

The Castle Voice

September - December, 2025 WomanKraft Art Center's Newsletter Volume 77



Dr. Annick Safken

388 S. Stone Ave. Tucson, Arizona 85701 520-256-7455
www.womankraft.org

Castle Voice

Mysteries of the WomanKraft Castle Center for Art, Education and Culture, Revealed!

WomanKraft is a Non-Profit Arts Organization founded in 1974 to claim, validate, and empower women artists and other under-represented groups.

Directors and Coordinators at WomanKraft

Directors of Exhibits

Tony Russo
Gayle Swanbeck

Directors of School of the Arts and General WomanKraft Business

Gayle Swanbeck
520-256-7455

Executive Directors: Gayle Swanbeck, Tony Russo,
Traci Kelly

Online Class Booking

<https://WomanKraft.scadler.com>

Traci Kelly



Official WomanKraft Website

<https://womankraft.org>
Geno Davis

**For more information, please call 520-256-7455
Thursday-Saturday, 1-5pm**

Castle Voice

Organizing, Keystroking, Proofreading, Editing:
Traci Kelly, Albert Kelly and Gayle Swanbeck
Design and Photography by Jonathan DuHamel



In 1991, WomanKraft purchased the 1918 Queen Anne Victorian that is now the WomanKraft Castle Art Center. It houses our gallery, The School of the Arts, The Sanctuary, an all-natural beauty salon, and the art studio of Gayle Swanbeck Studio #103, Lauralee Simon Studio #102 and Tony Russo Building Studio. WomanKraft is located at 388 S. Stone Avenue, Tucson, AZ, 85701

OFFICERS

Lydia Phillips, President
Darlene Kirk, Vice-President
Gayle Swanbeck, Treasurer

BOARD MEMBERS

Ana Maria Yañez
Darlene Kirk
Gerrie Young
Gwen Moore
Jordana Silvestri
Nicole Young
Terri McGuire
Tony Russo
Caroline Latron
Traci Kelly

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Thank You!

WomanKraft thanks Long Realty, our generous members, our gallery docents, investors, clients, customers, and all our volunteers.

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Gallery Schedule

Gallery hours: Thursday -Saturday: 1:00-5:00pm

Gallery ONLY is closed August 2025

SEPTEMBER 6- OCTOBER 25, 2025: ANYTHING GOES

RECEPTION: SAT, SEPTEMBER 6, 7-9pm

That's right, Anything Goes is any subject matter, any medium, any style. Deadline for submissions: August 23, 2025.

NOVEMBER 1- DECEMBER 20, 2025: HOLIDAY BAZAAR

RECEPTION: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 7-9pm

This 39th annual Holiday Bazaar provides revenue for local artists, a wide choice of fine arts and crafts all retailing between \$1 and \$100. We seek art that reflects the holiday season from Kwanzaa to Christmas; all mediums, all styles considered. Deadline for submissions: October 18, 2025.

Gallery ONLY is closed in January 2026

FEBRUARY 7-March 28, 2026: NATURE

RECEPTION: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 7-9pm

Flora, Fauna or landscape is the theme for this exhibit from anywhere in our big beautiful world. All mediums and styles considered. Deadline for submissions: January 24, 2026

APRIL 4- MAY 30, 2026 DRAWING DOWN THE MUSE

RECEPTION: SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 7-9pm

It's our 37th annual women artists only show. All mediums and styles included in this decades long WomanKraft tradition. Become a part of our rich and proud history. Deadline for submissions March 21, 2026

JUNE 6- JULY 25, 2026 WITHOUT LIMITS

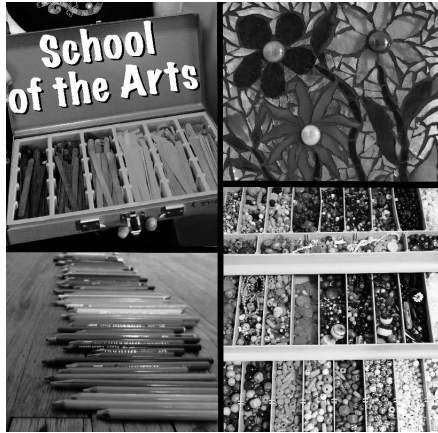
RECEPTION: SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 7-9pm.

