



# Kathleen O'Brien Studio

## 2017 Review



## *Retreat to the Orphanage*

This is not a negative thing, but a real thing. Happy that I have built the sanctuary that I wrote of this time last year, it's the foundation I have created a to continue forward into the last phase of life. This year I've allowed myself to fully grasp what it is to be without my mother, now along with my father and grandparents, to assess what is truly valuable to experience, to leave behind, to spend my time creating.



I've spent more time sitting in quiet reflection than being busy in the outer world displaying my art, or posting on social media. Everything is getting examined, prioritized and sorted, stored.





I was grateful to inherit this [oil painting](#) my grandfather did of me, The tear is a foreshadow of feeling. Months later, seeing my grandson discover charcoal, fire drawing, comforted me about the power of art and creativity, proud to see it running in the veins still.



It feels as if I did nothing, I wanted to do nothing, frankly. But as I looked through files to choose images for this review I realized I was more engaged than I had guessed.



### *Change Engine for 2017*

Each December I devote to engaging with the special energy of the season. Last year I did the *Lily and the Lotus* program by Janet Conner. It culminated in creating this mandala, the Change Engine, for what I wanted to create in 2017. It provided an empowering visual reminder of intention and focus. One thing I did influenced my art making throughout the year. I added an oil on paper self portrait, that I did in 1986. It opened the door for reflection back through the years to reveal themes that are perennial for me. Rather than store art from previous times, I used parts in the main series for the year....



### *The Atlas of the Year*

*Atlas of the Year* is twelve aspects of my continuing exploration of the 4 seasons – 4 directions, expressions of the time–place essences. Each of the twelve viewpoints has three parts: a collage, a drawing with symbols and correspondences of the month and written material. In this small detail from *One, Aries, Atlas of the Year*, (March 21–April 21) I used drawings from 1977, 1987 and 1997 when it noticed the synchronicity of the years ending in 7.

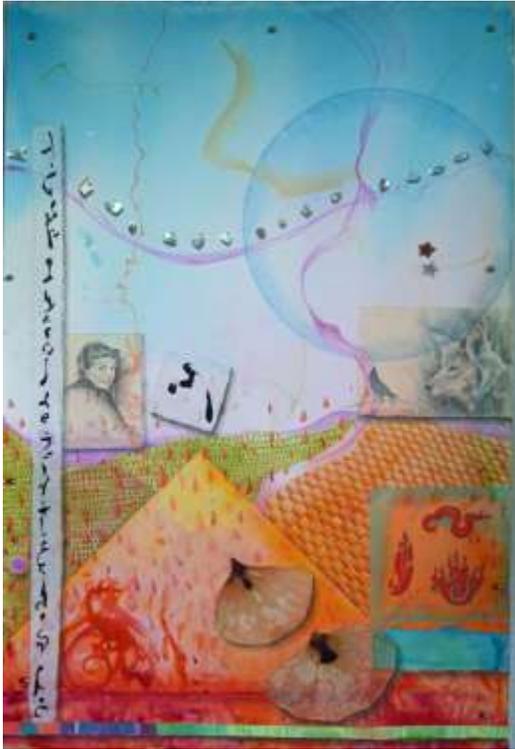
For each one I have written segments that describe the collage and drawing symbols and go into detail about the lessons of the time and place. This is soul work. I allow the images to surface. In The project actually began last December with *Ten, Capricorn, Atlas of the Year*, this focus continued through the winter, spring, summer and fall.



For thirty years I've been studying and teaching about being in the right place at the right time, the annual cycles of nature and the cosmos with a different format each time. 2006 for example produced a postcard a day front and back with messages about the celebrations of that day in *Each Day in the Year of the Fire Dog*.



For the last month of the spring-east season, *Three, Gemini, Atlas of the Year*, I used a light drawing of my mom and dad as youth. The hieroglyphic for friendship shows two friends on the threshold to the path to the rising sun.



*Six, Virgo, Atlas of the Year*, painted during Equinox time is the last of the [summer/south](#) segment, the color is red, the animal is coyote. In it I included a drawing of my mother, as this was the month of her funeral.

The last one, *Nine, Sagittarius, Atlas of the Year*, is composed of 35 embellished details from the postcards from the December section, like a large calendar. When they are all completed they will be professionally photographed, displayed and formatted into books.

