Renewal

Clara Sharon McLane
The University of Montana

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RENEWAL

By
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Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, 1976

Professional Paper
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in Fine Arts, Integrated Arts and Education

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

Autumn 2007

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This paper documents the process of completing a Creative Project in Integrated Arts and Education. The project has two distinct arms: one, to develop a teaching unit on illustration, and two, to renew my artistic identity by producing and exhibiting artworks after a twenty-seven year hiatus. The third part of the paper lays a philosophical foundation for the rest. 

The Illustration Unit was successfully researched, developed, taught and revised, and is available as a PowerPoint presentation. Thirteen artworks were successfully completed and exhibited—the paper details my process and techniques. I realized my goal by taking my place as a professional fine artist.

Through the experience, however, I came to realize that the real work was in facing my doubts and fears, and in coming to terms with the notion that commercial art is not “real (fine) art.” Thirty years’ work in various design fields has given me a clear understanding of the skills needed for good design. They are exactly the same skills needed to produce “fine art.” While it is true that commercial artists must work within boundaries set by the intended use of the work, what is commonly overlooked is that the fine artist also works within limitations defined by the media used, skill level achieved, etc. It is my belief that the commercial aspect of a work should not be a factor in determining artistic value; rather, the quality of the work itself should be the fair consideration. “Fine art” should simply refer to “excellent art.”

Unfortunately, artists and patrons alike have fostered an elitism which permeates the art world. This is simply cultural bias; it is a short-sighted position which ultimately damages the artists it is intended to protect. In cultures where art is truly integrated into everyday life, the arts are highly respected. This is not true where elitism exists. It is time to redefine art, encompass a larger view, and make art accessible to everyone. Integrated arts can help us make creativity a daily event, which is critically important, because creativity combined with clarity of vision is the cornerstone of human advancement.
To Ray Campeau,

mentor and friend for over forty years.

— and —

To my husband, Mike McLane,

for his support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The word “track” has many meanings that seem apropos to my journey toward completing this Creative Project. There is without doubt a mark left by my journey toward this master’s degree—on me and my students, my family, friends, and coworkers. To some it is the merest trace; to a few others it is a noticeable imprint; to me it is a deep and lasting mark which has forever changed who I am.

My path has been made, in part, by following tracks left by people who have had an enormous impact on me through their integrity, intelligent insight, creativity, fearlessness and indefatigable passion for the arts and for teaching. Each has taught me things that now form the core of my teaching and the artist I have become. They are, in the order they entered my life: Ray Campeau, mentor before the word became popular, consummate and energetic art educator, and longtime friend; Walter King, who brought Shakespeare to life and taught me that personal passion and high standards can seriously infect students; James Kriley and Elliot Eisner, who gave me the knowledge and techniques I need to champion the arts; and Maxine Greene, an incredibly tenacious and down-to-earth gardener who plants pithy little seeds of wisdom that expand exponentially. To them I would like to say thank you, for through you, I am a better teacher and artist.
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INTRODUCTION

Footprints leading to the final stages of this project stretch back to 1990 when I was taking coursework at the University of Montana in order to reinstate my teaching certification in K-12 Art. I enrolled in two courses offered as part of the Arts/Education Institute and Graduate Program (later known as the Creative Pulse). Though I did not know it at the time, that action marked the first step toward pursuing a master’s degree, refining my teaching philosophy and techniques, and finally gaining solid footing in my personal journey as an artist.

This paper documents the process of my final Creative Project presented here to satisfy the requirements of a Master of Arts in Integrated Arts and Education. The project contains two distinct arms, which, though they are part of one body, are best described separately.

Additionally, the whole of the work is inextricably bound up with my artistic philosophy and personal story. For the reader to fully understand the underpinnings of this project, I will need to dedicate a portion of this paper to discussion of past experiences which have heavily influenced present philosophy.

Accordingly, the paper is divided into three segments: Part One deals with observations and philosophy concerning art and art education; Part Two documents the process of developing and teaching an Illustration Unit as part of an Art Appreciation course at the University of Montana–Helena during Spring Semester, 2007; Part Three documents my efforts to reclaim my artistic identity, culminating in an art exhibition in October, 2007.
CREATIVE PROJECT OVERVIEW

As mentioned in the Introduction, my final Creative Project is composed of two distinct parts which are related to my roles as artist and teacher.

The first part or “arm” of the project was to develop and teach an Illustration Unit in collaboration with the Creative Writing class at the University of Montana-Helena. My hope and intention was and is to add an Illustration course to the Fine Arts curricula at UM-Helena at some future time. Though a full-blown course was not possible within the scope of this project, I developed the Illustration Unit with this expansion in mind.

The second part or “arm” was to renew my artistic identity by creating a body of artworks sufficient to mount a gallery exhibition. My undergraduate emphasis was in ceramics and drawing, but to challenge myself, I decided to explore and refine an art form in which I was not particularly adept — painting. I wanted to make a clean break with the past by creating a scenario in which I could realize a truly new beginning. The number of artworks required for the show would depend on the exhibit space and the size of the pieces, but I anticipated needing about a dozen medium-sized works.

Though these two “arms” of my project seem unrelated, in fact, they arise from a single source. It began as a doodle which triggered the desire to write and illustrate a story. Though the story was finally abandoned, the illustration prototype was an intriguing thing that evolved into the artworks that I have spent the past year creating for my exhibition.

Because of my experience with trying to illustrate a story, I wanted to learn more about the formal process of illustration, of giving an enhancing visual element to a narrative. Since I teach at a technical college, it seemed reasonable to expect that, as its art program expands, it will lean toward the so-called “commercial arts,” such as graphic design. In this scenario, a course in illustration would be appropriate.
PART ONE

Philosophy
CHAPTER ONE
Ending

After graduating with a B.F.A. in Art in 1976, I joined forces with three fellow graduates who, like me, wanted to make a career in the ceramic arts. All of our combined financial resources produced a gas-fired kiln and a studio. Unfortunately, the kiln never fired properly. The “studio” was a former chicken coop with no plumbing and only a small wood stove for heat. The wind literally whistled through the cracks in the walls. None of the kiln “fixes” we tried worked, and one by one, my cohorts gave it up as a lost cause and found jobs that paid the rent and put food on the table.

One cold and windy day in November 1976, I was in the studio trying to thaw frozen pots and keep my wet hands from freezing as well. I stoked the fire and soon was intent on the pot I was throwing on the wheel, the front of me roasting while the back was freezing. Absorbed in the work, I suddenly became fully aware that I had been smelling smoke for the past few minutes. To my horror, flames were beginning to climb the smoking planks behind the glowing stove. I threw water from my slop bucket onto the flames and ran for more. Finally certain that the fire was well and truly out, engulfed in choking steam and smelling like a doused campfire, I gave up. I finally had to admit that it was never going to work without a lot of cash that simply didn’t exist.

While I waited for the stove to cool enough to leave, I took all the frozen pots and destroyed them, breaking them into small bits so I could bag the clay. Then I went home, sadly aware of the fact that I had absolutely no idea how to make an art business work. I thought of how much money and effort I had spent in my seven years at the university, getting a degree which had taught me how to be an artist, but had given me no tools with which to make a living at it. My studio, minimal as it had been, was charcoal, the kiln was destined to become a fish smoker, my husband was still in school, we were broke, and my dream of being a ceramic artist had just died.
Four years earlier, my brother had written me a well-meant letter on the event of my engagement. Twelve years older and trying to stand in for a long-dead father, he was attempting to give me useful advice. At the time, I had been confidently sure that he was barking up the wrong tree. Now, his words haunted me:

...to date, you have not developed a marketable skill and just having a degree doesn’t mean a thing if you don’t have a skill that’s in demand. What I’m proposing is that you should either develop such a skill... or you should treat your art, ceramics, etc. as a hobby, hopefully a profitable one, and for the time being concentrate on [your fiancé] finishing his education (Farnham 1972).

