



#DiscoverYourArts

SHOWCASE

MULTIMEDIA

*This contribution was shared by Umbrella Studio artist **Max Payne**. Upon the closure of her studio at The Umbrella due to COVID-19, Max like all her fellow Umbrella artists was challenged to resume her creative practice in in a very different space -- both physical and mental. A visual fiber artist, Max found herself drawn to the written word to help her navigate the "New Normal," appreciate the extraordinary in the ordinary surroundings of home, and resume creating fiber work inspired by her new surroundings. She shared samples of her journaling early in the stay-at-home period and by early September, along with a detail of new fiber artwork.*

Journal Entry: April 1, 2020, Wednesday, 6:26 AM clear/sunny, 28 degrees, high of 48 degrees, Sunrise, 6:25, Sunset, 7:12PM Waxing half moon.

The day begins in possibility, after yesterday when fear rode roughshod all over my body and my mind and my soul, engulfing even the beauty of the day, and making me small, for that is what fear does...it makes us small. Small and cold, so that we shrivel into unpromising versions of ourselves: our lights shine low, our resolve is nowhere to be found, the news is all bad and getting worse, and the bowl of joy that I held in my hand just the day before has developed a serious crack letting the golden liquid seep out, leaving nothing but a few amber dregs to remind me that it was ever even there, Bone penetrating exhaustion, nothing to improve it, worry wrapped like a wet blanket around shoulders, the need to carry on, to do the things that must be done, both as a caregiver and as the person that I need to be in order for both of us to get through this frightening and terrible time. We all are sharing this nightmare, all over the world., but sometimes the enormity of it overwhelms me. All intention for real cooking went out the window, and last night we had my go to comfort food and also my favorite late night dinner...a mushroom and cheese omelet with a small green salad...the last of the fresh greens, and, guess what, it was delicious,

even with a half glass of not so good red wine. Somehow, this simple act of nourishment lifted us both up and that, as well as the simple zen of washing the dishes by hand...a thing that I have been doing for two years now, ever since Don walked into the opened door of the dishwasher for the second time and broke it, so that water wouldn't stay in it and a repair person and much money would need to be spent again to fix it..I have become reacquainted to my dishes and the joys of sudsy hot water and the simple pleasure of handling all these pretty things that we use every day but never think much about when we use the dishwasher for them. Everyone has their thing! This one is mine. All finished. Time for sitting together and having a piece of intense dark chocolate while watching whatever thing is on TV that is not the news for a little while, then to bed. 4:30AM comes early, so 9 or 9:30 is that time for us, Don asleep immediately, I finally able to read my book...but not too long before it begins to slide out of my grasp and words flow into each other and it is time to sleep. And it truly was sleep, blessed by the peaceful and joyful end of a really tough day.

The morning came as it always does for me with the sound of a soft tapping on a wooden block; the alarm sound I have chosen for my phone, at 4:25....gentle but distinct. I rose up refreshed in the darkness, stars brilliant in the deep blue night sky, stillness all around, renewed; fear put back in the locked and chained box that it sometimes, but not often escapes from, and joy rising on the wings of the sunrise with a birdsong, and then a choir of birdsong. There is nothing for it but to sing along. The day begins in possibility.

Journal Entry: April 7, 2020 , 6:30 AM, sunny, 39 degrees - high - 62, humidity, 47%, Wind, WNW 3mph . Sunrise, 6:15 AM, Sunset 7:19PM, Full Moon

The moon, full and huge and rosy-gold sits low in the western sky, hovering at the crest of the hill behind my house this morning. It is still dark at 5 Am, but I can see it even from inside f my house. There is nothing for it but to go out on the back screened porch and pay homage to its presence at the beginning of a new day. The gifts of the pre-dawn sky are multitude, especially on a clear morning such as this one promises to be, and now that we are sequestered in our houses, and cautioned---indeed mandated----not to make unnecessary trips outside----these daily gifts loom large in the index of joy. They are given freely each day---no strings attached except for the unspoken directive to pay attention. This miracle will never come again; at least, not in the same way, in the same circumstances, with the same cast of characters that inhabit this moment. A bird begins to sing, breaking the absolute stillness of the scene. Just one bird. But soon it is joined by another, and as the sky lightens, more join in until there is a sunrise full of birds.

My heart is lifted up and joy flows in.

Applause! Applause!

The celebration has begun,

And now, in the east, here comes the sun.

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Journal entry: *6:09 AM, sunny and clear, 43 degrees with a high of 73 degrees. Humidity 100%. Wind south at 3 mph. Pressure 30.21 inHg. Sunrise 6:27AM, Sunset 6:52PM. Waning moon, one day short of New Moon.*

Early to this book, and inside this morning. Don has a telemedicine appointment today at 8:20AM with his primary care physician, so I will need to get him up, showered, shaved, dressed and somewhat awake before that happens, and it is still pretty dark and cold out there on the porch, so I am sitting at my table at the back end of the dining area, for this is what I have at home...my "room of one's own" is an area, and not a separate room at all. But, still, it is a place all of my own and what happens here is all mine...no other things encroach here, and I decide what I will let in. My table is an old seamstress's table, scarred with tiny rows of pin marks and places where scissors have cut endless amounts of patterns and fabrics, and, because, it has been imbued with the spirits of the crafts women that came before me, it seems fitting that ever since I found this table years ago in a second hand store, it has been one of my favorite pieces of "this and that" that make up our eclectic lives in this house and in all the others. Now, especially here in this little house, it has been my studio away from my actual studio, and it asks nothing of me except a commitment to whatever work I undertake on it and a willingness to slip the boundaries of the kitchen where it used to reside at the east facing window in the breakfast nook there, or the identity of the dining room. I sit here, back turned to the dining room table even as, in the kitchen my back was turned away from the stern and demanding kitchen goddess there. This table creates its own space and, even if there is no door to close, its place at the windows is all that is required to make a separate room all on its own. I can see my garden from this window and also, because the ceiling is high here and the windows go almost to the top, I can even see the sky and the big trees behind our house and also the exterior door to our screened porch.

The hummingbirds come to the feeder that is right outside of the windows, and, once I put the garden to bed, I will establish a bird feeding station right outside of these windows so that all winter long, the presence of their wings and the beauty of the little woods just out behind our porch and beyond a stone wall, crumbling in places but still lovely, will help to bless this room of my own with a creative magic, and bring joy into this little space. I have written some wonderful things on this table and painted a whole series of tiny bird paintings on it as well while it was in the kitchen. We are old friends, this table and I. The craft awaits. This morning I can feel this intention rising up through its wood, reminding me of all of the others who created beauty here and understand that now it is my turn. My cup is filled with joy and the yearning to begin.

Max Payne writes: "Here is one of my small scrolls. It hangs from a wrought iron shelf in my kitchen. It is acrylic on Tyvek with cut out hummingbirds on it, but the best thing about it is that it casts magical shadows on the wall behind it very early on the morning when the only light on is a small wall hung lamp directly across from it. To me it reflects the time we are living in now...a shadowland made possible by the presence of art in a dark world lit by a well-placed light, bringing the colors alive and casting the shadows of things yet to come, not yet fully realized, but possibilities there for a new creative birth."

