

# FREE COLUMBIA

## NEWSLETTER #4 SPRING 2021



*High Falls*, charcoal on newsprint, Stefan Ambrose

# Table of Contents

Greeting	3
Wholeness in Learning — M.C. Richards’ Challenge to Education Today	4
Two Poems by Luke Fischer	15
An Interview with Craig Holdrege	18
YET NOT CONSUMED	28
Bridging Divides, Healing Communities Grant Program	30
New Online Art Courses	30
The Bird Hunters of Anthropocenia	33
Reflections from Students in the M.C. Richards Program	35
Gratitude	42

---

“Autumn” and “The gods are silent” © Luke Fischer, used with permission.  
“Yet Not Consumed” © from Mary Szybist, *Incarnadine* (Graywolf Press, 2013) used with permission.  
All other material © 2021 Free Columbia

# Greeting

Dear Friends,

I am sitting down to write this greeting on one of this winter’s coldest days yet. It seems even indoor spaces are not quite warming up, and yet, can it be, I find myself meeting intimations of spring? In this newsletter I am happy to send out news of a year of creative work and innovation. I am happy to share this window for you to look through and I also feel, in all the work we have done, there is a new life to come! We can grow this, we can mature it—a new year is coming!

Contributions are gathered in this newsletter that look out on recent efforts within Free Columbia at *aesthetic education*, awakenings in perception, feeling and pictorial judgement in art and science; *contemplative inquiry*, a turning toward the spiritual in ourselves and in the world; and *action research*, putting ideals to work to judge them by their fruits.

It is the first newsletter to appear since the launch of the M.C. Richards Program, and I hope some of the festive and creative spirit that has graced this year shines through these pages. There are conversations, poems, images, and reflections from students on their experiences so far in the course. We are now receiving applications for the coming Fall cohort.

Besides the launch of this program a variety of online classes, with participants from all over the world, have been ongoing. You will also find a brief description of an upcoming series of conversations focused on issues of social justice called “Bridging Divides, Healing Communities” that will be facilitated by Roxanne Wilkens, who was part of the Social Theory and Action Program in 2018. During the summer of 2020 there was also a production of an original puppet play culminating in a small tour.

Free Columbia continues as an independent and accessible initiative, striving to evade the public-private polarity. This involves combining the virtue of accessibility with independence through eliminating paywalls and seeking support from a wide circle of donors, course participants and students, audiences, foundations and grant programs. The courage of the teachers, scholars, artists, and scientists, as well as a wide circle of supporters and foundations, make this all possible.

Gratitude is due to all the contributors to this newsletter, and to Ella Lapointe for layout, design and visual art, and to John-Scott Legg for editing support.

—Nathaniel Williams  
Philmont, February 2021

# Wholeness in Learning

## M.C. Richards' Challenge to Education Today

*This is an edited transcript of a participatory panel discussion that took place on September 28, 2020 at Lightforms Art Center in Hudson, NY with Heinz-Dieter Meyer (Professor of Education, SUNY Albany), Sara Parrilli (Art Teacher at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School), and Nathaniel Williams (Faculty member at Free Columbia). It was one of a series of events celebrating the inauguration of the M.C. Richards program. The background to the discussion was a consideration of M.C. Richards' talk/essay "Wholeness in Learning: or Non-Toxic Education," from The Crossing Point: Selected Talks and Writings (Wesleyan University Press, 1973).*

**Nathaniel Williams [NW]:** Tonight's event is the last of three, a festive confluence of activities! This artwork that we're sitting in the midst of, these are all paintings and ceramics work from Mary Caroline Richards,

the American artist and writer and poet.

I would like to briefly introduce Sara Parrilli and Heinz-Dieter Meyer, who are joining me for the discussion tonight. Sara is a board member of Free Columbia. She participated for two years in Free Columbia fulltime programming and has gone on to become a teacher. One of the things that I'm going to say about Sara, which I find remarkable, has to do with one of the field trips that we took. We were going to a museum, I believe in Massachusetts. We were driving together and I remember that I used the GPS and she was so deeply disappointed, to see her teacher rely on this device, and I had opportunity on that occasion to see that her glovebox is full of maps. What I got a glimpse of at that moment was the joy she gains through the peculiarity and particularity of things. To

make that trip, and to look at the terrain and know which roads are your choices, and where they go, and to know their names, to know what shape they make in the landscape, it was almost like when she looked at me she could not believe I would impoverish myself by using this machine. Last week I gave a presentation on Mary Caroline Richards here at the gallery. One of the things Mary Caroline Richards says about the task of education is that, through learning to build the capacity to experience the particularity of things, we actually become ripe for a life of love and service. I just want to say one of Sara's strengths is this marked capacity for experiencing joy in the concrete and particular. She's now working at The Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School as an art teacher. I'm so grateful that you're here.

I first heard about Heinz-Diet-

er Meyer through Clara Steinkellner, a mutual acquaintance from Germany. I invited her over to speak about education a few years ago. When she found out where we were, she said, "Oh, great. I'm going to see if I can meet Heinz-Dieter Meyer!" I thought to myself, "Who's Heinz-Dieter Meyer?" I learned that Heinz-Dieter Meyer had just co-written an open letter of protest against the International PISA testing paradigm, which was developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and Andreas Schleicher. Every three years, all over the world, these standard-

---

One of the things Mary Caroline Richards says about the task of education is that, through learning to build the capacity to experience the particularity of things, we actually become ripe for a life of love and service.

---

ized tests are given to 15-year-olds in mathematics, science and reading. The scores are published and education ministers, politicians, and many others consider them when they come up with

education policy. This letter of protest gathered thousands of signatures from people all over the world, including the likes of Noam Chomsky. A part of the letter articulates how ridiculous it is to talk about education within a paradigm of global standardized testing, and to have a global discussion around the purpose of what it means to be an educated person from the perspective of these standardized categories. I went on to study at the University of Albany where I had classes with Heinz-Dieter Meyer, and he was kind enough to serve on my Dissertation Committee in the Political Science Department.

The background for our discussion tonight is a talk that Mary Caroline Richards gave fifty years ago at a university in Canada. The year is 1970, and there are massive student protests, walk-outs, and strikes at universities all over the U.S. and Canada as well. At the university where she is present as a visiting artist, there is a

deep gulf between the teachers and the students. The students are talking about their desire for self-fulfillment. They're talking about what the professors call "whiny emotional matters." Pro-

fessors are characterizing them as a generation of lemons. While Richards is there the Philosophy Department has a symposium on the Philosophy of Education. They give a number of presentations ridiculing the student's perspective. Mary Caroline Richards had become a famous author through her book, *Centering*, and she was a traveling teacher and artist. She was shocked at the professors responses, and they invited her to give a response herself. This essay was her response. We can call to mind the radical unrest in the U.S. and Canada at this time. The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were quite recent events. The Vietnam War had not ended and protests against the war's expansion were ongoing. It's in this context that she is speaking, and I'm interested to see how her words resound here tonight.

**Sara Parrilli [SP]:** I was almost shocked by what she was saying. I am aware of the time she was addressing, even though I was not alive, but my daily experience with children and teaching is so different.

**Heinz-Dieter Meyer [HDM]:** I had not known of M.C. Richards until you named the new program after her and shared this essay, and I was quite taken



---

What is it actually that we're educating? What do we call that? How do we think about that? When we don't think of the heart-mind as a unity, and don't have the pedagogical methods that speak to that unity, schooling tends to strengthen the patterns of the thinking response at the expense of feeling, intuition, and sensation. What we end up cultivating is what Plato called *the calculating non-lover*.

---

aback. She really was onto something that I am only now getting to in a different way. One of them is the idea of, *what are we actually educating when we educate?* What is the thing that we are shaping? If you ask an educator, they might speak of learning and knowledge and so forth. If they're really thoughtful they might say something about the mind. She mentioned this point. A concept that I've been working with recently is the heart-mind. The heart and mind as one entity is really, I think, what we are building.

In German we have the term *Bildung*, education understood as a process as outlined in this

essay. Now, why is that significant? She points out over and over again, we don't just think with our heads and feel with our chest. We think and feel, and it's one and same process. Our feelings shape our thoughts, our feelings shape our cognitions, and also vice versa. Our thoughts frame a radius for certain feelings and experiences. It is utterly artificial to separate the two, feeling and thinking. We all know that when

you're fearful, your mind goes in a different direction; you have different thoughts as opposed to when you're joyful. The two things always operate together. It is in a way preposterous for us to aspire to separate the two, as we have for many centuries, and say, "Okay, here in school, we are going to deal with the mind or with knowledge. The feelings, that's your business." Or, in a previous age, "that's the church's business; it's not the business of education." That really is where the whole project went off the rails, in a way. It's something that's exceptional to the modern West. This artificial separation did not exist in the ancient

world, East or West. Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, none of them fostered this. In Buddhism, there is a concept of *Citta*, which is the heart-mind. You cannot translate either as mind or as heart, it means both. We really are the heirs of a very unfortunate era. As M.C. Richards points out, today there are people going along with these ideas in a different way, we are educating smart fools. This is a phrase from Robert Sternberg, the former President of the American Psychological Association, so no small entity in conventional sciences.