There were no teaching jobs, so I found work in commercial art, which was intended to be only a temporary solution until I could teach. Though I couldn’t know it at the time, this step began a thirty-year career in various design fields—graphic art, illustration and exhibit design. I was surprised to find I enjoyed the work, happy that I was able to use the skills I had learned in art school, while creating ads, brochures, displays and so forth. In fact, I used all the same tools—color, line, form, texture, composition, etc., that I used when creating a piece of art.
CHAPTER TWO

Selling

I was young, uncertain, and uncomfortably aware that I had “sold out.” At the University, it had been made very clear that fine art was the only “real art” and everything else (commercial) was prostitution. I respected my professors and took the criticism and judgment very much to heart without looking at the inconsistencies in the art versus non-art discussion. At that time, I didn’t yet realize that what I had been taught was only one point of view.

In my design jobs, I learned a lot about selling things, about attracting and educating people through visual means, about capturing the interest of the busy and the bored, all of which has made me a better teacher. What is education, really, but the “selling” of ideas? Whatever we hold to be “true” is understood through one’s sensory perceptions, as Maxine Greene states in “Aesthetics as Research”:

As I see it, the phenomena or the appearances of the surrounding world are grasped by a consciousness as it thrusts into the world and comes to know it through acts of perception, imagination, judgment, and belief. Rather than existing independently and objectively, it is the world as perceived, the world as conceived, as sensed, as felt, as imagined that becomes our reality (Green 1).

Truth will always, eventually, come to be questioned, revised, accepted or rejected, all dependent upon the knowledge and beliefs of the culture that reviews it. Each culture can identify “reality” only through what it can perceive and comprehend. What we know of the world now is vastly different than what our grandparents knew, simply because of technological advances that allow us to gather and understand more information. Our children will know even more, and will look upon our knowledge as limited and provincial. Elliot Eisner addresses this issue in The Enlightened Eye:

What we come to see depends upon what we seek, and what we seek depends . . . on what we know how to say. . . . [the] mind mediates the world and because it does, perception itself is a cognitive event. . . . Any
report of the world has to take some form and be carried by some symbol system. Some systems, such as language, describe. Others, such as visual art, depict. . . . Within a single symbol system there are unique constraints and unique possibilities. Because any symbol system both reveals and conceals, its use provides, of necessity, a partial view of the reality it is intended to describe or depict. In fact, the form we select is constitutive of the understanding we acquire: the medium is a part of the message.

To complicate matters further, the schemata we use themselves structure perception. These schemata may be thought of as structures of appropriation. They define the contours through which our perception and comprehension of the world are created (Eisner 46).

Regardless of how faulty one’s reality might seem to someone else, realities are born from cultural experiential understanding of the world, and so, for each member of the culture, it is, for all intents and purposes, personally quite real.

Viewing my profession through the tenets of the University culture I had so recently left, I came to accept the “truth” of my poor position within the art world. In an effort to redeem myself (in whose eyes?), I began work on a set of pen and ink drawings for exhibition. Even then, though, the choice of media came from the fact that I had been doing a lot of ink line drawings for illustration. It was a technique with which I had a lot of practice.
CHAPTER THREE

Beginning

In 1980, I exhibited pen and ink drawings at the Ketterer Gallery in Bozeman, Montana. Since then, I have produced hundreds of illustrations, but little “fine art,” and I had not exhibited again until 2007. For years, I thought that the reason for this long lapse was simply a matter of too little time and not enough passion or willpower to “just do it.” What I finally realized is that it had everything to do with the elitism that permeates the art world.

If I were ever to begin making “fine art” as a profession, I had to address the core issue, which was that my confidence in my artistic identity had been deeply damaged by what had been taught me in art school about “real art” (i.e., fine art) versus non-art. Fine artists belong to an elite group of like minds—other fine artists and patrons who can understand (and purely incidentally, of course, pay for) their work. Anything commercial is “selling out.” Small wonder no courses were offered to address the business of making art.

Maxine Greene summed up the elitist art world in a lecture in 1991, saying, “Part of their feeling of power is the feeling that they live somewhere where codes protect them, and they don’t want to have someone break those codes. It’s dangerous.”

In art school, I was an outsider. The social art scene did not appeal to me; mostly, it was the snobbery and arrogance that repelled me. The realistic style of my two-dimensional artworks was frowned upon as being stodgy and uncreative. (Conceptual and minimalist art was “in.”) Worse yet, the ceramics to which I was strongly attracted (functional pieces that grow out of and are an integral part of everyday life) weren’t even considered art, but rather, “craft” which had no value in the world of fine art. To put a fine point on it, I was not a “real artist” and the art world wanted nothing to do with me.

I now understand that this is simply a cultural bias. I would feel right at home in many other cultures around the world where the arts are integrated into daily life. To
them, “art for art’s sake” is an incomprehensible idea. Earlier in my life, however, the slap was real. I felt it and retreated into a sort of stasis of uncertainty and invisibility.
CHAPTER FOUR
Finding the Path

I find it peculiar that one can proceed through an entire B.F.A. program without ever formally (or informally, for that matter) addressing the creative process, or the nuts and bolts of the business of making a living as an artist. When I graduated in 1976, it seemed strange, but I didn’t put much thought into it. As the years passed and I began to teach, it came to be a persistent question. How could two things that seem so essential to the concerns of a professional artist be so ignored?

In 1990, that inconsistency was what initially attracted me to the Creative Pulse, which offered coursework titled, Creative Process and Theory and Sensory Perception of the Arts. Finally, I could find out how to actually teach creativity! If there was an identifiable process, it could be taught. Beyond skill, creative self expression enters, and I had always suspected that that process could be taught, or at least fostered, as well.

I sincerely believe that anyone can be an artist. Children do it with ease. It is unfortunate that somewhere along the line, as they leave childhood, many people leave art behind. Once lost, they must then relearn the perceptive skills of an artist. It is especially difficult for adults who have had no art in many years and experience a lot of angst when asked to produce the art they think requires talent they don’t have. Like learning to play the piano, acquiring art skills only requires time and commitment. Not everyone will be a master, but the arts are accessible at some level (or should be) to anyone.

When I returned to the University in 1990, I saw that the issue of fine versus commercial art had not gone away. Apparently, this schism has been the norm in many prominent art schools across the United States. Marshall Arisman is one of several illustrators and artists who discuss the problem in the anthology, The Education of An Illustrator:
The following characterizations have never been written down, but even when I graduated from Pratt Institute in 1960, the formula for picking your major was well known:

1. Fine Art is pure.
2. Illustration is the beginning of selling out.
3. Graphic Design is commercial art.
4. Advertising is selling—period.

The painter who illustrates is suspect. The illustrator who tries to find a gallery is tainted. The fine arts world does not want illustrators in its club. This would all be amusing except that these definitions directly affect the status and marketability of the artist. Of course, what is at stake is who is “selling out” and who isn’t.

David Smith, the sculptor, defined commercial art as “art that meets the minds and needs of other people,” and fine art as “art that meets the mind and needs of the artist.” Following these definitions, I know many fine artists who are commercial and some illustrators who are fine artists.

I believe that it is possible to expand the boundaries where fine art and illustration meet into an image-making process that redefines our tired old definitions and replaces them with figurative art that is simply good or bad art, wherever it appears, whether on a printed page or on a gallery wall.” (Heller and Arisman 3-4).

