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I am a queen in Egypt. It is time for me to go to the temple. I go out the back of my house (which is similar in arrangement to my grandfather’s house). I feel my long hair brushing my chin as I move gracefully, regally, in my long dress. Two of my men servants, dressed only in black loincloths, hurry forward and stoop with their backs to me so that I may climb on their shoulders and be carried. Their backs and shoulders are muscled and tan, their heads bald. I climb up onto the shoulders of the one on the right. He lifts me and walks erect toward the temple that is off to the left sitting on bleached sand.

The manservant tells me he likes my dress which is long and straight and of a soft loopy texture like chenille, in browns and turquoise. I thank him and he sets me gently down at the steps of the temple. Four more men servants in white loincloths with white headdresses rush forward with a sedan chair. I walk slowly towards it knowing my subjects wait for me inside the temple. I feel myself straighten, almost grow taller with power and energy running through my veins. My chamberlain and other servants wait outside at the top of the temple steps to escort me in.

Just as I am seating myself in the sedan chair, another man emerges –one of my subjects – and stands in the doorway of the temple, unrolling a long scroll of colored silk about eight inches wide. In a loud voice, he reads from it, a list of complaints, demanding

redress of wrongs. I let him finish. He turns to go back inside and I nod at one of my administrators sitting next to the door – a man in the long garment of aristocracy, and bearded. He jumps after the other man – I only want the man to be retained so I may question him later – but the administrator stabs him with a knife!

I am horrified – I did not want him killed!

I had this dream at the age of 32 on my way to being 33. At that time, I was a mother of three young sons, happily married and living in an old farmhouse that we heated (if you can call it that) with a woodstove. Four months earlier, my mother had died of breast cancer at the age of 53. I was still grieving and part of that process was keeping a journal of both my waking life and my dreaming life.

Prior to that day, I was both an unpublished writer and a weaver of colorful, abstract wall pieces, some sold, some didn't. Also, from the time I was a child, I had always been an active dreamer, remembering and loving my many dreams but not giving them any special import, neither recording them nor acting on the information I received in them.

My mother and I were fortunate enough to be the best of friends, sharing interests in art, and books, and, of course, raising children. Watching her sicken and die, not only ripped at my heart but seemed to rip open the door into my dream life. I had several significant dreams before she died and many, many more afterwards where she often came to visit. So I began to pay more attention and to record the dreams as they came, considering them sacred gifts, while also reading books about dreams and dreaming.

Then, after recording dreams and life events for about six months, I had the Egyptian Queen dream. What was that about, I wondered. What was going on here?

Fortunately, at that time I was reading Gayle Delaney's book, "Living Your Dreams". Using her way of working with dreams, I concluded that this dream was about the sacredness of my creativity, my temple filled with my subjects (ideas and projects) waiting for my arrival, and that I was sabotaging (stabbing in the back) myself and the creativity that was demanding expression.

Though I believe that dreams, like great art, have many layers that can reveal themselves over time, I took that understanding of my dream then seriously and began to look at the ways I undermined my creativity. I began to make time to write (I was working on polishing a young adult fantasy I had written several years before). I sat down at the computer and worked in spite of a house that was barely warm (60°), and three sons, ages 7, 6, and 3, who were continuously sick with flu and fevers and some strange virus called Fifth's disease. The image of that dream, of killing my creativity, compelled me to keep at it. I also continued to weave.

Then, six months later I had another significant dream. This dream had me in a local gallery admiring a weaving that was supposedly by someone else but when I asked whose it was, the gallery director, a friend of mine, said the woman's name was Paula. My name! I looked at the weaving in soft blues and violets. The image was clear. Within the next few months I wove that image and a variation, titling them Transcendence I and II. Several months later that image was chosen as the cover design by a professor at the state university whose book title was Mediated Transcendence!

From that point, I knew that my spiritual life, my dream life, and my creative life were all inextricably linked with each other and with my waking life. Each aspect fed and nurtured the other. Then, in the early '90's, I saw an ad for a dream class being taught at a local New Age bookstore. The teacher was Robert Moss who was just then beginning to teach the shamanic approach to dreams. As I attended class after class, workshop after workshop with him, I knew I had finally found the key that not only helped me understand and honor my dream life but, unlike my experience of traditional religions, also accepted and integrated all aspects of who I am.

Moss's approach to dreamwork appealed especially to the part of me that has always loved fairytale and myth. Both my father and mother read to my siblings and I from the time we were old enough to sit up. Some of my first stories were, of course, Bible stories, having grown up in the Methodist tradition where Sunday meant church and Sunday school without fail. But more vividly, I remember sitting in the kitchen of my grandfather's house, where we lived until I was seven, listening to my father read stories to keep us still while my mother cut our hair. I remember a large book of Greek mythology that I brought home from elementary school, loving the pictures and stories of all the gods and goddesses.

