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My Daily Grounds: A Journal of Creative Alchemy

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My Daily Grounds Journal of Creative Alchemy

by

Kathleen Donovan

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creativity and Change Leadership

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2024

Buffalo State University

State University of New York

Department of Creativity and Change Leadership

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

My Daily Grounds: Journal of Creative Alchemy

My Daily Grounds: A Journal of Creative Alchemy is a project intended to renew artistic confidence and prepare a mindset for a writing retreat in Ireland in June 2024 by revisiting childhood memories and exploring the impact of early domestic abuse through a visual journaling process. This endeavor aims to stir up the creative voice and find authenticity in creation by gathering and clarifying personal data visually, following the Creative (CPS) approach to unlock new insights and ideas for writing. The resulting essays will illuminate the unseen effects of trauma and are intended for publication, reflecting a co-creative process between the artist and the act of creation as the artist approaches a new decade of life.

Kathleen Donovan

Your Signature

5/5/24

Date

Buffalo State University
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Dates of Approval:

5/5/24



Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Associate Professor

5/5/24



Kathleen Donovan
Student

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Acknowledgments

In 2020, I found myself emotionally struggling. I realized that a deep-seated childhood wound was being triggered, and I was revisiting some dark places that I hadn't been to in a while. One day, while in my car, I began to weep and prayed for strength. Suddenly, I looked outside and saw a vibrant, fiery-orange monarch butterfly flying through an unexpected early autumn hailstorm. Despite the strong wind and rain, the butterfly kept flapping its wings and pushing forward. It seemed impossible but, at the same time, so inspiring. I felt that the butterfly was a messenger from the Divine, a symbol of hope telling me to keep moving forward even when life's circumstances seem to push me back. This experience was a moment of "Monarch Madness" that I will never forget. So, my first thank you goes to this winged creature. I am so grateful for your visitation that dark day. It brought me hope.

After weathering the storms of life, just like a butterfly, I have emerged stronger. However, unlike monarchs, I cannot achieve true metamorphosis without the support of certain people in my life. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers, my SUNY Buffalo State University advisor, for her creative guidance and unrelenting assistance in helping me complete this project. A thousand cheers to her! I would also like to thank my husband, Mark, who always provides me the space to complete projects like this. He continuously supports me from the sidelines, allowing me to dance on and off the concert floor of life. Lastly, I am grateful for my two sons, Joe and Tom. They are a testament that it *is* possible to raise strong, compassionate young men in a world that often challenges this. They continue to transform me.

Table of Contents

Section One: Background to the Project	
Purpose and Description	1
The Background Story.....	4
The Process	9
The Intention.....	10
Section Two: Pertinent Literature	12
Section Three: Goals and Outcomes	17
Project Timeline.....	20
Section Four: Outcomes.....	22
Location, Location, Location	23
The Early Bird Gets The Book.....	25
Dance Like Everyone Is Watching.....	28
Section Five: Key Learnings.....	30
Section Six: Conclusion.....	37
References.....	39
Appendices	41
Appendix A: Images of the Journey	41
Appendix B: Zine.....	47

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: The Tree That Grew	30
Figure 2: The House Of Chutes & Ladders	32
Figure 3: What Moved Through The Child	34
Figure 4: The Monarch Madness	34

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Purpose and Description of Project

Anyone who knows me well enough understands that I try just about anything and everything when it comes to exploring my creative process. I often value being creative as a jump-in-and-learn-how-to-swim-later experience, and because of this, I admit that I sometimes gulp down too much water and get lost at sea. But then there are times when I swim laps like an Olympic athlete. Regardless of the outcome, taking risks in creative expression is always worthwhile.

We are here to embrace this vast oceanic experience of creativity, to embody it. To do this in earnest, we must first realize that our creative expression is our unique spark of light. When we apply our gifts, we set ourselves on fire. Secondly, we must accept that the creative process is alchemic, and when deliberately applied, it invites us to transcend beyond the known; it grows when we let go. Finally, when we recognize the importance of creativity as a unifying force between the fields of science and the humanities and acknowledge that creative expression is not limited to artists alone but also extends to scientists, we can tap into a new source of inspiration. By continuing to establish the scholarly significance of creative expression, we may expand our ability to enhance human consciousness.

Let's briefly explore each of these beliefs and reveal some naked truths (skinny-dip) behind what I'm describing.

Embody Our Spark of Light

We are all here on Earth to fulfill a purpose, which is also known as our dharma (Cope, 2015). However, it can take a considerable amount of time to figure out what our destiny actually is. Finding our purpose in life is where applying the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process (Puccio, 2012) can be a great strategy. CPS involves identifying the problem, gathering relevant data, clarifying the problem, and creating an action plan. By using CPS, we can become more purposeful and creative in our lives while also learning how to articulate and strengthen our talents that define a purpose. This process equips us with the tools we need to diverge and converge, formulate a plan, and understand the steps required while having the courage to revise our approach as necessary. To continue the metaphor, it's like encountering a rip tide while swimming, incorporating new strokes. Personally, in my creative life voyage, I feel that writing about and recording this process is essential, as it helps me navigate the journey. Therefore, I plan to create a journal called "My Daily Grounds" to invent new strokes.

Embody The Process As Alchemic

In my journey, I *know* how practicing my creativity, developing it, and working hard at strengthening my gifts have transformed my identity as a creative woman. My dedication to curiosity, openness, and flexibility has strengthened my mindset in all areas of life (e.g., meditation, physical fitness, career, and artistic practices). Also, applied imagination is a potent universal resource applicable to all domains. In other words, this is not just about me; creativity transforms all who engage in the process. However, to embrace this creative transformation, it becomes essential to self-reflect

and enter into the space of one's interiority to find the extraordinary. Creating a journal entitled *My Daily Grounds* assists me in making this self-evident.

It Grows When We Let Go

I love contributing ideas. But this mighty ideator preference makes me an impatient practitioner of convergent thinking. It has become a significant roadblock in completing my creative writing projects, so I know that I must concentrate on developing strategies to assist the creative flow by becoming (a) more patient with the incubation process and allowing it to work, (b) trusting the power of my imagination and never demand to know any specific outcome before it is ready; (c) allow peak experiences or the transcendent to emerge in its own time and space, honor the sacredness of the co-creative process as permission to play with some Divine Consciousness (e.g., the great, big grand electron in the sky). Creating a journal entitled *My Daily Grounds* will assist me in knowing what I don't know.

Find Common Denominators in Science and The Humanities

Imagination lives in the artist, poet, scientist, and mathematician, so it becomes important to continue exploring the connective tissues between the domains of science and the humanities as they apply to consciousness, creativity, and imagination.

By delving deeper into current research on neuroscience, philosophies of human consciousness, and the art of improvisation by contemporary scholars and practitioners, one can investigate how physics, cognitive scientists, philosophers, and past mystics can inform one another (Shlain, 1991). Once common denominators are identified, they

motivate our capacity to use creative thinking skills within these domains. Our species' consciousness will be transformed through the transcendent experience of *intraconnection* (Siegel, 2022). Creating a journal entitled *My Daily Grounds* helps me value this connection.

This journal, which I will officially entitle *My Daily Grounds: A Journal of Creative Alchemy*, will help me witness how things can be destroyed, born, redeemed, and rearticulated through the divergence and convergence of my creative expression. It's like a perfect storm - a powerful experience in which I will embrace uncertainty rather than seek familiar paths. I'll allow myself to release into the unexpected arrival of new ideas that need to be seen, told, and renewed.

The Background Story

I have always been a Seeker, felt a push to see, do, and be more. I believe this vibe is a seed born from a trauma I experienced in my youth, at around the age of nine. It is a dramatic event that eventually fractured the foundation of my family, and as a result, I have always been searching for a new way to build a different kind of life. In other words, it was evident to me early that I had to become my own "independent general contractor" to search for new blueprints to follow and align with possibilities that my primary caregivers could not imagine. I knew they loved me, but it was clear that they unknowingly fell into the trap of buying bargain-basement materials. Therefore, I set out to find the best made and, most importantly, hire a better pool of laborers to teach me how to reconstruct the cracks in my foundation.

