
Types and Shadows

The Journal of the Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts

Issue # 46

Summer 2010

“The Barn Lady”

by Sherry McVickar
Uwchlan Monthly Meeting

Recently, I was in a print workshop led by Jules Burrowes. Jules opened the workshop with the question, “What’s the connection between creativity and the divine?” Later that night, at the brink of sleep, I came up with the real answer: “ME!”

I am the “Barnlady,” a.k.a. Sherry McVickar. I am a Plymouth Meeting Friend, Friends’ Central School, and Sarah Lawrence College graduate, 57 years old. I am currently working on a series of portraits of barns. I have painted for 55 years, also sculpted, danced, sung, performed, built houses, taught in art museums and preschools, and traveled. I paint professionally: nudes, portraits, flowers, water, and landscapes.

Q.: But why barns?

A.: They have soul...

They have romance...

They have magic about their proportions.



Right now, I am embracing the visages of barns like a religious conversion. All the things I have heard Fundamentalist converts say about their religious conversions I can say about my discovery of my pursuit of Barn Portraits. I am grateful for this discovery. I feel like it has given my life a purpose. I feel like my life is filled with joy since I gave birth to this pursuit. I don’t feel possessive of it, and I am not proselytizing. I see myself as a documentarian. I see myself as The White Knight of Barns. I see every one of my barn portraits as a “Save the Barn!” poster. I see my paintings as essential to Barn Preservation.

My pleasure is in capturing the nature of the building. I am consciously painting a *portrait* of each barn as an individual. I love barns as the quintessence of practicality. Every nook and cranny is used; by advance plan, or in time and nature. Could it ever have been that the construction of barns on the land that never felt the weight of a collection of stones offended the original occupants of the area as a Wal-Mart is offensive to me? I wonder... I do prefer an ancient barn to a newly built one. The effects of age are a gigantic component of the romance and the beauty that I love so much in the barns that I paint.

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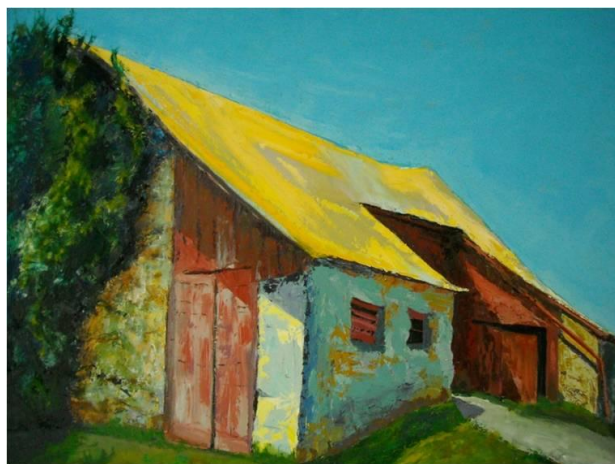
The Barn Lady continued from Page 1

I use a palette knife on Masonite and stick to the historic, standard “Plein Aire” frame. I put the 4’ x 8’ sheet of Masonite on my driveway on a sunny day and prime with a stain killer. Then I cut it to fit the frame. I put a ‘ground’ on the surface. I set up on a big studio easel in the shade on location of the barn. Or, when working from a photo, I use an image from a brilliantly sunny day, as strong lights and shadows define geometry best. I whip up “sky” on my palette and lay it on. Skies are either leaning toward purple or green. I find painting skies and trees boring. Of course, I have had to adopt a little humility over the years, and I represent sky and trees in a less abstract fashion to satisfy my critics. I am, after all, on a Mission here: I want the paintings to inspire our viewers to ‘Save the Barns.’

My joy in seeing, and thence recording, the barns are that they have abstract beauty. I love geometric fields of color. I describe my style as “American Literal”; which is my way of saying; “What You See is What You Get”. I paint what I see. I have studied with Impressionist teachers who say: “Things in shadow are in cool colors, things closest to the sun are in warm colors.” The head of the painting department of the nation’s oldest art school says: “Things in the foreground are sharper and brighter colors, and things far away are the opposite.” I also want the attention to go to the building, not the dumb old sky and trees.

