



2023 ReView

Kathleen O'Brien Studio



2023 was like having a ground hog year. These were the opening words from last year's review: "I titled 2022 as "The Year of the Drought", figuratively and literally. Like many of my artist friends, options for opportunities seemed to dry up because of the economy. We had no rain since June, after an abundantly wet spring, so our gardens were minimal. Luckily one of my studio goals was to create new inspired art."

2023 was eerily similar. Yet gathering all the artwork and events together this ReView form, to see it again, gives me a sense of achievement. Won't you join me please?

2023 began with studio planning followed by an exhibit of [*Alexander's Library*](#) artist books and paintings at the Lexington Public Library, East Branch.



Links in the 2023 Pantone Color of the Year (Viva Magenta) takes you to a blog post that goes more depth on the subject.



Alexander's Library, exhibit. [Check it out.](#)





Starting the year with an interesting [email](#) I received:

“I have your pencil drawing from the Daily Camera in 1971 on my wall. I’d like to send you a photo for your enjoyment. You sold it to me for \$5.00 back then!”





On March 3rd at 4:30 P.M., a ferocious wind storm arrived and blew out power for many in Kentucky.

For us the outage was immediate.

The power returned March 7, coincidentally both of our departed mother's birthdays.

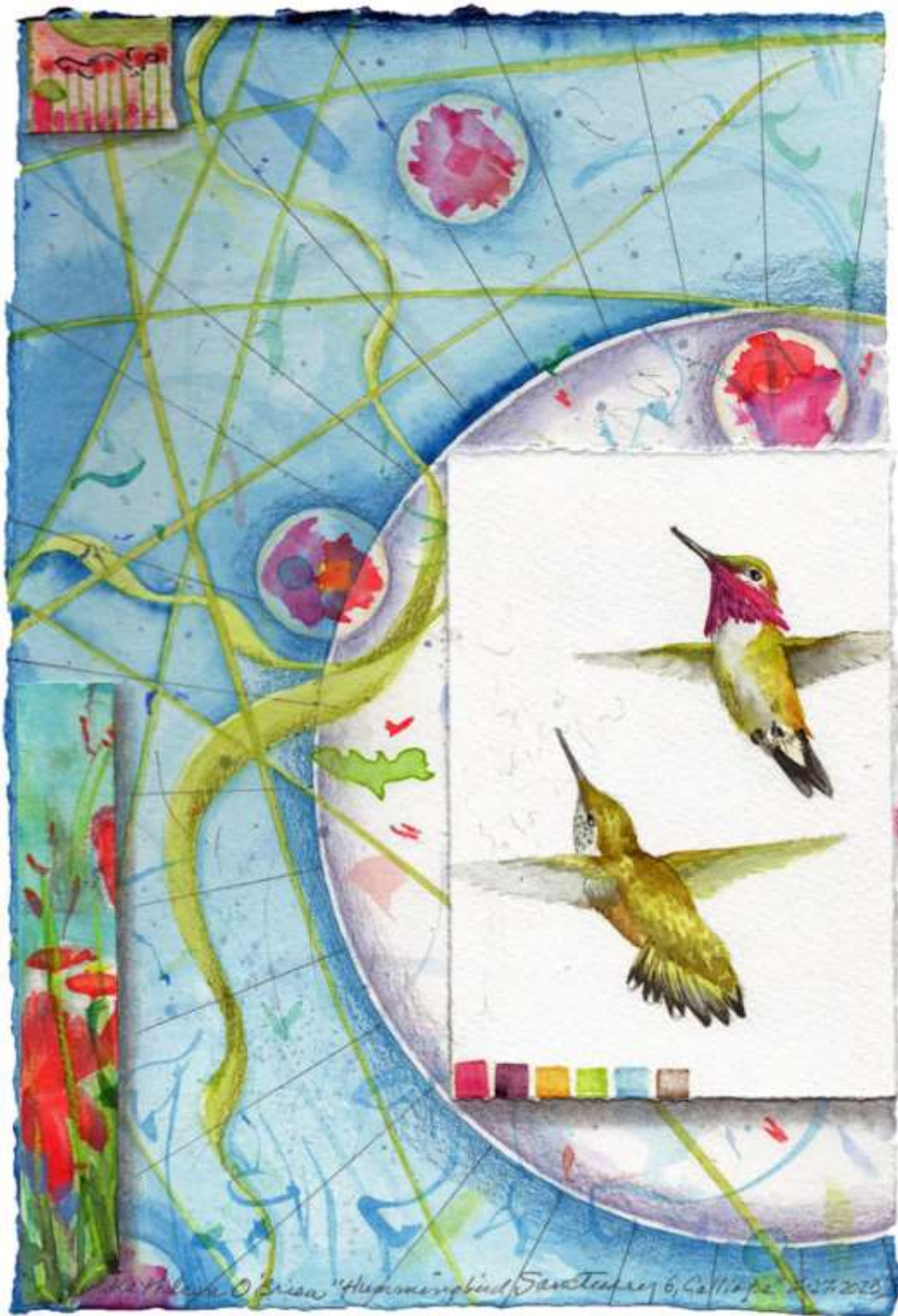
We learned many lessons from what, for me, was an unexpected hiatus of fully living the artful life.