Before my parents divorced in 1973, I remember life as being good. I spent days in communion with friends at my parochial school and my after-school hours with my

maternal grandmother and her sister. I often watched soap operas with them on a black-and-white TV, laughed at their stories amidst an abundant haze of Kent cigarette smoke (no child abuse here, just the cluelessness of the 1970s), and witnessed their consumption of many cans of Schlitz beer. Weekends were often spent accompanying my mother, sometimes father, to church and other parish community events. As they say, all was good until it wasn't.

My life shifted the night I witnessed my father repeatedly strike my 16-year-old sister against the glass corner cabinet in our dining room. In one moment, as I lazily turned the soft pages of *My Curious George* library book in front of the living room TV, my reverie was shattered by my sister's screams. As I watched my father drag my sister up the stairs by her hair, accompanied by my mother's eternal pleading echo for him to stop, violence trapped me in its grip. It was scary, chaotic, and very confusing. None of them had time to notice me watching, and because of this, I saw something they did not—evidence.

My sister's bloody fingerprint was left on the underside of one of the stark-white staircase spindles. As I was shorter than everyone else, I could see what they had missed, so even though they cleaned the house later that night, this mark remained because I decided not to tell. I allowed my sister's mark to remain there for days, and during this time, I observed how, as her blood dried, it turned an unpleasant color but still maintained a beauty. This fingerprint proved that my sister had tried to escape that night. Years later, I now understand this as a symbol of her life's journey, as she has always been trying to escape something. This fingerprint is my earliest memory, an

example of how I learned to gather information, long before I knew how to identify the real problem.

Gathering data. It is how the creative problem-solving process begins. A challenge arrives, and we set out to clarify and consider all of the parts of the issue. We begin by asking many questions, excavating different perspectives, and then finding fertile ground to plant seeds for new growth. We water all of it with our imagination and fertilize it with some meaningful divination. Soon, in the soil of incubation, a solution begins to grow, and upon harvest, we reap a solution to store in our internal silos of achievement. It provides excellent sustenance for the days to come.

After my parents' divorce and my family members' struggles with addiction, relationships, and religiosity, I have learned the importance of remaining curious about the hidden aspects of people. I am eternally curious about my parents and their motivations, but I approach this investigation compassionately. I have some theories about what led them to do what they did, but my future plan is to explore these thoughts in a memoir. For now, I am more focused on how reflecting on my experiences with my family can improve my creative writing skills, aid in my personal growth, and ultimately help me become more self-actualized.

Recently, at the 2024 Creativity Expert Exchange (CCEE), I heard a keynote speaker, Dr. Marie Forgeard, explain how some of her current research is demonstrating possible links that when an individual experiences adversity, they find creative pursuits as a way to work through the trauma and possibly transform the self (Forgeard, 2024). I have to agree. I have gained valuable lessons from the various forms of suffering I have encountered in my life. Now, I consider it as a personal catalyst

for my growth, guiding me through difficult times. It has significantly influenced my life, and I regard it as one of my main guides or perhaps my best CPS facilitator. It teaches me how to focus on the essential aspects of a situation, gather the necessary information, and create a plan to find a way out. In many ways, it provides me with a fertile ground to plant new seeds. Lately, I have realized this process is similar to a practice I learned during my undergraduate drawing and painting coursework with Professor Paul Vazquez.

My Surrogate Father, Paul

In the mid-1980s, I returned to school to pursue an undergraduate degree in graphic design. My primary motivation for doing so was to learn how to use my creative abilities to make a living. This drive was initiated from a previous job experience at an insurance company, which I had taken up after completing high school. Although I wasn't particularly keen on working there, I eventually agreed to this setting after my mother persuaded me it was the best option. Looking back, I believe this job was a good stepping stone.

I gathered data by watching and working with other young urban professionals, or "yuppies," as they were called back then. I soon realized that other people my age were reaping the monetary benefits of a college education, including the man I am married to today. This experience opened my eyes to new possibilities for my future. In addition, I saw college as an attractive option because none of my family members had chosen it. I believed getting educated could be a solution to avoid the many problems my parents faced and it would allow me to create a different path for myself.

However, I am not oblivious to the irony here because although I wanted nothing from them, without my parent's financial support and love, I would never have been able to return to college and remain free of incurring debt. I know now that my father and mother were unknowingly trying to make up for their failings and misgivings, each in their way, but back then, I convinced myself they were entirely motivated by an intention to placate me. Whatever the impetus of their motivation was, looking back at this, I remain eternally grateful for the ways that they helped me, especially how they continuously provided the funds and encouragement for me to enroll in the fine arts program at The University of Bridgeport (UB) in Bridgeport, CT. At UB, I met professors who would eventually transform my life.

Paul Vazquez (2015) taught me how to see. Although I brought some latent artistic ability into my classes, with Paul, I began to see how art reflected life. He exposed me to a palette of universally applicable creative strategies for authentic expression, primarily through his critiques based on Jungian psychology. Through his process, he metaphorically guided me to find and open up the places where I got hurt and demonstrated how to backfill them with my authentic creative expression.

In so many ways, Professor Vazquez assisted me where my father could not. Another data point: although we may have biological parents who support us in life, many others also guide us as surrogates. In short, Paul helped me find my creative wellspring, and I continue to work hard to nourish the gifts he unwrapped for me.

The Process of Making Grounds

In an advanced drawing course, using ink, gouache, black and white photocopies, and collages, Paul taught me and my classmates how to create abstract grounds to generate the foundations of new compositions. He often reminded us to trust the process and be ready to catch the essentials as they revealed themselves to us upon the surface. He also taught us not to fall into the pop-culture kitsch of the day or to create to appease society's definition of a pretty picture. He taught me that darkness possesses beauty when seen in the light of a new perspective, like the inherent beauty I saw in my sister's dried bloody fingerprint on the staircase from my childhood.

I have chosen to reenact this drawing technique to complete this master's project because I see it as visually diverging, converging, and refining new solutions. It will assist me in making things more tangible and guide me in adding fresh imagery derived from the affordances and wisdom I have received thus far in my journey.

So, now I've noticed that my hands are getting inky and dirty again, just like they did when I was in my twenties. Back then, I hadn't yet witnessed my father slowly drinking himself to death, nor had I endured my mother, like a swinging trapeze artist, desperately clinging to any man who came along, never daring to acknowledge that she had her own safety net of self-love to fall into. These were things I had to experience for myself, along with marriage and motherhood, before I could finally reach a point where I could forgive my parents for their mistakes. It has released all the trespasses we've done because none of us knew what we were doing to one another.

As I create my art with all of this background knowledge and come to terms with living in an aging body vessel, it has become evident that I am *still* trying to gather data,

searching for new tools to assist my soul in maneuvering certain obstacles. As I climb to see the unseen from a new vantage point, edging closer to the ledge of the last years of my nifty fifties, I know I may see things I am not supposed to, much like when my height enabled me to examine my sister's mark left on the staircase long ago. But I cannot be afraid. I need new evidence. I know it is time to begin again, gather the necessary data, and expose more of my life. To assist my journey, I will create *My Daily Grounds, a Journal of Creative Alchemy*.

The Intentions of this Project

My Daily Grounds: A Journal of Creative Alchemy will rebuild and renew my artistic confidence, not just in a visual way to assist in my studio practice but also for a writing retreat experience I will have in Ireland this summer. I plan to converge on my essays from my early childhood and return to my continuous attempts to understand memory and backfill the places where I got hurt. I plan to begin to prepare these essays for publication so others can see the unseen within the traumatic force of domestic abuse. It will be a co-creative process with the known and unknown. This, I know.