And one Christmas, my mother's older sister sent us a collection of fairytales from around the world that were illustrated by a German artist, with beautiful doe-eyed women, handsome men, and animals that looked to be from another world. One of my favorite stories in the book was of the twelve brothers (the number varies) who were turned into swans by a wicked stepmother. To break the spell, their sister must gather

stinging nettles and spin them into a green thread and knit sweaters out of the thread for all the brothers while also maintaining a vow of silence. Now this strange behavior is of course determined to be that of a witch, especially when the sister is discovered gathering the nettles in a cemetery! Condemned to be burned at the stake, she nonetheless continues to spin and knit while she awaits the carrying out of her sentence. The illustration in that book was so beautiful, so haunting to me along with its powerful theme of transformation through love that years later when I began my weaving business, the story inspired the name of my business – Nettles and Green Threads. Happily, my mother, an artist and art teacher, designed the logo for my business card around the tale.

Yet, while I may have spent the last 12 years building a business weaving threads, I have really been a weaver of stories from the time I was old enough to read and write. I remember writing my first little book and illustrating it with simple stick figures – a simple tale about a skinny guy who tormented a fat guy until one day the fat guy lost weight and the skinny guy became fat (I never liked to see others hurt and had a strong sense of justice!). In elementary school, we had to write little stories using that week's spelling words. It was my favorite assignment - the other kids moaned and groaned.

Then I discovered Nancy Drew mysteries, reading voraciously the few available to me, and was inspired to write my own Nancy Drew-style mystery for an English assignment in seventh grade. I loved English classes and most of my English teachers and I loved reading, going to the school library and taking out the thickest books I could find. I read many of the classics, Dickens, the Brontes, Austen, even less well known classics like *Lorna Doone*. Books, for me were a world of delight and discovery and escape. And I loved anything that challenged my own skills at storytelling like playing with my dolls,

or entertaining my siblings with the puppet theatre I received from Santa one Christmas, or telling my little sister my own magical Christmas stories while we looked at the colorful lights that decorated the eaves of our house.

Oddly enough, when I started college at Penn State University, I declared my major in French, thinking I would be a translator someday, and travel the world. Growing up in a small rural community, I knew from my reading that there was a bigger, exciting world “out there” and wanted to travel from a very young age. I took four years of French and three years of Spanish while in high school and enjoyed it so much that a language major in college did not seem unreasonable. But after several semesters of struggling to catch up with students from city schools who had studied French with language labs and trips to France and Quebec, I decided to go back to my first love. I majored in English – Creative Writing, studying poetry, fiction writing, short stories, and even business writing while also taking courses in Chaucer and Shakespeare, and the Victorians, etc. I could at last read and write to my heart’s content.

I didn’t discover fantasy writing as a genre until several years later when I was working in Washington, DC where I lived with my husband, Bob, who was attending graduate school at Georgetown. A woman in the office shared a book with me, one of the Witch World series by Andre Norton and I was hooked. Several years later, as I prepared to do an independent program for my MFA, I chose to do it in weaving and writing with the connecting theme of fantasy. I worked on preparing an exhibit of woven images while also working on writing a young adult fantasy (still unpublished) and doing research on the origins and history of both visual and written fantasy. I discovered C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, George MacDonald, Ursula Le Guin, Madeline L’Engle and so

many others who used myth and fairytale as a basis or structure for their works. I was also delighted to discover the sense of Spirit that was so often present in their writings.

Now I am trying to find a publisher for my own fairytale-inspired fantasy – *The Shadow Weaver* - loosely based on the Sleeping Beauty story but with shamanic elements of shapeshifting and dreaming. At the same time, I am looking for a publisher for my creativity book also inspired by the Sleeping Beauty story called *Sleeping Beauty, Prince Charming, and the Kiss of Creativity*.

Interestingly enough, the experience with my weaving business of sending out slides to juries for craft shows and exhibits and then waiting to hear if I made it in, and having to deal with the rejection when I didn't, prepared me very well for the process of approaching agents and editors about these two books. I try to keep ten queries out there in the ether somewhere. A rejection comes in - I file it and figure out where the next query needs to go. I know from experience not to take any of this personally. At least at this point – check with me at Skidmore in August and see if I still feel the same!

My story would not be complete if I did not speak about the role the men in my life have played. I believe a good writer should not only be a good reader, but also a good learner, always ready to expand one's horizons. Stephen, Christopher, and Jason, my three sons, have stretched mine way beyond what I could have imagined. I now understand the basics of soccer, basketball, baseball, and football, I whose idea of athletic activity is cleaning the house – or dancing! Because of them, I stayed current with music from Bon Jovi to Guns 'N' Roses, to Pearl Jam to Tool. I became conversant in the language of guitars and drums while hosting bands that practiced frequently in our family room and ate as much spaghetti as I could fix. I was forced to learn how to use

computers just to keep up with them! And because of those three questing and questioning minds, I have had to re-evaluate in the last 25 years every principle and decision I have ever made!