As I knew from my own work, to produce commercial art, one uses the same elements and principles of art that are used in the production of fine art. The difference is in the boundaries that define the possibilities and limitations of the work. Every work of art is produced within such boundaries, imposed the moment the artist begins—media and style chosen, time spent, ability and knowledge being primary among them. With every commercial work, an additional boundary is imposed by its intended use—an added layer of selling, informing, or educating people.

Alex Murawski points out the hypocritical (at worst) faulty logic (at best) of the elitists who subscribe to the list of points Arisman makes above. He gives examples of the great artists of the past who elitists revere while simultaneously ignoring the fact that the very works they admire were made for commercial reasons:

Work we do . . . is usually commissioned to promote a particular idea or product. . . does this specificity of content limit your creativity?

It might help to consider the work of Michelangelo for the Medici or the Roman Popes, commissioned to promote the interests of the government and the Catholic Church. Another helpful example might be the elegant posters of Toulouse-Lautrec to promote French nightclubs. How about the portraits of the burghers by Rembrandt? No one would deny that all of this work transcends, in every way, any limitations that
may have been set by the “client” or by contemporary expectations for style and content. So, exceed expectations.

What makes a thing Art? I would say it’s the intent of the creator. If you approach each project as a vehicle for self-expression, you are working as an artist. Be creative and honest in your work and put it before the public in any market you can. Galleries and museums are appropriate venues for experiencing some kinds of ideas. Magazines are good for others. TV commercials have, for example, been the vehicles for some of the most creative, groundbreaking work done in film and video. Each form has its specific limitations and each requires certain compromises. None require you to lower your creative standards (Heller and Arisman 125).

I couldn’t agree more. The line between fine and applied arts is blurring in more forward-thinking schools, and I hope that it reaches further faster. “Fine art” should refer to “Exceptional art.”
I find it sad and alarming that the arts are so poorly supported, and not just for the sake of the arts themselves, but because we are losing our ability to be creative problem solvers at a time when those skills are sorely needed. Until about fifty years ago, ordinary people in industrialized cultures routinely devised simple means to solve everyday problems with what they had on hand, but nowadays, everything runs on computer chips. If broken, few things can be repaired or used for some other purpose. Most of what we use is intended to be disposable, and we use a lot of it! We of the industrialized nations have managed not only to have amassed huge quantities of garbage, but to lose our ability to be creative, to solve problems in small daily ways, which, of course, trains us for larger arenas.

Of necessity, or maybe by choice, there are still places in the world where creativity is a daily fact of life. People of the Third World are creative or they don’t survive. Earth’s few remaining tribal cultures know far more in many respects than those who find them “backward.” I am suggesting that, in our headlong race to embrace all the newest and slickest “solutions” (electronic and otherwise), we are blind to the costs. I believe that the cost of the ease with which we dispose of problems is, at the end of the day, very steep indeed. We need to slow down, clean the window, and see a bigger picture. The arts can help us to do that.

There will always be individual men and women of vision—those who can reach beyond the norm to draw upon some inner resource which allows them to affect change upon their worlds. Whatever their actual positions might have been, these people are bound together, not by what they envision, but how they envision it. They allow their minds to be open and sensitive, to see connections between seemingly unrelated things. They analyze and evaluate, and are willing to risk change. In a word, they are creative, which is no easy task in a world prone to equating creativity with chaos, viewing change
with fear and skepticism, and rewarding the safely homogenous. Without question, however, creativity combined with clarity of vision is the cornerstone of human advancement.

We are very quickly coming to a critical period in which difficult decisions concerning the fate of our beleaguered planet must be made. We face monumental social, environmental, and political problems that are ineffectively addressed by traditional solutions. Old ways of thinking no longer serve our purposes. We are in most urgent need of flexible, creative minds and systems willing to use them, to bring forth solutions to these problems.

Within the present structure of our educational system, training in the arts seems the most likely and well-developed place to foster creative minds. This is especially true because the arts can be so readily integrated with other disciplines. Where every discipline is kept separate, students learn to pigeon-hole, to see the small picture, to live in boxes. Elliot Eisner pointed out in a 1991 lecture that children need to be encouraged to think creatively, to cultivate their own projects and goals. As he put it, “We need yeast: diversity that allows growth.” He addresses this issue further in The Kind of Schools We Need:

. . . The problems of life are much more like the problems encountered in the arts. They are problems that seldom have a single correct solution; they are problems that are often subtle, occasionally ambiguous, and sometimes dilemma-like. One would think that schools that wanted to prepare students for life would employ tasks and problems similar to those found outside of schools. This is hardly the case. Life outside of school is seldom like school assignments—and hardly ever like a multiple-choice test (Eisner 84).

If we can manage to create “global economies” and “global warming,” we ought to be able to achieve global solutions. Our fragmented societies and traditional segregation of cultures make attempts to integrate any worldwide solutions difficult. Again, it seems that an integrated approach to teaching in all subject areas, including the arts, may be the best way to nurture the ability to think of our culture and our world, not as a bunch of unrelated pieces held together by gravity alone, but as pieces that can truly only exist as a whole. Stephanie Burridge, in summarizing a paper she presented at the
International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) 31st World Congress in 2002, stated:

. . . A predominant theme of this conference was the essential role of the arts in humanizing a fragmented world. The visual arts, music, drama and dance provide a rich opportunity for students to explore society and the self in both diverse and distinct ways. . . embracing student identity, gender, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. Many solutions to problem solving should be celebrated and encouraged empowering students, giving ownership to ideas and creativity and socialization through the appreciation of difference (Burridge 11).

That said, I do not mean to imply that instruction in the arts themselves should be abandoned in favor of creativeness training. The arts enrich our lives in countless ways and allow us to better understand where we have been and where we are going, personally and culturally. Eisner, again, succinctly sums it up in *The Enlightened Eye*:

There are multiple ways in which the world can be known: Artists, writers, and dancers, as well as scientists, have important things to tell about the world (Eisner 7).

An increasing number of studies have shown that students who experience the arts perform better academically and socially. For students who actively participate in the arts, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the arts give them interest in staying in school and help them to develop higher levels of creative thinking and problem-solving skills. The Arts Education Partnership’s website contains a wealth of information about numerous studies that have been done concerning the arts in education, particularly the integration of arts with other disciplines (Arts Education Partnership 2007).

We must also be careful not to relegate the arts to a position wherein they simply provide entertaining vehicles for teaching other disciplines. The arts themselves are valuable disciplines deserving study. Eisner addressed this issue in his keynote address at the National Conference, *Discipline-Based Art Education: What Forms Will It Take?* in 1987:

When integration is aimed at, the special features of a subject are often compromised in the process. On balance, I lean toward a stronger boundary strength for the arts in order to protect their special characteristics from being swamped by subjects often regarded as being more important. . . Yet, I do recognize that any approach has its tradeoffs.
I value integration, coherence, and unity. I would urge that connections between the arts and the other subjects be made when they can, as long as the values of art are not diminished in the process (Fowler 72).

Though there is danger of the arts dissolving into other disciplines, integration may still be the best vehicle for finally pulling the arts into the mainstream where they belong. It is partly due to the fear of change (and the creativity that spawns it) that the arts are not well supported. Artists frequently say things people are unprepared to hear. However, it is also true that the arts have suffered greatly from the self-imposed elitism discussed earlier. Artists and patrons alike have been all too willing to remove “their” art to a place kept inaccessible to the average person. As long as we persist in viewing “fine art” as the only legitimate visual art form, this segregation will persist. How can we, the art community, first tell people that they cannot understand, let alone make “real art,” and then complain when they do not want to support us? Of course they don’t. They are reminding us of what we have told them—art is inaccessible and unimportant to them.