## *Shapes*

Shapes is a series of six 12x12" varnished panels that feature the three basic shapes. *Shapes 1, 2 and 3* were a part of the [Gridworks](#) exhibit at new Editions Gallery in the spring.



## *Bouquets*

*Bouquets* is a series of 27 watercolor, drawing collages. Some feature the flowers we all love, painted loosely, others are abstract. They range in size from postcard size to 9x12".



## *15 Paintings, 9 Paintings*

*15 Paintings, 9 Paintings* are two series of miniature watercolor, drawing collages. *15 Paintings* has 11 in the series, each is 5x3". *19 Paintings* has 14 in the series, each is 3x3".



## Events

2017 began with two events involving UK Healthcare. They purchased of three drawings for their new Cancer Center. Twenty artworks were on display at the OBGYN Clinic. I am very pleased to have my art where it can uplift the viewer.



Charged Space 2, watercolor, drawing, collage, 7x5"



Also beginning the year artfully, I had four works in the *New Year, New Art* exhibit at the Community Arts Center in Danville. This is an annual invitational show that always makes me feel like I'm off to a great start.

The Kentucky Arts Council traveling exhibit *Illustrated Word* continues through 2018. In Lexington, it was displayed at the KY Crafted: the Market. *Choice of Words* and *Magic Square of Words* along with the work of 29 artists who incorporate text as a design element will travel to [six more libraries](#) next year.



[225: Artists Celebrate Kentucky's History](#) had a six month showing at Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea. 51 Kentucky artists represented numerous facets of Kentucky's rich 225-year history. Six out of eight *Pleasant Hill Botanicals* sold. [Abraham Lincoln's Kentucky](#) had the perfect exposure.





The studio loft had a thorough inventory check and [reordering](#). Some things need to be stored, like oil paintings that date back to the early 1970's and examples from many different series through the years. Others I am offering at the Open Studios. It has been an important activity. Many things are being included in new work.



Gwen Childs, director of the Berea Arts Council (shown at left) invited me to two group shows at their venue.

In the summer, a beautiful exhibit *Kentucky Painters Invitational* found my work in the company of many wonderful artists.



*The Book Transformed* exposed some amazing approaches to altered books. I was happy to show my books from a traveling show I had there ten years ago, *4 Seasons-4 Directions*.

Four times a year at mid season the Studio doors are open. Last year I missed the mid winter Open Studio because I visited my mother. Each event has a distinct theme that relates to time space essence. Concurrently I send out a mid season studio update by email. I love the rhythm of this activity. I produce, then prepare for display, then write about it then share it with visitors. This part is very important for me. To witness the response that visitors have tells me the stories they perceive in the art. When someone acquires art I'm thrilled to be a part of the feedback loop.





I wrote about visiting  
old friend,  
Robert Bellows' [Warrior StoryField](#).  
Placing my mother's  
medal in the Dragon  
Heart brought me a  
sense of peace and  
honoring of her  
memory.  
It is profound  
what they are  
accomplishing with  
this healing project,  
and I look forward  
to seeing it  
in situ  
when complete.



## New Products



This year I acquired many more beads, always on the lookout for the unusual especially old ones. The history imbued in a Lewis and Clark bead, a Medicine Man bead, Dutch annular, Sleeping Beauty turquoise or something like an *end of the day* Millefiori, where the bead maker gathered up all the scraps of the day and repurposed them into one of a kind bead—all are fascinating. The fun for me is gathering them together into the latest series, [Healing Necklaces](#). Having a new computer and new programs made my technical work fun.





In time for ARTTOUR I created [four new cards sets](#), that's sixteen new individual cards. They are adapted from the *Bouquets* series of watercolor collages.



Also I developed a series of notebooks that feature wraparound artwork, with an anti-scuff laminate cover, 52 pages of high quality 70lb text paper. I paired them with a matching mug filled with a package of coffee beans for a Journal Set. They were a big hit



Living with the flow of nature and the garden brings continuous surprise and vitality to the body and senses. My birthday flower, Royal Lily is beyond intoxicating - it's reviving. The end of a cycle simply means the next wonderful plant reaches it's fulfillment bringing the next surprise.





This year's Christmas card.

A fond farewell to 2017 Pantone color of the year, *Greenery*.  
Soon to welcome 2018 Pantone color of the year, *Ultraviolet*.

Thank you for reading. Onward to a new year.

*Kathleen*