

## PREFACE

*For several reasons, I have been a vehement anti-blogger. However, a precedent has been set and I learned that it has been a vehicle for some people who have traveled cyberspace from Susan Thacker's inaugurating blog to BSAI. For these reasons I commence.*

*Also:*

*- I trust that this outpouring will release some of my excesses of awe and honor and will still allow me to retain inner discourse.*

*- I ask for tolerance in advance. I am a tourist here. I will undoubtedly get some things not quite right if not completely wrong. Edification is welcomed and appreciated. Most of what I do get right is because of info from locals and a humungous proportion of credit to Jim Cox, resident foreman.*

*- It was not intended to be self serving (directing people to my web site, but I could not find a free blog site that would allow me to upload doc files. And to spend more time blogging in the eves means less time for drawing.*

*- I cannot be more grateful to the Big Sur Arts Initiative and the Land Trust folks who conceived of, allowed, and created this opportunity. I am a privileged recipient to be in this sacred site and given license to engage in the creative process and open to whatever transpires...*

## WEEK 1

### Arriving

It doesn't matter now how the day crawled through my spine or how my sense of direction and timing became alarmingly distorted in the dark, unused to driving at night, without city lights, and in a vehicle that is taller than me and has no windows. For half of the journey, the rescue cat that no one would take for 8 weeks, yelled at me with a mean face and sometimes kept her mouth weirdly open for minutes at a time.

Not realizing I was simply two inches away from Rocky Point landmark, made a rescue call to Lisa (see The People) who I apologize to for her overtime.

A dark and windy road in a canyon – something sensed as oddly familiar: A short chapter when 19 years old in a living/working collective (Vocations for Social Change) in Canyon, California (a little known unincorporated town east of the Oakland hills).

I also missed the curve around the barn into the studio area, felt lost, but got out of the van to take in the stars, the quiet, the air. Eventually arrived where I was supposed to be by mid morning.

After accomplishing some order to the 9 feet of cargo van art supplies, made a small ritual with sage, auga, and Peruvian stick to enter the space of the studio

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En route to exchange van for car, caught snippets of radio reception. I'm torn between reacting to the political conditions and taking a hiatus. I will be here during the election –is it possible to completely retreat? Last week's topics in SF – the bail out. Here it seems all tongues are on The Fire and its trauma, fires impending, foreboding of mud slides, and human close encounters and animal fatalities with mountain lions foraging for food from out the wildfire territory. After numerous cougar stories from Jim (see The People), he loans me a stick to take on hikes.

## The Studio

Charmed by its loveliness, its design mimicking the barn's architecture,



and its well-appointed-ness for a writer and/or visual artist and/or bird watcher and/or escapists:



Became acquainted a bit with Virginia Mudd via entries in the book donated to the studio, The (in pink) New (in white) Older Woman (in blue). Gail Sheehy's intro refers to women "facing passages for which we have no names, never mind maps." Weaving into the theme was a side bar conversation with Todd and V at the lovely opening reception (see The People). We each arrived with a perspective that we don't fully take control of our selves and our power (especially

women) until our 40's and 50's. I think those forward thinking women, Group 4, with hindsight of a now 30+ year span would conclude that living without a map is organic and enriching.

In the Continuity section for Group 4, there is Virginia Mudd cleaning up from storms and overseeing completion of her/this studio:

Now she must answer the question: "What are you going to *do* there?"  
First priority is looking at the hills, hawks, and horses; the setting up the workspace... then getting serious about reading all those books and old *New Yorker* magazines..." – pg 195-196

The above understandable for a writer and one who lives on this land. Similarly, I glance at the stack of friend's recycled New Yorkers and books I brought, but wonder how I will make time to read when art making immersion time and space is so precious.

### **The People**

Greeted by Jim (foreman, caretaker, guardian, guide, historian, firefighter, canyon community commando, and more) and introduced to his companion dogs and the horses. From Jim one receives not only the lay of the land, but the culture and flavors from stories that wind through the canyon and hills of all this spectacular Land Trust property.

In addition to Jim, everyone I've encountered near the studio (Lee, David the electrician, and Will) have each added savory stories.

Heard the chain saws this morning. Lee and Jim are building a redwood bench. A memorial bench. Should the walking stick not suffice, I requested a redwood bench with an ocean view.