To repair this damage, most of what is required is a shift in thinking. The arts exist all around us, in every aspect of our lives, from film and television to music, clothing, architecture and furnishings, all of which were imagined and created by someone. To reiterate points made in Part One, these designer/artists utilize the same tools that come to bear in making a painting or a pirouette. The only significant difference is one of function, the addition of which, narrowly defined, casts the piece into the realm of craft or non-art, but when viewed through a larger lens, is simply an added dimension. This is not to imply that “anything goes,” rather, that the element of being a commissioned work is not necessarily relevant in determining quality or acceptability in defining art.

Arts integration appears to be gaining ground, at least in larger cities. It is very good news, but still, the arts are the first to be cut whenever budgets get tight—which brings me back to the central problem of elitism. As long as we as a culture persist in the idea that “real art” belongs to the chosen few, fear of artists and what they have to say will persist. When the arts can be perceived by the average person as an integral part of their lives, rather than “frills and luxuries,” art will finally take a solidly respected, essential place in American education.
PART TWO

Telling Visual Stories
CHAPTER ONE

Doodling

I doodle. Probably most people have doodled at some point in their lives. There is a doodle that I have drawn for at least thirty-five years. Small hatched shapes nestling up to each other, with evenly spaced paths between them, they have decorated the margins of my notes for a long time.

One day in 1992, the doodle formed itself into an egg. I have no idea where the egg shape came from, but the image immediately piqued my interest, which was followed by an exciting cascade of images and story ideas, a delicious stormy soup of potential, all flowing from my simple doodle.

As I began to work on a story line, I realized that what had intrigued me so much about the egg image was that it looked simultaneously cracked and whole, like stained glass, as though it had been broken and put back together. Eggs, of course, have long symbolized beginnings and births. Combining the idea of birth with that of a broken and repaired egg, I arrived at the notion of rebirth or renewal.

The story was about new beginnings drawn from the wreckage of past mistakes. It was finally abandoned as a lost cause. Intending to make a children’s book, it hadn’t taken long for me to realize that writing for children is very difficult. It requires a leanness of language that eludes me. I rewrote the story several times, and finally gave it up in favor of another story that was working better. However, the illustration I had begun was working well, and I wanted to pursue it further.
CHAPTER TWO
Deciphering Visual and Verbal Images

When I teach Art History, the very first image I show is of cave paintings. Humans have been drawing pictures to tell their stories for at least 20,000 years. Telling stories verbally doubtless has an even longer history. We humans place a great deal of importance on identity, and telling stories about ourselves allows us to connect with others of similar experience. I suspect that storytelling is the first step toward cementing community. As Jerome Bruner says in *Making Stories*, “. . .telling stories soon becomes crucial to our social interactions. . . .Storytelling becomes entwined with, even at times constitutive of, cultural life.” (31).

Combining the visual and verbal methods of telling stories is something that appeals to all of us from a very early age. Witness the number and popularity of children’s books which are heavily illustrated. Children adore them because they can “read” without knowing how to read. When they are ready, the pictures they already know how to “read” help them to learn how to read the words.

Because our brains must process language and visual images differently, reading illustrated written material is actually quite a complex process. For example, to read a line of text, we must be able to recognize the letters, or rather, groups of letters and then translate them into sounds and groups of sounds that produce words, which in turn form thoughts. In our Western culture, we read from left to right and top to bottom, a linear activity that occurs through time. Reading along a line of text, we must group words into phrases in order to form ideas or parts of ideas. Holding each idea in memory, or even backtracking in order to remember it correctly, we gradually form the whole idea contained in a sentence or paragraph. In effect, as we read, our eyes are moving to the right along the line of text, but simultaneously, we are constantly referencing backwards in order to build and link information into a coherent thought.
For example, consider the sentence, “The boy in the red shirt watches his dog play.” We read it in this fashion: “The boy / in the red shirt / who? the boy / watches / who watches? the boy in the red shirt / his dog / watches what? dog / which one? the boy’s dog / which boy? / the one in the red shirt / play / who is playing? the dog / which dog? the one that belongs to the boy in the red shirt.” All of that backtracking occurs without much notice from the reader, unless the reading material is so dense that the phrases cannot be held in memory. In that case, the backtracking is very much intentional and significantly slows reading progress.

Images, on the other hand, are “read” virtually all at once. The image of a boy in a red shirt watching a dog play would arrive in the consciousness of the viewer all in a piece, unless for some reason it is difficult to see or identify the various images. That is not to say that it is instantly understood in its complexity. After taking in what we can notice from the whole, if it holds our attention, we continue to look at it for a time, eyes moving around the picture, gathering more information in the details of line, color, texture, mood, etc. This scrutiny then becomes an activity more like reading words, which happens through time (Schwarcz 9).

When images and words occur together, the brain has to proceed through both reading actions simultaneously. There is no question that, in spite of all the split-second coordination that must occur in order to mentally process illustrated text, it works. The images enhance the text, and the text enhances the images. A well done illustration can add many layers of additional and complex information to the writing.

Fig. 2 Illustrations by the author.
CHAPTER THREE

The Illustration Unit

Developing this unit was more difficult than I had anticipated because there are so few resources available. In July, 2006, I began a search for textbooks and reference materials on illustration and turned up virtually nothing. What I found specific to illustration had been published between the 1940s and the 1960s, for the most part. They were fine as far as they went, but were so dated and narrow in their focus as to be practically useless for a beginning class.

Still looking for resources, I contacted Connie Bergum, a professional illustrator who lives in Helena and holds a Masters Degree in Illustration. I asked her if she would be willing to give a presentation to my class, show examples of her work and discuss the business of being an illustrator: methods, timelines, specifics about working with writers and editors, and so forth. She agreed to come to the class and had some suggestions for what she might cover, including a small project she wanted to do with them. I also asked her if she had any textbooks or other reference materials from her graduate courses. The answer was no, they had not used any.

The end of August, I met with the Creative Writing instructor, Mike Cronin (who was also my Department Chair at the time), to discuss my idea of collaborating with his class in the spring. The idea was for my students to illustrate his students’ work. He seemed excited about the plan, and noted that the school administration was supportive of this type of collaboration and had indicated that it wanted instructors to move forward in this direction. Over the course of the next few months, he and I attempted to work out the logistics, trying to anticipate potential issues and problems.

Following is a summary of the planned coursework along with comments about actual outcomes:
Two Week Illustration Unit

**Goal:** For the student artists of *Art Appreciation* and the student writers of *Creative Writing* to collaborate on one or more illustrations to accompany the writers’ texts. Writers are not obligated to incorporate the illustrations into their “presentation copy” books, but may do so if they choose; however, the exercise will be a graded assignment in *Art Appreciation*. No compensation is intended to writer or artist.

**Creative Writing Outcomes:**
Writers must complete a “book” as their final (and sole) graded assignment. They may choose to include illustration, but that is not a requirement. However, working with an illustrator will allow writers to see how others visualize the writing. The exercise of working with the artist to arrive at mutually acceptable visual presentations is not only part of the creative process, but potentially, part of the revision process as artists help writers see the effect of the writers’ texts.

**Art Appreciation Outcomes:**
Students will utilize the elements and principles of art to illustrate several written works, concentrating on conveying message and mood while using media appropriate to print publishing. They will be exposed to various methods used to create interesting and reproducible illustrations. A lecture and workshop by a visiting professional illustrator will give them insight into the issues and strategies typical to the profession. Finally, working with a writer will expand the artists’ understanding of the creative process, and will provide them with feedback on their illustrations.