This show celebrates each artist's chosen style, medium and creativity- it will feature local artists from the emerging to the already arrived with art selected for the quality of that work. It's perspective and creative uses of the chosen mediums, It can be a great photo or a photographic collage, a lovely painting on canvas or handpainted clothing, a beautiful ceramic sculpture or a 3-D piece all from recycled materials. Let us see what you have to offer, it's without limits. Deadline for submissions: May 23, 2026

Gallery ONLY is closed in August 2026

Are you an artist interested in exhibiting with WomanKraft? Call 520-256-7455 for an appointment with Tony Russo or Gayle Swanbeck, Directors of Exhibits. Artists, please note: Shows are filled from first to respond. Deadlines indicate the last day works will be viewed, not the first. Hence, make contact ASAP. Call Thursday to Saturday from 1-5pm to speak to the docent on duty.

Womankraft School of the Arts



CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS Welcome to the Womankraft School of the Arts

Please note: Pre-registration is required for all students. All workshops are open to adults of all ages for listed fees. Your class fees help us offer more classes and pay instructors. Fee students must pre-pay before you will be registered. Please visit www.womankraft.scadlr.com to book your classes today! You can find a link in our website: Womankraft.org Hurry while spaces last! Class registration can also be made in person during business hours.

All workshops listed in the Castle Voice are free to low income people 50 years and older. This is made possible by the generous support of individuals, board members, and those who pay workshop fees. Thank you. For scholarship information, please call Womankraft during business hours at 520-256-7455

SEPTEMBER

FLAT STAINED GLASS MOSAIC: 2 PARTS

Create an 8"x10" mosaic with an abstract or realistic design while learning to use the tools and tricks of the medium. It's great fun, and stained glass is always beautiful.

Part 1: Saturday, September 6, 1:30- 4:30 pm

Part 2: Saturday, September 13, 3:00- 4:30 pm

Facilitator: Traci Kelly

Fee: \$30, supplies included

LEARN TO CROCHET- A HOLIDAY SCARF

This class welcomes everyone from beginners to enthusiasts who wish to unlock the magic of turning yarn into beautiful, functional pieces. This course will guide you through the foundations and inspire you to discover your own style. Ask your instructor about the Sage Angels Lost Art Club

Wednesday, September 10, 4:00-6:00pm

Facilitator: Brenda Gilbert

Fee: \$20 Bring your own holiday colored yarn, hooks provided

GARDEN STEPPING STONES 2 PARTS

Learn techniques to make your very own garden stones. Add color and whimsy to your yard or garden. Learn to use glass and tile while having creative fun.

Part 1: Friday September 12, 1:30-4:30 pm

Part 2: Friday September 19, 1:30-3:30 pm

Facilitator: Linda K

Fee: \$30 Supplies included

WRITING WITH RUMI

After listening to selected poems by Rumi, participants will imagine and write creative responses to them. They will discover that these poems are pulling them out of their habitual ways of thinking and discover their deeper concerns and joy.

Thursday, September 18, 1:30-3:30 pm

Additional classes on Oct. 16, Nov. 20, and Dec. 18

Facilitator: Dr. Annick Safken

Fee: \$20 or ALL four for \$40. Supplies included

TREAT YOURSELF: THE FACIAL

In the all-natural hair and body salon housed in "The Castle," the Sanctuary is offering a workshop to learn professional techniques and secrets for facials, skincare, aromatherapy, and more.

Wednesday, September 24, 10:00 am- noon

Facilitator: Jordana Silvestri

Fee: \$20, supplies included.

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

SACRED DOLLS

Create exquisite sensory dolls from paper and natural materials that will help you bring out your inner joy. The creation of such dolls are sacred because of the discovery involved in the experience. Affirmations are included to introduce a positive approach.

Thursday, September 25, 1:30-4:30pm

Facilitator: Gerri Young

Fee: \$20- Supplies included, feel free to bring your own treasures: cloth, trinkets and any natural materials you wish to share or donate.

WISE WOMAN'S WRITING WORKSHOP

Learn to tap your infinite wisdom and playfully connect with your inner writer. We will journal with writing exercises, topics, and creative surprises.

Friday, September 26, 10:00-Noon, additional classes on Oct. 24, Nov. 21, Dec. 19.

Facilitator: Ingrid Aspromatis

Fee: \$20. All four for \$40.