Some of the memorial benches on Glen Devon ranch:





A ride offered from Jim to the ridge in time for brisk and rose quartz/amethyst sunset. We encounter what first appears to be a deer, but is Will, an elder role model walking the land by himself with ski poles for balance.

#### Reception

Drive south to Nepenthe for the reception. I didn't think it was possible, but the ocean vistas get more gorgeous with each turn.

The setting, an extravagant overlook of ocean and humming birds within arm's length. Sadly hills ravaged by The Fire were the backdrop.

Everyone was graciously gracious (and congratulatory). I attempted to dribble versus gush my gratitude. Had time to share a little about my intentions for the residency time. Had not enough time to connect, learn more about the mission and vision for the residency, or learn of each person's role let alone their story of arriving here.

Gleaned a little more about Lisa of BSAI who has been the genial and patient link as well as deliverer of directions, ant traps tarps, orientation packet, and hopefully some singing. Her job, to escort me from, to, and through the residency has been more than fulfilled.

Not surprising that Karen of BSAI is also an artist. We'll exchange ash and paper.

Within this first week have been feeling gluttonous for more time here, even though knowing it overrides experiencing things moment to moment. Must take advantage of every day and eve. Must also remember to grill anything on rosemary twigs.

Honoring this astounding opportunity, bestowing thanks to all who made it possible.

#### Getting Started

Prepped the 40 4x4s, but still had no idea what to do with them or the SF ones when completed. Decided on letting people play and turn the 4x4s as they like. Tried magnetic strips on sheet metal found at Colton's in Sand City's interesting little niche of artisans, crafts people, and other resources. Experimented for hours getting a look to the sheet metal that was satisfying.

4x4s inside for the rain:



The loft set up as drawing station:



Downstairs set up for living, seeing out, writing, and mixed media:



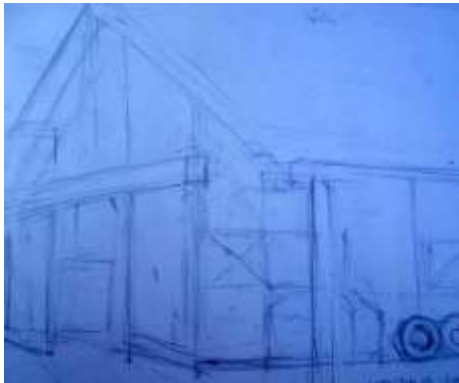
Plentiful drawers are ideally cat proofed and each now holds a different medium. I have ebullient anticipation (and only a little nagging concern about product/outcome).

## **Drawing**

“To draw is to be human” & “... drawing interconnects us to our ancestors...” & “all the world is a drawing” – Emma Dexterin’s forward in Vitamin D, New Perspectives in Drawing.

Good to be observational again. Figure drawing is training to see relationships among parts. Just as in life. It takes awhile, several passes before I see all the ridges, shadows, slight mounds, details, and how they interrelate. It’s as if nothing belongs without all the other parts fitting together. The relationships make the whole. Committed relationship to mark making and art making. A relationship to the creative process, a relationship that is sustained with authenticity, internalizing the process, and giving it voice.

Quick sketch of barn begins a panorama:



I am trying to commit each image to memory for drawing. Envision several narrative drawing vertical scrolls that hang about 6 feet. Was hoping to do a drawing everyday and complete 8 scrolls. But the images are being stored and only committed a first drawing - a small branch of acorns – mid week.



### **The Ordeal & The Lesson**

Was difficult to find FSC certified wood for stretcher bars. Web searches, phone calls, and a visit to the Eco-Frame shop near the shipyards produced pine from a certified farm in Wisconsin (not local, but at least not from New Zealand which was the first option). Ordered 3 in the dimensions of the shops wood sample display (63x23). Next a round of phone calls and visits to fabric stores, green home supply stores, art store distributors, etc. Nothing suitable for stretching and/or nothing sourced as sustainable. Settled for the usual art store canvas.

Once here, had staple gun issues (with my mega one and with Reuben's loaned little electric stapler). The three panels required over 500 staples and tapping each on both edges. Over the course of several days I was attempting to problem solve my difficulties, trying different pressures and techniques and perspectives. I was anxious to start painting and albeit not a completely trivial task, was disappointed with myself for it taking so long.