On the idea that you can be rational without having your emotions developed in unison with your thoughts, she says, for example, "I have not forced one of my rational capabilities in order to develop my post logical, pre-rational, intuitive capacities." In other words, it's not an either-or kind of thing. You don't need to become irrational in order to develop your intuitive capacity: I have not relinquished my ability to analyze and generalize and so forth, in order to develop my artistic contemplative faculties. This goes to the whole essay. This is an interesting direction for conversation: What is it actually that we're educating? What do we call that? How do we think about that? When we don't think of the

heart-mind as a unity, and don't have the pedagogical methods that speak to that unity, schooling tends to strengthen the patterns of the thinking response at the expense of feeling, intuition, and sensation. What we end up cultivating is what Plato called *the calculating non-lover*. Somebody who loves nothing except their own advantage: it's a version of the modern utilitarian. A self-interested utility maximizer. That person's mindset is calculation. It is not contemplation, it is not an open experience, it is very narrowly focused on, "Do I get more mileage out of a Corolla or out of a Camry? Do I get more mileage out of this job or that job?" That's the entire world that

---

Experiencing is where the action of the human being is at. The perception of the seeing is important but it's not the whole show. In our conventional education, seeing is all there is.

---

we are preparing when we educate the calculating non-lover. Plato speaks about the need for divine madness, which is not irrationality, but it is madness about something higher than your own advantage. I will stop there. She

really has put her finger on these things earlier than many others I am aware of.

**SP:** Yes. I want to express in reading this piece of hers, parts of it, were resonating with things that are on my mind, having recently prepared for a school year, which we are now entering into. I'm not going to assume that everybody here is familiar with Waldorf education, I'm not really sure. I work at Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School which is nearby. I would usually begin the year by going into my classroom, looking at my supplies and thinking about my students. This year I couldn't do that because I had to quarantine. I couldn't interact with any other human beings for two weeks. We were anticipating a year that no longer relies on things that we've learned before. Preparing for a school year with social distancing and masks and classes split into two. I very much identified with being someone on the feeling end of things. I learned through this experience, preparing for school, that I learn so much through doing. In preparing for this year, I couldn't go into the classroom, I couldn't go into school, I couldn't

interact with any other human beings for two weeks. We were anticipating a year that no longer relies on things that we've learned before. Preparing for a school year with social distancing and masks and classes split into two. I very much identified with being someone on the feeling end of things. I learned through this experience, preparing for school, that I learn so much through doing. In preparing for this year, I couldn't go into the classroom, I couldn't go into school, I couldn't

have conversations with anyone. Without this doing, it felt like everything was projecting from this headspace into the future, to something that none of us had ever done before. It got to a point where I couldn't actually take in any more information, like reading walls of texts and emails, trying to figure out how we're going to do this. It's hard to describe, but I can feel I get pulled up to teaching through my thinking as opposed to teaching through the feeling life. It's like a deep question to work with, what are we actually educated *in*? How are we doing it? Even when we talk about it, we're still approaching it from this heady perspective. It keeps coming back to actually giving people an experience. I'm not going to tell you what we're going to do and how we're going to do it, I'm going to give you an experience, and how do you do that?

**NW:** In relationship to this, one of the first times I heard about Mary Caroline Richards was from a student about eight years ago. She was an alum of Warren Wilson College. She had heard about a graduation address Richards gave one year. She gets up at this ceremony, and then she just says, "Art," over and over and over again. She doesn't say anything else. I feel something in what you just described, how, in a way, we



can't talk about her. Some things you can refer to but you've got to be careful when you do it. You can mislead people with fancy concepts and words. I also was thinking about Joseph Beuys. He was a professor of sculpture in Dusseldorf and he became so popular as a teacher that everyone wanted to study with him. There were limits to how many people you could admit, but he was like, "Forget that, you can study. Anyone who wants to develop themselves, you're welcome in my class. I don't care

this whole audience of the most well-dressed, respectable, diploma-proud people.

**HDM:** There is a famous poster, I think it was done in '67 or '68, Harvard students calling for a strike—strike because the cops are beating you, strike because of this and that, and then, importantly: "*strike because there's no poetry in your lectures.*" It was a different time. There was a sense of something changing in education. Today this is not so easy to imagine. Education has become

---

"student learning objectives," "outcomes." That's the language in which we are supposed to define the goal of education. This amounts to specifying in advance, knowing in advance what students will know at the end of the course. I can only do that if the students are completely deprived of any agency in the learning process, any responsibility for their own learning. The teacher becomes the demiurge of the learning process.

---

what the registrar says." This got him into big trouble. Then, there is a student protest because he's fired. Eventually all these education ministers are called together for the students and Joseph Beuys to make their case. Joseph Beuys goes in front of them, and he repeatedly clears his throat, and says nothing, in front of

just compulsion, and that in the narrowest way. What *kind of education* will get me the job today? Of course, one of the reasons behind it is that education has become so expensive, so in one way it is natural to ask "What are we going to get from this \$200,000 that we are paying for education?" Students, many of them,

end up in long term credit slavery. They want to get an economic return, so this whole reduction of education to something that pays off in the marketplace, there are reasons for it and there are decisions that have been made to direct it this way. It wasn't necessary that tuition has risen to these levels. There are policy decisions that drive that, putting money in other areas rather than in education.

**NW:** Mary Caroline Richards offers some pretty radical ideas throughout this essay. This is 1970 and one of the ideas she is grappling with is the new physics. She refers to cultivating views that can allow for the possibility of matter being a condensation of spirit, or an expression of spirit in this regard. One of the things that the professors brought up to the students, is they said, "You know what a university is? A university is an institution where there is a transfer of culture. That's it. We just transfer culture to you. You don't get anything else from us." One of the things she brings up is, "What about jumps? What about a cultural jump?" I think about the description of the change from the medieval to the modern age in trying to follow her. There are these big shifts in his-

tory we can recognize, when you describe Descartes, for instance, against the backdrop of earlier times. She pretty much says, "The challenge today, appearing as a symptom among the students, is to actually make a jump," as she said, "The university is not up for the task." It is meaningful how she speaks of the students call for self-fulfillment in this light. It's not just subjective for her. It's actually a whole spiritual world view, a re-orientation. That's how she justifies her perspective to the professors.

I was wondering, Sara, what your experience in teaching at the Waldorf School is like in relation to this? I remember in my early twenties, I was asked to teach in a Waldorf school. One of the things that I experienced was that I met teachers that had practices where they would try to visualize their students, but not in a way where they're making judgments about them. They just called them up in their memory. Then they would try to maintain an openness of heart and mind through their classes, receptive for new impressions related to teaching during their day. They didn't only do it in isolation, they did it in meetings together. They had these intuitions, or impressions that would light up in connection with this practice. My experience of this was moving.

I would feel, the intuition I just had, the impression I just had, I'm closer to my student than I am with a photograph or holding their hands. It had the weight of reality. It involves tending to subtle, spiritual dimensions of the human constitution, orienting oneself toward this horizon of experience. There's something about that attitude that I feel is connected to her call for a whole new view and the question, what is a human being, what are we educating?

**HDM:** Just to make it a little bit more concrete, there may be a useful distinction between *seeing and experiencing*. Picture you go into a cathedral and you just look at say the furthest distance in the front of the church, you're seeing an altar. That perception is not the whole of what you experience in the cathedral. You're experiencing something with all your senses about probably something of vast space that has a certain sacred atmosphere to it. You're seeing maybe a stained glass window, a religious figure or whatever, and there's a deeper experience. The whole point of training the *heart-mind* is to sensitize people that experiencing is more than seeing. Experiencing is where the action of the human being is at. The perception of the seeing is important but it's not the whole show.

In our conventional education, seeing is all there is. We have discrete objects, "Look at this, look at this, look at that," and there is presumably not two ways of seeing things. When you want, for example, to explore a poem, you obviously cannot just hear the words, the way you would understand a newspaper article. You have to experience the sound of the words. You have to experience the associations that sometimes cross-cut with each other. That needs training. That's when the transformation takes place in people, waking up to the fact that there is actually much more than just reading one word after the other.

**SP:** It's interesting being here and that I'm experiencing this ongoing inner dilemma between the materialistic and the quantitative versus the qualitative. It's out of no judgment of this discussion. It's like it's an ongoing question for me especially because this year in particular, a lot of new families are coming to our school, relocating from elsewhere, from the city. When you think about individual students and who they are, the essence of their humanness, the essence of themselves goes beyond their physical selves. We're educating things that are invisible. I know, for me, personally, it's hard to navigate even this conversation



because it's an ongoing question for me. Even recognizing this pull of a materialistic realm into naming things. Even when it comes to parents wanting a good

---

When we talk about the challenge of wholeness in education today, Mary Caroline Richards calls out "We have to challenge the foundations, the way we think about things," meaning modernism, Cartesian dualism, the body-mind split.

---

education for their children that will be accomplished when they have learned the words and they have learned the letters and they can say the names of things. Then you have something; we can name that and we can hold on to that. I feel like I'm really working from the other side in what I'm trying to educate. I can sense the difference when I walk into a room of children and if I were to walk in there with a plan that I set on adhering to. I don't pick up on what's actually living beyond them in the qualitative realm, in the feeling life. I just try to teach to their intellect.

**NW:** This passage from the essay came to mind. Mary Caro-

line Richards writes, "Perhaps it is the philosophical question of secondary qualities rearing it's lovely head. Newton did not settle our hash forever and perhaps neither did Kant. Perhaps the secondary qualities are not so secondary now. Perhaps the categorical imperative, it's not an imperative. Perhaps the categories are transforming into a larger field, now open to human perception, which has been awakened to it." There's something in what you were just describing that immediately made me think of that.