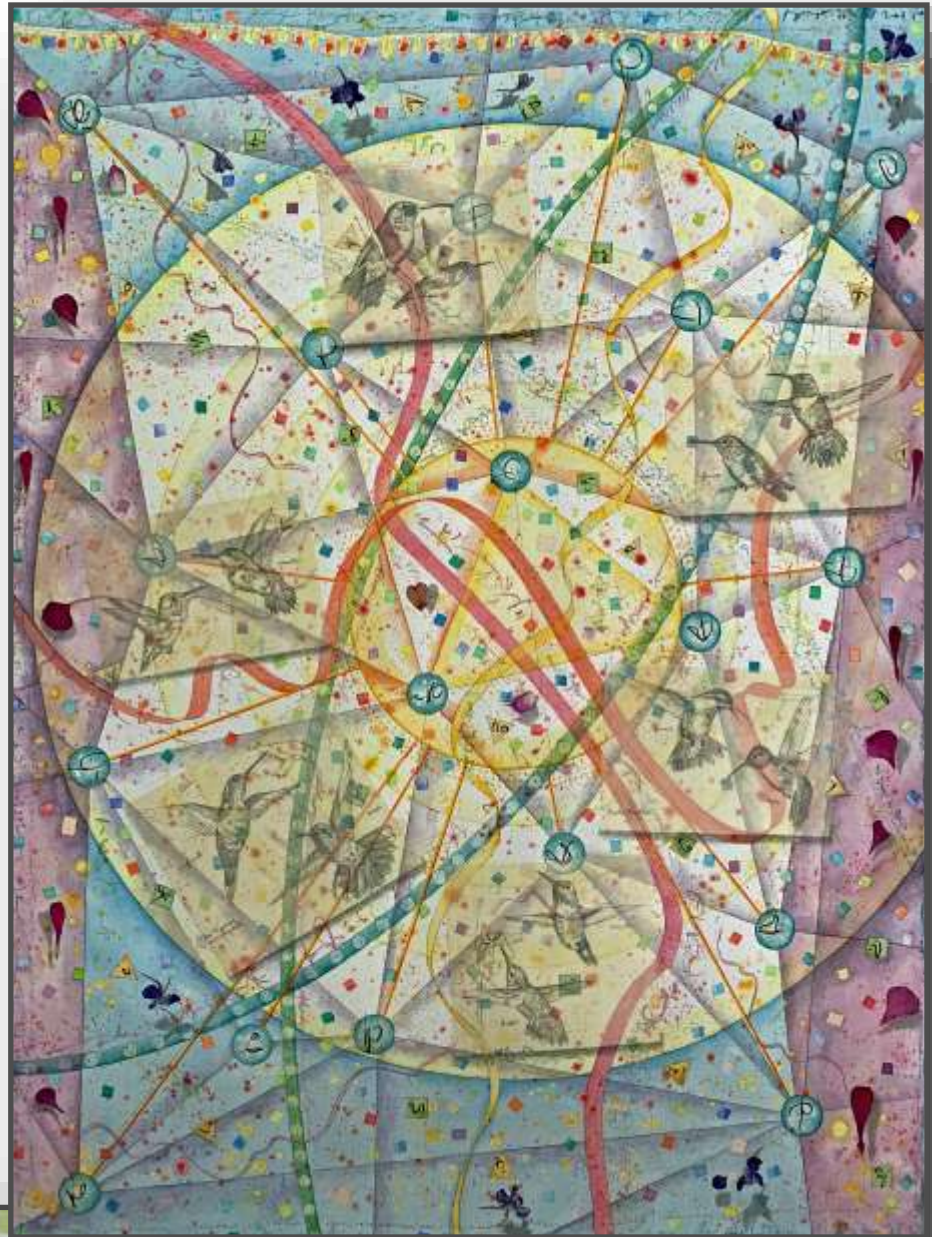
Information about the new work for the Spring Into Art Open Studio in [this post](#).