**Issue:** How many pieces should each writer submit?
**Action:** We decided to leave it up to the writers, but recognized that there would probably be insufficient time to illustrate an entire book, since multiple revisions would likely be necessary (unless the illustrator chose to do this as a Final Course Project and assuming that the writer wanted more illustrations).
**Outcome:** Some writers chose not to submit anything. One or two submitted a couple of pieces, and the rest submitted one. They ranged from short poems to short stories and fragments of longer works. Two or three chose to use the illustrations in their books, but did not send them back for revision. A couple of the art students wanted to continue with illustration as a final project. One was currently also in the writing class and the other had taken it the previous semester; both chose to illustrate some of their own work.

**Issue:** How should the students communicate?

**Action:** Class times were different, and we did not feel it was appropriate to require students to attend another class. We decided to leave it up to the students as to whether or not they wished to meet face to face or via phone and email.

**Outcome:** All communication was via written notes.

**Issue:** How much information should the writers provide the artists? As Mr. Cronin pointed out in a personal email to the author, “A writer could provide some sort of abstract or set of instructions to the artist. That would give the artist insight into the writer’s intentions. On the other hand, if the artist comes to the text without preconceptions generated by the writer’s instructions, the artist interprets what he finds rather than what the writer thinks she has invested into the text. The artist’s renditions then would reflect his interpretation and the writer can respond by suggesting changes in the illustration or by revising her text if she thinks the artist’s interpretation is stronger.” (January 13, 2007).

**Action:** We decided that it would be most advantageous to both sets of students if the writers did not provide instructions or abstracts. For the artists, I felt that they would get more out of the exercise if they were allowed to decide how to interpret the work themselves, without trying to illustrate according to directive. Accomplished illustrators also have difficulty with this, finding that it limits and negatively affects the final product. Connie Bergum spoke at length about this very issue.

**Outcome:** The writing samples were submitted without any sort of explanation or instruction and the artists were charged with thoughtful reading to create interpretive images.
**Issue:** At what level of completion should a writer begin submitting drafts?

**Action:** We decided that the writing needed to be complete enough to contain strong, clear images.

**Outcome:** Samples were submitted about three weeks before the end of the semester. Some were more polished than others, but could at least be considered “strong drafts.”

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**Issue:** In what format should the illustrations be submitted?

**Action:** Illustrations were to be drawn by hand. The writers needed final versions in digital form.

**Outcome:** Original artwork was sent to the writing class, which had access to a scanner. All work that was to be used for books was scanned and returned. One was too large to scan and was not used.

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**Art Class Assignments:**

1) Using line drawings, students illustrated one or more short poems by Shel Silverstein. (Silverstein’s poems contain vivid whimsical images easily illustrated with simple imaginative drawings, requiring no model or other reference material.)

2) Silverstein assignment discussed—problems, surprises, general comments.

3) Guest Artist: Professional children’s book illustrator, Connie Bergum, gave a presentation in which she showed several of her original watercolors and the corresponding published illustrations. She showed examples of the four versions of each illustration that are required for review purposes. She talked about her background, education and professional experience and discussed how she researches new projects, taking copious photos of models and locations, which she works from when doing her paintings. She also went over copyright and publishing issues, and the difficulties of finding work and making a living as an illustrator. She covered basic design, such as not placing important images in the gutter (the inside edges of the pages, where they are bound), She also explained the theory behind composing the pages to guide the eye from the upper left corner to the lower right corner (and on to the next page). She provided pre-measured sheets with the gutter marked, and had the students spend 20-30 minutes
illustrating a memory from childhood. She then briefly criticized each piece. The students were attentive and interested and seemed to get a lot out of her presentation.

4) Students each chose one writing sample from those provided by the Creative Writing class. After careful reading of the texts and deciding on general tone and specific images, they were to produce illustrations, using graphite for rough layout, then inked, or finished with colored pencil. Lecture explained the need for certain pencil and inking techniques necessary for quality printing.

5) Illustrations were sent to the writing class. While waiting for comments, students viewed a PowerPoint presentation on the history of books and illustration, the types and uses of illustration, and techniques used by illustrators. (See Appendix 1 for excerpts of the presentation, or open the file separately from the Mansfield Library webpage: [McLane_Clara_Illustration_Unit.ppt].)

6) Artists were expecting to revise drawings upon receiving comments from the writers, but no revisions were requested. Instead, students were asked to find a short piece of vivid writing and produce one or two finished illustrations, depending on the complexity of detail.

7) Finished Illustrations were criticized.

8) Work on semester final project began. Students were given the option of continuing the illustrations.
PART THREE

Painting
CHAPTER ONE

Becoming a Painter

The process of trying to become an accomplished painter was a somewhat daunting undertaking. I took required painting courses as an undergraduate, of course, but that was all. Since then, I had painted only a little.

Learning again has been at times frustrating, tedious and difficult. I am proud of my successes and feel as though I am “getting there.” However, I still do not consider myself to be an accomplished painter. It will take a good deal more work to achieve that. I have been diligent until it has become something of a habit, and I intend to keep at it.

I had the good fortune to spend a wonderfully humbling day painting in Butte with three professional painters who were also willing to criticize my work. Having little opportunity to get feedback from other artists has been one of the most frustrating aspects of this enterprise, and I am grateful to them. A result of this excursion was that one of my paintings was hung in an invitational show at the Main Stope Gallery in Butte in July, 2007. It was very gratifying as well as being a milestone in terms of my commitment toward continuing to show my work professionally. Because it did not fit thematically with the rest of my paintings, however, I did not include it in the show at UM-Helena in October; however, it is included in this paper. (See next page.)
Fig. 4 *West Park Alley, Butte*, 11” x 14” watercolor, 2007
CHAPTER TWO

Artworks

This chapter documents the process of making twelve works of art for an exhibition mounted in October, 2007. I will discuss them in chronological order. Below is a facsimile of the Artist’s Statement I prepared for the exhibition:

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**RENEWAL**

by Sharon Farnham McLane

*Master of Arts candidate, Creative Pulse, University of Montana-Missoula*

This series of works represents a new artistic approach for me, my past work having been primarily in ceramics and drawing.

“Heron Eggs” was the first, which began as an illustration for a short story. The stained glass-like style flowed from a doodle I’ve used for many years, which one day evolved into an egg form. The egg is a symbol of renewal, and this particular egg (broken yet whole) sparked the idea for a story about new beginnings drawn from the wreckage of past mistakes.

Working with that theme, I began to experiment with the juxtaposition of flat, symbolic, abstracted egg shapes, set within realistically rendered natural elements, at first using colored pencil and charcoal and later switching to watercolor and charcoal.

My work is an expression of my great love and respect for the grace, beauty and extremes of the natural world. I especially love the bold magnificence of the vast western landscape, the graceful elegance of birds, and the surprising small beauty of often-overlooked places. I fear for the future of these things and others around the globe, and my hope is that perhaps, through my artwork, others may see the value of them. Perhaps I can help to preserve and renew them. While preparing this statement, I came across this very apropos quote:

“The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.”

— Wendell Berry

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Fig. 5 Abby’s Pansies, 18” x 24”, watercolor, 2006
I was nervous about beginning this piece because I had completed only one or two watercolors in the twenty-five years prior. As I began painting, it was soon apparent that I had lost whatever “loose” confidence in painting that I once had.

I struggled with mixing color and consequently built up many layers of paint trying to achieve the look I wanted. Being a transparent medium, watercolor is most effective when colors are layered, but it is difficult to keep from overdoing it and making the colors muddy and flat. Another issue with the painting was its large size. Because the work is so detailed, it took a very long time to complete. It has a few somewhat muddy spots, but as a whole looks fine. Overall, I am happy with the finished piece, especially the flowers. My biggest criticism is that it lacks the loose quality that comes with confidence and practice.