My Daily Grounds: A Journal of Creative Alchemy will also become the tool for me to enter the foundational step of the CPS process: to clarify by gathering data by visually exploring the foundation precepts of my life. I will describe this process in more detail in the following sections, but for a quick overview, I plan to return to a visual process that will help me discover and then converge on new data for writing while I am in Ireland. This process will become the grounds for my muse to play upon so that she may inform me of what needs to be said and what needs to be written. In doing this, I

will deliberately plan and restock my silos of imagination with a new harvest. It will be the first step of my belief in creative alchemy as I move closer to the threshold of my sixth decade of living.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES

Introduction

I will make my morning practice an essential part of *My Daily Grounds*, with reading being a central part. To center myself, I will get up before dawn every day to read in a quiet house, save an occasional demonstrative cry from one of my two felines demanding that I reposition a book to provide them with lap real estate. I will explore my interior spaces of mind through chosen texts. It will be a sacred time to precede my twenty-minute meditation session and the physical bodywork I need to squeeze in before I begin the busy work day as a public-school educator. None of this is new to me; I have been in this habit for many years, so when I get big-eyed emoji looks of astonishment from those to whom I confess this habit, I tell them that my morning practices are like clearing the cobwebs from my soul, how it is best facilitated by the mead of the gods: caffeine.

I read many genres, and although I love great novels, I tend to choose a lot of memoirs, creative nonfiction, and nonfiction works in cognitive science. These latter categories include quantum physics, the science of consciousness, creativity, and the lives of individuals who tell stories of living and working within these domains.

As part of *My Daily Grounds*, I have intentionally been rereading the books (paper and audio) that have served me the most in developing my creativity as a visual artist. I also have looked back at the many academic articles I have read for the many papers I have written in the past two years in my creativity coursework. These readings are like traveling to distant islands I once knew so well, and it feels good to sink my toes back into their sands, revisit their terrain.

I am also a huge fan of listening to audiobooks and interviews in the podcast media format. They allow me to multi-task. I listen to them as I shower, dress, and prepare for my day. I have chosen to, rather than getting sucked into listening to the doom and gloom of local and national news, leave the house believing in the good of people. It places me in a state of reverie and, quite frankly, hope for our species. It's good energy to begin the day with.

For this paper, I am choosing to categorize all of these sources into three main categories: (a) those that assist me in wandering my interiority; (b) those that assist me in wandering others' interiority, being enlightened by new perspectives; and (c) those that share a potential to embrace a *shared* interiority, a universal transcendence or common threads that we all share. In keeping with the oceanic metaphor I wrote about in my introduction, these resources are pertinent rafts that drift, bump, and bob their way into my consciousness. They *all* keep me afloat and contribute to *My Daily Grounds* project.

Resources to Help Me Wander My Interiority

Campbell, J., & Moyers, B. (1991). *The power of myth*. Anchor.

Caruana, L. (2009). *Enter through the image*.

Cope, S. (2015). *The great work of your life: A guide for the journey to your true calling*.

Bantam.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: flow and the psychology of discovery and invention* (1st ed.). Harper Collins Publishers.

Edwards, B. (2012). *Drawing on the right side of the brain: The definitive* (4th ed.).

Penguin.

Frost, S. B. (2010). *Soulcollage evolving: An intuitive collage process for self-discovery*

and community (1st ed.). Hanford Mead Publishers, Inc.

London, P. (1989). *No more secondhand art: Awakening the artist within*. Shambhala

Publications.

Rich Roll. (2022, January 10). Lisa Miller, PhD *On The Neuroscience Of Spirituality* |

Rich Roll Podcast [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuBDmIRThTk>

Resources to Help Me Wander Others' Interiority

Barron, F. (1997). *Creators on Creating: Awakening and cultivating the imaginative*

mind. Penguin.

Buchman, L. M. (2021). *Make to know: From spaces of uncertainty to creative*

discovery. Thames & Hudson.

Byrne, D. (2017). *How music works* (1st ed.). Crown.

Hoffman, D. (2019). *The case against reality: Why evolution hid the truth from our eyes*.

W. W. Norton & Company.

O'Donohue, J. (2009). *Eternal echoes: Celtic reflections on our yearning to belong*.

HarperCollins.

Whyte, D. (2021). *Still possible*. Many Rivers Press.

Vazquez, P. (2015). Artist Paul Vazquez - Paintings, Prints, Abstract Expressionism.

<https://paulvazquez.net/>

Resources to Help Me Wander a Shared Interiority

- Davies, J. (2019). *Imagination: The science of your mind's greatest power*. Pegasus Books.
- Forgeard, M. (2024). Creativity and Resilience: Creativity From, or Through Adversity? *Creativity Research Journal*, pp. 1–8.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2023.2299639>
- Gilbert, E. (2015). *Big Magic: Creative living beyond fear*. Penguin Publishing Group.
- Goldberg, N. (2010). *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Shambhala Publications.
- Gupta, S. (2021). *Keep sharp: Build a better brain at any age*. Simon & Schuster.
- Kaufman, S. B. (2021). *Transcend: The new science of self-actualization*. Sheldon Press.
- Keltner, D. (2023). *Awe: The new science of everyday wonder and how it can transform your life* (1st ed.). Penguin.
- Miller, L. (2010). Watching for Light: Spiritual Psychology Beyond Materialism. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 2(1), 35–36.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018554>
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- Mills, J. (2023). Jung on Transcendence. *Jung Journal*, 17(3), 57–77.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2023.2225749>
- Puccio, G. J. (2012). *Creativity rising : creative thinking and creative problem-solving in the 21st century*. ICSC Press, International Center for Studies in Creativity.

Rich Roll. (2020, July 20). Change your Brain: Neuroscientist Dr. Andrew Huberman | Rich Roll Podcast [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwQhKFMxmDY>

Rich Roll. (2022, March 21). *The Psychology Of TRANSCENDENCE With Scott Barry Kaufman* | Rich Roll Podcast [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qM-5_quc2o

Rovelli, C. (2017). *Reality is not what it seems: The journey to quantum gravity*. Penguin.

Rubin, R. (2023). *The creative act: A way of being*. Penguin.

Siegel, D. J. (2022). *IntraConnected: MWe (Me + we) as the integration of self, identity, and belonging*. National Geographic Books.

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

Plan to Achieve Your Goals and Outcomes

I aim to have the muses well-primed and confident before leaving for Ireland. As explained in the previous section, I plan to finish writing a series of essays about my early life there. I will work on *My Daily Grounds* for many weeks, and before this paper is due, I will fully reflect on and converge on what has been excavated in the process. To assist with this, I will create a cumulative zine (or set of zines) using the design website *Canva*. A Zine (pronounced *ZEEEN*) is a small publication articulating a passion project. They are often small, whimsical, colorful, and collage-like do-it-yourself booklets, perfect for a convergent summation of *My Daily Grounds*. To accomplish all of this, I will focus on these specific strategies:

Morning Practice of Resonance

After every morning reading session lasting for about 30 minutes, I will take 5-10 minutes to post any quotes or excerpts that have resonated with me. I will create a Google Photos album that allows me to run a page on the iPhone app to post photos and text. Because I am on a strict schedule to get out the door in the morning, I will use the voice dictation feature on my iPhone to get the initial thoughts onto the page and make this reflection time the most efficient and concise. I plan not to worry too much about editing.

Also, since research shows that cultivating strength in the body builds strength in the mind and vice versa (Gupta, 2021), I will keep a notebook and pen in my home gym

to record any insights I gain while lifting weights and completing my high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts.

Sunday A-Muse-Meets

Every Sunday, when I am not traveling, I plan to work in my studio, Valence Studio, in Utica, NY, and create the aforementioned abstract grounds, which I learned from my undergraduate mentor, Paul Vazquez. I will let myself wander in my creativity and let my muse become the primary driver. I will post my good, bad, and ugly efforts to the Google Photos album as evidence of my time spent.

