

STEAM ROLLER PRESS

SPRING 2025

Volume I
Issue 1: *Place*



Welcome to the Steamroller Press.

We at Steamroller Group decided to create this journal to explore the world of ideas, honor the cerebral, and satisfy intellectual curiosity within our group. The idea came about at one of our meetings and was then steamrolled into shape, materializing as a container for news, ideas, thoughts, poetry, and philosophical essays expressing what inspires, influences and informs our lives and studio practices. In the life of an artist, it is virtually impossible to separate the creative process from everything else. The varied interests of our members, academic and otherwise, provide a suitable basis to share among ourselves, and others who might be interested, in our process. As this endeavor is rather new, it is our hope and desire to apply the same capacity, well-honed through years of art practice, to create something from nothing. With open minds, we aim to share on these pages our most compelling ideas, as they develop and change through time, in hopes of building a lasting place to read about each other's unique creativity. In a world that is spinning quickly

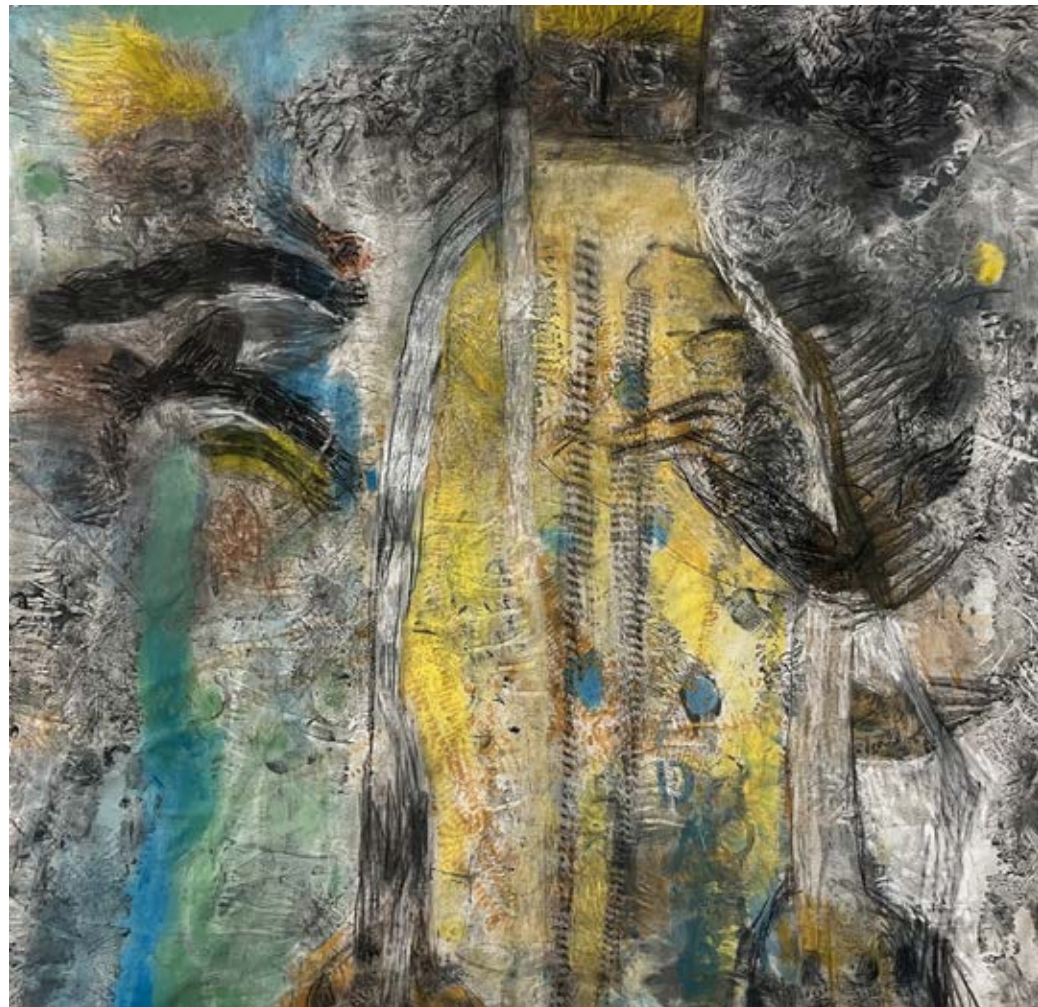
towards the purely virtual, perhaps this journal will be our version of a paper speakeasy, of well-considered words printed with ink on paper held in our hands as we dream of new ideas. We are proud to present the first Steamroller Press, Volume I, Issue 1: *Place*.

