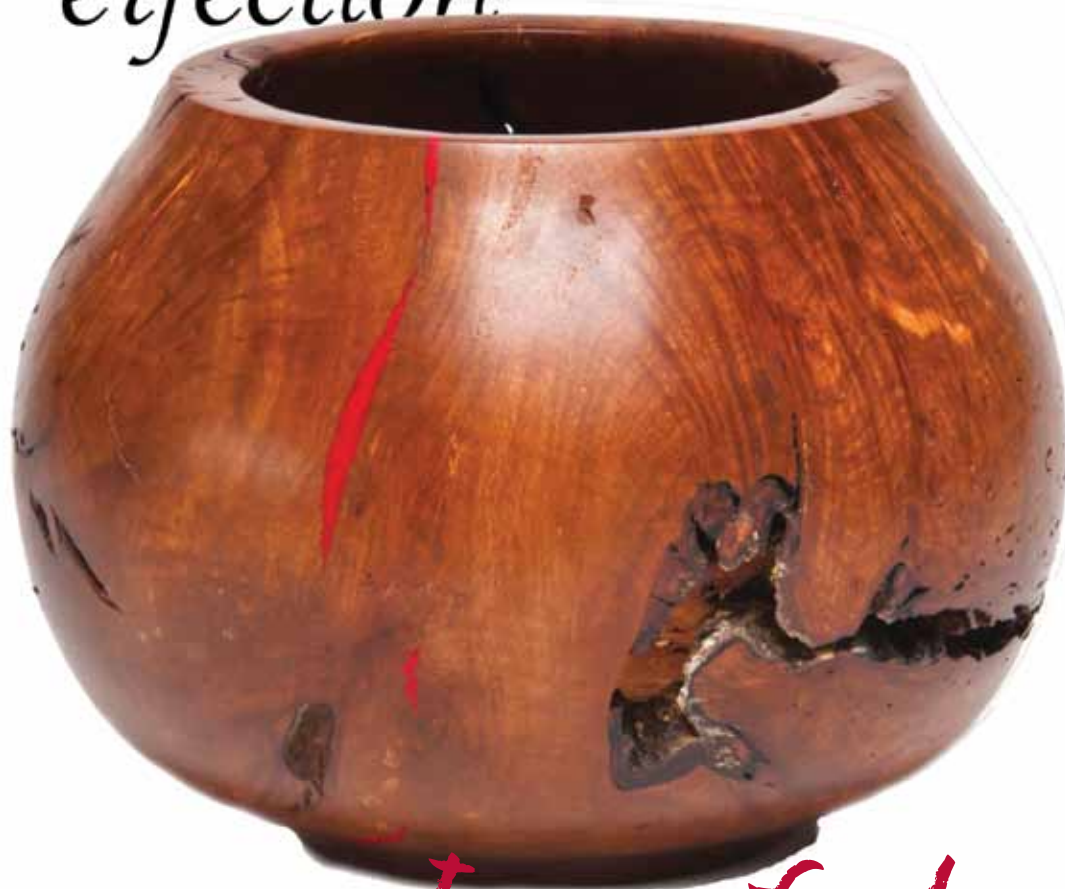


*Perfection.*



*Imperfection*

# Perfection *Imperfection*

In art and in life we may struggle to find balance. What is this inclination we sometimes have to “fix” ourselves, our artwork, or a moment in time? There is much to learn by listening and watching as complexity unfolds and we ask, “what is perfection?” Something that has been mended may be no less “perfect” than it was when it was new and not in need of mending. Just because something didn’t turn out quite the way we expected or our tools or skills or materials weren’t quite up to the challenge doesn’t mean that we should judge ourselves or our work harshly.

We challenge ourselves to observe, and record, and transform what we see. To see fire as renewal. To use the discarded to capture the essence of the transitory. To glory in the process without worrying about the results. To let what we see speak to us, whether new or old, tidy or messy, partial or complete, permanent or transitory, natural or artificial. To translate our insights, feelings and experiences into words and pictures.

This is our gift, and our work, to share our joys and pains in what we find in the world.



—Barb Whittlesey



*Sandy River 28 April 2018, watercolor sketch with river water*

## Confluences

My first memory is the Minnesota River flooding in 1965 when I was 4 years old. I was in the backseat of the car, with my mom driving to see her parents who lived near the banks of the river. It made an impression because mom was worried, and I remember it visually. Standing water was...everywhere. I've been obsessed with water and rivers ever since.