OCTOBER

PHOTOGRAPH THE BARRIO 2 PARTS

Let's take a walk through the Barrio Viejo and photograph architecture, people and beauty of the neighborhood using your own camera or phone. In the second class we will share, critique and learn to exhibit your photos.

Part 1: Saturday, October 4, 1:30- 3:30 pm

Part 2: Saturday October 11, 1:30- 3:30 pm

Facilitator: Steve Renzi

Fee: \$20- Be sure your batteries are charged

LEARNING TO DRAW: THE GRID 4 PARTS

You'll create your own grid sheet, select an image from our samples, learn to enlarge or reduce an image by using this grid method. Supplies will be provided during the first workshop but you'll be given a list to acquire for your continued use.

Part 1-4, Wednesday, October 8,15,22,29- 1:00-3:00 pm

Facilitator: Tony Russo

Fee \$45

LEARN TO KNIT

Knitting, a timeless craft, offers both a meditative escape and a practical skill. Whether you're looking to create cozy scarves, intricate sweaters, or simply want a new creative outlet, learning to knit opens a world of possibility. This guidance will accompany you step by step, from holding the needles to binding off your first project.

Wednesday, October 8, 4:00-6:00 pm

Facilitator: Brenda Gilbert

Fee: \$20 Supplies included but feel free to bring your own yarn and needles

DRAWING PORTRAITURE

Let's treat the face as beautiful parts by learning to use bold drawing techniques. Portraits are important expressions of love and time, a landscape of facial expressions that we can capture with charcoal and pastel. We will focus on light and shadow to construct face portraits. All materials provided, however you can bring your favorite faces.

Thursday, October 9, 1:30-3:30 pm

Facilitator: Gerrie Young

Fee: \$20, supplies included

MOSAIC ROOF TILES 2 PARTS

Using clay roof tiles and glass half-rounds, glass squares, and stained glass, you'll mosaic your own design creation. We use the tiles to edge our walks and plant beds.

Part 1: Friday, October 10, 1:30-4:30 pm

Part 2: Friday, October 17, 1:30-3:00 pm

Facilitator: Linda K.

Fee: \$30, Supplies included

WRITING WITH RUMI

After listening to selected poems by Rumi, participants will imagine and write creative responses to them. They will discover that these poems are pulling them out of their habitual ways of thinking and discover their deeper concerns and joy.

Thursday, October 16, 1:30-3:30 pm

Facilitator: Dr. Annick Safken

Fee: \$20, Supplies included

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

STAINED GLASS MOSAIC VOTIVES 2 PARTS

You'll create your own beautiful votive while learning the tools and techniques of mosaicing with stained glass. Your choice of a blank glass votive provided.

Part 1: Saturday, October 18, 1:30- 4:00 pm

Part 2: Saturday, October 25, 1:30- 3:00pm

Facilitator: Traci Kelly

Fee: \$25. Supplies included

DRUMMING FROM THE HEART

Journey into the sacred and moving experience of drumming. Instruction in basic hand patterns and rhythms will allow you to continue on your drum adventure. Loaner drum available.

Thursday, 1:30-Oct 23, 1:30-3:00 pm

Facilitator: Susan Danos

Fee: \$10, loaner drum by donation payable to instructor.

WISE WOMAN'S WRITING WORKSHOP

Learn to tap your infinite wisdom and playfully connect with your inner writer. We will journal with writing exercises, topics, and creative surprises.

Friday, October 24, 10:00-Noon

Facilitator: Ingrid Aspromatis

Fee: \$20.

NOVEMBER

DRUMMING FROM THE HEART

Journey into the sacred and moving experience of drumming. Instruction in basic hand patterns and rhythms will allow you to continue on your drum adventure. Loaner drum available.

Thursday, November 6, 1:30-3:00 pm

Facilitator: Susan Danos

Fee: \$10, loaner drum by donation payable to instructor.

PHOTOGRAPH THE BARRIO 2 PARTS

Let's take a walk through the Barrio Viejo and photograph architecture, people and beauty of the neighborhood using your own camera or phone. In

the second class we will share, critique and learn to exhibit your photos.

