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9_Café 541 Column

SUPER POWER

Call it what it is—I'm stuck in my house like millions of folks around the world.

I suppose I could see this as an opportunity to “Marie Kondo” my underwear drawer and, while that’s a tempting thought, I think I’ll pass. I admit it—I’m domestically challenged. However, I’m not easily bored.

That’s my super power.

I recently heard from Oregon artist, Milla Oliveira who wrote, “...as artists we have deep training in imaginations and adaptability, along with being comfortable sitting in our own company for long periods of time.” Nice.

Imagine that. Just you. Alone. Been there, done—I mean, doing that, I hear you say. But consider, as a positive by-product of your currently curtailed lifestyle, the depth of insight possible through solitude over an extended period of time. Imagine submitting yourself to each successive moment without an externally mandated expectation and the ability to, what, control time? Artists frequently describe an altered state of awareness and a different perception of the clock when they’re making.

In a recent interview with Fresh Air host, Terry Gross, author, Stephen King said, “Twenty hours a day, I live in the same reality that everybody else lives in. But for four hours a day, things change. And if you ever asked me how that happens or why it happens, I'd have to tell you it's as much a mystery to me as it is to anybody else.” Time, it seems, is the ultimate mystery even for this master of plot twists and the macabre.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/04/08/829298135/stephen-king-is-sorry-you-feel-like-youre-stuck-in-a-stephen-king-novel>

I checked in with several artist colleagues on how they were spending their time these days. Painter Bets Cole wrote, “I have a lot going on! So many paintings to finish...I move around in a circle from easel to easel.” And Margaret Coe shared, “I regard the seclusion as a sweet hibernation. It is a quiet, restful, yet alert experience...” Beautiful sentiments, filled with the promise of new work.

Artist Pete Goldlust offered a slightly different take. “Probably sad, but I've learned that quarantine doesn't actually affect our shut-in lifestyle that much. I think we've been secretly quarantined for the last several years... but lately, with the schools closed, I've taken up designing decorative fencing to keep my kids out of my studio.” Practical, with a dash of humor.

In her 1992 book, “Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why,” author Ellen Dissanayake states, “Art is a normal and necessary behavior of human beings that like other common and universal occupations and preoccupations such as talking, working, exercising, playing, socializing, learning, loving and caring should be recognized, encouraged and developed in everyone...”
<https://ellendissanayake.com/>

Contemporary artists in our community have created vibrant and sustainable careers and cohorts. Without adequate and immediate support those practices and the many cultural organizations that have enriched our area may be in jeopardy. Don't get me wrong, art has and will continue to survive and thrive, but are we willing to accept the potential cost?

Those contemporary artists and art organizations in smaller cities, like ours, and rural areas need help...now. The Lane Arts Council is accepting donations for their Lane County Artists' Relief Fund to assist those creative folk here at home that are in need. Consider donating—I did.
<https://lanearts.networkforgood.com/projects/95896-lane-county-artist-relief-fund>

Stay in and stay safe. Be creative. Be grateful for those who provide the essential services that make your life possible and be generous toward those less fortunate than you, during this unprecedented time. Empathy is priceless.

Step up. Six feet away, of course.

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