In the process of raising these three remarkable young men, I often wondered how in the world single parents manage (my hat's off to you), because parenting is such a never-ending challenge. Fortunately I have a husband who has equally shared the responsibility of parenting from the first moment in the delivery room, otherwise I probably would never have had the energy to act on one creative idea. Bob has been a true partner to me in every sense of the word, from our marriage to our parenting, inside the home and out. While I know other women have had to fight to find space and support in their lives for the creative work they are called to do, I have always felt supported, encouraged, and respected, making my creative choices and decisions so much easier. We will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary a year from September and I am grateful every day for him. Someday, I know our three sons will be wonderful supportive husbands because they have a great role model.

I celebrate my 50th birthday this August (who? Me?). Though in my mind I still feel like I have so much to learn, I have also begun to realize that the experiences I have had since that Egyptian dream so long ago, has given me some insights on the creative process that I love sharing with others. So in addition to my weaving and writing, I am now also doing dream work and creativity coaching for people. I want everyone to experience the joy and excitement of their own creativity, so I coach people by helping them define their creative goals and dreams and then work with them to make them reality. I love hearing the amazement in people's voices when the creative magic

happens. Please don't ever say "I am not creative!" to me. I don't believe it. We are all queens, with hundreds of subjects just waiting in our Temple of Creativity for us to listen to their demands and to act. The challenge for me is to keep dreaming, to keep listening and to decide which demand to act on first!

From *The Crafts Report, August 2002*

THE HEALING HANDS OF CRAFTS

"Whenever illness is associated with loss of soul, the arts emerge spontaneously as remedies, soul medicine." Shaun McNiff

The words "heal" and "healthy" have the same root as "whole", so to heal is to make whole again, whether in mind, body or spirit. Crafts, as with all art making, are an ancient, effective, non-verbal method for integrating and healing especially in the fields of occupational therapy (OT), expressive arts therapy (EAT), art therapy, and art and healing. Some of these therapies address physical, social, and mental issues, requiring extensive training and certification (OT and EAT) while the art and healing approach written about in Michael Samuels book "Creative Healing" is the realm of any artist. "Currently, we believe that there is no need for licenses to certify artists in art and healing. The only license you need to be with another human being in a time of suffering is to be human, to be present, and to have the intention to be healing." (p. 32)

Occupational Therapy

Begun as a recognized therapy in 1917, occupational therapy was influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Crafts like woodworking and sewing were very much a part of restoring self-esteem, skills, and independence for those injured or disabled.

When Denie Whelan, an registered occupational therapist who has worked with the elderly, the terminally ill, and the caregivers of patients of with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), received her OT training 20 years ago, crafts were very much a part of the therapy process.

“We learned so much that is not being taught (in OT) now. It is more theoretical and science-based. It (crafts) became difficult to justify since the outcome isn't always apparent.”

Barbara Thompson, a registered occupational therapist and certified social worker who teaches at Russell Sage College in Troy, NY where Whelan also teaches, acknowledges that OT itself may have moved more toward the medical model of treatment yet believes that there is “an increased emphasis on looking at crafts as a way to derive meaning and to develop a deeper understanding of oneself in the world. Medicine has been very good in many areas but cannot address existential issues with chronically and terminally ill patients.”

Expressive Arts Therapy

As occupational therapy seems to have moved away from crafts as a mode of therapy, expressive arts therapy has incorporated crafts into its mix along with dance, music, drama, and writing. Both Whelan and Thompson studied with Markus” Geoffrey Scott-

Alexander, the creator of Glass Lake Studio and its program in expressive arts therapy. Scott-Alexander, a registered expressive arts therapist and a former potter, is also one of the founding members of the North American Network of Expressive Arts Therapy Training Centers, and has taught expressive arts in Nepal, Sweden, Israel, Spain, Denmark, and Canada, as well as the US. He likes expressive arts because it is a very body-centered approach.

“Creativity moves one to stillness – allows an aligning of all of the self, a congruity of the inner and outer selves,” he believes.

Expressive arts, according to the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association, emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to creative endeavor and acknowledge arts’ capacity to respond to human suffering.

Thompson saw this affirmed last fall in an occupational therapy course she was teaching at Russell Sage College. She was scheduled to give a 3-hour lecture for her first class of Psycho-social Assessment and Intervention for the semester – on September 12th.

“I wondered how I was going to do this. I couldn’t give the planned lecture – I needed to address what had happened – for the students and for me.”

Falling back on her Expressive Arts Therapy training, Barbara took with her to class a large roll of paper, tempera paints, and different painting and drawing implements. Allowing the students to choose the size of paper each wanted to work with, she then encouraged them to paint whatever they were feeling or whatever image they wanted to create, not limiting the experience to 9-11. After 45 minutes, the class broke up into groups of three so everyone could dialogue with the image they had created while the

second person in the group aided the dialogue and the third person in the group wrote down what was said. When that was completed, Thompson then encouraged the students to write a poem or narrative response to the image and the experience. At the end of the 3-hour class, everyone felt supported and part of a community. The cohesiveness of the class was especially important as it was discovered that one of the students in the class had lost a relative. But the story doesn't end there.