Part 1: Saturday, November 8, 1:30- 3:30 pm

Part 2: Saturday, November 15, 1:30- 3:00 pm

Facilitator: Steve Renzi

Fee: \$20- Be sure your batteries are charged

TREAT YOURSELF: THE MANI-PEDI

In the all-natural hair and body salon housed in "The Castle," the Sanctuary is offering a workshop to learn professional techniques and secrets for manicures, pedicures and more.

Wednesday, November 12, 10:00 am- Noon

Facilitator: Jordana Silvestri

Fee: \$20, supplies included.

HAND TINTING PHOTOS

Hand tinting, also known as hand coloring, is the delicate art of adding color to black-and-white photographic prints. Restore a family heirloom, create fine art, or experiment with techniques, hand tinting is a process that merges photography with painting. These can be made into Holiday Cards through various platforms.

Wednesday, November 12, 3:00- 5:00 pm

Facilitator: Brenda Gilbert

Fee: \$20 Supplies included BRING A PRINTED PHOTOGRAPH

SACRED DOLLS

Create exquisite sensory dolls from paper and natural materials that will help you bring out your inner joy. The creation of such dolls are sacred because of the discovery involved in the experience. Affirmations are included to introduce a positive approach.

Thursday, November 13, 1:30-4:30pm

Facilitator: Gerri Young

Fee: \$20- Supplies included, feel free to bring your own treasures: cloth, trinkets) and any natural materials you wish to share or donate.

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

GARDEN STEPPING STONES 2 PARTS

Learn techniques to make your very own garden stones. Add color and whimsy to your yard or garden. Learn to use glass and tile while having creative fun.

Part 1: Friday November 14, 1:30-4:30 pm

Part 2: Friday November 21, 1:30-3:30 pm

Facilitator: Linda K.

Fee: \$30, supplies included.

DANGLERS AND WINDCHIMES

In this workshop, you will use an abundant selection of repurposed treasures, learn to use copper wire to create durable suspensions for all-weather displays and have a lot of fun while acquiring new skills.

Saturday, November 15, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Facilitator: Traci Kelly

Fee: \$25, supplies included.

WRITING WITH RUMI

After listening to selected poems by Rumi, participants will imagine and write creative responses to them. They will discover that these poems are pulling them out of their habitual ways of thinking and discover their deeper concerns and joy.

Thursday, November 20, 1:30-3:30 pm

Facilitator: Dr. Annick Safken

Fee: \$20, Supplies included

WISE WOMAN'S WRITING WORKSHOP

Learn to tap your infinite wisdom and playfully connect with your inner writer. We will journal with writing exercises, topics, and creative surprises.

Friday, November 21, 10:00-Noon

Facilitator: Ingrid Aspromatis

Fee: \$20

DECEMBER

MACRAME` A PLANT HOLDER

Learn to transform simple cords into intricate decorative plant holders. You will learn basic knots and techniques to craft your own unique plant hanger—perfect for showcasing your favorite greenery or gifting to a friend. No prior experience is necessary.

Wednesday, December 10, 2:00-5:00pm

Facilitator: Brenda Gilbert

Fee: \$20 Supplies included

STILL LIFE DRAWING

Learn the classic tips for drawing everyday objects. Compile them into a group to create an interesting still life design. We'll color or shade or draw depending on time!

Saturday, December 13, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Facilitator: Traci Kelly

Fee: \$20 supplies included

WRITING WITH RUMI

After listening to selected poems by Rumi, participants will imagine and write creative responses to them. They will discover that these poems are pulling them out of their habitual ways of thinking and discover their deeper concerns and joy.

Thursday, December 18, 1:30-3:30 pm

Facilitator: Dr. Annick Safken

Fee: \$20, Supplies included

WISE WOMAN'S WRITING WORKSHOP

Learn to tap your infinite wisdom and playfully connect with your inner writer. We will journal with writing exercises, topics, and creative surprises.

Friday, December 19, 10:00-Noon

Facilitator: Ingrid Aspromatis

Fee: \$20.