This is where the lesson of positive and negative space applies. Mother taught me this: the negative space is as important as the positive. It’s been difficult for me to position my barns so they grace the frame and vice versa. I think it’s the perversity of human nature that makes me want to flaunt conventional rules but I want to sell, so I toe the line. I am hotly in pursuit of unlocking the secret to selling art. I have a wonderful guide in that pursuit. He came out of his office into the sunshine two summers ago to introduce himself while I was painting the barn next to his office. He has inspired me enormously. When a painting of mine has sold I like the feeling that I get. To quote Sally Field at the 1985 Oscars; “This means you like me. You really like me.”

Please write with questions and comments! www.BARNLADY.net



**SAVE THE DATES
WE HAVE A LOT GOING ON!**

February 18th and 19th, 2011

**Annual FQA Conference –
And for the first time,
a two-day conference!**

**The conference will be held at
Burlington Meeting House and
Conference Center**



FQA HAPPENINGS

by Maria Cattell, Clerk of FQA



I hope you're enjoying this issue of *Types & Shadows* as much as I have—from first page to last. And I hope you'll think about what *you* might contribute to *T&S*. A (very) short story or a poem, if you're a writer. Photographs, if you're a photographer. Your story as an artist, no matter what your medium (like the Barn Lady's story).

Happening: North Carolina YM (Conservative)

News from Chuck Fager in North Carolina about the arts at North Carolina YM (Conservative). Chuck is a very longtime FQA member, past Clerk, and current board member. At NCYMC's annual sessions held this July, Chuck participated in a lively panel discussion about the evolution of Quaker attitudes toward the arts and their implications for us now.

Other panelists included novelist Haven Kimmel, with Indiana Quaker roots; Lloyd Lee Wilson, a plain Friend; and FQA's booklet, *Beyond Uneasy Tolerance*.^{*} A book as a panelist? Yes, in the form of quotations from *Beyond Uneasy Tolerance*, quotations read aloud which made vivid the attitudes discussed by the panelists. The next day there was a display of members' artwork, from homemade Native American flutes to colorful quilts.

The quilts were hung in the room where business sessions were conducted. They soon proved to be more than mere vain worldly indulgences when the air conditioning got turned to the frigid level. The quilts were taken down to wrap up several shivering Friends whose attire was more suited to the 90°+ conditions outside. Chuck (who was wearing shorts) was one of the quilt-wrapped Quakes, so if you know Chuck, have a hearty laugh picturing him wrapped in a quilt (next time wear long pants, Chuck!).

Chuck reported that "the tableau was somewhat out of sync with the traditional grey and brown motifs associated with Conservative Quaker assemblies, but the sessions were concluded in good order nonetheless."

^{*}*Beyond Uneasy Tolerance* was compiled by Esther Greenleaf Murer and published by FQA in 2000. It is a collection of statements made by Quakers from George Fox (art "proceeds from a wrong heart...and feeds the wrong heart and mind and wits") in 1658 to Britain YM ("Spiritual learning continues throughout life....[and] there is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts...") in 1995.

Happening: Philadelphia YM annual sessions

FQA had an information display at PYM sessions in July. It included a vest crocheted by your clerk as a change from the usual pictures and words on such displays!

Happening: 5th Arts Conference, February 18-19, 2011

Just a reminder to save the date. More on the conference soon!

THE MUSIC OF SILENCE
by
Frank Comstock

"...there is music in the air, music all around us; the world is full of it..." – Edward Elgar

You park your car at the end of the narrow country lane in a wide, flat area where the dirt has been packed hard by the tires of the many cars driven by other seekers. Like the others, you seek complete silence from the sounds of civilization—a silence so complete that your heartbeat and the thrum of blood passing through the artery near your ear may be the loudest sound you hear not coming from nature.

You leave your car, gently pushing the door until it latches so you won't disturb nature with sounds she did not create. You walk a half a mile on a well-worn trail, your hiking boots leaving hard, ridged impressions on the soft earth of the forest floor until you come to a boulder softened and perfectly shaped for sitting by the rains of a million years. When your breathing returns to normal and quiet returns to your body, your ears can still hear the faintest hint of civilization—probably the highway a mile away, the highway that led you to the country lane.

With feet rested from sitting on the boulder and your thirst quenched with deep draughts of cool water, you continue on, walking quickly away from civilization, yet forcing yourself to slow down to enjoy the wildflowers scattered along the trail by a thousand birds. Moving slower is a necessity now because you are in tune with nature's time. The time on your watch no longer matters.