Fig. 6   Detail, *Abby’s Pansies*
Fig. 7  *Heron Eggs*, 19" x 29", colored pencil and charcoal. 2006
I began this piece in 1991, but did not finish it until 2006. I wanted to break the bird image into the same fragmented, stained-glass style of the eggs, and found that I could accomplish this by defining individual feathers. Since it was intended to be an illustration for a children’s story, I used a brighter palette than I normally use. To get the blended colors I desired, it was necessary to apply many heavy layers of soft Prismacolor pencil, which was a lengthy process, especially for a large piece like this.

Once the colored parts were complete, I was at a loss as to what to do about the background. I wanted it to be dark, which would make the bright colors jump out, but it was an awkward shape that would only be exaggerated by a simple wash of dark color. I decided to add “ghost eggs” in shades of gray, which would break up a rather large and unwieldy negative space, and then add a very dark background to set them off.

I tried several experiments with paint, but could not get the even, matt black I wanted, so I finally decided to use charcoal. After carefully drawing the shapes in pencil, I shaded with stick charcoal and outlined the shapes with a charcoal pencil which could hold a finer point. I had a hard time keeping the charcoal from smearing and ended up doing a lot of erasure using an eraser shield. I then used 6B stick charcoal to fill in the

Fig. 8  Detail, *Heron Eggs*
background as heavily as I could to achieve a deep matt black. When complete, I sealed the entire work with fixative.

I was quite happy with the finished piece, especially the velvety black of the charcoal. It was possibly the first piece I had ever done that had a style solely my own. My only concern was that it was so time consuming.

Fig. 9  *Hooded Merganser Eggs*, 8-1/2” x 12-1/2” watercolor and charcoal, 2006

I wanted to continue making egg images, and birds, of course, are natural companions for the eggs. I have always loved birds, and ducks in particular, for their elegance and beauty. Colorful ducks seemed to be a good choice to combine with the brightly colored eggs. Hooded Mergansers, with their extravagant head crest and startling patterns of color, were just the sort of whimsical image I wanted.

I decided to work smaller and try watercolor to get the blended color I was after. After stretching the paper, I carefully drew the shapes in pencil. I then painted the eggs
without shading so that they would remain flat and abstracted. I added interest by using a full palette. When the eggs were complete, I painted the colored parts of the duck. The water was painted last, and I had a trouble with the reflections. The water also appeared to be standing on edge, so I attempted to add depth by darkening the eggs in the background, which wasn’t particularly effective until I also darkened the white interstitial spaces.

To solve the problem of smearing the charcoal, I made a stencil to protect the painted images. I taped a sheet of tracing paper over the work and traced all the areas that were to be black or dark gray. Leaving a hinge of tape at the top, I folded the tracing paper back and then covered the painting in the non-tacky blue tape used by house painters (so as to not tear the paper when removing the tape). Laying the tracing paper back over the taped painting, I secured the bottom so that it would not shift. Then, using a very sharp Xacto knife, I carefully cut out the areas that were to be black (not the gray areas), cutting through the tracing paper and the tape, but not into the artwork. After checking to see that all areas were cut through, especially corners and areas where the tape overlapped, using the tip of the blade, I carefully peeled off areas of tape, thus creating a stencil. Once all the appropriate pieces were removed, I gently burnished the cut edges of the tape with my thumbnail, so that they would not peel up.

Then, using 6B stick charcoal, I blackened all of the exposed areas, taking special care to not distort the edges of the tape, but still getting the charcoal even and very heavy. Using a stump, I then worked the charcoal into a smooth, dark layer with no streaks or thin spots, especially against the edges of the stencil. Because of the heavy texture of the paper, this required several applications of charcoal. When it was done, I carefully vacuumed away loose charcoal dust and then sprayed it with workable fixative.

The process was repeated for the dark gray area, though I applied a lighter coat of charcoal and used the texture of the paper to create the gray feathers on the side of the duck. I was very happy with the result, especially the combination of highly realistic bird juxtaposed against the flat, abstracted eggs, and the use of the deep, velvety black of the charcoal. Excited, I was determined to continue with a series of similar work.
I had been thinking about what the egg shapes could “be” other than eggs. I had an idea about floating eggs that become smaller and smaller, and turn into drops of water flying from the duck’s paddling feet.

I used the same process of painting and stenciling charcoal as I had with “Merganser Eggs.” This one, however, was a lengthier process because of the painting of the underside of the wing and the finely striped feathers on the side of the duck. For some reason I had a difficult time getting the shading of the wing right, and getting the water to read as water. In the end, I thought it was a weaker painting than the Merganser, though that may just be because I had so much trouble with it.
Fig. 11  *Loon Eggs, 10” x 14” watercolor and charcoal, 2006*

This painting presented problems because of the very small white areas within the black parts of the bird. The stencil (tape bits) would have popped off when rubbing over it with charcoal. To avoid this, I painted the body of the loon and used charcoal only on the head and neck. Even so, I had trouble with the tape coming off the neck and ended up with a lot of cleanup work to get a clean white. I wanted to try something different for the background, and my daughter suggested adding the grass, which turned out quite nice. In fact, of all the egg pictures, this is my favorite.
When I began this picture, I wanted to use more vegetation and place less emphasis on the eggs. The “floating egg” idea that I used in the Wood Duck painting was still intriguing, so I experimented with the idea of eggs peeping out from under the lily pads. I also wanted underwater eggs, like rocks dimly seen at the bottom of the pond. I love water lilies because they often grow in clear, still water, so you can see the underwater stems. This, along with the beautiful, rounded heart-shaped leaves and the butter-yellow flowers gives the whole image interesting layers of visual information. However much I love water, though, I hate painting it because I have such a terrible time with it. I have yet to paint water that looks right, and greatly admire those who do it well.

This particular piece was the most frustrating of the lot. I had decided not to use charcoal on this one because I wanted a very deep blue-green for the water. Once the lilies, logs and turtles were painted, I used liquid frisket to mask them so that I could use a continuous color wash over everything. The wash turned out a lovely deep blue that was perfect, and I managed to get the underwater eggs to look alright, but had a lot of
trouble with tree reflections in the lower right corner. No matter what I did, as my husband succinctly pointed out, it just looked like drool.

Worse, when I removed the frisket, there had been pinholes and my entire painting was dotted with small dark blue blobs of paint! I lifted the offending paint by working at it with a wet, fairly stiff brush, scrubbing gently with the ends of the bristles (and ruining a brush in the process), followed by blotting with a tissue. This worked after a fashion, though there are still dark dots apparent upon close inspection. Unfortunately, the blotting also lifted color that I did not want removed, which then had to be repaired.

With the repairs finally complete, I tried several methods of representing the tree reflections and finally ruined the painting in that corner. The only way to save it was to cover it with charcoal, which meant drawing around all of the images and then taping and cutting a stencil.

When finally complete, I had essentially drawn/painted/cut the whole thing five times (preliminary drawing, painting watercolor, painting frisket, tracing paper drawing, cutting tape shapes)! This piece is the one most people like best, apparently because of the whimsical way the turtles line up on the log (which is exactly what they do when basking in the sun).

Fig. 13  Western Tanager, 8” x 10”  
watercolor and colored pencil, 2007

I started with the oval frame which provided the egg shape for this painting. The branches break the sky into the same interlocking shapes I have used on the egg paintings. I tried the frisket again with as little luck as I had had on the Turtle Eggs painting—the wash left ragged edges along the branches. I finally had to use colored pencil to repair the mess left by the frisket failure. The painting is somewhat overworked overall.
I started this piece with the idea that I was going to have to speed things up if I was going to have the work done by my self-imposed deadline of mid-July. My initial idea was to make some of the grapes into small eggs half hidden under leaves on the forest floor. One thing led to another and it took a very long time to complete this painting because of the detail. When the entire piece was finished and I started to paint the broken shapes into some of the berries, it just didn’t look right, so I finished the berries realistically.