Also, during my week-long school breaks in February and April, I plan to dedicate more fully to his project. During this time, I will get to the studio at least five days a week, working on creating new grounds and converging them into final images. I will trust my intuition to see and know when a composition speaks loudly enough to be completed or at least reveal pertinent subject matter for the Ireland writing retreat and the summative zines. I will trust the process.

Mid-Week Impromptu HIITs of Convergence

As a public school educator, my days are packed and busy. I often have to take work home to grade and plan, get dinner ready, and get to bed at a decent hour to get up before dawn. This leaves me little time to work on *My Daily Grounds*. Nevertheless, on at least two afternoons after the school day is complete, I plan to use the grounds I created during my school breaks and in the studio on the weekends and work into them using ink and paint. I will provide myself 30 minutes to complete this in 10- or 15-minute

intervals. (I can call this my high-intensity interval training or (HIITs of creation.) I will not overthink this. I will allow it to flow, get it done, and permit myself to tell the muse we need to stop and pick up later because I need to take the chicken out of the oven!

Time to Be in the Zine

After completing what I just described, at the end of many weeks, I will create the results in a summative zine(s) using the Canva design platform. To keep me on task, I plan to digitally print this zine(s) before I leave for Ireland and create several copies to give to my sounding board partners, close friends, and family. I will digitally post the zine(s) on social media, such as my Instagram and Facebook accounts.

In Summary

This visual grounding process demonstrates divergence and convergence as tools for creating authentic compositions. I am diverging through the creation of the grounds by serendipitously working with materials such as ink and acrylic paint and also using these mediums to converge on what I choose to bring forth from the grounds, usually in a representational form (e.g., a tree or a person.). These symbols help me enter through the image described in the book *Enter Through the Image* (Caruana, 2009). This text derives most of its credence from The Nag Hammadi Gnostic codices ("Nag Hammadi library," n.d.) and by keeping with the hero's journey, as Joseph Campbell described in his interviews with Bill Moyers (Campbell & Moyers, 1991). I believe, as described in this book, these archetypes will arrive to communicate with me and say what needs to be said. These arrivals will assist me in clarifying and developing

transformative solutions in my creative writing life, as it once did in my advanced drawing class with Paul Vazquez. It will help me be very deliberate in what I write in Ireland. Finally, in the end, I will implement and converge by doing the work, writing notes in the established Google Photo album, and creating the zines. I am holding myself accountable by using the tools I have learned throughout my study at SUNY Buffalo State University Center for Applied Imagination: gathering data, planning, and implementing a solution. Stay tuned.

Project Timeline

The table below reflects how I planned to get this: *My Daily Grounds: A Journal of Creative Alchemy*. Because of my hectic days teaching and learning new courses this year, having a plan helps me stay on track. Perhaps I am going back to my days when I was employed as a Creative Services Manager / Art Director at The Connecticut Credit Union League in Wallingford, CT, a time when I had to coordinate the writing, design, and delivery of over fifteen newsletters each month while handling the other client's graphic design projects. *If you fail to plan, you plan to fail*, an old axiom attributed to Benjamin Franklin that I have always adhered to because it works!

Master Project Timeline (work in progress)		
2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit concept paper outline to Brightspace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 2/14, talk with Dr Sue
2/17 - 2/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In STUDIO, work at least 6 hours making visual grounds in my studio. Present in ZOOM on Wednesday Connect with a sounding board partner (Prof. Steve Specht from UU 1:30 2/20 pm Tuesday 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> this is my school Winter (Feb) break, go to my studio every day and sink into this
2/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZOOM live class: Share the direction of my: <i>Making Grounds</i> with my classmates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show what I have completed in studio: making grounds
2/26 - 3/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work to complete sections 1-3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section One: Background to the Project Section Two: Pertinent Literature Section Three: Process Plan send to sounding board partner
3/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZOOM live class: Have your paper reviewed by your sounding board partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

	or someone else.	
3/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Sections 1-3 to Brightspace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (see sections above)
3/18 -24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on implementing project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work in studio & home
3/25-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on implementing project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in studio; BSU Spring Break My school Easter break Fri 3/29 & 4/1 off best to finish ground journal so next week I can begin to complete sections 4-6
4/1 - 4/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on implementing project Begin work on sections 4-6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work in studio; no zoom class
4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZOOM live class: review & share sections 4-6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION
4/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Sections 4-6 to Brightspace Prior to the deadline, have Sections 4-6 reviewed by your sounding board partner or other person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Note: Embed your sections 4-6 in your entire document. Submit the entire document. Only 4-6 will be reviewed.)
4/22 -26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicate this week to completing. Use sounding board partner (Prof. Steve Specht from UU and Kelli Watson) to check the articulation of content and APA. 	<p>My April Vacation School break.</p>
4/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Final Paper to Brightspace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

Location, Location, Location

As soon as my concept paper was approved, I was eager to work. Although I planned to begin this project in mid-February, I was unsure if many of my other commitments would cease and provide me with the time and, most importantly, enough solitude to begin the process of creating *My Daily Grounds*, a *Journal of Creative Alchemy* (see Appendix A). The time genies graciously granted my wishes because as my February school break began, not only was I untethered from the day tasks of a public school educator, but my spouse had decided to go west to hit the ski slopes in Utah with his brother. With this, I was allowed to create a stay-cation or, better said, a stay-creation, enabling me to design my own DIY *artist-in-her-own-residence* experience. However, I knew I had to leave home to do this. Two naughty felines enjoy taking my paintbrushes and hiding them in and around the house, so my house was not an option. I considered my studio, which is about five miles away, but I decided to save that space for what I like to call my Sacred Sunday time. My best practice has always been to cap off the weekend with artistic expression. It helps me transition back into the busy workweek. So, considering all that, I chose to take advantage of my school's empty art classroom and remove myself from all distractions. This proved to be a good decision.

Back to No-School

An elementary school empty of the life of little children is haunting. Sometimes, the loneliness was so palpable that it was hard to shake off. However, once I got used

to the hollow classrooms, everything became a creative oasis, and it was here that I found the complete solitude and freedom I needed to think and create on my own.

Although my original plan was to begin creating grounds by collaging my childhood photos, I soon realized I had little to work with! It was apparent that I had fulfilled the last-baby prophecy: the Polaroid camera was always out of the film to record early life events. I did find some digitized 8mm films of my baby and toddler days that were fun to re-watch, but none of that media would work for this project. Therefore, I went to the next best thing: images from National Geographic magazine.

My aforementioned undergraduate art professor, Paul Vazquez, often had my classmates and me use this magazine's images due to its high composition and content value. This Nat Geo pivot was a good turn of events because these poignant images, primarily landscapes, allowed me to release my small ego wants and relax my focus on unknown terrain. Besides, since I was working with the analogy of discovering and planting seeds on new grounds, what better way to begin than to work with images from the earth's grounds?

I also created foundational grounds by leaning on the power of improvisation. In my classroom, I found ample leftover paper scraps from past students' projects and laid down some gestures upon them using black paint (see Appendix A). By intentionally keeping the brush moving quickly, I created a good strategy: work fast so my artsy ego archetype could not get stuck in her typical stop-and-smell-the-rose strategy of creating pretty little pictures for herself. Therefore, even if I saw a poignant image growing, I reminded myself that it was best to stay in motion and keep driving the car no matter how often she insisted I stop. With this strategy, I produced many drawings in a short

amount of time. It made me feel like some biblical Moses as if I was parting my own Red Seas, allowing my muses to sink into the unknown sands and get to new shores of expression. It was a freedom I had not felt in a long time. It was in a joyous abundance.

The Early Bird Gets The Book

As I wrote in Section III of My Process Plan under *Morning Practice of Resonance*, using a Google Photo album was the best, most efficient way to record what I received from my early morning reading. One of the first books I reread was a favorite art-process book called *No More Second-Hand Art* (London, 1989). I found author Peter London's writing to validate the entropic, universal process I was beginning to engage in:

Seeking after meaningful and not merely beautiful objects will not result in the creation of a turbulence of gestures and marks as many fear it will. It does not lead to disregard for carefully made things; the effect, in fact, is quite the opposite. When we are motivated to find increasingly complete and satisfying means to convey what is of great personal importance and draw from both the conscious and subconscious levels, our images naturally become more vivid, deeper, more articulate, and (interestingly!) somehow more universal (p. 21).