Another mile brings you to the banks of a tiny creek, a little sliver of water barely two feet across and no more than a few inches deep. Here nature shows her genius as she gathers this small amount of water, allowing it to flow gently down the slight slope and over small rocks as it seeks its future, to join with a thousand other such rivulets into a mighty river.

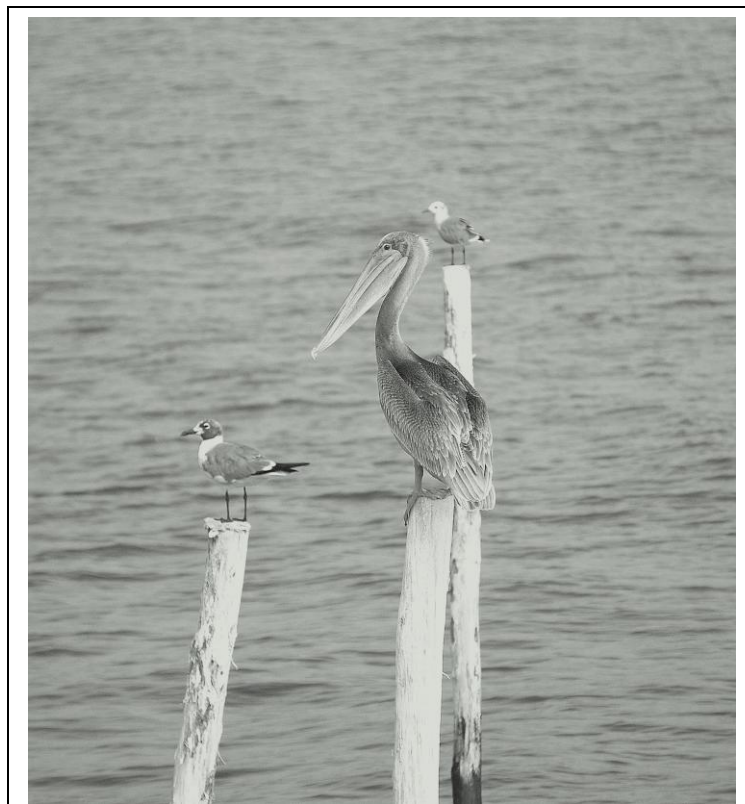
Taking off your boots, you sit on the mossy bank, sheltered by the leafy canopies of a dozen or more trees as you settle your tired feet into the cold, clear water. Fifteen, maybe even twenty, birds of red and brown and yellow and blue swoop over your head, soaring from one branch to another in search of food for their young.

As you sit there, becoming more conscious of your own breathing and the beat of your heart, you realize you have left civilization behind. You can't hear the pre-teens next door bouncing a basketball on the street and arguing about whether or not one fouled the other as they raced to the basket. There is no heavy throb from the too-powerful car speakers belonging to that teenager who wants everyone to know he is there. There are no squealing brakes on a trash truck as it works the streets of your neighborhood, removing the detritus of your life. There is no beating of the air when a helicopter passes over your house or the dull, distant roar of a plane far overhead as it makes an approach to an airport. There is no repetitive, mind-numbing tinny representation of a song as an ice-cream truck moves ever so slowly along your streets. There are no barking dogs, egged on by other dogs and that one annoying neighbor who never grew up and just feels the need to bark once a while to get the real dogs going. There is nothing and that is when you hear the music of the silence.

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A dozen different bird calls permeate the air as leaves rustle gently in the breeze. Nature's breath ruffles the life-filled leaves one against the other, the sound of their touching as gentle as the laugh of a baby. The tiny stream of water gurgles as it splashes over a few stones in a diminutive waterfall no more than eight inches high. A scurrying sound off to your left is a mother squirrel scampering up a tree with food for her babies crying plaintively from a nest far above your head. The dry detritus of nature on the ground under the trees—old leaves, small twigs, and pine cones—rattle and rustle as a chipmunk scuttles underneath searching for tasty treats.

You have arrived at a place where there are only the sounds of nature. You are the only human within miles and you are sitting still, even controlling your breathing, so that you can hear the music of the silence.



“Pelican”

Photo by Frank Comstock

"If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him."

~~ John F. Kennedy

In Memoriam...

FQA Member, **Sondra Ball**, left this earthly life on March 17th. Sondra was a member of Mickleton Meeting, Salem Quarter, New Jersey. Sondra was editor of a twice-monthly journal, *Autumn Leaves*. Below is the introduction to the last issue written by Sondra's husband, Mario Cavallini.