That flood remains the highest point of the river to date. Our farmhouse was also in the Minnesota River Valley, but our town was further away from the river and didn't suffer flooding. I'm sure it had been several days or longer for my mom to be able to travel to see her parents. The Minnesota River is a critical element of life there. It's a lovely area, with rolling green farmlands, intersected by deciduous woodlands, low cliffs, and bodies of water, including rivers, cricks and lakes.

A river is the epitome of beauty, imperfection, and transience. It is constantly moving, changing, and evolving. It can be low and slow moving. Or it can be swift with dangerous undercurrents. Cities around the world were built close to rivers; they provided clean drinking water, water for crops, and a means of transportation.

In Tucson I live in a house less than a mile uphill from the Rillito River. Even though its banks are now usually dry, I have to live near a river – just not too near! I recall the Tucson flood of 1983. I was on a retreat through the U of A, at the Girl Scout camp on top of Mt. Lemmon, and the Catalina Highway was washed away. The National Guard had to pick us up in Humvees, and bring us home the back way. We drove through Oracle and then northwest to Florence to I10 to Tucson. My family has old ties to Florence, and it was another surreal experience, riding in the back of the Humvee, looking at all the standing water that had risen over the banks of the Gila. Areas that I'd always known as cotton fields were vast expanses of water. The tops of houses were peeking out of the water. Cows and horses stood in water up to their necks. It's unreal how nature can be both so beautiful and so ugly.

I'm currently working on a series of river confluence wall installations. A confluence is where two bodies of water meet. Confluences are a sacred place, and every confluence is unique. Sometimes two rivers of different colors come together. Sometimes confluences are gentle, sometimes they tumble angrily into each other, or they may appear calm on the surface, but you can





*Confluence #1, 2018, watercolor, water from the Brule River and Lake Superior, and embroidery on paper, size varies (installation at Modified Gallery, Phoenix, AZ)*



*Confluence #3, 2018, watercolor, water from the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, and embroidery on paper, size varies (installation at Grand Marais Art Colony, Grand Marais, MN)*

see or sense violent undertows. My grandpa taught me to observe, respect, and develop a relationship with a river, but never trust a river either.

The installations are made of tiny watercolor paintings, with flowing bits of sewing, and are constructed on walls, moving up and down or across the wall in the shape of the rivers and its confluence. It's interesting to do the same installation more than once; I create the configuration according to the last time I saw that confluence, and it's fascinating how that configuration can change the land around it.

In preparing to create the installations, I observe and photograph the confluence. I'm interested in the formation, but also in the atmosphere of the confluence, the history of the rivers, and the color of the water. For example, the Minnesota River has been browner due to high river levels for several years and the erosion that entails. Rivers might appear clear, brown, green, blue, turquoise, black or silver, depending on a number of factors including minerals, agriculture, temperature, sunlight, etc. A brown river might be unhealthy due to farmland erosion, or it may be healthy and colored by tannins (an organic substance from wetlands).

I like to use water sourced from the rivers to make the watercolor paintings. That turned challenging this fall with all the rains from the tropical storms. I parked in a abandoned industrial gravel lot near the Rillito and Santa Cruz confluence in order to collect water. I never made it to the riverbanks, and instead had to call AAA to tow my car out of knee-deep mud! In case you're wondering, the power washer at a carwash cleans the mud out of running shoes beautifully! I just sprayed myself from the knee on down.

As I continue to explore water and rivers in my work, science and climate change become more important. I wonder if I'll ever see Southern Arizona rivers flow like they used to. Now when it rains, the river rarely extends to the banks because the water tables are so low. Rivers are an under-considered factor in global warming. Areas that experience intense storms, end up with swollen polluted rivers, affecting the viability of drinking water. In severe drought, low river levels may signal water rationing.

I expect this series will change and evolve over time, but I don't see my work ending any time soon. There are many rivers that have made an impact on me, and the more I explore and develop relationships with them, the more I have to create and to say.

—Ann Tracy



A concept  
Dissolution  
Shattered  
Dissolved

I had a handful of old solar plates. I mean old, as in the last generation and no longer being produced in this iteration. I could see some plates were cracked and I knew many had some light exposure. I had a concept for a book that was not about perfection, as a matter of fact it was about a shattered vision of life. It was about what was, dissolving into the unknown.

*Time With Buffalo* is the book I made with these solar plates that perfectly/ imperfectly fit the concept. I used hand made paper which added another level of the unpredictable uneven and slight size variation as well as varied thicknesses, I am new to paper making.

I had very little control over how the “imperfect” plates exposed. The prints off of these plates were wonderfully unique. These are a few of the pages from *Time With Buffalo*.