I often read two or three books simultaneously, so another nonfiction book was on my morning stand, a more research-based book called *Imagination* by Jim Davies. This book became more of a chore mainly because it was long on data and less on

reflection. However, what intrigued me most was his explanation of how imagination activates the same parts of the brain and neurological processes as memory. His research described how often it is best to use symbols to help us efficiently recall a memory. He has a strategy he calls Creating Memory Palaces, where he explains how using floorplans of a familiar house can help with memorization (Davies, 2021). This science was good to know; it was purposeful. It made complete sense to me that if my divergent imagination was freely working alongside my memory in the same neural playground, by standing back and staying nonjudgmental at what I witnessed, images from my past would inevitably resurface and converge from the abstract grounds I was earnestly creating. Nevertheless, I wondered whether these images would be explicit or if I would have to ponder the grounds more deeply. Time will tell.

Another book I sunk into was *Enter Through the Image* by L. Caruana (2009). Based on Gnostic writings found in The Nag Hammadi texts ("Nag Hammadi library," n.d.) discovered in the mid-20th century, this author explains how the early Christian gospels, such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Apocryphon of John*, were integral to assisting many artists, allowing them to create a composition for the viewer to enter through the image and into some divine field. He also explains how mythology, best described by Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung, is essential in their proverbial messages. As described in my background story, both scholars were significant parts of my undergraduate artistic collegiate experience; therefore, I was digging in, eager to learn more.

My dreams were also becoming more pronounced, and although I remember only bits and pieces of many, it did cause me to pay attention to what I was receiving in

my dream life. A new sun was rising and setting on my internal horizon line of creation, so this one passage from Caruana's book truly resonated with me:

Each time we see the sunrise on the horizon, illuminating all of creation with its light, we are reminded of our own consciousness: sheerly through awareness, we illuminate all of creation. And each time the sun descends beneath the horizon, we surrender our own consciousness to the dark underworld of dreams. Like the sun, we journey through our own underworld, illuminating its darker images with the light of our awareness. And so, too, like the sun, do we emerge to greater consciousness with our awakening. In this way, our continuous dream and awakening reflect the One to itself, as an eternal renewal of self-awareness (p. 289).

Finally, a book that came late in this process but proved to be *very* self-affirming of the process I was engaging in was a recommendation from one of my SUNY creativity classmates: *Make to Know: From Spaces of Uncertainty to Creative Discovery* (Buchman, 2022). What this author has explained in this book is precisely the process I focused this project on! I was delighted to read how other artists and designers felt that their creativity burgeons when they begin with the unknown and wait until the pathway is revealed. It was incredibly uplifting. This quote from the author's interview with artist Ann Hamilton sums up what I was about to experience:

Not knowing isn't ignorance. (Fear springs from ignorance.) Not knowing is a permissive and rigorous willingness to trust, leaving knowing in suspension, trusting in possibility without result, regarding as possible all manner of response... Our task is the practice of recognizing (p. 79).

Dance Like Everyone Is Watching

As Alan Watts has often said in his lectures on Hinduism, the dancing god Shiva reminds us how, through destruction, life is renewed. (Watts, n.d.). As I began to create the initial grounds, I told myself it was best to embrace this Hindu mindset as my mantra and to dance through my creation process. After I allowed the initial photocopied and improvisational black-stroked grounds to incubate far away from my eyes, laying under several sets of my favorite large coffee table art books (e.g., Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock), later in the week, I pulled them out to begin to add ink lines with pen and watercolor hues. I twisted and turned the papers to keep my mind open-minded and accessible while in the process.

Another strategy I used (also taught by Paul Vazquez) was to photocopy these grounds and flatten them into a new, monochromatic union. When colored compositions are brought back to grayscale, unity is created. The surfaced images combine to offer new possibilities for drawing, painting, and revealing archetypal messages.

This process of divergence, convergence, extrapolation, and distillation was a letting go and letting in. Although suggestive images sometimes appeared within the compositions, I kept driving the bus. At this point, my aforementioned artsy ego was thoroughly pissed off, but just as parents remind cranky teens on a long car ride to chill

out, I told her to sit back and enjoy the view because before she knew it, we would come to a rest stop. And so, we did.

In due time, compositions flooded up from my unconscious memory, and I often sobbed and laughed out loud when this occurred. It was evident that I had begun to converge on some meaningful symbols. I reminded myself that the goal of this project was to give birth to authentic writing prompts for my upcoming writing retreat in Ireland, so I must slow down so the converging could begin. I looked to see where my curiosities lay and determine what images I needed to *enter* (Caruana, 2009). Needless to say, acknowledging this made my artsy ego extremely enthusiastic. Her FOMO, or fear of missing out, was ending.

In the following sections, I will highlight three specific writing prompts I will bring to Ireland based on the themes unearthed from this journey. I will also reflect on progressing through this project, *My Daily Grounds Journal of Creative Alchemy*.

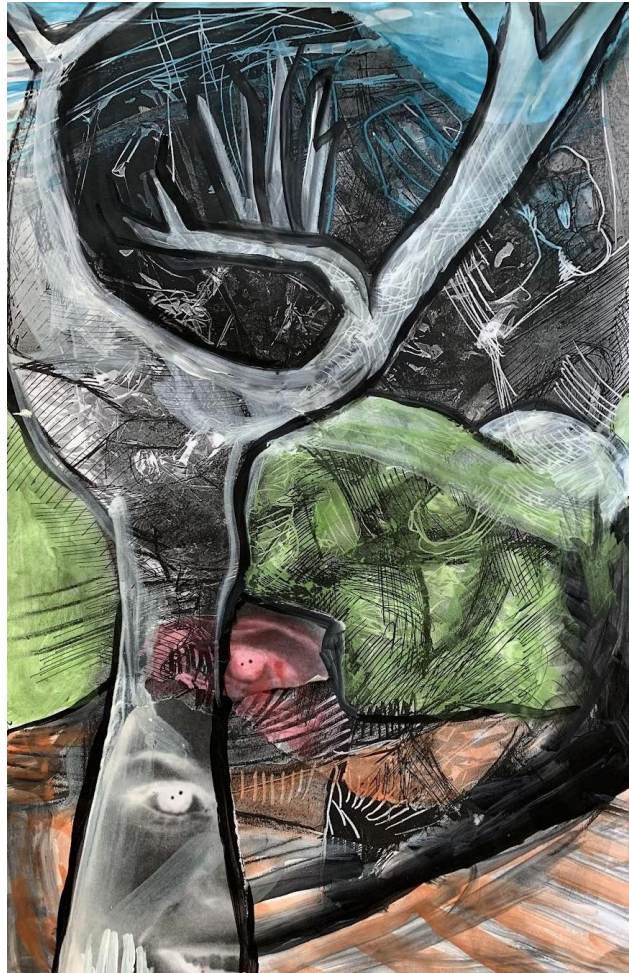
SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

The Harvested Prompts

The Limbs That Supported Me

As a child, I was always envious of the neighborhood boys. I longed to possess their confidence and purpose. I constantly studied how they moved and talked to one another, and I even changed my name to Kevin for a short time, thinking that this new moniker would assist me. However, I proved to be an inadequate tomboy. My chubby body was not built to outrun or dodge others effectively in a neighborhood kickball game, so I constantly disappointed my “boy” friends. However, all was not lost. As with all experience, this tomboy tryout provided me with some purposeful skills: it led me to discover my strength and agility in climbing trees.