Thompson took the images to a framer and had them framed, creating an exhibit with the art and poetry. (The exhibit will be shown again at Russell Sage this year as part of a 9-11 memorial.) Then, taking four OT students with her, Barbara traveled to The Association for Death Education and Counseling annual conference in Portland, OR, and set up the exhibit – each image on an easel with its poem.

“Attendees viewed the exhibit and later came to me and responded that as a result of the exhibit they were doing further processing about the event,” says Barbara. “There have been outgrowths that were not anticipated.”

“It's the making and the shaping in the process of creating that is healing,” says Whelan, who has worked with the elderly, the terminally ill, and with the caregivers of patients of with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease).

Another student of Scott-Alexander's, Diane Szabo, believes that the benefit of the arts in healing is that “you can start from any expressive point without verbal cues.”

Often in the midst of pain and grief, words are insufficient or limiting. Szabo, whose background is in weaving, knows this from her experience with victims of domestic abuse.

“(Weaving) is another way to voice how they feel without going into painful details.” She uses the process of weaving to help her clients gain perspective on their families and situations.

“I have a potpourri of fibers that I let people chose from for the warps. They are to pick fibers to reflect how they saw their family as a child, and then other fibers to represent their adult point of view. We explore each strand that they choose. One man chose barbed wire and baling twine to represent his mother!”

After the warp threads have been chosen and reflected on, then the weaving, on simple frame looms made of dowels and plastic elbows and using a weaving needle, is begun. This time the wefts are to represent events of their lives.

“I show them how to let things hang out and loose, if they were feeling ‘at loose ends’ or how to scrunch up and tighten things if they were feeling tight and dark. We are not concerned about the integrity of the fabric. In the process they remember things they had forgotten. Something about the visual image helps them see the family situation and the history and where they are.”

Once the image is out, though, “writing can be particularly powerful at crystallizing the image,” says Holly Heyman, another student of Scott-Alexander’s. Though she received her Masters in Public Health – Health Education, Heyman’s first love is dance and she often incorporates dance and movement with clay in her work with seniors, ALS patients, mental health patients, and domestic abuse survivors. One creative experience she uses is to have people in her therapy groups pair up with someone else. Then, in total silence, in a 5- to 10-minute time period, the pair is to create a creature from clay or Play-

Doh. After the time is up, the pair decides what the creature is, give it a name, and decide what powers it has. Then they introduce it to the group.

When she works with seniors, who often participate in her groups for the interaction and social connection, she gets them into their bodies first with some movement, self-massage, and then massaging each other's shoulders. Next she gives them Play-Doh and encourages them to just play with it.

“The point is for them to regain the surprise and spontaneity of life. The beauty of the art experience is in not knowing what is going to happen. One woman, after the events of September, made an image that she said was an Arab woman weeping.”

Heyman, who turned to clay when she began studying with Scott-Alexander, is working on a series of figures called “Attitudes of Devotion” inspired by devotional postures from the Bahai tradition. Keeping a journal while working on the figures helped her understand her own creative process.

“The work is so powerful,” she says, “the way one art form brings in an image or theme and then you can move into another art form to deepen it.”

Other Opportunities

If you are not interested in pursuing certification as an occupational or expressive arts therapist, you can still use your craft to help and heal others. Whelan encourages craftspeople to volunteer at hospitals, hospices, and homes for the elderly, who are always looking for artists to come in and work with their populations.

Eleanor Wiley, a former speech pathologist and California beadmaker, used her new craft to work with cancer patients and the elderly. Then she turned her beadwork into

making prayer beads that honored all faiths and spiritual traditions. She created a sacred wheel of peace in 1999 that has symbols from various faiths and traditions on it that she includes with her prayer beads. She gave a string of these beads to his Holiness the Dalai Lama. Wiley began teaching her creation of prayer beads to groups around the world, traveling to the Balkans – Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania – teaching young people 17-22 how to make prayer beads.

“I offered them a basket of beads of all shapes and color and sizes to choose from. One young person in a group of Macedonian and Albanian youth, observed how the beads were like people! We talked about shared traditions. The students helped each other with the stringing. It gave them a place to be present with each other without having to talk about the violence around them. One of the boys said he would give his beads to his grandmother to help her with her fear. He told me she sits with them all the time.”

Wiley also teaches how to make prayer beads to cancer patients, the elderly, people recovering from addiction, and even to public school students.

“Although, in the schools I call them gratitude beads,” she laughs. “I have almost no technical skills. What I teach is not beading. What I teach is to trust yourself, your intuition. You can’t make a mistake. What you make is wonderful.”

If your budget won’t allow volunteer work, check out your local arts organizations that may offer grant opportunities related to work in the community.