NEWS & EVENTS

NEWS AND EVENTS

Special Note: WomanKraft kindly encourages you to pre-register and purchase special event tickets online where you can also make donations via credit card. Just go to:

<https://womankraft.scadlr.com>
and look for "Experiences"

WOMANKRAFT OPEN HOUSE AND MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Saturday, September 27, 4–7pm

You're invited to a joyful evening of art, creativity, and connection at our Open House and Membership Drive! We welcome you to explore the gallery, meet new people, and experience the vibrant energy that makes our nonprofit so special. As a non-profit, WomanKraft relies on our members and donations to keep the lights on. Purchase your yearly \$30 membership to enter our fabulous raffle! Guests will have the opportunity to peruse our current exhibition, participate in sample workshops and visit our art gallery. Whether you're a longtime supporter or stepping into the space for the first time, this is the perfect chance to see what we're all about, connect with our creative community, and simply have a great time. Consider becoming a member to support a community oriented art center that claims, validates and empowers women and other under-represented groups! We can't wait to celebrate with you!

KARAOKE NIGHT AT WOMANKRAFT

Friday, October 17, 6-8pm

It's back! Hippies do Karaoke: 1970's-1980's! Come as you are or dress the part for full fun! Bring a date or your friends! A \$5 donation (or more) gets you in to sing or watch. Free munchies provided. Be there or be square.

STUDENT CONCERT

Sunday, October 26, 3-4 PM

WomanKraft is proud to announce our first student concert. Come and enjoy an afternoon of classical music in our venue presented by the Desert View High School Orchestra students. Tickets are \$5 and benefit WomanKraft and pay the students!

Light refreshments will be served. Reservations and prepayment required seating is limited and walk-ins may find they are not able to attend.

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY MEETS GREEN SATURDAY AT WOMANKRAFT

Saturday, November 29, 1-5pm

Join us at WomanKraft to celebrate Small Business Saturday and support our local Community Food Bank. On Green Saturday a donation of non-perishable food or cash gives you the opportunity to win a raffle gift package of artwork, baked goods and gift certificates. The winner/s will be drawn at 4:45pm. You do not need to be present to win. Each Green Saturday contribution valued at \$5 will earn you one chance to win. \$20 in cash/check/card donations will earn you 4 tickets (checks payable to WomanKraft and we'll remit a combined single payment to our local food bank). Drinks and munchies will be offered and you'll have a chance to peruse our Holiday Bazaar exhibit and do some seasonal shopping. Purchases can be gift wrapped by donation \$2-\$5 each. Be there to support our community's food needs and local artists in one pleasurable visit!

WOMANKRAFT'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

Saturday, December 6, 5-7pm

Celebrate our 51st year as a non-profit arts organization in Arizona! Munchies and drinks will be offered and everyone is welcome. This is the perfect time to gift WomanKraft with your end of year tax deductible contribution, meet artists, members, docents, teachers, supporters, board members and friends. Be there to celebrate the birth of our next 50 years!

ANNUAL BOARD MEETING

Saturday, January 3, 2026- 10-NOON

Our WomanKraft Board's annual meeting will be held. Open to board members and proposed new members. Business will be reported in Volume 78 of the Castle Voice.

NEWS & EVENTS

THE NEW AND IMPROVED ANNUAL RUMMAGE FAIR

Saturday, January 10, 2026- 10am-6pm

It's a one day event this year with only high end quality items being offered. Call to see if your donation works for this sale. We are accepting deliveries of goods until January 3, 2026. Call 520-256-7455 or speak with a docent

Thursday-Saturday 1-5pm. Volunteers welcome!

HOW TO KEEP THE CASTLE VOICE COMING TO YOU-

You can find the Castle Voice on our website: www.womankraft.org but if you prefer to be mailed a hard copy of this newsletter you may become a member or request to be added to the mailing list. January 2026 our mailing list will be cleaned up to be reflective of people who are actively interested in receiving a Castle Voice in the mail. So please contact us ASAP in person or by phone during business hours to ensure your place on the list today! Thank you for helping us reduce the high cost of printing and mailing the Voice. Keep a lookout on our website for new ways to sign up for a membership.

Updates and Thanks

It's that time for me on behalf of WomanKraft, to fill you in on all the news that's fit to print and give thanks for all our blessings. Like most places and people the weather has been hitting us hard and hot, way too hot, hitting 110-13 degrees too many days in a row. Yet people do keep coming by, attending events and filling workshops. If you visited WomanKraft lately you may have noticed that the old movie theater seats on the porch have been fixed up and reupholstered. The bulk of this labor was done by our newest docent, Brenda Gilbert, with some help by Tony Russo. They look beautiful, and Brenda, your time, creative results, and intensive labor is so appreciated.