**SR from the audience:** Well, I just graduated from university in May. I am left with the impression that education is so much about *what*, in what was trying to be taught, so much about answers and so much about results. I just think to myself that the moments that I appreciated most in my career are not so much the answers, but the questions that I was able to have and the questions that I was able to feel comfortable having. Often I have to remember that there are never scientific papers published about doubts or questions. Sure, some papers will end with fur-

ther notions to be explored, but the question of ignorance is completely rejected. I wrote an essay for one of my final classes, and it was 80% questions. My teacher, before she graded it, handed it back to me and said, "You bring nothing to this. This essay says nothing and it asks more questions than you claim. You have to rewrite it." I went home and thought about this for the next two nights. It was one of the last papers I had to write and I just wanted to really bring home the point. I brought the essay back, and I had changed the title into a question. She gave me an A minus. Anyway, I just want to add this idea of living among the questions and appreciating the ignorance and working through that. I think that is important when we're talking about speaking to the heart and mind, rather than just the mind.

**HDM:** First of all, it's gotten worse since you were in school—it gets worse every year. Now it's "student learning objectives," "outcomes." That's the language in which we are supposed to define the goal of education. This amounts to specifying in advance, knowing in advance what students will know at the end of the course. I can only do that if the students are completely deprived of any agency in the learning process, any responsi-

bility for their own learning. The teacher becomes the demiurge of the learning process. When the Greeks talk about the love of wisdom as a path for life—that's really the object of education, to develop the love of wisdom. They meant to develop a love for questions because wisdom is not something you can put your hand on and say—I know this! Wisdom is to *contemplate what I am experiencing* and to ask *in what terms is it good?* (Which goods are higher, which goods are lower?) You develop a taste for this, this living in the questions.

**HH from the audience:** I would like to use questions to express what I want to say. If it is a capacity that we can think purely intellectually, does this mean we also have to think purely intellectually? We have heard from some that this does not make you feel comfortable, but then I also ask, what in the world feels comfortable being grasped by a purely intellectual mind? Not me, not you. What about the tree or the rabbits in my garden or the cows in the barn or the valley? What in this world feels comfortable being grasped intellectually? I know, as a human being, I do not feel comfortable when I am grasped as a number, as this or that discrete category. In Brazil, I once met an older man full of ini-

tiatives. In his eighties, he decided what we need is a schooling of empathy. He developed a whole sequence of courses of interdependency. He is schooling empathy as seriously as you school learning quantitative methods in engineering or in physics trainings. We have to develop in a balanced way or we can become very one sided.

**HDM:** If I can just make one more conceptual point. What I have in mind when I talk about the heart and mind is not just adding elements. It is actually, in Hegel's language, forging a synthesis of emotive and intellectual elements at a higher level. Where we don't have our raw desires over here, (like this desire for this new car, and this rich chocolate cake) and our intellect over there (that compares different makes and prices). We actually work on our desires, using our intellect, to refine and develop them and to, in some sense, tame our desires, and in another sense, *elevate* them. As we do that, conversely, as well, we direct our thoughts, our intellect, from the heart towards empathy, towards compassion, towards contemplation, because the heart is calling for that. There's a traditional controversy between the rationalist and the romanticist. The rationalist says, "Mind over heart," the romanticist says,

"Heart over mind." What I'm talking about is heart and mind together, developing each other at a higher level. There is, fortunately, a movement for this development of empathy, for being able to sense what it is like to be in another's shoes, throughout schools today. I have seen it.

**NW:** I'd like to ask in relationship to this, thinking about the essay and the point I referred to earlier: When we frame education as particularly referring to the subject, to ourselves, what are we acting out? It was interesting, Henrike [HH], when you spoke, you said, "What in the world would like to be grasped only intellectually?" What I found so interesting about that question is you referring to a cow or a tree with *being* instead of inert exteriority. *What is it?* In many areas, it is taboo to seriously suggest that there is beingness in the world. Therefore, I find often it's easiest in education discussions to come back to the place that we know beingness, which is psychology. For instance, one of the dangers of always referring to thinking and feeling is we can find both those in our subjectivity, but what about thinking and feeling as it's experienced, outside of the subject. It's interesting in relationship with the Eastern tradition, because I know in Buddhism, certainly, in Japan and



China, the monks were also often artists, and they experienced the spiritual movement in the landscape in their work, or in their poetry. They were absolutely convinced that they were experiencing a spiritual side of the landscape. Their feeling and thinking was not contained in a psychological subject in the modern sense. There wasn't a subject, and in Chinese painting you see these little, tiny figures of the 12th century. Then there's this giant landscape whose subtle movements were not lost on Van Gogh or Cezanne. Francois Cheng, a profound interpreter of Eastern art, says that's because that was how the Chinese experienced their soul.

I thought I'd bring this up not just arbitrarily, but also because I feel like it's actually the most radical part of the essay. It's also the most radical part of the challenge. When we talk about the challenge of wholeness in education today, Mary Caroline Richards calls out "We have to challenge the foundations, the way we think about things," meaning modernism, Cartesian dualism, the body-mind split. Where's mine? It's in the subject. What's outside? Discrete and lawful material movements. We have our per-

sonal private beliefs and we have the physical world, which we imagine as objective. Richards calls out, "No, no. You want to know why students can talk about self-fulfillment? It's because self-fulfillment is connecting again to a different world that they're asking for." She suggests this is what people are searching for and that "...some people call it the Michaelic age and some people call it the Age of Aquarius." We may smirk, and we may also feel intellectually so superior to these questions, but in a way, they're the most radical part of the whole essay.

**HDM:** This begs the question, is our highest insight conceptual? Is it cognizing? Is it using thought, or is our highest insight beyond that? I think Waldorf, and the Wisdom Traditions that I am familiar with, emphasize over and over that insight is beyond concept. And, just for proof, a quote I just came across in this gallery from Teresa of Avila: "For the Divine is really speechless, it is too in love to chat." In Aristotle and the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "The highest life is the contemplative life, which is the life that allows you to get in touch with what is *fine and divine and fine and divine in us*." He's talking about the no-

ble and Divine *out there* and the noble and Divine *in here*. That's beyond speech. In the Taoist school, in the *Tao Te Ching*, the very first line is "The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao." That's a disclaimer for everything that follows: Don't think what you are about to read is the full story. Words are signposts, but what matters is what they point to, which is beyond signs.

**NW:** It is worthwhile to connect this with the story that Sara opened with. If we refer to the contemplative life and also thinking and feeling, I feel like this is what I described earlier as a challenge. What about the world of action? What about the world of matter? What about the world of objects? Can we not also see our focus on contemplative life as possibly an expression of an undervaluation of doing? It's interesting, you were talking about preparing for class and not being able to go and take things in your hands. What about all the reality that flows into us through moving our bodies, through engaging with substances in space? There's a passage in this essay, where Mary Caroline Richards starts to address this question of self-fulfillment, and she writes, now autobiographically:

Where did I ever get the idea that the university exists to bring me self-fulfillment? Don't think I haven't asked myself that question 100 times in the past, with a heart furious and bitter. 'You betrayed me,' I raved at the ghosts of my teachers, 'I trusted you. I thought you were teaching me what I needed to know. I thought the good life meant success and children and a husband and a home and having everything come out happily. Here I am in the middle of my life in despair, disillusionment, impotence, isolation, in hell. So I have a PhD. What good is it? I don't know up from down, dark from light. My life is in ruins. The Girl-next-door never finished high school. She has five kids, a husband, a shoe store, it looks juicy as a peach.' Where did I get the idea I like others have been brainwashed since infancy by parents, schools, church, the American mystique, which says, 'If you do well in school, you'll be equipped for life. You will have done your duty and be suitably rewarded by personal fulfillment, supposedly.' What else would it be? But what the university means by ful-

fillment is intellect, power, and money. It is a misunderstanding but that's how it happens.

Here is the challenge to be prepared to live, not the contemplative life, not the bookish life, not the life where you're in meditation all the time, or in the states of contentment and enlightenment, but juicy as a peach life. I feel like that's a challenge also for the level of reform of knowledge. That it not only be a knowledge that we find spiritually in opening on a feeling level or an aesthetic level but practically to live a good life.

**HDM:** To live a good life is not the non-active life. The contemplative life is the life that makes you act wisely, or that helps you act wisely. You could, for example, throw yourself into global warming campaigns and be burnt out in two years if your understanding of the active life is campaigning all the time. But if you are able to balance the two, then you can choose wisely and you can be much more effective. I've had my share of banner carrying and it wasn't always wise action.

**NW:** We have touched on many important things tonight and it seems we have only begun and yet it is time to close, but before we close, I'd like to thank

Heinz-Dieter Meyer and Sara Parrilli for joining us tonight, and for all of you for coming.



*Ten minute studio sketch, charcoal on newsprint, Sara Cruz*

## Two Poems by Luke Fischer

### Autumn

Mild autumn light  
embraces you  
like an old school friend,  
gifting a part of yourself  
you'd almost forgotten.  
A bit of a loner  
he'd spend each lunch break  
sitting in a corner of the classroom  
reading a book on ancient history or art  
(while the blokes played basketball  
on glaring bitumen). The gleaming rim  
of your coffee cup traces his smile,  
that of a kouros who knows  
the secret joy of the Mysteries.  
Muted colours of salt shaker, glass  
jug and table, share the same rich si-  
lence,  
as though lifted from a Morandi.  
A breeze wraps your body  
in a loose cloak, an airy house  
to accommodate your soul  
that now neither flees the earth  
for the sun, nor freezes into crystals  
along the ground, but hovers  
as a ripe, wavering plum, just held aloft  
from the pull of gravity.



## The gods are silent

The gods are silent

The gods are silent  
and where their images once moved  
at the boundary of the soul  
like mosaics of a church  
in the flicker of candlelight,  
there is only darkness.

But the time of mourning is past.  
It will not bring them to speak.

And I will celebrate their silence.

