

# Friends of Silence

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"Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?"

Dear Friends ~ To create, no matter the artform, is a tender and vulnerable calling. When my partner, Luke, makes a basket, he starts in the woods, at the edge of a field, or by a roadside where he quietly notices. He looks for the specific plants he'll use, observing whether they are abundant or few, and whether they are at the ideal point in their growing cycle. Eventually, after he has respectfully harvested vines or taken a young tree, he carries the plants home, now responsible to whittle them down carefully and prepare them to be woven or joined together. This is the part of the creative process that recalls Michelangelo's famous quote: "*Every block of stone has a statue inside it, and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it*". Like a writer staring at a blank page, or a potter holding a lump of clay, there is a necessary courage inherent to opening oneself to a practice that has no guaranteed outcome.

Paul Tran's poem, "The Cave", begins:

*Someone standing at the mouth had  
the idea to enter. To go further  
than light or language could  
go. As they followed  
the idea, light and language followed...*



Joy Houck Bauer

I love to imagine that "*idea*" to be the impetus that inspires any of us to transform the human experience into created forms. And I love to imagine "*light and language*" to be any craft that draws us back into the beauty of the world.

It was a delight to compile the quotes for this issue of Friends of Silence and to reflect on the mysterious (and sometimes unnerving!) facets of the creative process that we open ourselves to in order to offer our gifts back to the world. ~ Joy



Whenever you are creating beauty around you, you are restoring your own soul.

~ Alice Walker



Josh Houck

Unless we are creators, we are not fully alive... Remember, the root word of humble and human is the same: humus: earth. We are dust. We are created; it is God who made us and not we ourselves. But we were made to be co-creators with our maker.

~ Madeleine L'Engle in *WALKING ON WATER*

To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong.

~ Joseph Chilton

Because in trying to articulate what, perhaps, joy is, it has occurred to me that among other things—the trees and the mushrooms have shown me this—joy is the mostly invisible, the underground union between us, you and me, which is, among other things, the great fact of our life and the lives of everyone and thing we love going away. If we sink a spoon into that fact, into the duff between us, we will find it teeming. It will look like all the books ever written. It will look like all the nerves in a body. We might call it sorrow, but we might call it a union, one that, once we notice it, once we bring it into the light, might become flower and food. Might be joy.

~ Ross Gay in *THE BOOK OF DELIGHTS*



Serious art is born  
from serious play.

~ Julia Cameron in *THE ARTIST'S WAY*

Cathy Images

We sleep, but the loom of life never stops, and the pattern which was weaving when the sun went down is weaving when it comes up in the morning.

~ Henry Ward Beecher



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To pray you open your whole self  
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon  
To one whole voice that is you.  
And know there is more  
That you can't see, can't hear;  
Can't know except in moments...  
...we must take the utmost care  
And kindness in all things.

Breathe in, knowing we are made of  
All this, and breathe, knowing  
We are truly blessed because we  
Were born, and die soon within a  
True circle of motion,  
Like eagle rounding out the morning  
Inside us.

We pray that it will be done  
In beauty.  
In beauty.

~ Joy Harjo in "Eagle Poem"  
from *INMAD LOVE AND WAR*

I rarely think of poetry as something I make happen; it is more accurate to say that it happens to me. Like a summer storm, a house afire, or the coincidence of both on the same day. Like a car wreck, only with more illuminating results. I've overheard poems, virtually complete, in elevators or restaurants where I was minding my own business... When a poem does arrive, I gasp as if an apple had fallen into my hand, and give thanks for the luck involved. Poems are everywhere, but easy to miss. I know I might very well stand under that tree all day, whistling, looking off to the side, waiting for a red delicious poem to fall so I could own it forever. But like as not, it wouldn't. Instead it will fall right while I'm in the middle of changing the baby, or breaking up a rodeo event involving my children and the dog, or wiping my teary eyes while I'm chopping onions and listening to the news; then that apple will land with a thud and roll under the bed with the dust bunnies and lie there forgotten and lost for all time. There are dusty, lost poems all over my house, I assure you. In yours, too, I'd be willing to bet... I've lost so many I can't count them. I do understand that they fall when I'm least able to pay attention because poems fall not from a tree, really, but from the richly pollinated boughs of an ordinary life, buzzing, as lives do, with clamor and glory.

~ Barbara Kingsolver from "Stealing Apples" in *SMALL WONDER*

For most of us, knowledge of our world comes largely through sight, yet we look about with such unseeing eyes that we are partially blind. One way to open your eyes to unnoticed beauty is to ask yourself, "What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?"

~ Rachel Carson from *THE SENSE OF WONDER*

**Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could do.**

~ Toni Morrison in *THE BLUEST EYE*

I was taught that I had to 'master' subjects. But who can 'master' beauty, or peace, or joy?

~ Kathleen Norris in *THE PSALMS WITH COMMENTARY*



Joy Houck Bauer

In order to create,  
I must be still.

~ Jan Kandy-Fragas

Creation is lifework, creation is how...you spend your life, you cannot divide life and the creation, it's impossible.

~ Yohji Yamamoto

"Scrape the willow until it sings..."

~ Julia Parker, Coast Miwok-Kashaya Pomo basket weaver

Boredom is — yes, the runway of creativity. That's the way I tell my youngest, if she ever says it. I'm like, "Great! You're bored! That means you're a little uncomfortable. And you know what? This incredible, creative world is right at the edge of that uncomfortableness," because it inevitably happens that you'll have to create your own sense of creativity...

...Your mind is in its most supple, creative state when it's off leash...we need to create more space off leash. And even now, when I step in the shower, I think, don't turn on the news, don't turn on anything, and just take a shower, because that's why you have your best ideas when you're in the shower or doing dishes or taking a walk. And we've just filled every waking moment with stimulation and input, and you need time to digest and create new thoughts...and figure out how you think about it and how it integrates to your larger narrative and — it's just such a great thing, to create that space to think.

~ Tiffany Shlain from "Living the Questions" podcast interview with Krista Tippett

Sometimes I wish I could photosynthesize so that just by being, just by shimmering at the meadow's edge or floating lazily on a pond, I could be doing the work of the world while standing silent in the sun.

~ Robin Wall Kimmerer in *BRAIDING SWEETGRASS*



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