Organize your own craft workshop or seminar around issues such as ageing or grief.

Offer your craft as healing to other healers and caregivers.

Heal yourself with your craft.

“Lots of people are using the arts to heal themselves naturally,” says Whelan.

So the next time the wholesale order deadline is making you just a little breathless, stop, take a deep breath, let your hands move into the making and creating, find the place of stillness and remember, as Thompson strongly states, “the arts are needed more now than ever.”

“At the deepest level, the creative process and the healing process arise from a single source. When you are an artist, you are a healer; a wordless trust of the same mystery is the foundation of your work and its integrity.” Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., author of Kitchen Table Wisdom and My Grandfather’s Blessings.

From *Crafts Business Magazine*, March/April 2006

SAY “I DO” TO THE WEDDING MARKET

Frustrated with slow sales and declining markets in the current economy?
Looking for new places to sell your work and revive your bottom line? Then say “I do!”
to the wedding market.

Every year there are some 2.4 million weddings in the United States, according to on-line sites like About.com. And for all those brides and grooms who walk up the aisle or onto the beach, or across the lawn to say their vows, approximately 19 billion dollars is spent on presents at wedding gift registries. Why not consider being part of that healthy and growing market?

Entering the Market

Although the registries and gift buying associated with weddings have been around almost as long as the ceremony, many craftspeople and galleries have not taken advantage of this continually growing market. In fact, of the three galleries and four artists interviewed for the article, (most) fell into the business by happenstance rather than as an intentional marketing decision.

For the galleries, their decision to offer a wedding registry seemed like the natural off-shoot to carrying handcrafted house wares and home accessories.

“The registry is something we haven’t actively promoted,” says Brenda Leder of By Hand South Gallery in Decatur, Georgia, “but we have had it almost as long as we have been open for business (16 years).”

In a well-to-do Chicago are, Bucktown, the contemporary craft gallery, Virtu, offers people traveling to the windy city for business, especially wives of business men a great place to shop for themselves and others. From the gallery’s essentially one-of-kind inventory, they can choose unique wedding gifts like a Judith Weber teapot, or an Ed Wohl birdseye maple cutting board.

“We have become the perfect place to buy the gift for a friend who has everything,” says Virtu’s owner, Julie Horowitz Jackson.

Ed Wohl never developed his birdseye maple cutting boards as a bridal gift. A woodworker producing fine furniture and prototypes for industrial designers, the cutting boards were “just something interesting to do with the small, leftover pieces of wood. While exhibiting his boards at the American Craft Council craft show in Minneapolis, gallery owners like Richard and Diana Shaps of Citywoods, discovered Wohl’s boards

and ordered them for their shops. As they gained popularity, Wohl contracted out the matching and gluing of panels to one subcontractor. Then he helped set up a neighbor to be able to do the sanding and finishing.

Soon the board was selling in 200 galleries across the country, and internationally in Japan, England, and Italy.

“I never realized it made a great wedding gift. To me it was just part of the puzzle.” The part that let Wohl spend his time creating his furniture and prototypes, and designing new boards.

Wedding Registries

Known as the home for Sound of Music heroine, Maria Von Trapp, Stowe, Vermont is also the home of Stowe Craft Gallery. Like Virtu in Chicago, Stowe draws many of its customers from outside the area, the difference being that most of Stowe’s visitors are there for pleasure rather than business.

According to Kelly Bowden, sales clerk and web specialist, “A lot of our customers are from New York, Florida, and Boston. They come for vacation and discover us.” Then, says Bowden, when it is time to purchase a wedding gift, they go online to check out the gallery’s inventory, and then call the gallery to ask questions about color and style or even to ask for suggestions of gifts.

The gallery started its wedding registry in-house about seven years ago. Couples would come in and select items and enter them in the registry. A year ago, the gallery put up a registry on their website so couples can register on-line and wedding guests can then sign on and check out what the couple has requested.

“Most of our customers will look at what is listed online, and then they will call us,” says Bowden. “People want the personal communication.”

Popular sellers from the Stowe Craft Gallery registry are coffee and tea sets by Michael Lambert, glassware by Simon Pearce, and Sticks Furniture. Currently, the gallery averages four to five couples registering with them per year.

Although Virtu has had an online registry in the past, Horowitz Jackson took it off-line in order to redesign and update it. She intends to have it back up after the wholesale shows in February.

“The challenge for my gallery and the online registry is that because I carry unique work, what a customer sees in May may not be here in August. We can recommend something similar, of course.”

In addition to the Judith Weber tea pots and Ed Wohl cutting boards, some other top wedding registry sellers at Virtu are cherry serving spoons by Jonathan’s Spoons, table linen by Lotta Jansdotter, and ceramics by Goyer Bonneau. The gallery currently averages three or four in-house registries a year.