Not because I desire to be a stranger  
in the cosmos, or a shade  
reflected in the circus of a screen,  
nor because I fancy myself  
a son of Ivan, a rebel against the all,  
as heroic as that might seem.

But because I will rely on myself  
as the child who takes her first steps,  
her parents lending no assistance  
though watching in anticipation,  
and thereby joins them  
in the open  
vertical dimension  
that redefines relations  
between above and below,  
in front and behind, right  
and left, earth and sky.

I know the gods  
won't whisper into my ear  
unannounced in the black of night.

No miracle will occur.  
No church will save me  
(remember the friend  
who thought his conversion  
would solve the riddle  
of his existence).

Out of the ashes of myself  
I will condense a pillar, a candle  
ignited by pure intention,

place it on the table  
climb onto the waiting chair  
join their feast.

# An Interview with Craig Holdrege

by Eve Hindes and Stefan Ambrose

Lightly edited by Nathaniel and Craig. Transcribed by Stefan. This interview was conducted during Craig's Fall course in the M.C. Richards Program and focused on the book *Do Frogs Come From Tadpoles* by C. Holdrege, (Evolving Science Association, 2017).

**Eve Hindes [EH]:** Thank you Craig for coming to talk to us today.

**Craig Holdrege [CH]:** Glad to be here.

**EH:** You are an educator and author, phenomenologist and Goethean scientist, as well as a parent and person in wonder and awe of the world, and you can really see that in the way you've been teaching us about all kinds of creatures and their environments in the last couple of days, as well as this piece of writing you've done here. One of the first questions we have for you

is: When did you first fall in love with frogs?

**CH:** I don't know if I'm in love with frogs.

**Stefan Ambrose [SA]:** Sounds like you're in love with frogs.

**CH:** I'm definitely fascinated by frogs. It's kind of hard to say, I don't actually know. When I was in college and had to dissect a frog, I wasn't in love with them. I mean, I did it and I learned quite a bit about muscles, but that frog wasn't really a frog. Later, in teaching zoology as a high school teacher, the metamorphosis of the tadpole into the frog became interesting to me when I realized: They don't lose their tail, they digest their tail. I thought, okay this is strange. So it was in learning about the metamorphosis of the tadpole into the frog that I started to become really interested in them. Then it kind of waned; I've always enjoyed seeing frogs, and

having moved here you have all kinds of frogs in the spring—early spring peepers and the wood frogs that are heralds of the spring. The chorus they make in the evening in March and April is amazing. I started observing more. So it was a gradual process. Not gradual, it was sporadic. I never really focused again on frogs until I started doing the research for this booklet. That was a number of years ago. Five years ago or something like that.

**EH:** Just for everyone here, I'm just wondering if it would be alright with you if I just give a little description of the tadpole becoming frog. And feel free to jump in at any point if I misspeak or if you think that I have left out something important.

**CH:** Please.

**EH:** Now it is fall and the frogs are doing their thing, but in the spring, for all the people here,

imagine you're walking here in the spring, and it's still pretty cold, and things are just starting to appear and come up from the ground, and the bodies of water are beginning to thaw. You may come across a pond at this point. When I was little, it was great fun to go to the ponds and to find these globs on the edges of the pond, there'd be these big chunks of goop, and the game was to find the biggest one. You can imagine you go to the pond, and you find one of these, and maybe you lift it out of the water, and you notice this glob is actually a lot of small orbs, and in the center of each orb is a smaller dark, almost black, orb and you'll set it back into the water. Maybe you'll go on another walk a couple of weeks later, and you may find the same glob, but there's no longer the same orb in the center, but in the water you'll see from a couple dozen to a couple hundred of these small tadpoles in the water. They are very fishlike. They have a spherical body, and a mouth and little eyes on the sides of their head and a finned tail, and they move very quickly. and they're living into their environment and feeding on plant life. Around here I think all frogs feed on plant life, but that is not the case for some of them. As the water warms, a few months go by, and a good deal of tadpoles stay in the form

of a tadpole; for some it is up to two to three years. Then the frog will begin to appear, coming out of the tadpole. And it's amazing, because they don't lose the tail, as you said, it gets sucked in, digested into the body, and they rebuild and recycle their entire bodies to become this frog. And the frog, as you know, makes noise, yet the tadpole doesn't have vocal cords, and the frog will make a whole chorus of noise, so it also hears. It's developing ears and vocal cords. The eyes become bulbous on top of the head, and they start developing hind legs, having four legs, and the tail disappears into the body. It will begin to eat things other than just plant life, like insects, and for that it will need a tongue and a whole new digestive system. Which is insane! Because the big question is, how and why does it do this?

Towards the end of the first chapter you talk about how science tries to separate out this "activity." They will point out that "It's just the DNA that's doing it" or "It's the hormones!" But you really go into the fact that all creatures that are developing will have hormones and DNA but no tadpole will grow up to become a horse or a cow or anything like that, it's going to become a frog, and emerge from this tadpole. So, I'm wondering, why do you think in science they separate out this ac-

tivity? What is the point of trying to separate out the environment and activity, instead of viewing the frog as a being in relationship with its life process and environment?

**CH:** That's an interesting question. It's a fact that when you study biology, physiology, and developmental processes today, people raise the question—and you're supposed to think in this way—what causes something to happen? The cause needs to be something that you can determine, that without it, the process doesn't happen, or if you change it, the process goes differently. These are called in biology today the underlying mechanisms or a mechanistic explanation. There is an urge that has arisen in the history of science, in modern science, to look for causes in this way in biology. It's almost taken for granted that this is what science is. It's presupposed that if you're doing biology, that's what you're doing. You're looking for the causes, and the causes are discrete physical entities. One imagines DNA or thyroid hormone as something that is in the organism and when the genes are active in a particular way, or when the thyroid hormone is secreted, they initiate the process of metamorphosis in the frog. And, I don't think anyone could deny that and there have been lots of



experiments to show that. Scientists then talk about causes.

understand that you have to look at all the phenomena in their interrelations, otherwise, for me,

---

It seems to me that the search for causes limits our understanding. You'll find interesting things, but, what one finds becomes for me part of the overall picture of how something develops. Just because you can manipulate metamorphosis by changing the hormones does not mean you understand the integrated nature of the transformation from tadpole to frog.

---

It's also the case that thyroid hormone does not have the same effect in different organs of the animal. So, there is always a sort of conversation with itself, where a substance arises, and in that relationship some organs do this and some organs do that, all in relationship with the fact that this is now an organism that is in transformation. It seems to me that the search for causes limits our understanding. You'll find interesting things, but, what one finds becomes for me part of the overall picture of how something develops. Just because you can manipulate metamorphosis by changing the hormones does not mean you understand the integrated nature of the transformation from tadpole to frog. To

it is not understanding. It is the ability to manipulate. And, those are two different things.

**SA:** And it sounds like it comes to being because of its relationship to the environment, naturally. Even if we can use thyroid hormone as some causal agent, to manipulate or cause transformation, that doesn't mean that we're going to understand how this arose through time and space, this being in relationship to its environment.

**CH:** That's right.

**EH:** I think you touch on that when you talk about a desert frog of some sort that has tadpoles, and some of them, from the same mother, will become carnivorous and feed on tiny shrimp.

**CH:** In the desert!

**EH:** Yeah, in the desert! There are shrimp in puddles and some of these tadpoles will become carnivorous and feed on these shrimp, and sometimes other tadpoles of the same family. And if there aren't enough shrimp in the pond, or the body of water, that same tadpole may change its diet and go back to eating algae again.

**CH:** And it changes its whole form too. If they start feeding on shrimp they become different from those that start feeding on algae. It's the same species. There is a remarkable plasticity in relation to the environment that they're living in. That's an extreme example of very interesting frogs that are called spadefoot toads for some reason. They live in Arizona and northern Mexico and places like that. They live at least nine months under the ground as adult frogs, usually in dry areas, and when it gets a little bit wet they come up and lay their eggs—quickly. All this happens really fast in a puddle that's going to dry up soon. So, it's a remarkable adaptation to circumstances.

**EH:** That really touches on the relationship the frog has to its environment. If you were to look at that from the perspective of hormones or DNA, there's not re-

ally a solid explanation for that. It seems it's really about the tadpole and frog as a being, and how it exists and will be changed at all times by its environment.

**CH:** And certainly you could learn something by looking at the hormones, by looking at the DNA. I'm never against that kind of inquiry. Because you found x, y, or z, and you change one of those factors and the process changes, does not mean you are understanding the whole process. Scientists feel that what they call "causes" are *explanations* of the phenomena. For good or bad reasons, this has never made sense to me. It never made sense to me, from ninth grade on; that's when I remember thinking about this for the first time. That's what they call an explanation? It doesn't satisfy me. There is an interesting issue there: What we feel to be adequate as an explanation. I speak more about understanding. It starts when I feel like I've entered into the web of relationships to a degree, that I get a little bit of a sense of what's overall going on. Of course not everything, but something.

**SA:** Right, and this leads into the next section of the book that was for me really riveting. You give this great portrayal of the frog, which seems distinct from other kinds of literature that might

analyze the frog in a reductive way, and one might think, "How have you, and others, come to this way of being in relationship to the frog, such that you begin to perceive the activity?" What are these interrelating factors that actually make a thing what it is, that create and define metamorphoses, give the ability for something to metamorphose? As opposed to saying, "The thyroid hormones have caused this." You say at the end of the second chapter: "A science of beings moves beyond certain habits of mind that constrain our perception and understanding, it requires a different way of researching than is prevalent today. When nature becomes a presence and we have been touched by another being, we also honor that presence, that being. This connection forms the basis for greater insight, and importantly, for an ethical relationship to the natural world. A science of beings is a science that connects."