~ Editors

Kazaan Viveiros
Bonnie A Berkowitz

Contributors:

Val Sivilli
Susan Mania
Kazaan Viveiros
Bonnie A Berkowitz
Cay Maria Adams



Our Better Selves

Val Sivilli

Not So Local

When I moved to western New Jersey I was not quite sure I made the right decision as an artist. As it turns out, I did not. Creating art in Hunterdon and Bucks Counties as the kind of artist I am did not serve me. I moved to a place where the current state of the art world was not heard, not known, not studied. It was a bit disheartening.

Then I met Michelle, who had recently moved to the area as well. We quickly realized that other not-so-local artists must live out here, too. We all just had to find each other. But how? We decided to open a members' gallery.

It was 1996. Michelle Henkin and I sat at a proverbial kitchen table, or rather I think it was an actual kitchen table, at Michelle's Bucks County house. As we brainstormed the name of our new art gallery, we spent a lot of time tossing around names like *River Valley Artists*, *Artists Along the River*, and *Frenchtown Art Gallery*. Having recently finished graduate school, I didn't feel much like a *river artist*, a *Frenchtown artist*, or a *river valley artist*. Neither did Michelle. We did not paint barns, or landscapes, or old stone houses—our work was more difficult, more abstract, often dark, and we used alternative materials and methods.

Steamroller started as a joke. It just made us laugh so hard. Each time another river related name got tossed about, the other would say, "STEAMROLLER!" and we would laugh! Eventually, we said, "Fuck It! Let's take 'em down. Let's flatten 'em." The tag line *A Place for Not-So-Local Artists* was added. We quickly became a group of twelve not-so-local artists. We had twenty-four really great exhibitions with well attended opening events, a lot of press, and a bunch of fundraisers for the town and local school. We put black paper on the gallery when it was World Aids Day, a day without art. A few memorable events got us into good trouble with the local police. We arrived! We steamrolled! We even managed to sell some artwork. It was where *Civilian Art* started. Then, two years after we opened, we closed. No one other than me was willing to step up and take on the role of director. My family needed my attention—I had two small children and a marriage that eventually fell apart.