Overall, I am very happy with this piece. The only troubling thing about the work was that I was carried even further from the loose quality of painting I so admire in others. This work is extremely tight, which isn’t necessarily bad, but I wanted to loosen up on the next one.
The Oregon Grape piece took so long to complete that I was becoming seriously worried about getting twelve pieces completed on time. In addition, I wanted to try something less detailed, which would still “fit” with the other pieces in a show. A year before, I had occasionally seen an unusual magpie with one white tail feather near my office. Happily, he was still around and I was able to get a number of photos of him before the trees leafed out in the spring.

I collaged four views of the same bird, and experimented with a salted wash for added texture. I also added the small flowers and stones to add interest to the foreground. I painted parts of the birds to detail their beautiful iridescence, and finished the black with the stenciled charcoal.

The first magpie painting was a failure because I did not get the iridescent feathers right, so I did the painting over. Searching for a title, I chose one of several collective nouns for magpies, which include: charm, congregation, flock, gulp, mischief,
tiding, tittering, tribe. (Magpies do not ever titter. They are a very charming, noisy tribe of extremely smart and maligned birds that have been killed out of hand for many years and are still generally perceived to be pests. They are my favorite bird.) I was happy that the painting was looser, though I still needed to work on it.

Accordingly, I painted four small landscapes. Of the four, I feel that the best is the Pelican Creek painting. The least effective is the Obsidian Creek painting, which is stiff and not especially well composed.

Fig. 16  *Lamar*, 8-3/4” x 11” watercolor, 2007
Fig. 17  *Obsidian Creek*, 8-3/4” x 11” watercolor, 2007

Fig. 18  *Soda Butte Creek*, 8” x 11” watercolor, 2007
Fig. 19  *Pelican Creek*, 8” x 11” watercolor, 2007
CHAPTER THREE

The Exhibition

In August, 2006, I began looking for a place to exhibit the artworks produced from this Creative Project. I contacted a number of galleries and art museums and found that my work was either inconsistent with their style, or that they were booked up to two years out.

At UM-Helena, I had been working with the library staff to secure space for showing student, staff and professional artworks, but the room was ill suited to it. I was hopeful that we would be able to find suitable space because showing their work is such an important part of art students’ education. It is equally important to give needed exposure to the Art Program, which is severely under-funded and needs to expand, but we cannot expect to build any support if the underlying message is that art is not important enough to show.

The library was scheduled to move into a new wing in the Donaldson Building in August, 2007. With space dedicated to changing art exhibits finally available, and since I am an instructor at the school, I was able to schedule my show for the following October. Though I would have preferred to have my opening early in the month, the college opted to have it in addition to the Open House for the new wing scheduled for October 25.

There were issues with hanging the work on a curved concrete block wall. The architect proposed using a track system that has hanging airline cable with sliding hooks for the track and adjustable hooks from which to hang the work itself. Unfortunately, I
was not consulted and the track was installed higher than expected, so most of the cable was too short. As a result, my work had to be installed about a foot too high for optimum viewing. Not only did visitors have to crane to see the work, but the up-lit ceiling lights combined with the angle at which the work had to be viewed resulted in distracting reflections in the glass.

In preparation for the exhibition, I prepared an Artist’s Statement and individual labels. For the opening, I submitted information and images for press releases which were handled through the school. I also designed invitations which I had printed separately from those sent out by the college. (See Appendix 2 for exhibit related materials.)

The opening was well attended with roughly 85 visitors during a three hour period the evening of Thursday, October 25. As it was scheduled at the same time as my Art Fundamentals class, I gave my students a tour of the show, explained my methods, problems and successes, and covered basic information about preparing and installing an exhibition.

Several visitors were interested in purchasing works, and many stopped to ask me about specific pieces. Overall, it was immensely gratifying to receive their very kind and appreciative comments.
SUMMARY

Beginnings
Rigor and Renewal

Everything comes with a cost. The cost of a possession goes beyond its purchase price because once owned, it demands attention. It must occupy a certain amount of space and perhaps requires certain care and maintenance. If its owner chooses to neglect it, its requirements do not cease to exist, they are just neglected.

This is equally true of intangible things. Whatever we do or don’t do comes with a price which may be plain or obscure, but is very often simply not contemplated at all until it must be paid. Decisions to take action may or may not come to fruition for a thousand reasons which are mostly out of one’s control, and all of which carry a price.

In the acknowledgments and introduction, I referred to the tracks or footprints of the work I have done for this Creative Project. Perhaps it was not the best choice of metaphor, as footprints imply a “journey,” walking to another place. A better metaphor for my experience might be “ship’s housekeeper.” This voyage has been a largely internal one, rather like being on a ship at sea. The sea has no regard for ship or passengers; the passengers enjoy a certain amount of protection within the ship, but are still ultimately subject to the raw forces of nature.

This voyage of mine has been long and difficult. In the end, it did not really matter what the destination was. The real work was the housekeeping: cleaning, prioritizing, polishing the forgotten treasures of life, finding things of value hidden under meaningless debris, mending the broken and getting rid of the useless and dangerous. None of that could have occurred without honesty. After that, the destination is what it must be.

The summer of 2006 held more than one epiphany for me. The first was the realization that I needed to throw out the binding and tired old definitions of who an artist is, get rid of doubts and fears, coax my artistic self to step forward and claim the
confidence my abilities deserve, dust off the tools and get back to work. Of course, deciding that something needs to be done is very different than actually accomplishing the task, and I was not sure I could do it at a level deep enough to effect a real and lasting change.

The second epiphany changed that, adding magnitude and urgency to the first. Though not mentioned earlier in the paper, it has been a major factor in completion of this work—simultaneously impeding and compelling my efforts. In August, 2006, I suddenly found myself facing the very real possibility that I might have a particularly aggressive and difficult form of cancer. From my personal journal:

October 15, 2006:
  This word “cancer” is a powerful thing. . . For me, this word—this idea of painful, early endings—has profoundly motivated me. . . my beliefs and goals have not changed, but my energy and direction has focused and hardened.

April 26, 2007:
  I have come to a new understanding. . . about what’s important and what’s not. . . I’m amazed at my long years of wrong choices, all the lost hours of my life. . .

Life happens without regard to individual plan, and that is where diligence and rigor enter the picture. The “costs” have been surfacing like drowning cats, all of which have needed attention and robbed me of time to make art.

Let me be very plain that I am in no way a victim. The “victim” of my past was evicted during my spate of housekeeping. I now stand solidly on my own two feet regardless of whether or not anyone stands next to me. Strange as it may sound, the word “cancer” helped me to do that.

It occurs to me that maneuvering through what daily living dishes out is much like making artwork. It simply needs flexibility of mind, because what may appear to be obstacles may in fact be opportunities. The artist creates by being open to possibilities presented by the unexpected, which is to say that the glass must always be half-full. It’s a good way to go about living as well.

Prophetically, my egg motif emerged long before I knew it was pertinent to my own situation. It has gradually become a metaphor for my personal renewal. While discussing metaphors with me recently, Mike Cronin commented:
In the [feminine] journey mode, the metaphor is "re-invention of self." In this sense, the new art pieces allow the artist to jettison traditionally accepted modes of expression, making them personally obsolete, and leads her to the exploration of new modes that break free from the strictures of those conventions. The result is a revised sense of what it means to express oneself through art, one that changes who the artist is and redefines her relationship with the art community according to her rules.