I was wondering if you could say a little bit more about the role, and the necessity, of this intimacy in connection to the beings that we're studying, and especially to the 7-fold process in that chapter that you describe as a biology of being? This seems like a paradigm that has these incremental layers that bring us into this form

of relationship, this form of connection. Why is that relationship and connection so important to a developing science?

**CH:** It's an interesting question, and not so easy to answer. While you were speaking, I was thinking: There are people who are in one way very materialistic in thinking about things, really dedicated to seeking cause-and-effect explanations, and they have the most warm-hearted relationship to animals and plants, and are proponents of biodiversity and really good people. Right? And, sometimes I feel a little bit of a disconnect between their thoughts and their feelings. Maybe they have a greater intimacy with animals than I have, because they're field biologists and are always out there with them, and love it, and that's great! On the other hand, if you ask them to explain the things, it's as if the animal turns into a complex mechanism. That discrepancy always felt wrong to me. I felt I could not see the things the way they are if I make them into a mechanism. I don't deny that people who have the more mechanistic view can't have a relationship. But the relationship is not enough. That's interesting, right? It's not enough. Certainly, it is a presupposition to be a good person in the world—to honor the other. It is really important! But then: Can I honor it



to a degree that I'm really willing to transform my way of knowing to adapt to the way the creature is showing itself? Or am I not doing that because I'm imposing a certain framework on it? I think that kind of sensitivity is what's key. That's why in some contexts I speak of this approach as a dialogue, as a conversation. You are listening—not literally—but you are listening to what's trying to show itself there, and then you're adapting your way of knowing to what you're discovering. That's an ongoing dialectical process that you engage in. You are becoming different, and your way of knowing is becoming different as you're engaging.

**SA:** So, maybe not step by step, but as a first principle, there's this engagement. You are getting to know a being, you're seeing it, you're seeing its activity, you're seeing its form. And then you begin to free yourself, the second principle, from the mental constraints, the boundaries, the things that we've predetermined, so that you can go back and engage with it again. To see more, see a little bit more. Then you begin to picture in your mind, a third principle. What is this being? So it begins to live in you, internally we start to develop, in this case, a "frogness." So that each time we come back to this being of the frog, we get to see a

little bit more because, in a way, we're beginning to speak its language. Then we begin to compare. In this chapter you also compare the frog with the salamanders, the caecilians.

---

There is also a danger in environmental classes, and in schools, of focusing children too early on all the problems we're causing rather than first letting them get a sense for the wonders of the world, to let them fall in love with the world concretely. To know the world.

---

**CH:** The caecilians are worm-like amphibians that are quite strange, that you've never seen—and I've never seen—they are described in the literature.

**SA:** I was reading this and was like: "Where do these exist, I don't think this is real."

**CH:** They're evidently real!

**SA:** So you begin to compare, because by comparing the frog with other beings in the same family more and more distinctions are beginning to pile up. We're developing this memory of what it means to be a frog. Then the fifth principle, intuition. The intuition that begins to reveal things about the animal that we couldn't have seen if we were just studying the mechanisms.

**CH:** Yes.

**SA:** And that feels really important and related to what you were saying—that an intimacy to the frog develops, like "I love the frog!" This isn't quite enough. When we begin to actually speak

the language of the frog, and intuit the frog, we begin to know more about the frog. And that becomes a science that instead of getting deeper and deeper mechanistically into what it means to be a frog, we begin to intuit the activity, things we couldn't have seen before. And then we have the ability to portray it, another principal, for others, so they can access these intuitions for themselves. You mention that even if we portray a being, that doesn't mean that through a portrayal that we're actually giving someone knowledge, or that we're giving someone the experience of what a frog is. We're just creating almost an architecture, or an experience, where someone can, of their own volition, of their own capacities, decide for themselves what a frog is. And you say

this requires some finesse—how to portray something well. And then, we can go back—not just as scientists and people practicing this method, but also as someone who has maybe read one of your portrayals—go back to the frog again and see more and more. So this really is a developing process. It sounds like in the traditional mechanistic scientific community there are, gradually, more who are seeing the limitations of strictly reductive research, but still something is missing.

**CH:** Yes, and I think a lot of scientists who are doing this kind

---

this turning towards the concrete in the world and training our capacities to be able to deal with complex, dynamic situations is, I think, where we need to go as humanity

---

of work carry these things that I'm trying to work with in a more unconscious way. They're synthesizing, they're seeing relationships, they're seeing things in a more holistic way than they are perhaps articulating—and that

they're, very frankly, allowed to articulate, right? If you want to get a scientific article published, you have to do it in a very particular way. Otherwise, you're gone. If you're going to be an academic, you've got to publish, or you will perish. And, so, you've got to fit a specific form. And there are so many wonderful, really incredible people studying animals and plants around the world, that are not only full of heart, but are also full of observations, and the understanding of relationships. Unfortunately, there is a superstructure throughout the scientific community, and through what has become tradition, that everything has to be interpreted in a certain way if it is going to be accepted by the community. So there's a certain sadness that I have about that. But I don't want to be critical of the individuals doing that work, because they're doing good work. I mean, you can have your questions, for example, about animal experimentation and all these kind of things. I have my big questions. You know, what are we doing to animals in laboratories to prove something, messing around with their brains, or this, or that? You can have real questions about that kind of work.

**EH:** Why do you think it's important for this way of viewing animals as beings to be, I guess,

permeated into the world of science, and what do you think the effects in a societal way would be if scientists were allowed to approach these matters with heart first?

**CH:** I think we would simply become better and better at always understanding things in their dynamic relations. That's what it's about. Ecology as a science is the science of relationships. And yet, it has become, for example, so data driven. Where you're starting with such high level abstractions, and then the only things that you can say relate to data that is deemed statistically significant. So, you have a statistical analysis of something, and say, "well, that may be a trend." A statistical trend towards this or that. You can't say anything really about the individual case. Right? And so this turning towards the concrete in the world and training our capacities to be able to deal with complex, dynamic situations is, I think, where we need to go as humanity. And this is one way to help develop those capacities. That's the one side. I think we just need more and more of those kinds of capacities in order to address how we are in the world, and what we're doing with the world.

On the other side, I just think if people were learning biology



more in this way there would be more of a sense of the fact that this is a planet that we should be taking care of and not exploiting. There is also a danger in environmental classes, and in schools, of focusing children too early on all the problems we're causing rather than first letting them get a sense for the wonders of the world, to let them fall in love with the world concretely. To know the world. I think this is especially important today where we are so screen focused. That we actually have hands-on, minds-on, senses-on experiences of the natural world. So that we're rooted in the world. In this world. Not only rooted in Google and Facebook.

**SA:** This feels like the perfect transition into the last section of the book where you begin to tackle the condensation of the beings of the world into symbols, into things. For instance, the idea that we can determine or say, "The human being comes from the chimpanzee." Why would we say such a thing? Do we even have evidence to say something like this? You begin to look at this idea that none of the specific traits in the human, none of the activity of the human, can you actually find in the fossil record of the chimpanzee. When we look at the fossil record, the picture only grows in complexity.

It doesn't become more clear. So, why would we say something like "human beings come from chimpanzees," or, that "the frog comes from the tadpole," when nothing of the frog exists within the tadpole? It sounds like this condensing of the educational experience to this symbolic, data driven process, it's almost that that's the only option. We can only really see the physical, skeletal remains, "that's what we must come from."

**EH:** It really separates out beings themselves. If you look at a fossil, you're just looking at it like it's a thing, not as a unique part of history and evolution.

**SA:** So then you start to explore a polarity. We have evidence of the created being in the form of, for instance, a fossil, or, for instance, when looking at a tadpole and just seeing, "Okay here's a tadpole and here's a frog." Just the structure and, of course, there are mechanical realities to that, and you make sure to say you're advocating for a science that doesn't throw out research that is looking into things like the thyroid hormone. But on the other side of this polarity, there's what you call, a "creative being, creative activity, agency, a being at work." And anytime you focus on the one side of this polarity you start to lose the picture of what a being really is. Could you define and

contextualize what these three phrases mean—creative activity, agency, a being-at-work?

**CH:** No, I can't define them.

**SA:** I was expecting this! Because right after he says this, he says, "well, language isn't important!" But, then these phrases appear over and over! They do seem indicative of a way of thinking that's important.

**CH:** You remember we talked about the beaver twelve days ago. I gave a portrayal of the beaver and then we looked at the teeth, the growing incisors, and how the incisors continue to grow, and at the same time they're being worn down constantly as the animal is gnawing. I don't remember who of you it was that realized, "the animal is a kind of activity." It is "formed," but it's also always "forming." Think of what we just talked about this morning with human development in the bones, for instance the feet. We're forming, our bodies are forming through activity that achieves form, and the forms are always being re-formed. Every organismic process is like this. The re-formation is slow, or it can be rapid, like in the development of the tadpole to the frog, where everything gets broken down and reorganized within a week. That this aquatic creature becomes that hopping creature. So this is

where, if you follow the process, you begin to see the animal is everywhere activity. It's everywhere activity. Plants are activity in their own way too. It's a different story, but we're focusing on animals here. So, everywhere you can look, at every structure—as reflection of an activity. The skin is continually being replaced.

---

We're forming, our bodies are forming through activity that achieves form, and the forms are always being re-formed. Every organismic process is like this.

---

We have all new red blood cells within 120 days. So, ongoing activity of the organism: that's the one side. That's what I'm calling agency, or using "creative activity," which sometimes rubs people the wrong way—the creative part, I'll come back to that in a second.