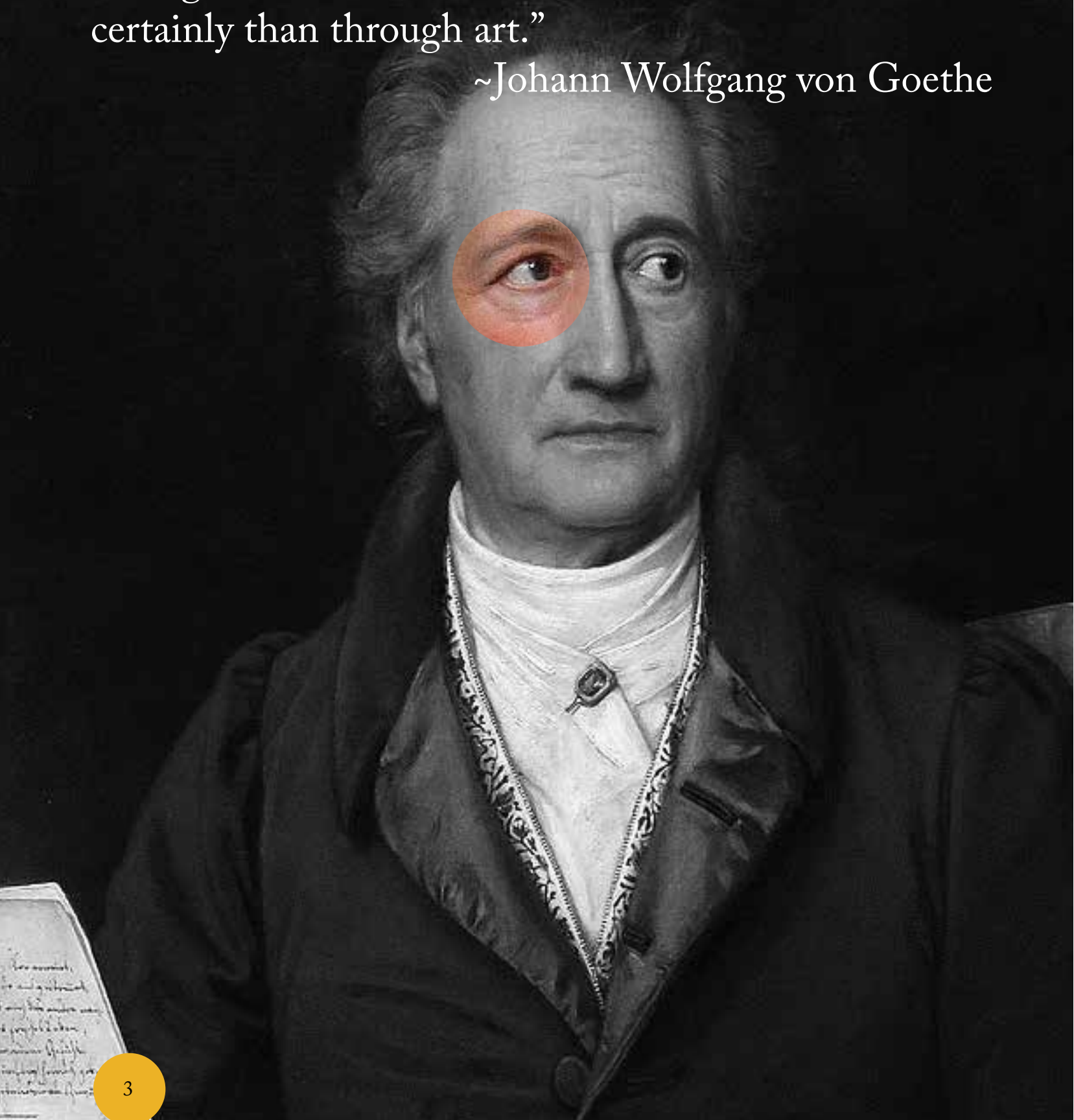
~ Val Sivilli



Time Out, May 17-26, 1996

“One cannot escape the world more certainly than through art, and one cannot bind oneself to it more certainly than through art.”

~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



An Artistic Study of Place

Participating in the Creative Activity that is Nature

“The question is not what you look at, but how you look and whether you see.” ~ Henry David Thoreau

In the winter of 2024, I embarked on a journey with The Nature Institute’s sixteen month foundation course in Goethean Science, entitled *Encountering Nature and the Nature of Things*. I have sought to know and understand the natural world throughout my life. As an artist interested in nature’s wonders, a gardener and a spiritual traveler, nature has been central to my quest for meaning. Through the work at The Nature Institute I have been exposed to new ways of thinking, observing and participating in the world, enabling me to explore the language of nature through a contemplative and encounter-based approach that points a way to unlock nature’s mute secrets.

So what exactly do we do at The Nature Institute? Ten months in and I am just beginning to understand that for myself! It is a practice, above all, done in three distinct ways.

First are the philosophical and literary readings. We have started with the most artistic essays by naturalists like Nan Shepherd and Aldo Leopold, who spent their lives observing nature and all its phenomena. We’ve read poetry that expresses the creative activity that is nature, including poems by Mary Oliver and complex philosophical texts by thinkers such as Owen Barfield, Henri Bortoft and Johann von Goethe.

Second are the conversations we have with our course instructors (there are four) and with each other, as a community of students from diverse backgrounds coming together from nine countries. This community working together toward a shared goal is essential to our practice—together we are able to see much more and form a communal body of shared research.

Third is our work in the field: experiments and artistic exercises. We’ve held observations in a completely blacked out room to better observe light and shadow, spent meditative

time outside looking at one aspect of nature every day for a set amount of time, writing creatively, drawing, painting, and noting our observations.