Although their on-line registry is only a year old, By Hand South registers an average of five to 10 couples per year on-line and at the gallery, serving a mostly local client base. They have a sign at the cash register notifying customers of their registry service. Ceramics by potter, Bill Campbell, measuring spoons by Tin Woodsman, and glass by Fire and Light are some of the gallery’s more popular registry choices.

Artist, Judith Weber, has her own bridal registry. Friends of the couple can give money that goes into a gift certificate for the couple. After the wedding, Weber will sit down and consult with the couple about color, design, and setting pieces for their

tableware. Weber can only do two or three a year because of the time involved. The work is all custom and signed.

The Artists

Weber, who has been in business since 1978, started creating her teapots nine years ago.

“I was always interested in items for the table. In the beginning, I didn’t make the teapot specifically for the wedding market.”

Her teapots took off when she exhibited them at the New York Gift Show and then later at the Rosen Buyer’s Market. In fact, the response to her brightly colored, unusually shaped contemporary teapots was so good that she was challenged to find a way to produce the teapots in numbers that could not only meet the demand but support her. Development of a commercial mold required a year’s work, and resulted in a high-end wholesale product. The teapots have been spotlighted in magazines such as Gourmet, Tableware Today, and Bride Magazine.

“It (the teapot) is the perfect gift because it is so unique and functional.”

Wohl, a woodworker originally trained in architecture, has been in business for 35 years and finds that the combination of beauty, function, and affordability are qualities that make his cutting boards such popular gifts. Working with retailers like Simon Pearce who has showrooms in places like Quichee, VT and Chads Ford, PA, also insured his success.

“They are the customer from heaven,” Wohl says, selling almost 1/3 of his production to them. The success of the boards have helped Wohl build a house and

support not only his family but several employees one of whom has been with him since 1984.

Deborah Chapman of Tin Woodsman, who is celebrating 20 years in business, began by marketing her pewter ware at both retail and wholesale shows. She was surprised to discover how popular her pewter measuring spoons are for wedding couples.

“No matter what we come up with in ideas, the measuring spoons remain the most popular.”

Retailing for \$50- \$60, the spoons come in a number of styles, the most recent being the dragonfly.

“We also sell salad servers—we thought they were a classic wedding gift, but it is the measuring spoons that sells. They are the type of thing couples can pass on to the next generation.”

Wedding rings are another handcrafted item that can be passed down through generations. And because he does a lot of custom work which about-to-be-married couples appreciate, goldsmith Garry Vann Ausdle prefers to sell straight to the happy couples through retail craft shows, mostly in the Virginia area, and by word-of-mouth.

Vann Ausdle, who started his jewelry career after many years of carving rare materials, received his first orders for business by visiting shops in New Jersey where he lived at the time, and telling them he did custom-designed jewelry in wax. Asking if he could do anything for them landed him five contracts with five different jewelry stores, mostly to make wedding bands. As his skills developed, he pursued his own design ideas, generally in a floral or organic style.

Sales of wedding bands make up about 25-30% of Vann Ausdle’s business.

“When somebody finds me at a show or in my shop (in Charlottesville, VA), they see what I have and they often ask me to do something special.”

This something special can be a slight redesign of what he already offers in his line, or a completely new design. Couples are delighted to discover that he doesn't charge extra for custom work.

“Unless they bring me a rendering for me to work from, anything I design for them is my design and I will probably use it again. So even though I design it for specifically for them, I will charge them a regular retail price because that design will go into my inventory.”

Couples married for 20 years or more now also seek out Vann Ausdle for his custom work. They want their more typical plain bands redesigned into one of Vann Ausdle's unique organic designs, like his popular scroll design based on the acanthus.

“They have the disposable income after all these years and want something a little fresher in their rings.”

Advertising

Although the size of the wedding market suggests that advertising, especially in wedding-oriented magazines, might prove worthwhile, the galleries and artists interviewed have done very little in these venues.

Horowitz Jackson has advertised in a local publication, Chicago Collection, that is a listing of shops, galleries, etc. distributed to high-end hotels. She also does an e-mail newsletter to customers, and sends out press releases quarterly to 40 different outlets. These have resulted in mentions in magazines like Glamour, Lucky, American Express Magazine, and in the New York Times. But she does very little paid advertising.

Stowe Craft Gallery places an ad in the local Stowe Wedding Guide to encourage local business but, again, most of their sales are from out-of-town customers who discovered them while visiting the area.

Although Weber had a teapot appear in Bride Magazine three years ago and Chapman saw her spoons being used in a spot on Good Morning America, none of the artists have paid for advertising, relying on word-of-mouth or exposure at craft and gift shows.

Trends

“I can’t remember where I read the article,” says Chapman, “but it said that silver and china were being replaced by earthenware and pewter on the bridal registry.”

The reason for this is twofold. With many brides working full-time jobs, the classic choices of silver and fine china are too high maintenance and don’t fit in to most couples’ more casual entertaining style. Instead of a formal dinner party for eight, couples are just as likely to invite guests over for pizza and a movie, or a wine and cheese party!