I climbed trees for adventure and to ease my mind. Their largeness helped me feel strong and capable inside them. I was always confident they would hold me in all the right places. Each tree had a labyrinth of branches; all it took was to closely examine their trajectories and look ahead to see how they led to the top. I also enjoyed climbing because it allowed me to conquer something in solitude, on my own terms. Therefore, it was no surprise that a tree prominently appeared in a composition while I created my grounds (see Figure 1). Also, the steps to the final piece are as follows (see Appendix A).

Figure 1*The Tree That Grew***Writing Prompt 1**

I will write about the times I climbed trees to help me manage my early life. I will mention the time I scurried up the evergreen tree when I thought my mother died, the times I sat in the tree in the back of the garage, often at twilight, for company, and how the diseased dogwood tree in my father's backyard represented his life, one which was dis-eased by alcohol. I will climb into these limbs and write.

Living In A House Of Chutes And Ladders

As a child, I, of course, was unaware that I was living with two functional alcoholics. However, this was a blessing in disguise because if I had been aware of the spell they were under then, I might not have been the introspective person I am today. My parents grew up during WWII and were part of the aftermath generation—a time in America in the 1950s when the frames were well-defined for men and women to fill. Alcohol was the easement to cool their anxiety. They were doing their best in the worst of times, and my life is a product of their beloved attempts to get it right.

Nevertheless, one night, amidst my exasperation after taking part in yet another one of my parents' dramas during their gnarly divorce, I vehemently promised myself, and perhaps to God, that I would live to provide a different kind of experience for my own children. The details of this promise transformed over the years as I endured the many residential moves after my parents' divorce and living with an immensely bigoted stepfather, but ultimately, it was a vow to provide more clarity for the future beings I would bring forth into this world. I envisioned *one* family with *one* house and *one* father. It was a simple supplication, expressing a naive child's point of view as if life could be easily chosen from an a-la-carte menu, but I believe it was prescriptive. It set out an intention that I could work with. It helped me navigate my journey's many chutes and ladders (see Figure 2).

Figure 2*The House Of Chutes & Ladders***Writing Prompt 2**

I will write about how I maneuvered around my parents' demands, masterminded their games, and humbly admit I used their guilt to my advantage. Eventually, I learned how to forgive them and myself for these trespasses. My soul, now equipped with its own GPS to a final destination still unknown to me, is constantly recalculating, much like the poet David Whyte has reinforced in his poetry: *no one path goes all the way* (Whyte, 2012). In other words, there is more than one way to build a resourceful life. When I look into many of my compositions, I see trapdoors, secret passageways, and new trajectories of light. As I enter my own internal residency in Ireland, I will encounter

many windows to smash, doors to open, turnstiles to maneuver, and invitations to dive into chutes of my unknown future. The question remains: Will I be brave enough to consider falling through some of these as I write? Time will tell. I will use this as my guiding question to renovate my house of consciousness.

May The Nighttime Be Your Home

There is a set of lyrics from the band Goose (TedHonks, 2023) that brings tears to my eyes every time I hear it. It is from a song (appropriately entitled for this project) called *Factory Fiction*:

*On your way to kill the beast
You meet the child, the only one you know
And he sings to you, Let go,
May the nighttime be your home.*

Throughout my life, I have learned to let go, and this message floated up from many of the images that appeared on abstract grounds and new creatures that appeared from them. Whether chimeras or archetypes, I am always curious to learn from their arrival. They come asking more questions. (see Figures 3 & 4)

Figure 3

What Moved Through The Child



Figure 4

The Shadow & the Monarch Madness



Writing Prompt 3

Through these images, I will use what I see and do not see and what I now know. As I battle the beasts of memory, I will be on the watch for the innocent, the archetypal wounded child and welcome her in. All-knowing or gnosis will come through the senses, and it will be up to me to translate the emotions into words to communicate the stories I need to tell.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

The Gnosis of The Creative Process

Sometimes, you do not know until you know. I learned this during my first creativity course at SUNY Buffalo State University. When you admit that you need help understanding the full scope of the problem, you may see that you have been hunting down answers to the *wrong* problem. You must keep asking the questions via the give-and-take of divergence and convergence and dare to jump back into the unknown.

In this journey of learning more about my own creative process, I re-enacted a technique learned from a beloved undergraduate art professor, Paul Vazquez. However, since I revisited this with a midlife artist's mind and the scholarly knowledge of creativity from my coursework, this has enabled me to engage deeply in the creative process of true gnosis (or deep knowing), which assisted me in seeing anew. Creating grounds and working in and out of them is an act of divergence and convergence. It creates something new each and every time. It assists us in engaging in the *process* and creates a playground where our imagination can play with new possibilities.

One of the first papers I wrote for this program was about using the creative arts as therapy for others. In the future, I plan to study and offer more of this grounding process for myself and others. Specifically, I would like to align this process with more of Peter London's drawing exercises and I would also like to become certified in Serena Frost's SoulCollage process (Frost, 2001). The latter process uses the spontaneous creation of collages to access our Jungian archetypes and is another way to guide others in processing childhood trauma.

I now return to my fundamental beliefs in creativity, which I stated in the introduction. Yes, I still believe and *know* that we are all here to develop our creative gifts, that the process is an alchemical one that can transform life to develop authenticity, and that the science of the brain, the cosmos, can inform us. In this gnosis, I have been successful in embodying this mindset in this project, *My Daily Grounds, A Journal of Creative Alchemy*.

However, I must admit that not all of my timeline items were completed. I meant to spend more time creating animations for my social media about my process, but day job responsibilities and social commitments with friends and family needed my time. Although this deterred me from completing more, it has occurred to me that perhaps it was all part of the incubation process. I hypothesize this because I saw evidence of my other identities (besides my artist's) surface when I made my grounds. The labyrinths I described when experiencing climbing trees as a child are analogous; one must traverse the complexities of all the masks we wear to find new trajectories, get to the top, and gain a new purview.

My process may have colored outside the lines and, at times, disappointed my artsy ego, who likes pretty pictures, but the journey has been completed. I am ready to put pen to paper and write like a motherf\$#@er. (Strayed, 2012)

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Appendices

Appendix A

2024 February Break: Let the Grounding Games Begin!

The first step was to create collages on the photocopier and feely paint shapes. Here, all are laid out on the large tables in my classroom.



I created a "negative" of my high school photo using a photocopier. It was unsettling, but I was intrigued by the idea of trying something completely new. As it turned out, this experiment yielded a surprising outcome: my eye was embedded in the tree trunk of a final (converged) image (see Figure 1's journey).



Day 1 grounds 2/17/24. Brush strokes, free form on paper. Paint it and leave it be.



Pictured above are free-paint images. We had many leftover cardstock papers from a past student project. It was good to repurpose it because we usually throw it in the recycling bin!

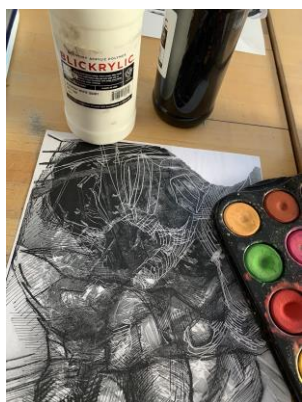


[Watch the work in progress in a video here.](#) (Adjust timing to speed up if desired)

The Journey of Figure 1

As Joseph Zinker has pointed out,
 "the creative process is therapeutic
 in itself because it allows us to
 express and examine the content
 and dimensions of our internal lives.
 We live full lives to the degree to
 which we find a full range of
 vehicles which concretize, symbol-
 ize, and otherwise give expression
 to our experiences!"
 Peter London, *No More Secondhand Art*

*Yes, the creative process is therapeutic.
 During this process, memories become tangible and grow from abstract grounds.*



1: After drawing, collaging, and a few photocopies, color is added.



2: Paint is used to make broad strokes. Here, the white line cuts the compositional ground in half.



3: It is always good to turn things upside down for a new perspective. This allows the muses to see anew!