Doing plant studies as a group activity has had a profound impact on my understanding of what we miss in our sleepy day to day. Through these practices we are developing a new approach to science that weds exact thinking and observation with aesthetic sensibility—what Goethe called *delicate empiricism*.

Finally, we are asked to take on our own regular practice with one aspect of nature, relevant to ourselves. I have taken on a *Place Study* in which, instead of looking at one aspect like a tree or animal, I look at my home landscape in its totality. This, I have found, is harder than it seems. Finding where to begin was the initial work. I started with my own inner thoughts and feelings about all I observe here on these sixteen acres where I live and work. Being present at the rising sun brought an encounter with four great horned owls, so close that I could make out their shape in the rising dawn. Seeing the damaging effects of invasive insects and plants took on new meaning. After all, the emerald ash borer has a will to live as strong as any protected bald eagle. What comes after their end tells a story of a landscape that has been disrupted for over 200 years and continues to change.

I keep a journal for what I observe and have taken my painting practice to be more observant to this mood, one of gratitude and wonder at all that is present here. In the winter months I am focusing on plant architecture, the skeletal remains of what is left after the green is gone. This is the work of a lifetime with no apparent end—it is a gentle peeling away of film, an opening up to movements not seen. It challenges us to move beyond the static abstractions of today’s thought toward a fluid way of perceiving and thinking. When we begin to see the dynamic and relational nature of the world, nature begins to show herself in surprising new ways, deepening our connections.

~ Susan M Mania

From *Thinking Like a Plant:* *A Living Science for Life*



such as unfolding, growing, and dying, transformation, dynamism, rhythm, and a unifying stream of creativity that brings forth diversity in an organism. Inasmuch as we internalize these qualities, our thinking itself can become enlivened. We can experience our own metamorphosis from an object perspective to a process perspective. We realize that each finished form is a snapshot in the life of an organism, and the plant can become a model for

“Getting to know the plant in this way lets us participate in essential qualities of life,

the way we work with our concepts and ideas. We gain greater flexibility so that we do not hold on to our ideas in a rigid, static and object-like way. Rather, we can let them grow and transform, and when appropriate, let the preliminary forms of our ideas die away. The plant can help us to establish a dynamic cognitive relation to the world. And when our thinking becomes more dynamic, it accesses a source of creativity—like the growing point in the plant—out of which new and fertile ideas can arise.”

Holdrege, C. 2013. *Thinking Like a Plant: A Living Science for Life*



All the Talk of Going but Never Got Away

Susan Mania

Evening, 10/16/1995

Dorland Mountain Arts Colony

My First Experience as an Artist in Residence

Suddenly, I am thinking, "What if the electricity went out all over the world and everybody was going out of their minds except me, because I am sitting pretty in the middle of nowhere writing on a Royal® manual typewriter by candlelight?" I'm wondering what it is about this place, this thing that I am doing. Is it that life is peeled down to the core?



Blue Dog Tea Whistle

Kazaan Viveiros

It is waking up when the sun comes up, making coffee and cooking something to eat. It is feeling the day blow through you and striking the match to light the lamps as the sun sinks behind the hill tops. It is feeling the rhythm of the day as you paint until you cannot stand up any longer. It is being awakened by coyotes at midnight. It is listening to cicadas sing their song to you. It is washing the dishes by hand and hanging your clothes on the line. It is rationing your food so you will make it until Monday, when you will have a ride into town. It is bathing in the claw foot tub by candlelight. It is sitting in the Adirondack chair with a view of the mountains, drinking from a can of beer and watching the sky as the day falls into darkness. It is looking at your paintings over and over and waiting for inspiration to strike. It is playing music you haven't played in ten years and feeling the fragments of each piece unfold. It is preparing and eating every meal at home and sitting at the table alone, rejoicing at the splendor of freshly cooked food. It is reading *Anna Karenina* by the light of a kerosene lamp. And it is all the while listening to the endless stream of thoughts pouring from your head with no outlet, no person to tell or ears to reach, with no TV to watch and no phone to ring and no distractions to make you forget that thought you were thinking. It is the quiet that lets you think and feel and search and behold and smile, standing in the middle of the floor in absolute, blissful solitude.