"Being-at-work" is a translation of Aristotle. That I got from an interesting newer translation of Aristotle by a person named Joe Sachs. He translates Aristotle's term "energeia," (where we get "energy" from) as "being at work." An organism is a being-at-work. A being is a doing. To be a human being is to be a doing. To be a frog is to be a doing frog.

But, it's also a formed frog. So, that's what you were saying is the polarity, right? Because if I only think activity all the time, then I lose track of the fact that I wake up tomorrow and I've still got the same feet, I've got the same fingerprints. There's something that stays somewhat the same. But, it's staying the same, not

because it's some dead architecture, but because—not because, that's not even the right word, it's not a because—its "staying the same" is being continually created. And this is what Aristotle called "entelechy." The entelechy, it's something Sachs translates as "being-at-work-staying-itself." It's ingenious the way he translated this actually. It's much more concrete than just saying "entelechy," a term that might lead you to think of some "thing," rather than a doing. The organism is an active being, always at work.

Why is this important? Because in the way we look at evolution, we have always a tendency to look at it from the point of view

of the past. And also in development: "The tadpole turned into the frog" or "the ape, or monkey, turned into *Ardipithecus*, and *Ardipithecus* turned into *Australopithecus*, etc." So you're always looking at a kind of molding from the past. When you're looking at mechanisms, the past is always determining the present. Right? It's always past oriented. The moment you start looking at activity, then you're seeing—you know—the frog is something new. When something starts to walk upright and has a skeleton for upright-ness, that's new. You cannot deduce that from the past. There's no way to get from the study alone of a creature that is not yet upright and is monkey-like to the form of the upright posture. You could not know from those early "Lucy"-type skulls (*Australopithecus afarensis*), what the modern human skull is going to look like. It's not in there. So, where does it come from? Does the author answer that question? [laughing] I don't think so.

**SA:** Well, I think it's interesting. What you're characterizing is a physical ancestor. There is something that came before us. That determined in many ways the shape we could take and the boundaries that we would meet in our development. However, there's something else, that, as you say, did not come from



what came before us. It manifested within the stream of life that we are the latest aspect of. And, that that's a really important reframing of the process. And while the answer to that question may still be unanswered, the fact that we're now looking at it from this

---

to the extent that we're recognizing the activity surrounding us in our interrelationships, we are evolution looking at itself, reflecting on itself. And that is new.

---

new perspective, that is living, maybe we'll start to find, within the complexity of the growing fossil record, maybe, instead of developing more confusion and making more and more theoretical claims, we'll begin to find more and more life and meaning. We'll begin to know ourselves a little bit more, actually.

**CH:** Right. Thank you. That was nicely put.

**EH:** At the conclusion of the third chapter, before the acknowledgments, there's a passage that we felt brought everything together and raised some really good questions:

"When we study evolution, we are consciously connecting with the whole of life—the life, with

which we are also connected through evolution. In this sense, evolution is reflecting back on itself in the minds of human beings. But, this reflection itself is a creative activity; it is not a given. The more I study evolution, the more I see the boundaries we put in the way of an expansive and deeper understanding. But I also see that we can move beyond those boundaries. It becomes ever clearer that our understanding of

evolution will evolve to the degree that we evolve in our capacity to see evolution as a creative activity."

**SA:** This just feels like a mic drop statement. And also like a meditation. I'd like you to talk about it. When I first read this, I was like, "What?" Then I read it again, and I was like, "Wow." In other words, to the extent that we're looking at the activity in life, and not just the created being, or, for instance, the fossil record, the material mechanisms of something; to the extent that we're recognizing the activity surrounding us in our interrelationships, we are evolution looking at itself, reflecting on itself. And that is new. This is not just for the process of developing a new "biology of be-

ings," or a new science, but simply to know what it means to be human. And this is a deep revelation, that could be philosophical. It could almost be borderline spiritual. To the extent that we develop a process, a lifestyle or a method of science where we see this as a concrete reality. We are evolution, the activity of evolution, looking at itself. That's pretty wild, right?

**EH:** Existential.

**CH:** Pretty wild.

**SA:** Want to say something about that? Where that came from?

**CH:** No! I think we've got three more days in our course, right? Next week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. And we need to come back to this in some way, shape, or form. This little book was a breakthrough for me. I got somewhere where I hadn't been before. I gained an orientation to questions I'd been carrying for about thirty years. I got some little openings. I'm making some statements that are new territory.

**SA:** Well, I love this statement, because it's really hopeful. When I read that statement, I just feel like, "Yeah, we're going to overcome our boundaries!" Right? The same way the frog is manifesting, overcoming, dissolving the boundaries of the tadpole. We can overcome and dissolve the

boundaries we currently experience as our way of relating to the world. So, that's really hopeful.

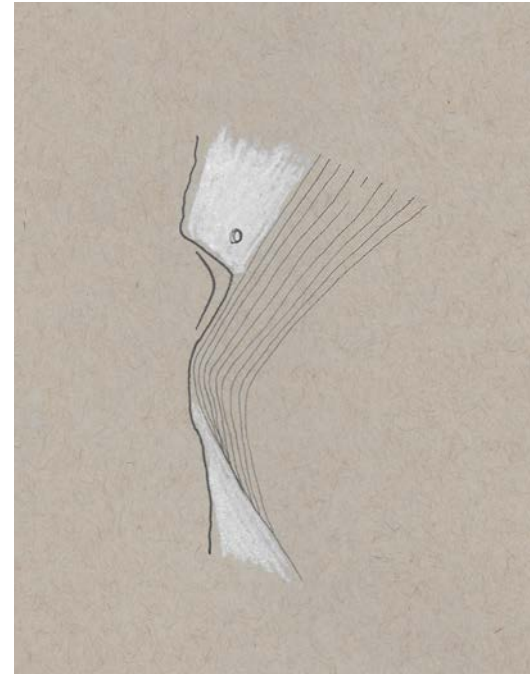
**CH:** Yes, that's very true. We can keep going. We can become different.



*Carriage House*, charcoal on newsprint, Kyra Moyer

# YET NOT CONSUMED

By Mary Szybist (United States, b.1972)



But give me the frost of your name  
in my mouth, give me  
spiny fruits and scaly husks —  
give me breath

to say aloud to the breathless clouds  
your name, to say  
I am, let me need  
to say it and still need you  
to give me need, to make me  
into what is needed, what you need, no



more than that I am, no more  
than the stray wind on my neck, the salt  
of your palm on my tongue, no more than  
need, a neck that will bend  
lower to what I am, so  
give me creeping, give me clouds that hang  
low and sweep the blue of the sky  
to its edges, let me taste the edges, the  
bread-colored clouds,  
here I am, give me

thumb and fingers, give me only  
what I need, a turn here  
to turn what I am  
into I am, what your name writ in clouds  
writ on me



Images for the poem *Yet Not Consumed*  
Created by Laura Summer

# Bridging Divides, Healing Communities Grant Program

Laura Summer

Free Columbia has been awarded a grant from the Taconic Berkshire Foundation as part of their “Bridging Divides, Healing Communities Grant Program”. This grant will support discussion/workshops on social injustice and systemic racism. The workshops will be offered to residents of Columbia County free of charge. Workshops will be led by Roxanne Wilkins who has worked for forty years with Families in Crisis. She was a leader of diversity work and social justice for Hawthorne Valley School in Ghent NY in 2017. She is currently doing individual and group mentoring of girls in Philmont, New York, through Americorps, as well as leading local racial justice discussions. She was a participant in Free Columbia’s Social Theory and Action Program in 2018.

The program will be in-depth discussion/workshops, with the objective of creating a new sense of connectedness amongst its members. The group will be coming together to share, learn, and express their individual experiences and perspectives hoping to find ways to cope, heal, and solve some of the issues together. Since having a pilot session last July with 20 in attendance, all of whom eagerly requested more talks, we are encouraged to proceed.

If you are interested in participating please contact Laura Summer.

## New Online Art Courses

Laura Summer

When the coronavirus pandemic started I wondered what I could do as an artist to help. Since I could not teach in person or show work in exhibition, I began to offer online classes. I found that there were people all over the world who were interested in working with painting in relation to meaning. Currently, I am conducting five zoom calls per week; four for people interested in Color, Composition, and Contemplation and one working with the *Calendar of the Soul* by Rudolf Steiner. These courses include local people here in Columbia County, New York, as well as people from across the United States, India, Malaysia, Romania, Canada, and Mexico. Doing this work together has created a worldwide community of mutual support and understanding. Recently, a participant in Malaysia asked me if I could offer something artistic in relation to *The Philosophy of Freedom* by Rudolf Steiner. She said she had a group in Malaysia and China who would be interested. So, I will begin to prepare this work and hope to offer it starting in March.

The courses follow a basic format of exercises that people do at home during the week and then a zoom

call where everyone shows their work and asks and answers questions. I find that seeing each other’s work is the greatest teacher. My experience is that artistic work is often transformative and stabilizing for people. Many of the participants have remarked on how this work has been a lifeline for them in these difficult times. Through this creative work a supportive transcultural community has been formed. Often in the groups, working together, we can feel inspiration and understanding flow between us.

### Comments from Participants:

“I have recently been involved with two online courses that Laura offers. They have given me a wonderful opportunity to connect with people from different countries and helped me to see how different cultures view the world. Even more importantly they have given me a practical way of learning to use art in my inner work. They have been of immense value for me on many levels. I am so grateful that I have been able to take part in these courses.”

—Janice Shaski, Canada

“Laura Summer is a remarkable teacher. She offers simple, clear instruction to the novice level based on her long studied inner life. The intention is clear: she is modeling a process not a product. Her process makes her classes both available for the neophyte and inspiring to the accomplished artist, by giving tangible support for the beginner and encouragement to freedom for the more advanced.