4: Steps 1-3 are continuously revisited until something tells one to stop. As described in my paper, trees were a large part of my coping strategies in childhood. (Note the negative image of my high school photo in the truck of the tree and the red-eye above right. All happy images occur in this serendipitous process.



The above is an example of the start of the process. The photo on the left is from National Geographic magazine. While I didn't fully explore this technique in more successive steps, it showcases the initial steps of creating grounds and breaking down images by panning into them.

The left side of the photo set is a photocopied collage of a photo, a 'before' image. The right side demonstrates how I work into the image with white paint, altering the face's structure. It's a form of artistic alchemy, a dance of Shiva!

On the right is a glimpse of my home desk, where I managed to work while safeguarding my paintbrushes from my mischievous feline companions. These two thieves love to steal my paintbrushes when I'm not looking!



If we engage in the **creative process** as one who scoops up water believing they have captured the stream, we will end up making a piteously shallow imitation of a really grand thing, drained of its life force. If we are to be artists in and of life, we must plunge into the stream, allowing ourselves to feel the heave of its might. We can splash madly about, but in the end we must yield and permit it to buoy us up, touch us all over, filter through our hair, chill our bones, who knows, save our souls. This too is the stuff of art.

Peter London, No More Secondhand Art

peter london citaion

The Convergence (compositions developed from working from the grounds)

These occurred in rapid succession. I did not photocopy or collage; I just worked back into black-ink marked paper with traditional art materials (pen and watercolor).



More Processes of Divergence



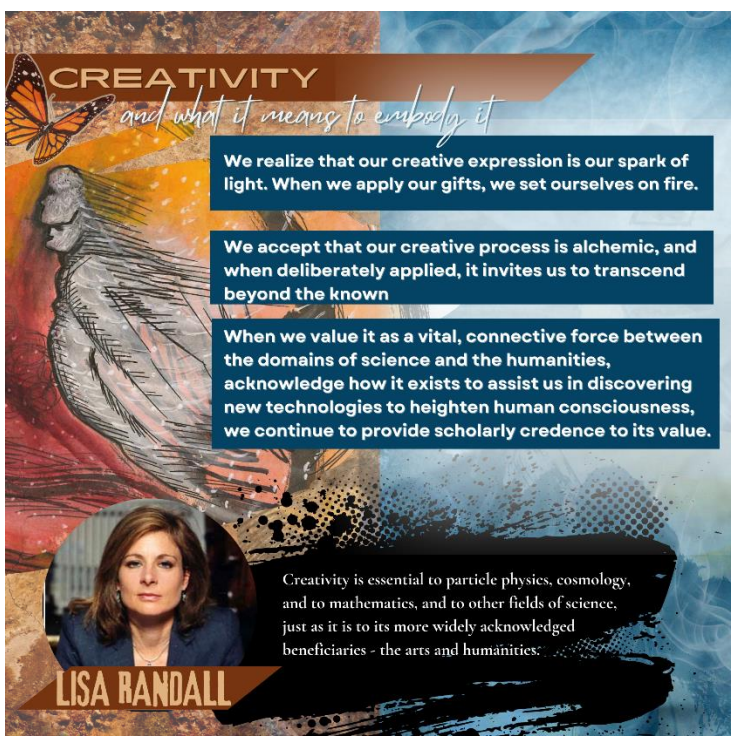
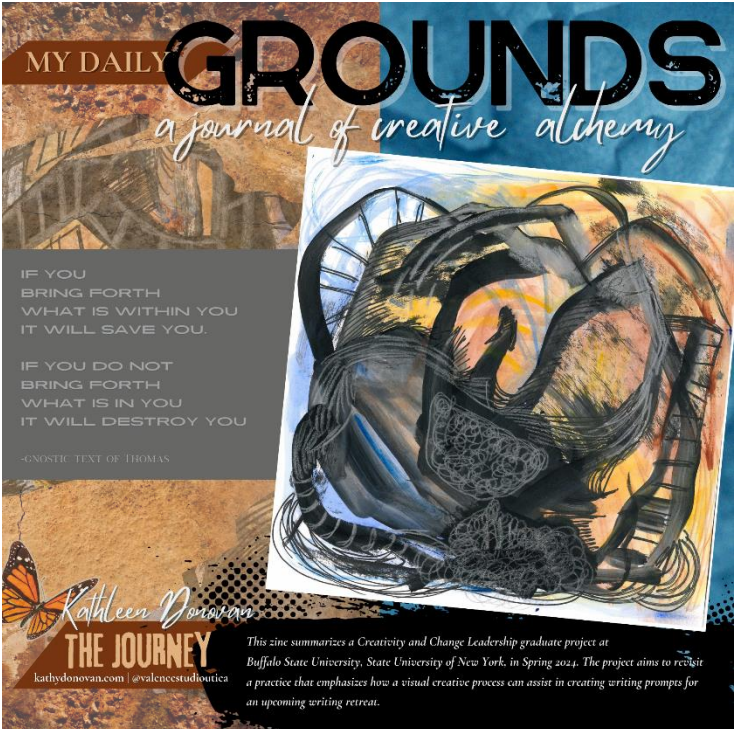
Just enough: Knowing

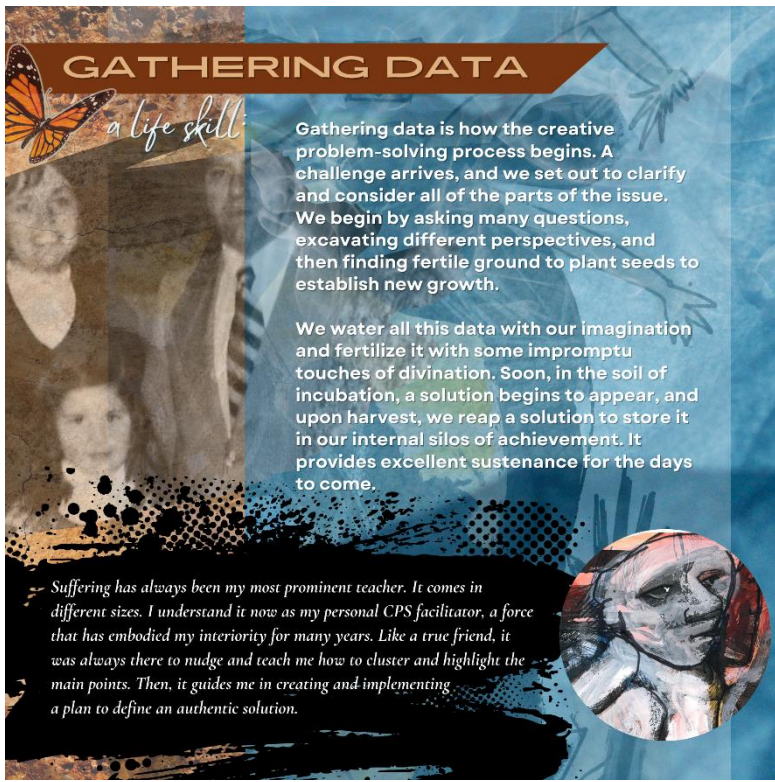


After photocopying the collage, one piece emerged. I added some pen and ink, but seeing the boat maneuver its way along a turbulent ocean was enough. I was reminded of the ocean of creativity metaphor I described in my introduction to this project paper.