Tony Russo resolved what we feared was going to be a major electrical problem with major repair costs. He discovered the upstairs electric box that others have failed to find, and flipped the breaker

switch. Tada! Let there be light. Tony has cleaned the upstairs studio and is taking the space. He, like many of us, finds how much easier it is to have an actual art studio rather than share our homes. I had to take all my art and equipment to my backyard porch every time I had a visitor so we could have a place to sit down. Tony told me he used his bed as a chair and crowded his easel between it and the wall. No more of that, hey Tony? Welcome to our house family of studio artists.

Speaking of the upstairs (and other areas), Traci Kelly's students of Desert View High School, Eva Morales de Leon, Daniel Parades, Enrique Enriquez, Giovanni Mendoza Moreno and Eric Paredes worked hard this spring and summer as volunteers to help clean and organize the upstairs rooms including the donation room, storage rooms and kitchen as well as many other areas.

She also invited the orchestra students of Desert View including Andy Nguyen, Lexis Astorga, Elias El Onache, Zaira Courtney and their teacher, Luis Alarcon to perform for our drawing down the Muse reception in April. The music was the perfect accompaniment to our opening. It was a great success.

Jordana Silvestri, Tony Russo and Brenda Gilbert continue to give their time and energy to keeping up the grounds. Tony, while checking the condition of our flat roofed building and studio areas discovered a large branch on the roof of the sanctuary. He cut it up, removed it and cleaned the collected tamarisk needles. The roofs look good, but we will have to deal with gutter replacements in the near future.

Barbara Accord has resigned as our membership coordinator. For many years she did an excellent job but her recent health issues have derailed her ability to do the work. Thank you so much, Barbara, for all those years. We hope you'll be able to touch base with us by taking a workshop here and there. I know you enjoy them so much. Take care and thank you once again. We are looking for people, two would be ideal, to take on this job. Once a month

NEWS & EVENTS

the membership list needs to be updated and also added to our mailing list in order for members to receive a Castle Voice. Traci Kelly is working on creating a method for people to purchase and renew their yearly membership. More to come on that later but please refer to our open house / membership drive special event in September. We hope to see you then. We will celebrate all that WomanKraft has to offer as well as chances for all members to enter into a drawing.

You are an amazing gift to the organization, Traci, making connections between people in our community, updating our tech abilities to serve our clients and members, researching and applying for grants, donating your time to cover events, teaching wonderful workshops, and let's not forget contributing your beautiful art to many of our exhibits. Thanks also to you and your husband Albert Kelly, for all of the work you do to get the Castle Voice out. Thank you for all of this and all of the little things you also do that if mentioned would make our thanks to you page very long.

Thanks also go out to Jonathan DuHamel for his continued work creating the Castle Voice. You've been there for us, Jonathan, thank you again. Each time I write these updates and thanks I am reminded of all the great things our WomanKraft family does for our community and each other. Fifty years and counting bring such a smile to my lips and to my heart. As you read this, I hope it touches you too. In a world that seems to grow so hostile and diversive it is a deep source of pride to me to know that in our little corner it is not like that. So in closing remember that you are part of this too. We joined together in the common language of art regardless of our differences. Thank you one and all for your support. Please find it in your hearts to continue that support from the smallest to the grandest, acknowledged and anonymous.

In love and gratitude. Gayle Swanbeck

Artist Interview

This time around it is my distinct pleasure to interview our very own Dr. Annick Safkin. You'll know when she enters the room. That smile, that fashion sense, that wonderful accent! Annick, as we informally refer to her, is the quintessential poetry professor. She is so chic! We are thrilled to have her talent bringing an amazing- and in high demand- writing class to WomanKraft which wonderfully rounds out our offerings at the School of the Arts.

I asked: Your class, "Writing with Rumi," combines poetry, reflection, and writing. What inspired you to bring Rumi's voice into the classroom, and how do you see his work resonating with writers today?

Annick: Two brilliant professors showed me the way to do this work. Jim Fadiman, a gifted researcher in consciousness studies, taught me how to experience Rumi. I took his weekly class,

Sufi Stories, for 7 quarters, soaking in Rumi's poetry. Most people read a poem and feel good.