After a break (new concept for "break" is a short walk to:



was able to observe my mechanics and my *self* – holding my breath, gritting teeth, squinting eyes in conjunction with brute force to get the staples in. Tried getting yoga-ic and zen-ish by breathing during the stapling, which helped some. But after a few more rounds, noticed that it was only on exhale when there was a satisfying staple clutch into the bars. However, they were still stubborn and inconsistent. I began to feel frustrated from the tedium and effort. As I was closing in on the third corner of the third frame, I finally really observed my *presence*: I am stretching canvas outside, under stars, abundant hills, warm wind (Santa Anna?), with moths dancing in the flood light, owls beginning their throat songs.

I have been granted a profound gift. I am confident that if I slip again, this Place will catch me quickly to regain real perspective.

### **Alchemy**

Began a batch of 1:1 dammar crystals and denatured alcohol. Had enough coffee grounds to stain some paper that is waiting for an inspiration of subject.

Began experimental glazes for the 4x4s. Raw, unripe blackberries yielded a translucent and cherubic pink. Simmered for hours into the eve a gumbo of wildflowers. It filled the studio with a sweet-scented, floral aroma. It also yielded promising pigments. Will see how they extend their colors after sitting overnight (to be continued in Week 2's entry).

Have carried an intuition for a long time that angst would not exist if I were a hunter/gatherer. Here I can forage and practice as a hunter (of the visual) and gatherer (of source materials – earth, substrates, substances - to integrate into art making).

### **The Animals**

Prepped for potential rain and wanted pics of the barn for panorama and to collect images to draw from memory.



Around the corner from the barn, hearty greetings from the rescue mules. They are completely endearing and made me feel welcomed again to the property.



Wondered how the horses and mules were faring in the rain.

The cat shivered when I took her out to look at stars. I indulged myself outside and she indulged inside chasing moths. Entered the studio for the night with an expanse of unbelievably dense sky of constellations in my head.

There are horse sounds (my neighbors), crickets, and two owls for most night's sound track. I can hear other beings brushing against bushes but can't discern what they are.

Went outside to take in the dusk. A rabbit fled as did about 20 crows and the horse called Horse gazed at me. Things make sense here – the barn owls live by the barn. They are as sonorous as fog horns and are equals as nocturnal accompaniments.

Saw rabbits again, just their butts as they bound into bushes. Quails heard and seen. Finally, spotted a red tail hawk gliding over the ravine that Vs the ocean - similar terrain for the hawk that lingers the ravine by SF's Bay Trail route to China Beach.

A woodpecker intermittently let me see him in the branches.

Woke to cat throwing up, hoping it wasn't the ant traps but it was probably the long string of canvas I noticed when cleaning up. To avenge the cat, gesso-ed a long canvas string into one of the panels.

Jim so earnestly says I will get use to the flies. I almost believe him, but still use some earphones to muffle their pitchy droning.



The other night the two owls were hooting, but one louder than the other. He was sitting at the top of the tallest tree by the horse area and it seemed like he was bragging about his silhouette.

## Painting

So ready to get going... Stretcher bars are not as 'built up' (e.g. at least 2 inch widths) as I am accustomed to. Will need to go light on textures and layers.

In this setting, there is no disinclination for clean up:



Couldn't be more content - free to give my self over to process oriented painting AND engage in narrative imagery drawing AND forage for materials for 4x4s AND create SCRAP boxes from Big Sur materials AND draw a site panorama AND create a special painting on Lenox now stained with four days of my coffee grounds AND watercolor the fire engine from the same perspective as Susan's to induct a tradition for following residency visual artists. Without tension the projects blend back and forth and this excited, ADD-like energy is suitable for this experience.

### **More Lessons**

I am still a tourist. Learned to be deferent to lightening and will never again think of it as an object for visual entertainment.

No internet in the studio (due to my crappy laptop and /or a virus). Checked email in the BSAI office for the first time after the reception. Read only four of the 163 emails. Aside from missing the debates, I suddenly appreciate no internet in the studio as appropriate and its absence will be a blissful exchange for more time to be present.

### **Concluding Week 1**

In SF my favorite time of day is dusk. Here, any time of day emanates extraordinary light that whispers into and fills little voids in my soul that I wasn't even aware of.

Unable to conjure conjunction adjectives (e.g. extramagificient, mysticalbeauticious, jeweledgorgeousness, stunsplendorous) that suffice to describe Glen Devon ranch.



Enthusiasm swirls - whatever next week's immersion will bring forth.