Ending This Run

The publisher and editor of *Autumn Leaves*, Sondra Ball, left this earthly life on March 17th, 2010, leaving the rest of us with the question of whether to let her zine die with her.

As her husband and assistant on *Autumn Leaves*, I am very aware of how much this journal was a ministry for Sondra. Certainly it was a vehicle for her own poetry, but she was not at all shy about submitting to other publishers. No, the ministry was in her publishing the poems of others, and more than that, the encouragement and development of new poetic voices. The issues posted every couple of weeks were only the visible fruit of the effort; the true work was her network of relationships with her authors, and that, I could never duplicate or replace.

However, as the fruit of those relationships, *Autumn Leaves* has never been only about Sondra; it's been about the voices of this community of authors and authors-in-bud. Some of these have their own zines or other modes of expression; others will find other channels to speak through. But this particular crowd, in this particular place, deserves the chance to come together one last time, to celebrate, co-create, and say good-bye.

Thus this, *The Last Autumn Leaves*, a final issue not just to pay tribute to Sondra, but to give a clear, climactic expression of just what made this community work. I can't describe it, explain it, or write an obituary for it. I can only create the space for it to happen one last time.

This is that space. I may also produce a print anthology drawn from these poems, for those who need something more tangible in a commemoration; although first, there's a manuscript of Sondra's poems I've run across, devoted to peace (more to come, soon, on that). However, this collection — the poems in the table of contents below and the empathic, insightful, expressive souls who penned them — is the culmination of *Autumn Leaves*.

Please enjoy this moment, and create new ones.

Mario Cavallini
April 2010

The final issue of *Autumn Leaves* is online ... over 100 authors responded to the call, offering their words for you to read and find meaning.

Please come, read, and complete the creations: <http://www.sondra.net/al/tlal/default.htm>

NEWS FROM OUR ARTISTS & ART COMMUNITIES

Art Teacher Carol Sexton and FQA Board Member wins sculpture award

Carol Sexton, Pendle Hill's core teacher in arts and spirituality, has won the second place award for her "Knot" limestone carving in the sculpture category in the Art of the State exhibit at the State Museum in Harrisburg. This annual juried exhibit is co-sponsored by the State Museum of Pennsylvania and the Greater Harrisburg Arts Council, and showcases work from artists throughout the state of Pennsylvania. 152 pieces were accepted from over 2,000 entries. The opening reception in Harrisburg took place on Saturday evening, June 26. More information on the exhibit is at: <http://www.statemuseumpa.org/exhibits.html>



Knot, by Carol Sexton

Adele Bourne

Moorestown (NJ)
Meeting, has just
published a book of
poetry:
"A Grocery List & Other
Poems"



Chestnut Hill Meeting Plans Building a New Facility

Current plans for a new environmentally friendly meeting house are underway. "Having outgrown its 79-year-old meetinghouse on Mermaid Lane, the Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting is planning to build a new facility as a place for people of all faiths to gather for contemplation, reflection, or quietly delighting in the beauty of a lovely Skyspace by distinguished artist **James Turrell***, according to longtime Meeting member Signe Wilkinson.

"t a July 8 gathering under a simple white tent on the nearly two-acre parcel of vacant land where the Meeting intends to build its new facility, Wilkinson described the Meeting's plans for a new, artistically significant space on Mermaid Lane close to its current meetinghouse, which will be sold. The Meeting hopes to break ground in late 2011.

*James Turrell is a member of FQA. To see some of his work, go to NY Times articles here:

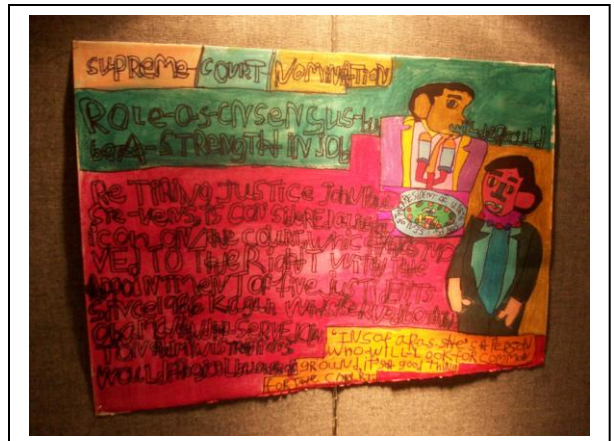
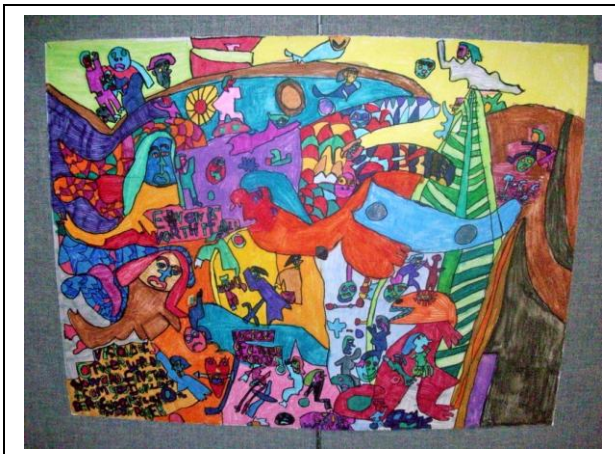
http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/t/james_turrell/index.html

Friends General Conference 2010 Lemonade Gallery Photos by Chuck Fager

Jamie Ham, son of FQA founder Minnie Jane Ham, has participated at the FGC Lemonade Gallery since its inception. Here are Jamie's latest paintings. Jamie's work is very colorful, which unfortunately, is not viewable in T&S.



3 Posters
by Jamie Ham
strawberry Creek
Meeting
Berkeley, CA
Resident, The Lukas
Community
Temple, New Hampshire



A Momentary Communion

I know every crater in this neighborhood
of wrecked structures already.
The nerve wracking drudgery of war
sweeps across me continually like hot desert wind.
It numbs and desiccates me with cynicism.
I prefer this to real feelings.

Every grimy street is a battlefield.
Yet – out alone in the early morning
here's a blossom that forgot to cringe
a tiny thing, a girl in windy white, full of smiles.

A blossom!
She flowers inside me a sudden orchard
of my baby sisters in organdy,
all ruffled up for their first
communion.

Myrrh
Palo Alto (CA) Meeting



Rouen City Hall, Rouen, France
Scratchboard
On-the-Spot Sketch
by Myrrh
Palo Alto (CA) Meeting

Global Warming

The attraction of the far North
The stark white that drew me,
A penumbra of mysteries hidden
in poised avalanches, covered
with a tracery of mists,

is gone,

Gone like the Mass of my childhood
Melted and run out to sea
Like the benumbing mutter of Latin
From the Cathedral.

Myrrh
Palo Alto (CA) Meeting

The Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts Board

The following FQA members currently serve on the Board of the Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts:

- * Maria Cattell, Clerk
mgcattell@aol.com
- * Carol Sexton – Assistant Clerk
CSexton@pendlehill.org
- * Doris Pulone, Treasurer
dpulone@comcast.net
- * Elke Muller, Editor T&S and Membership Care
maureenelke@verizon.net
- * Chuck Fager
chuckfager@aol.com
- * Blair Seitz
blair@blairseitz.com

If you are interested in taking a more active role in FQA, please send an e-mail to Maria Cattell at:
mgcattell@aol.com

If you have questions with regard to your FQA membership, please contact Elke Muller at
maureenelke@verizon.net

Visit our website at:

<http://www.quaker.org/fqa/>

Submissions Deadline for our next issue is
October 31, 2010

Send a story, poem, photo or other artwork to
Elke Muller at:
maureenelke@verizon.net
or to the FQA address below.

If you have an arts conference, play, gallery opening, et cetera, send the information to me for publication in the next T&S!

Please note: Entries will not be returned and will be published at the Editor's discretion

Join FQA!

\$25 per year for individuals;
\$40 for families and
\$50 per year for groups.
Send membership dues &
your postal address to:

FQA c/o PYM
Street
1515 Cherry
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Please make check out to Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts. Thank you.

PLEASE NOTE:

If you wish to receive Types and Shadows online and save us postage and paper, please let Elke Muller know at
maureenelke@verizon.net

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FQA Statement of Purpose

To nurture and showcase the literary, visual, musical and performing arts within the Religious Society of Friends, for purposes of Quaker expression, ministry, witness and outreach.

To these ends, we will offer spiritual, practical and financial support as way opens