If not, they jump to another one. But I found out that, if we listen with our full attention, the

poem resonates with the deeper core of our being. We take a step into awareness. Another professor, Jill Mellick, taught me how to nurture every ounce of creativity in each of us. It is not enough to have an insight; we have to see what comes with it, feelings, thoughts, images, sensations, and then, voila, we put them on the page. A student in my class heard a poem, asked herself: How does it work?" She saw herself in the mirror-poem, she took in Rumi's teachings, and brought light in the dark places of her life.

Next I wanted to know: You've lived a rich life as a scholar, writer, and now as a docent in an art gallery. How have the visual arts shaped or deepened your relationship with the written word?

NEWS & EVENTS

Annick: Rumi said, “There is a light seed grain inside. You fill it with yourself, or it dies.” I need beauty around me. I need to breathe it, inhale it, exhale it. I am not just an observer when I come to the gallery. The pieces of art talk to me, and I respond. Sometimes I smile, sometimes I get sad, sometimes I giggle. I am in a community of spirit, with Gayle, you, Traci, and everyone. The little light inside becomes a flame. Then I go home and write, with all the truth and passion I can muster,.. and sometimes I go and teach creative nonfiction.

My next question was: As someone originally from France with a deep love for language and beauty, how has your cultural background influenced the way you teach, write, and dress?

Annick: I lived, worked, and loved in 3 places. France, Quebec, and now, the US, for the last 35 years. I have been more concerned with the commonalities than the differences.

Everywhere, I want to say: “Hey, I am just one of you, guys.” The obvious thing for me is that there are thousands of ways to “kneel and kiss the ground,” as Rumi says. We can honor the sacredness of life in many ways, but what makes us friends, lovers, and spiritual companions are universal qualities. My husband knows that. There is a community of spirit I found here, and yes, I still dress a little French, cook French, and speak a little Québécois.

But hey, I like it.

Now I’m interested. I asked: Many students walk into writing classes feeling uncertain. What do you hope they walk away with after attending “Writing with Rumi?”

Annick: Awareness. Every response to a poem is valid. No blame or shame in this class. Sometimes we have to pull the truth out. We wonder: is it what we feel, what we think, what we sense in our bodies? Whatever it is, it is great. Truth frees us. Sometimes we come up with a crazy image. But is

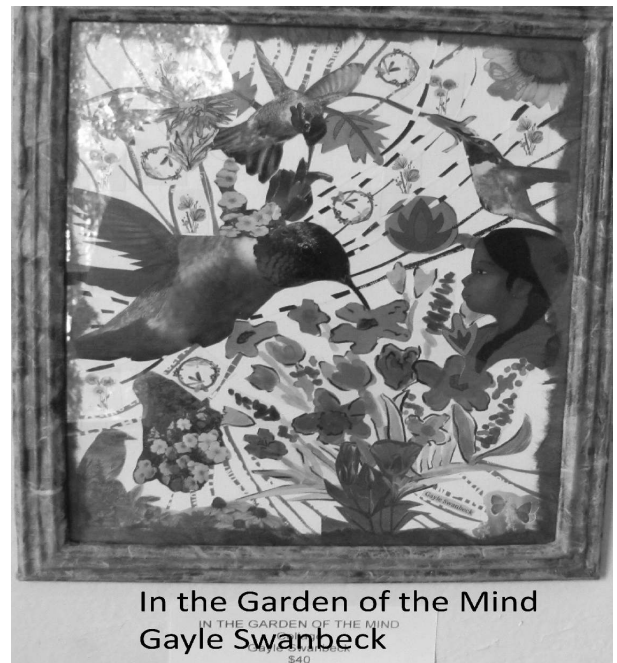
it crazy or creative? Rumi did not care about what was conventional, nice, or proper. He experienced an extraordinary scope of ideas and emotions. Only Rumi.

Shakespeare, and a few others can reach the deepest recesses of our souls. The metaphors we commonly use to describe inner and outer worlds are worn out. They have no bite.

Rumi gives us new ways to understand ourselves. Knowing ourselves is the only game here.

Time for one last question: If you could offer one piece of wisdom to emerging writers—or anyone seeking a more creative life—what would it be?

Annick: Come to a class. Try. Take another class. There are more pieces of yourself you don’t know yet, that want to be revealed.



WomanKraft
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Photo by Jonathan DuHamel