~ Kazaan Viveiros

Tufts of You

I saw the tufts strewn
Across the path on my morning walk.
I wonder, did you survive
Your tussle in the night?
Tufts of you I saw
Not tufts of Other.
Were you defiant,
Did they run off scared?
Or did they have their fun
And discard you,
As you slumped away to lick your wounds?



~ Cay Maria Adams

Background Image: *Brown Thrasher*, by Kazaan Viveiros



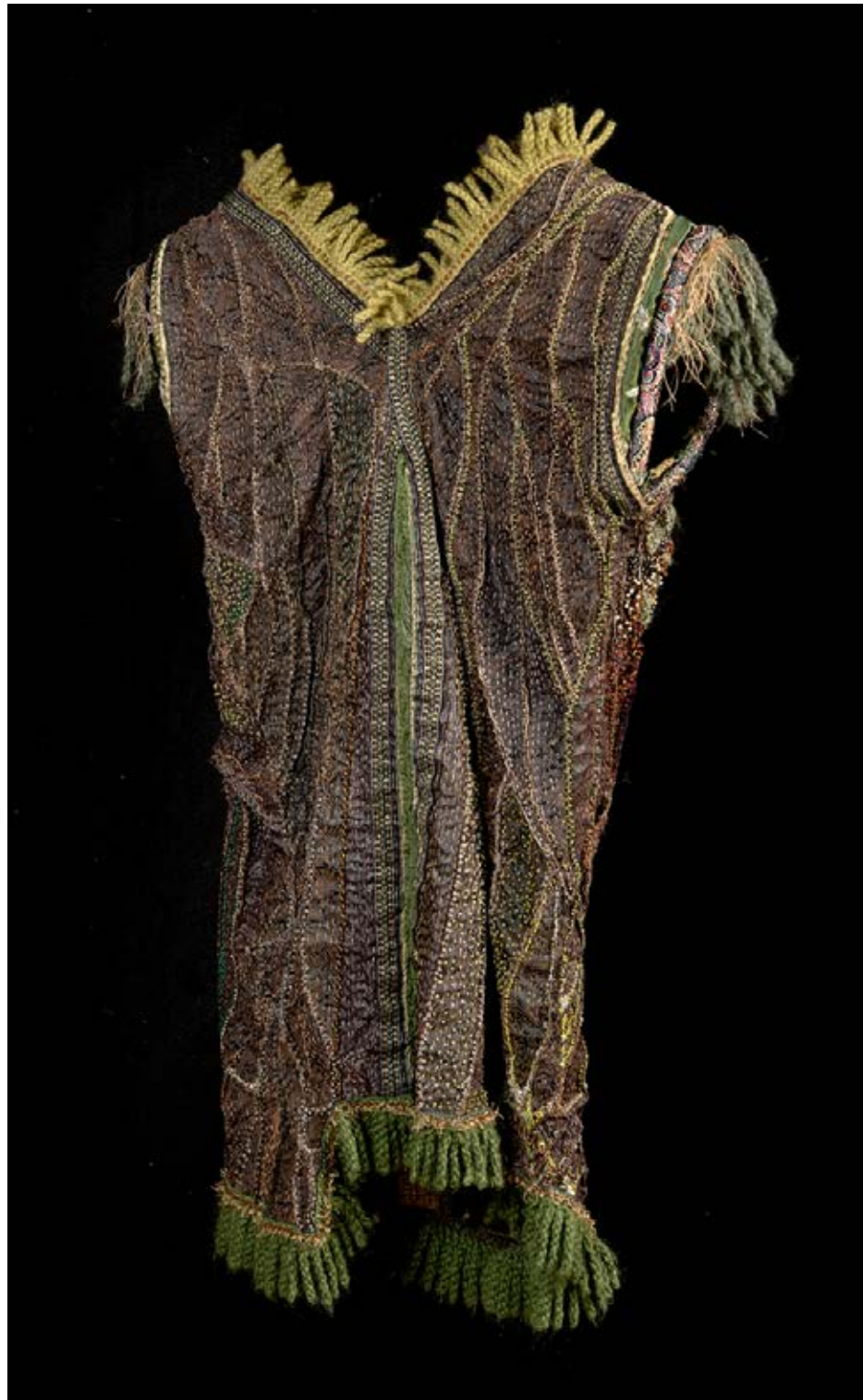
Brother

Cay Maria Adams

Brother

It is all over now, isn't it, big brother?
Although your eyes were closed to most truths self evident,
You waged a courageous fight.
A Don Quixote in the battle of the mind,
Tireless jousting with Grand Illusions.
Did we fail you as we did not intervene?
Too painful it was to watch.
We had to look away,
And shield our eyes
As if from the unyielding glare of the sun.
And yet we loved you.
Your Spirit never gave up,
Triumphant at every joust
"This is it! This time I got it!!"
You rushed so into the light, your mission to save us.
But all we wanted was you
To get off your horse and sit with us.
And so we will sit with you now,
Embedded in the embers of your courage
And hope you feel our love and know
We always knew you were the prize.

~ Cay Maria Adams



Tree of Life Coat

Bonnie A Berkowitz



Tree of Life Headpiece



Tree of Life Headpiece, back

Bonnie A Berkowitz