And the median age of bride and groom has risen, according to the Wedding Report .com—25 plus years for the bride and 26 plus years for grooms. It is not uncommon to see brides in their late 20’s and grooms just hitting 30. By this age, brides and grooms have been part of the work force for sometime and have established either their own separate households or been living together for some time.

Instead of the bride and groom needing the basics such as bedding, linens, and toaster and coffeemaker, couples are looking for the unique and unusual. The handcrafted item easily fills the bill.

Most people think of wedding registries at chain and fine department stores like Macy's and Bloomingdale's, but the current trend in registries include unusual options like honeymoon registries and Home Depot. Craft studios and galleries can take advantage of this trend of the search for the unique and special.

The number of weddings is expected to increase in 2006 by 1% over the number in 2005. For the savvy crafts artist, this could mean healthy and continued sales in a challenging economy.

To develop a niche in this growing market:

1. Ask any galleries that carry your work if they have a bridal registry. If they don't, ask if they would consider offering one.
2. If they do have a registry, ask if your work is offered or suggested by the sales people.
3. Consider sending out press releases to local and regional magazines, especially for issues that come out a few months prior to June and September, two prime wedding months. Focus on your work's unique beauty and function as a one-of-a-kind wedding gift for the couple who has everything.
4. Consider not just gifts for the couple for your line but also items for the wedding itself, such as invitations, wedding favors for guests, gifts for the wedding party, and even decoration. Chapman creates pewter "stones" with words like peace and joy and love on them for the reception tables.

5. Be willing to consider custom work as today's couple are savvy buyers and know what they like and what they want. Let your galleries know you are willing to do custom work if you are.
6. Exhibit at local wedding shows if you have items for the wedding and after, but not if you make wedding rings. Vann Ausdle, who has tried these shows in his region finds that by the time couples are visiting these shows, they already have the rings.
7. If you enter the wedding market, be prepared for success. Know how many of your items you can make in a year, and if you need to work in partnership with subcontractors or hire employees to produce in large numbers.
8. Wedding souvenirs and gifts have a lot of sentimental value. Think of creating pieces that, like the work of the artists mentioned above, can be passed down through generations.
9. Be aware that unlike 20 years ago, both bride and groom choose items for the registry, so make sure your designs can appeal to both male and female.
10. Consider doing shared advertising between artist and gallery for occasional and seasonal exposure.

From *Faerie Magazine*, April 2005

Faery History

How do you study the history of something that many people consider to be nothing more than a figment of an overactive imagination, or the result of drinking too much Irish whiskey? Even more challenging, if one does believe, how does a believer study the history and existence of something or someone who is reported to be either shy, leery of human contact, or even fading from existence altogether?

To study the history of faery (whose definition we will tackle in a moment) requires the willingness to look not only at written records of contact and experience, but, like the archaeologist and anthropologist, a necessary commitment to look at trace evidence – fragments and footprints – and to listen and observe.

Over the centuries, appearances and experiences of those beings known as faery, have been told and retold, and written and rewritten. Indeed, like the old joke of the chicken and the egg, it is hard to know which came first, the fairy story or the fairy, and is an issue still debated among scholars today. In looking at the history of these folk, we will look at both stories and studies, hoping to catch sight of the figure beyond the shadow.

One of the main theories about the origins of fairy and fairy tale is that they are the detritus or smaller echoes of the mythic gods, goddesses, and heroes. As early as Homer's *Illyad* and *Odyssey* (approx. 850 BCE) there are recorded passages that make mention of naiads and dryads, spirits of water and trees. Does this mean they are the

first mention of fairies or that they are the mythic foreshadowing of fairies as nature spirits?

The same question can be applied to the tale of Cupid and Psyche – is that a fairy tale complete in itself or a myth whose echoes carry into the tales of Sleeping Beauty and Beauty and the Beast.

Because the line between myth and fairy tale is such a blurred one, it is helpful to at least begin to define what is meant by Faery, in order to keep one's focus and to provide a light in the forest of the mystical and magical. The term "fairy" is commonly used in one of four ways: 1) as illusion or enchantment, 2) as the abode of the fay, 3) as its collective inhabitants, and 4) as an individual.

The origin of the word itself, according to Thomas Keightley in *The Fairy Mythology*, is the Latin *fatum*, "to enchant", and was derived from the French form of the word, *fée* or *féerie*. In English, the word appeared as *fey* and *fairie* which varied in spelling over time from *fayerye*, *fayre*, *faerie*, *faery*, and *fairy*. A fairy was considered a fantastic being, usually a woman, with the power to enchant. The Italian form of the word is *fata* and is related to the word fate.

In Greek myth, the Fates appeared as a trinity, either as Horae, Gaeae, Muses, Gorgons, Furies, or others as well as the principal trinity of Moerae, and they were nearly always weavers, according to Barbarba Walker in *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*. "Latin *destino* (destiny) means that which is woven, or fixed with cords and threads; fate is 'bound' to happen, just as the spells of fairy-women were 'binding'."