Her goal is to teach her students how to bring to visible expression our personal and universal searching and feelings on worthwhile themes. This makes her offerings fruitful in all cultural contexts. Find your way to a plant in your environment, she will say, and it does not matter if it is a Swedish

blueberry or an African violet: the important thing is your reaching out with warm interest into the living world.

In her classes art is not a subject so much as it is a path of cognition and expression.”

—Karin Mortensen, San Francisco, CA

“What I learned has been far greater than the sum of these parts. Laura Summer led a group of us in a training so ripe for a personal encounter with the quality realm that I find myself with what feels like painting as a spiritual practice. Spiritual in that I am able to connect to and have a relationship with color that is immaterial. My time at Free Columbia helped me form this capacity to listen to and experience color and composition in this deep way.”

—Alison Fox, Hudson, NY

“The few moments everyday with the Calendar of the Soul and the Art work is an energy booster and I am very grateful for this quiet time.”

—Hem Angi, Hyderabad, India

“I joined Laura’s online course Color, Composition, Contemplation and Calendar of Soul since October and August 2020, respectively. Laura reaches toward us with open gestures, embraces differences and errors, guided self-reflection with warm thoughtful assignment briefs and live feedback. I have great joy working and dialogue with members from different countries and backgrounds every week, when we come together to live within different qualities of colors, expressions and meaning, it gives rise to inner and outer peace. Beautiful experiences.”

—Chik Ying, Malaysia





# The Bird Hunters of Anthropocenia

an original play written and directed by Nathaniel Williams, with original music by Aldo Lavaggi, was produced and performed before limited audiences in 2020.

It was a challenging year for theater, as for so many other facets of collective life! We were fortunate that our production lined up with a loosening of public gathering guidelines in New York State, and we were able to offer six ticket-free, outdoor shows that safely accommodated audiences of forty people each. Our troupe this year consisted of Aldo Lavaggi, Melody Brink, Linda Michael, Madison Shulkin, Nathaniel Williams, and Emmett Nelson. There were many volunteers who helped make this project happen. The production included costumes created by Phoebe Martel, who was graciously supported by Arla Trusiewicz and other volunteers. Ella Lapointe created our poster. Catherine Smith brought the gift of looking for still compositions to remember the event through her camera, and a group of safety supporters showed up to help under the coordination of Laura Summer.

The play portrays the history of a world called Anthropocenia and the society of people that live there. In the course of the play, light turns to death, sleep becomes light, and a people who hunted birds and ate them, become the food of great birds themselves.

In ancient times the people learned how to release light from certain stones and they made big holes in the mountains to dig these stones out. They could burn as bright as storm lightning. Over many, many years the people learned from Light, who they looked to for guidance. They worshiped the light who promised that he would help them conquer sleep and death. Most of the people lived underground through light goggles. They were called the Luciens. They spent their time in the light worlds where they were never sleepy. When they did sleep, it was in short patches, brief and superficial. They had long ago stopped having dreams. When they were children they went to light school to learn to control their light bodies by using goggles and small movements of their eyelids. Living in the city was best because it was underground, removed from the pollution of the rock furnace. It was also convenient to live underground where people had full control. They didn't need to worry about being disturbed by sunset, or sunrise. They could turn the lights on and off. They had control of the light. They put on their goggles and lived in the light. They felt free and they rarely needed sleep.

Not everyone could live in the light cities, or in the light worlds.

Those who had sensitive or defective eyes, or who hated light school, lived outside the light cities and





came to call themselves the bird hunters. There was a constant threat of sickness from the pollution in the sky from the great rock furnace. But there was a silver lining: Creatures who lived by the water were less likely to get sick. And this is where the bird hunters made their home, by the great arm of the sea. There they ate water plants, fished, and hunted birds. They would go with their shovels, picks, and buckets into the mines, and they would haul out rocks and carry them to the great furnace. This furnace fueled the world of the Luciens.

Such was the life of the bird hunters, and they were never welcomed in the light city.

Most of the bird hunters did not hunt birds. They worked in the mines, fished, and harvested water plants. The actual hunters of birds were the few among them who had become leaders. They hunted the white-headed eagle, that fed on fish, and fresh corpse, not unlike our eagles and hawks. The gifted among the young mine workers and fishers were chosen by the elder bird hunters as novices. A rigorous training followed that involved lying still as death and culminated in a hunt for a white-headed eagle. The beak of the eagle was golden and would be used to dye a headband, to show that a novice had become a birdhunter.

This play follows the path of a stubborn and ambitious novice birdhunter who eventually receives a task through a mysterious encounter in sleep, and is able to restore dreaming among the Luciens.

This project was made possible with funds from the Decentralization Program, a grant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature and administered in Columbia County by CREATE Council on the Arts as well as Project Hudson.



mixed media illustrations by Ella Lapointe

## Reflections from Students in the M.C. Richards Program

In November we spent two and a half weeks with Craig Holdrege on a topic that I will now be considering for the rest of my life: *theoretical evolution*. Coming from the university, where I studied art history, my first thought was that biology and evolution could not be further from my area of interest. And yet, by the end of our class, I realized that throughout all my studies in the humanities, I had not really considered what it meant to be human at all. Through looking at the forms of the skeletal features (and sculpting them afterwards) of both animals and human beings, we began to consider the artful achievement of human anatomy as an evolutionary departure from larger more dominant themes seen in the animal worlds. We noted the claim towards uprightiness, we noted the *generalization* of human anatomy (especially our hands) opening us to myriad use potentials, we began to unpack the fossil record of the impulse towards humanness (*Australopithecus Afarensis*, *Ardipithecus*, *Homo Erectus*, etc.), often finding surprising leaps and contradictions throughout the transition of ages. Our questions were inexhaustible: why, for instance, has the human being no specific reliable environment; or why has our morphology (form) pushed towards a more simple, non-adapted, prototypical form instead of the utility specific capacities we see with animal claws and teeth? Needless

to say, the riddle of the human being was never fully unraveled because instead of pursuing the spotty trail of clues to the “answers” within evolution, the class opened us up to a way of appreciating the presence of a mystery and to observe the conditions which gave it rise. To that end, our slight awareness of the great world picture over time, as inheritors of the curiosity of life, is the product of an evolution deeply self-reflective as much as it is ineffable. Our attention to this enigma belongs not only to the scruples of science but as well to the implications of the entire human presence.

—Sergio Rico

Coming into this program, I knew my outlook on the world around me was going to change. And yet, even still, I am continually astounded by the new perspectives with which I am graced in each and every block. Our fifth block in the M.C. Richards program was focused on Color Theory and taught by Henrike Holdrege at the Nature Institute.

While the course has already challenged many things I thought I knew, this block has now forced me to reexamine many of the color phenomena I’ve experienced in my life. There are so many ways to look at the incredible experiences the



world brings about, simple ways, that our complex society guides us away from, but Goethean science guides us back to simple clues that, at the same time, bring forth incredible insights.

This block brought up the familiar feeling of wonder within myself. There are multiple phenomena we have observed, that don't come along with a concrete answer, justifying how they unfold. This, I feel, is something we're not used to in our modern age. Explanations are so accessible to us that, even though we experience a curiosity about the world around us, it's short lived, as we are able to immediately satisfy that curiosity with just the touch of a screen. In this block with Henrike, we were asked to face these phenomena, and live with the wonder of their lawfulness. This is harder than you think! It's a struggle, but it feels good! It's easy to get caught up in the facts we think we know, but there's so much to be seen in releasing that constraint, and wholly observing what is in front of you.

I had a block similar to this when I was in high school but I was bothered by the lack of explanation that came with the experiments we were shown. I wanted to be able to talk about why these things were happening, what reactions and interactions were going on, and I often left the class feeling frustrated. But now, at a different point in my life, I'm able to hold these experiments in myself in a different way. It means something to leave the classroom and still think about the experiment you observed. You look at the things around you with a growing curiosity, rather than the blunt experience of knowing something's lawfulness. It draws up more questions inside you, and, in my experience, guides me to look deeper into the phenomena at hand, and more surrounding it. This block for me has been about learning to ask questions, and being satisfied with the act of asking the question as my answer.

—Lucy Nordin

I walk into the studio where we are to begin our course in Goethean observation and encounter first the professor for this block, Catherine Read, a perception psychologist, who greets me with a kind smile and a short vowelled “good morning.” By the end of the class I am left with a distinct impression of Professor Read: She seamlessly integrates kindness and succinctness, inspiration and measure. She has the rare ability of connecting the most concrete phenomena and the most inspiring ideas, so that the former are all the more profound and the latter all the more available for grounded appreciation. For two weeks we engaged in disciplined Goethean observation of an individually selected rock, plant, or landscape (I observed a milkweed plant), elaborating the details of its appearance, how it changed from day to day, and the impressions it made upon us.

By observing, describing, and experiencing the milkweed I came to know the milky substance it exudes from all its parts, the golden veins that run through its leaves, the outlandish appearance of the pods, a milky lime green with soft thorn-like points all over. As it was fall, I bore witness to its browning, wilting, and the opening of its pods that revealed a dandelion-like bundle of seeds. I saw it die, for the winter, but spread its seeds before doing so. All these details integrated in my mind and fleshed out my conception of the milkweed plant. Not once did I approach with an intention of applying logic or dissective methods. This is the aspect of the observations Catherine wanted to reflect back to us, that one can learn by immersing in experience, and allowing the concepts to reveal themselves through the observation; she curated an experience that made concrete Goethe's indication that theory is implicit in observation, and that the higher order phenomena/concepts reveal themselves through meticulous attention to the manifold variations of lower order phenomena.