In Progress

Uncharted Territories: A Collaborative Project Uniting Poets and Printmakers with Book Arts

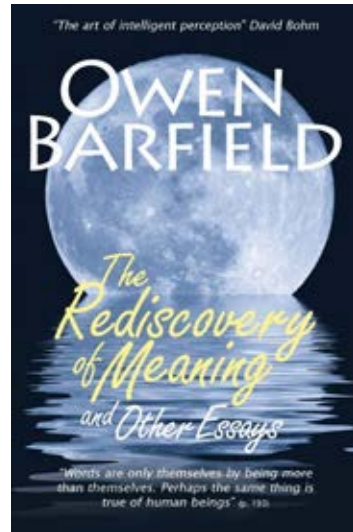
January 2025 - Summer 2026

Steamroller Group, in collaboration with the Hunterdon Art Museum invites a living dialogue among poets, printmakers and book artists in service of creating artwork that speaks to the relevant issues of our time. The *Uncharted Territories* project, the first in a proposed series, will incorporate imagery created by artists responding to the written word, using a variety of traditional printmaking techniques. We have collaborated with Vasiliki Katsarou to curate a collection of 20 poems that explore ideas of mapping, navigation, being lost, being found. Artists will be invited to create an edition of prints in response to one of the selected poems. Broadsides will be hand bound into a limited-edition artist book and exhibited in a group exhibition at the Hunterdon Art Museum in Clinton, NJ, in the summer of 2026. Stay tuned!

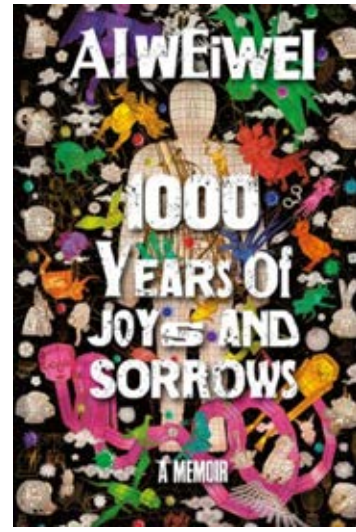


Antique Map of the World by Martin Waldseemüller, 1507

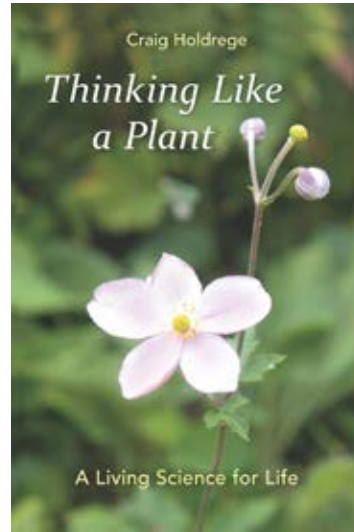
Reading List



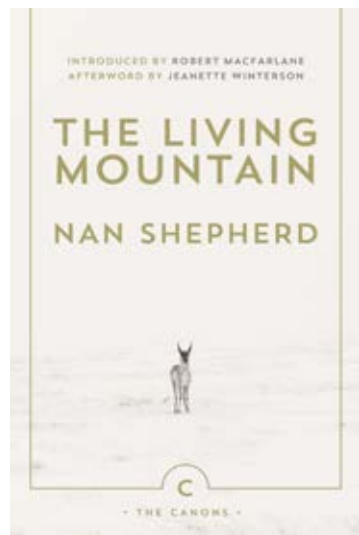
Barfield, O. 1977. *The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays*. Connecticut: The Wesleyan University Press



