural programs for

children and adults.

If you are interested in participating in next year's events, please contact Erika Paleck: epaleck@gmail.com or 503-429-0898.



Artwork by Dave Anderson



Play it safe this fall.

Fall is the best time of year to get outside and play, whether you're with your team, your friends or your family. It's also a really important time to brush up on some key safety plays.

- wear layers so you can stay warm or cool down easily
- drink water to stay hydrated, even when it's cool outside
- wear the right equipment for the game or activity: helmets, pads, vests, shin guards, and shoes or cleats
- be aware of more people, cars and bicycles out near schools, fields and parks

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