The three Fates are Clotho the Spinner, who spins out a human's life cord or thread; Lachesis the Measurer, who measures and determines the length of the thread; and

Atropos the Cutter, the most fearsome because it is she who finally cuts that thread, ending life. Though even Zeus, king of the gods, was not powerful enough to force the Fates to change their decision to cut a life's thread, occasionally the weaving Fates could be persuaded by words or deeds not to cut the thread of life, sparing the individual.

These three women are often honored as fairy godmothers in different cultures in Europe, where feasts of celebration for the newborn include place settings for these guests along with prayers, for it is the Fates who will determine the future of the newborn and no one wishes to displease them. Here again is the echo of myth in fairy tale. The uninvited fairy godmother (probably Atropos!) decrees that Sleeping Beauty shall die, have her life thread cut, on her sixteenth birthday when she pricks her finger on the spindle of the spinning wheel, (i.e. wheel of Fate). Fortunately, there remains a fairy godmother who has not yet granted her gift – probably Lachesis – and who changes the spell, “the binding”, and allows a measure of longer life to Sleeping Beauty.

There are other fairytales that reflect this connection between Fate and fairy. In Grimm's collection of tales is the story of the Three Spinners – one with a broad foot who got it “by treading, by treading”, one with a lip that hung to her chest from “licking, by licking”, and one with a broad thumb - “by twisting, by twisting”. These three help a poor girl to spin flax into gold for the Queen and thereby win the hand of her son the prince, changing her Fate or future.

In addition to the echoes of myth, fairies were often understood to be those creatures that exist as neither angel nor devil but somewhere in between. Other cultures, such as Norwegian and Scottish, claimed fairies were offspring of fallen angels, and as

such, carried off the souls of the dead. Thus, anyone who died at twilight, the time of fairies, woke to find themselves in fairyland – the place between heaven and hell.

One story from the Christian tradition is that Eve was bathing her children when she heard God approaching and hid the children she had not yet bathed. When God saw her and asked if these were all her children, Eve lied and said they were. God, who saw everything, said that the children she had hidden and denied would henceforth always be hidden from the sight of mankind – these were the elves or fairies.

This idea of fairies being a little betwixt and between, neither good nor bad, may explain why some are seen as either malevolent at worst, or immoral at best, while others, such as fairy godmothers, are present only to do good. They are alien creatures who generally do not feel the way that humans do thus their lack of morality. Nor do fairies think the way that humans do which explains why they are attracted to any creative activity.

Their function, nature, and even physical characteristics are often also influenced by their place of abode. For example, the dark fairies or elves that live underground are generally less attractive, darker-skinned, and can be basically benign such as dwarves (as long as you don't steal their treasure), or fearsome, such as the trolls. Those fairies who live above ground, often called the Light Faeries, are glamorous and tall and, on occasion, beneficial. Other realms of the fairy include the sea, (undines and mermaids), and plants and trees, such as the dryads.

The first known mention of fairies as “little people” occurred in the 13th century work of Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperilia*, where he describes certain daemons who are less than “half a thumb” in height. And though most people today think of fairies as

whimsical tiny people with pretty wings, fairies have also been man-eating giants (ogres), beautiful enchantresses (Morgan LeFay and Lorelei), small, wizened men (leprechauns), and playful pranksters (Puck). As is the case with humans, fairy seems to have a class system or hierarchy as well, for there are high and low elves, and those with more power than others, such as Shakespeare's Titania and Oberon.

Though fairies are generally thought to be the magical inhabitants of the Celtic lands of Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, the stories of magical folk who live next to humans, only occasionally interacting with them and therefore bringing about change and transformation, are to be found in Native North America, Scandinavia, India, Spain, Egypt, and other countries. In future issues, we hope to look at the history and origins of these fairies from varying cultures and societies around the globe.

We will, of course, do this with care and respect, for the one thing that a traveler into the land of Faery learns very quickly or otherwise suffers the consequences, is to do so wisely, according to the etiquette of Faery (such as not eating or drinking anything there if one wants to return). As Betty Ballantine says in the first edition of Brian Froud's and Alan Lee's book, *Faeries*, "Faerie represents Power, magical power, incomprehensible to humans, and hence inimical...it is a world to enter with extreme caution, for of all things that faeries resent the most, it is curious humans blundering about their private domains like so many ill-mannered tourists."

So, we will enter, and research, and write with extreme caution, minding our manners, - and hope you will join us on the journey into this most mystical and magical of realms.

Resources:

Faeries described and illustrated by Brian Froud and Alan Lee, 1978

The Great Encyclopedia of Faeries secrets revealed by Pierre Dubois, 1996

The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales 1972

“The Origin of faeries” by Fiona Broome, www.fionabroome.com

“The History of Fairy Tales” Sacred Texts, www.sacred-texts.com