Appendix B

the online version of Zine is [here](#)






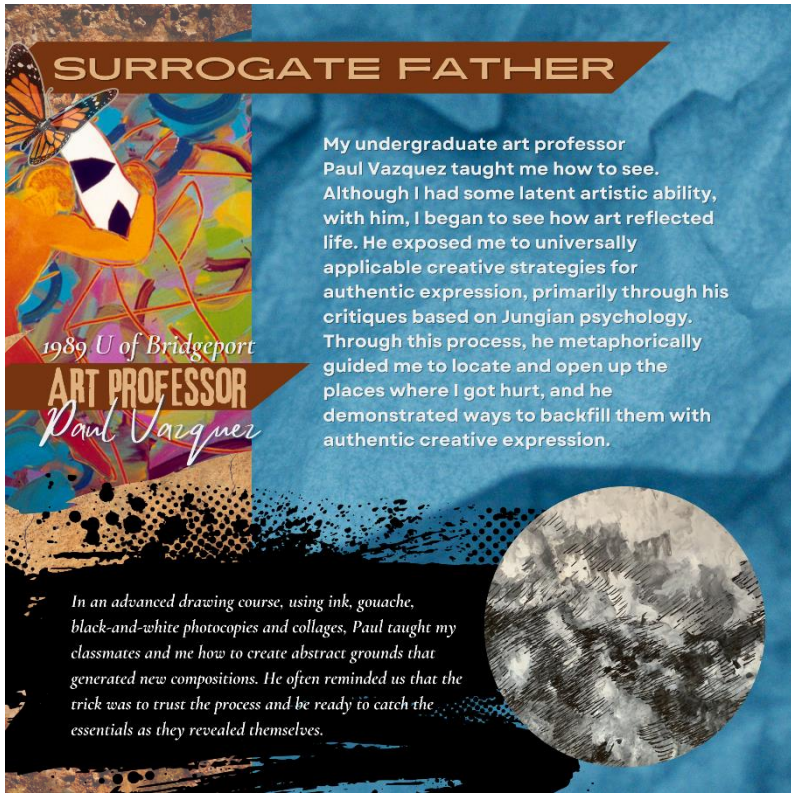
GATHERING DATA

a life skill

Gathering data is how the creative problem-solving process begins. A challenge arrives, and we set out to clarify and consider all of the parts of the issue. We begin by asking many questions, excavating different perspectives, and then finding fertile ground to plant seeds to establish new growth.

We water all this data with our imagination and fertilize it with some impromptu touches of divination. Soon, in the soil of incubation, a solution begins to appear, and upon harvest, we reap a solution to store it in our internal silos of achievement. It provides excellent sustenance for the days to come.

Suffering has always been my most prominent teacher. It comes in different sizes. I understand it now as my personal CPS facilitator, a force that has embodied my interiority for many years. Like a true friend, it was always there to nudge and teach me how to cluster and highlight the main points. Then, it guides me in creating and implementing a plan to define an authentic solution.

SURROGATE FATHER


1989 U of Bridgeport

ART PROFESSOR

Paul Vazquez

My undergraduate art professor Paul Vazquez taught me how to see. Although I had some latent artistic ability, with him, I began to see how art reflected life. He exposed me to universally applicable creative strategies for authentic expression, primarily through his critiques based on Jungian psychology. Through this process, he metaphorically guided me to locate and open up the places where I got hurt, and he demonstrated ways to backfill them with authentic creative expression.

In an advanced drawing course, using ink, gouache, black-and-white photocopies and collages, Paul taught my classmates and me how to create abstract grounds that generated new compositions. He often reminded us that the trick was to trust the process and be ready to catch the essentials as they revealed themselves.



MORNING PRACTICES

to strengthen mind/body

Research shows that cultivating strength in the body builds strength in the mind and vice versa (Gupta, 2021). I kept a notebook and pen in my home gym to record any insight I gained while lifting weights and completing my high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts.

1- 4 AM WAKEUP
2- READ, REFLECT
3- 5 AM MEDITATE
4- 5:45 WORKOUT

6:44
218

“Books are the training weights of the mind.”

EPICETUS

THE PROCESS

1: After drawing, collaging, and a few rounds of photocopies, color is added.

2: Paint is used to make broad strokes. Here, the white line cuts the compositional ground in half.

3: It is always good to turn things upside down for a new perspective.

as quoted by Peter London
“the creative process is therapeutic in itself because it allows us to express and examine the content and dimensions of our internal lives.”


JOSEPH ZINKLER

Steps 1-3 are continuously revisited until the internal voice or “knowing,” tells the hand to stop.
(see key findings 1 for results)

KEY FINDINGS

PROMPT 1

Limbs That Supported Me




This image will assist me in writing about the times I climbed trees to help manage my early life. I will climb into the limbs of my imagination and write about when I scurried up the evergreen tree, convinced my mother had died, the time my tween self sat in the tree in the back of the garage, often at twilight, to soothe a loneliness I had felt that I had no right to possess, and how observing the diseased dogwood tree in my father's backyard taught me how to observe him.

KEY FINDINGS

PROMPT 2

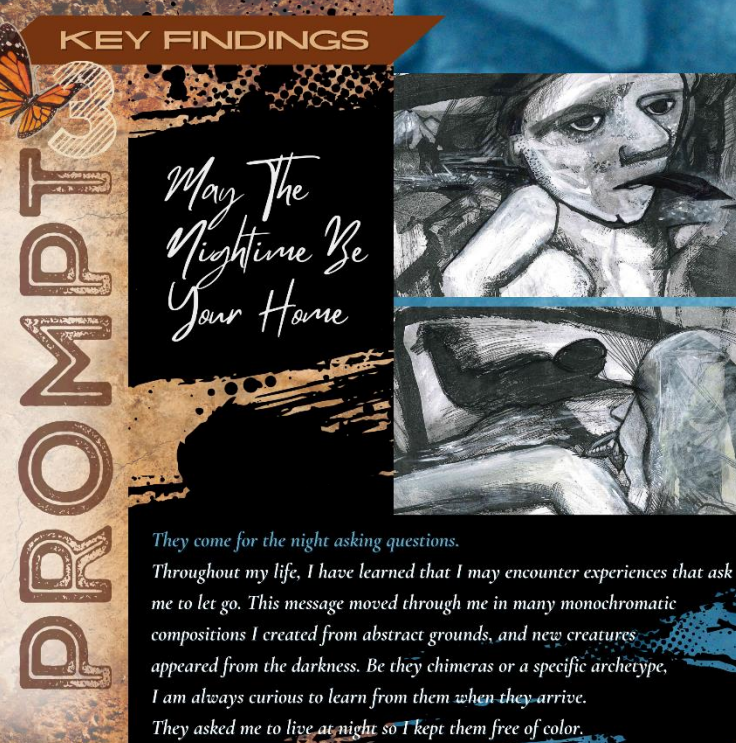
The House of Chutes & Ladders



I will use this to renovate my internal house of memory and intuition. When I look into this composition, I see trapdoors, secret passageways, and new trajectories of light. As I enter my own internal residency, I know I will encounter many windows to smash, doors to open, turnstiles to maneuver, and invitations to dive into many chutes of my unknown. I plan to fall through some of them as I write. Time will tell.


KEY FINDINGS

*May The
Nighttime Be
Your Home*



*They come for the night asking questions.
Throughout my life, I have learned that I may encounter experiences that ask me to let go. This message moved through me in many monochromatic compositions I created from abstract grounds, and new creatures appeared from the darkness. Be they chimeras or a specific archetype, I am always curious to learn from them when they arrive.
They asked me to live at night so I kept them free of color.*

This journey



In this graduate project, I reenacted a technique learned from a beloved undergraduate art professor, Paul Vazquez, to assist me in preparing for a writing retreat that I have scheduled for June 2024 in Ireland. But why would I choose a visual process to learn how to empower my writing? That's a good question. Let me explain.

Learning about the art and science of creativity at Buffalo State University showed that this visual arts technique of creating grounds was a great exemplar of a divergence/convergence tool. It has always been an implicit part of my visual studio practice, and I never cease to learn from its serendipity. In this project, I have deliberately made it explicit again to empower a dormant channel of my self-expression: creative writing.

Since I revisited this with a midlife artist's mind and the scholarly knowledge of creativity from my coursework, I deeply engaged in the creative process's true gnosis (or deep knowing), which has enabled me to see anew. Creating grounds and working in and out of them is transformative and analogous to life. It offers something new each time, assists us in engaging in the process, and creates a playground where our imagination can play with new possibilities.

Kathleen Ann Donovan

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Name

5/1/24

Date