—Jo Anderson







## *Fire*



*Fire Series #3, 2018*

Fire is mesmerizing for many people, beautiful to watch as a campfire or out-of-control wildfire. It is both destructive and a force for renewal, with many life forms depending on it for their existence. As is true with so much in this world, fire is full of complexity.

—*Diana Davis*

## *Inside my Imperfections*

Hair is thinning,  
Eyelids bag,  
Vision's dimming,  
Skin is spotted,  
Underarms flap,  
Breasts are gone.  
Stomach sags,  
Bum expands,  
Ankles thicken,  
Gait is tipsy.  
My beauty's still there  
Inside my imperfections.

—*Mary Rea*







# *Journal Imperfection*

*“I cling to my imperfection, as the very essence of my being,”*

*—Anatole France*

For the past 19 years, I have been using an Art Journal to express myself creatively. The art I make in these pages are for my eyes only, have no set formula or standard, and can be autobiographical or completely design or color-oriented.

The beauty and joy of the Art Journal is the idea that there is no right or wrong way to do it. What I find so fulfilling about the practice is the absolute imperfection of it all. Pages are finished or not finished. I can vent about life's frustrations and make it legible or not. Tear, glue, fold, paint, collage, write.

When making art for an exhibit or for sale, I find the desire to have it be perfect daunting, I sometimes end up unable to bring my initial idea to fruition. Making art journal pages is a way to create without any fear of imperfection and no idea of an end result. Following where the color and shape takes me is freeing and often, happily, gives rise to other art project ideas. When I teach my art journaling classes, I see a look on students' faces that clearly shows the excitement of the idea of a *no rules*, outlet for their creativity, a safe place for imperfection to take center stage. I love that.

*—Vanessa Dearing*



## *Poet's House*

This is a poet's house,  
where the earth and service to words  
reign under this roof.

Rocks, rough and hewn from the mother lode  
or smooth and rendered from seas and rivers  
round out corners and sleep along baseboards...  
adding glints of green and grey, gold and peach.

Papers, wordy phrases, little sketches and photos  
tucked and tacked everywhere...  
hold vigil, alluding to sagas present and past.  
Feathers lie about as if a bird,  
actually several different birds  
have molted here, and more than once.

And the stars are always out, in this house...  
stars of light and glass; stars painted on fabric;  
stars cast from their saline start, long ago plucked pink and  
dying.





Books comfort many spaces,  
like old friends who came for ginger cookies  
and stayed long after the tea's gone cold...  
but also books like bristly parents who hover  
offering their perspective,  
just in case one should want to know.

And music, piles of songs on paper and on disk,  
with words and tunes that ring and splash  
like a skipping stone on the heart.  
Yes, splash, plip-plip-plip...ripple, ripple ...ripple...  
offering places to start and  
circles that spread like a salve over the wounds of the day.

This is a poet's house, where waiting is the art,  
where the elemental articles are effigies of the muse  
or talisman used to call her forth.

And all the virtual efforts already recorded  
signal that there are never enough creations  
to supplant the emptiness...And so I write on...

—*Megha Roezealia Morganfield*



# *silence*

The silence of tranquility in the mind brought about by what the eye sees and imagines it sees. The silence of things forgotten, cast off and thrown away. Old, broken, decayed. No longer useful. But beautiful because they have the patina of use and once usefulness.

The silence of rust corroding once strong iron. The silence of hard wood becoming sanded and softened. The silence of earthy indigo swallowing white in its sooty depths. Unidentified marks on paper which speak although the eye sees but the mind cannot decipher. Old books that no one wants to read any longer, but which were once treasured by someone, somewhere. Pages torn and out of context. All of these broken things come together silently to create something new. Something of tranquil beauty. Something that silently speaks of the world, of living and dying, of the passage of time.

a quality of silence is:

*serene tranquility*

silence is a soft grey, muted blues, soft white  
the depths of indigo

silence is a distant horizon line, empty space, rectilinear  
shapes with soft edges

silence is in all things, objects and materials worn and  
weathered by time

*—Lyn Hart*





*Epiphyllum Oxypetalum*

LANCEOLATE ACUMINATE

WIDE, OBLIQUELY CRENATE

NOCTURNAL WHITE

BLOOMS NEAR MIDNIGHT

SURROUNDED BY SPRITES

BAKAWALI LEGEND

tuan puten

rarity refinement beauty love

Good luck

flash in pan

—*Connie Kampsula*





*Scattering*  
*Janet Windsor*

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