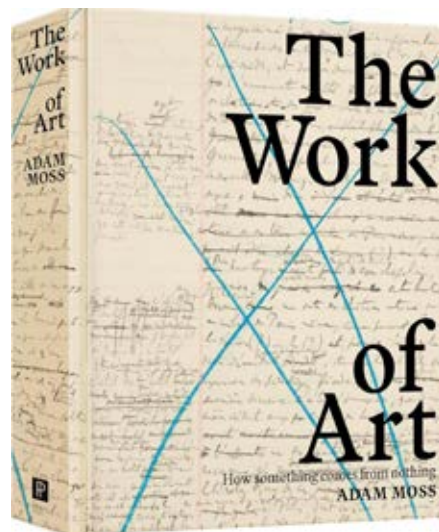
Weiwei, A. 2021. *1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows*. Canada: Bond Street Books.



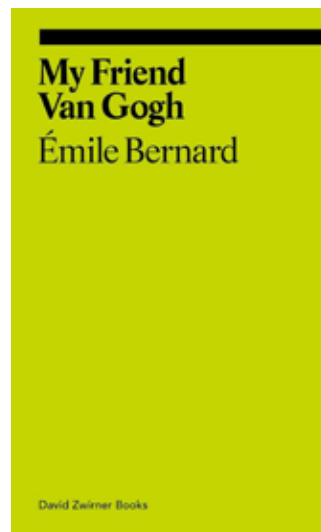
Holdrege, C. 2013. *Thinking Like a Plant*. England: Lindisfarne Press.



Shepherd, N. 1977. *The Living Mountain*. Great Britain: Aberdeen University Press.



Moss, A. 2024. *The Work of Art: How Something Comes from Nothing*. New York: Penguin Publishing Group.



Bernard, E. 2013. *My Friend Van Gogh*. New York: David Zwirner Books.

Calendar of Exhibitions

NEW JERSEY

Montclair Art Museum
3 South Mountain Avenue, Montclair, NJ
Interwoven Power: Native Knowledge Native Art
- Ongoing

ARTYard
13 Front Street, Frenchtown, NJ
Alex Callender: American Lawn
Through May 25, 2025
Words that Start
Through June 8, 2025
Soft as Earth
Through June 8, 2025

Art Fair 14C
Project 14C, 150 Bay Street, Jersey City, NJ
May 8 - 11, 2025

PENNSYLVANIA

Barnes Foundation
2025 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA
Cecily Brown: Themes and Variations
March 9 - May 25, 2025

Allentown Art Museum
31 North Fifth Street, Allentown, PA
Unexpected Perspectives: The Lens of Abelardo Morell
Through April 27, 2025
New Conversations: Renaissance and Baroque Art
Through July 6, 2025

Michener Art Museum
138 South Pine Street, Doylestown, PA
Charlotte Schatz: Industrial Strength
(*Bucks County artist)
Through March 9, 2025

NEW YORK

MoMA
11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY
Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction
April 20 - September 13, 2025

Guggenheim
1071 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY
Harmony and Dissonance: Orphism in Paris, 1910 - 1930
Through March 9, 2025

Neue Galerie
1048 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY
German Masterworks from the Kellen Foundation
February 15 - May 5, 2025

Affordable Art Fair
Metropolitan Pavilion, West 18th Street, New York, NY
March 19 - 23, 2025

Ukrainian Museum
222 East 6th Street, New York, NY
Beyond Tradition: Contemporary Decorative Art
Through March 23, 2025

Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY
Solid Gold
Through July 6, 2025

STEAM ROLLER

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To find out more about Steamroller Group, or to inquire about membership, go to <https://linktr.ee/steamrollergroup>