

Expressing Creativity

With Mary Lachman and Robin McCahill

by Nancy Cohen



Music, sports, dance, hugging, writing, drama, photography... The way we express emotions... How we cook, clean, speak, dress... Our choices in homes, friends, activities... All of these are aspects of creative expression. In every culture and time, creative expression has been used to connect generations, communicate, heal, enrich, teach, encourage reflection and new perspectives, and more. The process of innovation is a way of exploring and understanding our selves and our world. Local artists Mary Lachman and Robin McCahill have spent their lives discovering and sharing creativity. Mary believes "Everyone has the ability to create...the trick is finding what sings to your soul." Robin's thoughts? Everyone is creative and expresses some aspect of themselves just by being, whether deliberate or not. We present images through attire, poise, speech, movement or personal environment, and our ultimate creation is our own life.

Robin performs with hand-crafted puppets, and teaches puppet-making and wool felting to enhance well-being through creativity. She enjoys watching students express themselves, encouraging them to "Let change happen and do not follow constraints

and traditions or rules. Let go and see what happens." Robin believes enthusiasm for activities nourishes the spirit and sees creative expression as a way to process emotions. "It is generally not healthy to hold things



Photo: Dominick Scaramuzzino

inside whether it is difficult trauma or even exuberant delight. To express is to get these emotions out and de-stress, while simultaneously making a statement or simply creating something beautiful."

Mary's focus is creating felted hats and bags, knitwear and quilts. She perceives creative expression as "... the lifelong pursuit of art that allows one to realize his or her full potential



while creating positive change for those around them. Creative expression is an outlet for the mind. It can take you away to a place of peace and calm. It is relaxing. Once absorbed in making art (or working in the garden) I forget about the clock. I stop adding to my 'to do' list. I don't check the email. Sometimes I listen to music or a book on CD, but sometimes I just play."

The two first met in 2009 at an art open house. Inspired by Robin's felting demonstration, Mary became her student. They responded to each other's creative experimentation and ideas, and have since exhibited together at various fairs. Though they often create alone, Robin says "Working together and even taking workshops can be a great jump start to your own inspiration..."

As a child, Robin was always



Robin McCahill and Mary Lachman

Photo: Leo Kulinski

creating. "My grandmother taught me to crochet. I took it to a 3-d level and made masks and crazy costumes." She worked in fiber, learned to spin wool and shear sheep. While an art instructor and independent living facilitator in a rehabilitation center, she brought clients to a felting exhibit. Thus began her love of felting and puppetry, "sculpture that comes alive."

Mary views creativity as integral to her identity. "I create art because I have to. Working with my hands is deeply embedded in who I am as an individual." Her parents taught her values of thriftiness and hard work. She learned sewing from her mother. "Creativity and the ability to make something from castoffs was appreciated. I didn't shop for clothing. I shopped for fabric to make clothes." She was instilled



with the idea she could do anything. Her grandmother's hand-pieced quilts from previous generations inspired Mary to learn knitting, crocheting, and quilting. However, college/graduate school, marriage, and family, only enabled time for occasional dabbling in handicrafts.

In 2000, just when Mary began



quilting after a twenty year hiatus, her projects, fabrics, and books were destroyed in a house fire. The sewing machine's plastic case melted to the table. "It was a devastating event. But it was only stuff. Luckily my husband and I both felt the same way. We could replace material objects, and no one

had been hurt. As we rebuilt our home, quilting helped me rebuild my life."

Creativity can generate renewal anytime. When feeling drained, Robin, who is also a licensed massage therapist and business owner of Intuit Bike Fit (fitting bicycles to people), realized she is happiest when creating. As a result, she began taking time daily to make something. It helped...as does her journaling and "moving meditation" bicycling.



Mary enjoys the quote: *To the question of your life you are the only answer.* To encourage anyone believing they lack creativity, she recommends "Go on---jump in. Start small. Don't let yourself be overwhelmed. Give it a go. Keep going. Take a class. Don't try to copy the teacher's sample. Do your own thing. Don't look to others for applause. You will know in your heart when you have found your calling." Robin advises, "Fear causes stress and turmoil and stagnation. Just go for it. Don't worry about judgment. You don't have to be the best. You just have to be. And being you is certainly good enough."

Robin's exhibiting at New Jersey's Art School at Old Church, and September 25 at Litchfield's White Memorial Conservation Center's Nature Day. Mary teaches quilting at North Haven's Quadrille Quilting and often assists Robin, including at Cheshire's Artsplace. She hopes to soon convene a monthly group of fiber enthusiasts. In November, her work will appear in Creative Arts Workshop's Celebration of American Crafts. Both artists will display at Art Center of Killingworth's Autumn Art Trail Weekend October 9-10. Robin: 860.283.0050, robinmccahill@att.net, www.intuit2arts.com. Mary: mary@marylachman.com, marylachman.wordpress.com, marylachman.com.