In the language of the feminine quest, the process of re-invention of self moves the artist from the archetypes of "innocent" and "victim" to "creator" — in the language of Maslow, to "self-actualization."

The nifty thing about this metaphor is that a third of your paintings are about eggs, the device of females for the continuation of the species. But yours are not regular eggs, for they are artistically redefined. They re-invent the self of their mothers. Presumably the ducklings and turtle hatchlings will be new and improved versions of their species. (31 October 2007)

I can’t speak for the ducklings and turtle hatchlings, but in a very real sense, my art eggs have “re-invented the self of their mother.” Every artist is a mother/creator, and my eggs have, indeed, re-invented my artistic self.

Broken yet whole again.
Renewed.
APPENDIX 1

Excerpts from Illustration Unit PowerPoint

The following pages show excerpts from the PowerPoint presentation I developed for the Illustration Unit. It is divided into three sections, which can be taught at separate times:

1. History of illustrated and written symbols and the development of the book as we know it today.
2. Types and uses of illustrations.
3. Techniques used by illustrators.

Presented together, the entire show requires about two hours. If the reader has PowerPoint software, the entire presentation can be accessed by clicking on the link on page 24.

Slide 1
First let’s look at the history of the book.

Slide 2  There is an old saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” This was certainly true for cultures that had no written language.

Slide 3  Pictures served to tell the stories they felt were important to record.
Slide 6  Early alphabets evolved from early pictograms, or pictures which represented things or ideas.

Slide 7  Images incised into the rock surface are called petroglyphs.
Some of the earliest forms of alphabet were pressed into wet clay with a blunt reed. The clay tablets could be hardened in a fire.

Maya Codices (Books)

Heiroglyphics written on amatyl paper

Yucatan, c. 1500 AD

Many such records of Mayan civilization were destroyed by the Spanish Conquistadors and priests in 1562. Only three remain.

In Central America, early books called “Codices” were made by the Mayans to record important events.
Slide 15  Around 400 AD, the Greeks developed a simplified alphabet. Many Greeks and Romans were able to read, and the wealthy had libraries in their homes. Books were completely handmade, one at a time. Lavishly lettered and decorated books are called “Illuminated Manuscripts.”

“Book of Kells”
Four Gospels with Latin text
Ireland, c. 800 AD

Slide 16  After the fall of the Roman Empire, during the Dark Ages, few people could read or write, including the nobility. Books were handmade by monks living in monasteries across Europe. Called scribes, they produced a variety of works by Greek and Roman authors.
Slide 22 In 1445 AD, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in Germany. He also invented moveable (metal) type in 1440 AD, though it had existed in China since about 1045 AD. With moveable type, individual letters could be arranged to print text. Without it, all the letters had to be carved into a single piece of wood (in reverse, as all print type must be).
The next slides show modern uses of illustration.

**Slide 27** Illustrations can be used to add information to scientific or technical texts.

Illustrations can be used to add information to scientific or technical texts.

“Large as Life, Daytime Animals”

Text by Joanna Cole

Illustrations by Kenneth Lilly

1985
Illustrations can be used to influence.

Newspaper illustration by Frederick Remington. William Randolph Hearst, owner of the paper, allegedly told Remington, “You supply the drawings. I’ll supply the war.” Such inflammatory drawings and stories influenced the decision to enter the Spanish American War in 1896.

*Slide 30* Illustrations can be used to influence opinions. Propaganda often relies heavily on images to sway people toward particular themes or ideas.

Illustrations can add a great deal to Creative Writing.

In the late 1800s, illustrators created images full of action for novels and historical fiction.

“On the Irrawaddy” by G.A. Henty, 1896

*Slide 31* Illustrations add impact to creative writing.
The next slides show techniques used in illustration.

**Congruency**

Faithful depiction of what is written

“Under the Window” by Kate Greenway
1879

*Slide 35 Congruency—faithful depiction of what is written.*
Simplification
Background and other information is excluded.

“The Country Bunny and the Little Golden Shoes,” by Du Bose Heyward, Illustrated by Marjorie Flack
1939

Slide 36  Simplification—some information is excluded.

Illustrating motion can be achieved by using diagonal lines

Slide 45  Motion is most easily depicted using diagonal lines.
Border Decorations

Simple or elaborate, they tie the pages together as a whole.

*Slide 49* Book designers use specific fonts, colors, borders and other elements to visually tie all of the various parts into an integrated whole.

Perspective  Visual interest can be added by varying the viewpoint.

*Slide 50* Varying perspective requires imaginative reading of the text, and can keep the book visually interesting.
Personification

Objects or animals portrayed as human

“Aesop’s Fables”
Illustrated by Arthur Rackham
Facsimile of 1912 edition

“Salome: The Peacock Skirt”
Pen and ink
by Aubrey Beardsley
1894

Slide 52 Personification—portraying animals with human attributes.

Slide 56 Line art can also be elegant and dramatic.
Use bold shapes to create drama

Pen and Ink
“Portrait of James McNeill Whistler”
Aubrey Beardsley
1894

Slide 58  Switching to a dark background adds interest.

Use facial expression and body language to tell the story

“I am having a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day, I told everybody. No one even answered.”

“Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day”
By Judith Viorst
Illustrationed by Ray Cruz
1972

Slide 60  Body language and facial expression says a lot.
This is the first two-page spread of the book, *Free Fall*, by David Wiesner. The pages are so beautifully rendered as to need no words. Look carefully at the details. In the boy’s dream, the checkered quilt becomes checkered fields. The breeze coming in the window turns the pillow into clouds. The pages of the book float across the dream landscape.

Further into the book, the boy has found himself in a castle. Notice the stone wall on the left, which gradually transforms into a dragon’s body on the right of this two-page spread. Looking from left to right, the towers become trees and the doves flying out of the falling suit of armor also move to the right, which helps to draw the reader’s eye from left to right.
Here is the next spread as it appears in the book. Notice that, again, the movement is from left to right. Notice also that the trees become closer together, and have fewer branches as they move to the right.

*Slide 70*

Here, again, the right page of the last spread is shown on the left, seamlessly connected to the image the reader sees when the page is turned. Notice that the trees have become book pages. The birds and the characters are moving toward the area with the brightest light, becoming the main focal point. What keeps the reader interested in turning the page is the diagonal lines of the open book on the right.

*Slide 71*
APPENDIX 2

Exhibition-related Materials

Figs. 23 & 24 Front and back of Exhibition Invitation, designed by author
Campus Art Exhibit to Feature Work of UM-Helena Instructor Sharon Farnham McLane

(Helena) An exhibit of mixed media paintings and drawings by M.A. candidate and UM-Helena art instructor, Sharon Farnham McLane entitled “Renewal” will be showing October 1-31 in the new library at UM-Helena. McLane’s works are a highly detailed combination of realism and abstraction which celebrate the grace and beauty of the West. She has worked in several private and public collections. For 30 years McLane has worked as a professional graphic artist in print media and as an exhibit designer for community and governmental museums, visitor centers and wayside exhibits. She is currently working to complete her Master of Arts in Fine Arts in Integrated Arts and Education at the University of Montana, and has taught art courses at UM-Helena since 2005. The UM-Helena library began displaying art exhibits last year and has featured collections from faculty, students and members of the community. The college’s new library opened this fall providing a much larger and visually pleasing space, and was designed to accommodate exhibits and displays.

For more information contact Janice Bacino, Librarian at 406-444-5855.

Fig. 25  UM-Helena press release, 26 September 2007

Fig. 25 Helena Independent Record  
11 October 2007
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