In addition, and in contrast to the disciplined ob-

servaion we were doing, Catherine led us through a lecture by Rudolf Steiner about the archangel Michael and the significance of the Michaelic Fall season. In this lecture, Steiner elaborated the importance of experiencing the natural transitions of this season, the increasing cold, the darkening, the slow death and recession of vegetation, in order to become more intimate with the significance of the Michaelic impulse: the bringing forth of light in the face of darkness. Catherine tied this into our plant observations and how through that practice we were beginning to experience, in all its phenomenal splendor, the transition through Fall, the season of Michael. As a result of these observations, Steiner's seemingly lofty and esoteric ideas about the Michaelic impulse were brought down to earth, quite literally. Thanks to Catherine's guidance I felt more intimately connected to and inspired by Michael and what he embodies, the Fall season, and also the milkweed than ever before. Thank you Catherine, for seamlessly navigating us through the earthly natural phenomena and high spiritual ideas only to show, in refreshingly grounded fashion, that they are more intimately interwoven than we might know.

—Kai Naor

I want to express my gratitude to Craig Holdrege, Goethean scientist and cofounder of the Nature Institute, who taught a course in animal and human evolution. Throughout his course I've had the unique opportunity to witness and experience first-hand the application of hermeneutics and qualitative methods in the natural sciences in his work and teaching. It is a special privilege to be exposed to the application of ideas, in the study of organisms, for example, which often stay abstract and theoretical, or else are sanctioned exclusively to the social sciences. And yet, through his course it became ever clearer that these methods were integral to a comprehensive study of organisms, where-

as the materialistic lens reduces and interprets the animal as organic-machine.

Craig's animal portrayals, in all their depth, vividness, and comprehensive treatment of phenomena, stand in contradistinction to neo-Darwinian pictures which often reduce an organism to singular parts and singular functions. For example, Craig pokes holes in the convenient evolutionary explanation of the giraffe's longneck resulting from the survival advantage of reaching higher browsing foliage in seasons of drought. He offers us a more careful and well-rounded study of the giraffe, and points to numerous phenomena that are completely incompatible with the neo-Darwinian narrative.

But while I recognize the importance of Craig's elaboration of the shortcomings of materialistic approaches to the organism, I'd like to highlight an immensely inspiring aspect of his work: the rich and generative domain of his Goethean work and methods, which lies beyond the cracked facade of the overly simplistic mechanistic evolutionary picture.

Craig painted a picture of the giraffe that was at once replete in factual detail and yet beautifully and lyrically presented. Through his work I learned about the skeleture, musculature, social behaviors, sensory abilities, and environmental entanglements of the giraffe. Craig interwove these phenomenal threads, in the sense Goethe indicates through Mephistopheles in *Faust*, so as to point to an essence or beingness that is *Giraffe*, an irreducible organismic essence. Whereas a mechanistic neo-Darwinian perspective presents the *giraffe* as an epiphenomenon resulting from the sum of its true and essential parts, Craig presented all the phenomena that we call giraffe in a way that pointed to their inextricableness, and their inherent logic. In this way, through strict loyalty to the phenomena, Craig is able to intimate giraffe-ness, Giraffe as an irreducible whole, that can only be accounted for by creating room for those intangi-



ble phenomena and impressions which we deem moral, ethical, hermeneutic, and thus outside the realm of natural sciences. And yet it is precisely the acknowledgement and integration of these aspects that are necessary for a complete natural science, free of hypocritical and unnatural bias for materiality.

—Kai Naor

The Current of Goodwill was great in the way that it brought me a new way of thinking about money. It influenced how I think of economics and the exchange of goods. I got to completely reanalyze what it means to be a part of this process and what it could look like to be doing it responsibly. I think mostly it made me realize how much I don't consider the ethics of where my money is being spent, or the way in which I get my food, or the quality of relationship I'm building in these different spaces that I spend money in routinely.

We went over some of the philosophies of Rudolf Steiner and associative economics, Anthea Kelsick and the B-Lab, and the basic ideas of Milton Freidman and Karl Marx. Although difficult to fully grasp in such a short span of time, it gave us an open mind to rethink some of our conventional attitudes in modern day economics, as well as prepare us to better engage with discussions from guest teachers who came to speak with us about current projects attempting to open possibilities for new ways of exchanging goods and services (Chris Hewitt, Michael Marks and Leanne Ussher).

Having gone through all these talks, we began our "Current of Goodwill" project. The project was to make cards that represent a chain of services done out of goodwill. So any time we received something special from someone, like a gift or a lift to a friend's house, we would show appreciation by giving them a card representing 50 currents (Hudson valley current-local currency) that they would then

continue to pass down to others who had done things for them, until the card was filled and sent to one of 5 charities chosen by the last receiver of the card.

It was a great project, but it seemed difficult to complete it well. We had a video team working on an inspirational short film, a painting team that created a mural out of all of the cards so that each card had a unique piece of the whole mural, and instructions team who designed the lay out of the instructions side of the cards.

I think that there might have been a lack of focus on any one particular philosophy. It seemed like we were brushing over very dense material and lots of different writers and thinkers which made it a little difficult to keep up in conversation or to follow some of the thoughts about economics if one wasn't trained or well-read in some of these areas.

I do think that this part of the course is very important to the entirety of the program in the way that it helps ground us in reality to take a wider perspective on our daily activities. It definitely helped point to the fact that everything we do is tied to our well-being and that includes the way in which we handle economics. As an artist, I really appreciated learning that how I do business also becomes an art form and opportunity to bring more beauty into the world, with a striving for more wholesome forms of exchange.

—Armando Felipe García

Lucas Dreier's deep love and commitment to the Kogi people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta became our guiding light during our anthropology course. Day by day, we explored the lawfulness of indigeneity and how it intersects with our contemporary, western culture. Finding this meeting place, we worked our way back to a common source, intimate connection with the spirit through

sense revelation. My own special realization came in experiencing what I feel is the kinship between Indigenous ways of knowing, Goethean science, and the study of Aristotelian categories of my own Western heritage.

—Stefan Ambrose

I was in a Waldorf school from kindergarten to eighth grade and from the beginning I have been most interested in the creative world. Through high school and community college I really missed the Waldorf painting strategies, especially the watercolor exercises I had learned. Laura Summer's art class helped me get back to my roots with that gentle Waldorf-like approach to water colors, drawing, and color exercises (some exercises of her own creation). We explored colors, experimented with mixing them, and figured out which colors would look best paired together. Along this process, we created paintings associated with colors and the feelings they gave us, and how they related to words and poems. I feel like this class could benefit anyone, Waldorf background or not. Not only did we get to explore the world of color, but also the techniques of composition and adding mixed media to a canvas in addition to watercolor. Laura's visual art class is so relaxing and at the same time gets my head thinking about knowledge of color and composition and how I can use these exercises in my own art outside of class.

—Aiden Paul

The *Explorations of place and history through visual art* course truly pushed the limits of my thinking. We were engaged in a way of connecting with the land that took courage and discipline. Not only were we asked to open ourselves to experiencing historically significant structures in our area, but also to engage with them in a deeper way through

the drawing process.

We began in nature, which reflected the indigenous peoples of the land, and moved through different factories to homes and buildings, from the 1700s all the way to modern times. The process was able to heighten our relationship to the places we spent time with, as well as the transmission of information we were able to receive through feeling. In this way, we gained a deeper connection to the space that entered our field of thinking through the imagination.

Taking this further, we spent time reading about the history of each of the time periods that we got to draw. As we learned about the history of the peoples who inhabited this place through reading and drawing, we also sang songs every morning to get even more in touch with what that era felt like, what these places had inspired in the peoples that lived here, from the Natives to the colonist settlers, to the industrial revolution, all the way to modern times.

Truly I have never met someone more inspirational to guide a class of this kind. Every day we were met with a new adventure, every day we were gifted with Nathaniel's encouragement and positive reinforcement to get out there and connect to these deeper realities of place. His energy fueled me in a way that got me to see things and do things I could have never imagined myself doing on my own. I was really pleased with my results and improvement in drawing skills. It was a gift to have received this new process that now feels deeply embedded in my being, a process I will be able to make great use of. The exercise of feeling and seeing really changed the way I viewed my personal art-making process and has forever changed the way I look at the world.

—Armando Felipe García



MC Richards Program - 2020 Cohort



*Summit Mill*, charcoal on newsprint, Isabel Dancey

# Gratitude

We have received hundreds of contributions from individuals to make this work possible as well as support from:

Artist Resource Trust  
Berkshire Taconic Foundation  
Create Community Arts Grants  
Fern Hill Foundation  
Project Hudson  
Raymond James Charitable Endowment  
Stewart Shops  
The Evidenz Stiftung  
The Field Center  
The Green County Council on the Arts  
The Heritage Fund  
The Iona Stichting  
The Rudolf Steiner Charitable Trust  
The World Goetheanum Association

Thanks also to Free Columbia's Board members

**Linda Park** | *Development Director, Hawthorne Valley School*

**Nathaniel Williams** | *Free Columbia*

**Laura Summer** | *Free Columbia*

**Kai Naor** | *Musician, Social Therapy at Camphill Hudson, Student M.C. Richards Program*

**Allison Hoppe** | *Attorney, Environmental Protection Agency*

**Sara Parrilli** | *Art Teacher, Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School*

**Pete Lemire** | *Systems Engineer at Compass (a national, real estate tech unicorn based in NYC)*



*High Falls*, charcoal on newsprint, Armando Felipe Garcia