Details of new work for the 15th Annual Autumn Open Studio



Hummingbird Sanctuary is a series of eight hummingbird species, showing the male and female of each. The birds were painted on the beautiful Saunders Waterford cold press paper, with the background on heavier Twinrocker paper.



Hummingbirds Sanctuary,
which includes *Health and Help*,
is a series that I wrote about in
[this post](#).



Hummingbird Joy is a series of eight watercolor paintings of single hummingbirds in stationary poses, *in actual size*. I was surprised to find examples that were somewhat large, and also very small. Each is 6x4" on Saunders Waterford paper.





The idea of *Tiny Treasure Boxes* at first was intended as a gift box of eye candy, or soul candy, that has zero calories. The candies are tiny artifacts that had been kept in the storage boxes.



kathleen o'brien
S T U D I O

Hello Monica,

I am counting on the light of Beltane, and you, to help me come out of the dark half of the year. It's ironic that at this most lighthearted time of year, and as I prepare for my 75th birthday next month, that I am at a place in my business that feels like an ending. I am literally at a standstill, so I ask you, my friends, for your advice. Simply "reply" to this email.

Should I go out of business?

Should I put all my attention on archiving my work and building my legacy?

Is it important to you in your life to continue to see my art online and at the studio, why?

Would you like to mentor one on one, and pay for the inspiration you receive from me?

For unknown reasons, several things are lacking lately, and I hope to find solutions by reaching out to you. Very few guests came to my recent open studio and sales were minimal, and overall interest in my art seems to be waning.

Although my creativity, talent and output are strong, maybe never better, yet something has changed. Please tell me anything from your point of view. I will learn a lot from the words you send to me.

For instance, if you live close by and did not attend Spring Into Art Open Studio, what kept you away? For example, was it finances, travel, or something else? If scheduling is an issue, I have added the opportunity to arrange a visit with the click of a button on my home page. There are no wrong answers and no judgements, just a need to know.

Or, what considerations may hold you back from acquiring my "tranquil art for trying times"? You know I am approachable

Thanks to the many responses I received to my mid-season spring update email (see above) with cheers and suggestions I've been steadily pursuing options yet need to remind myself how long the path is and remain patient.



Platinum Birthday Collection, a story about how I celebrated several big birthdays. Open the PDF within a PDF below.



PlatinumBirthdayCollection_KOBrien.pdf



It started with sitting in the studio staring out the window, again. Just drawing a blank. No idea what to do or make. So I decided I would draw a blank. The rule; I could only draw or paint in the margins of what would be blank spaces that contain mysterious wonderings from time immemorial.

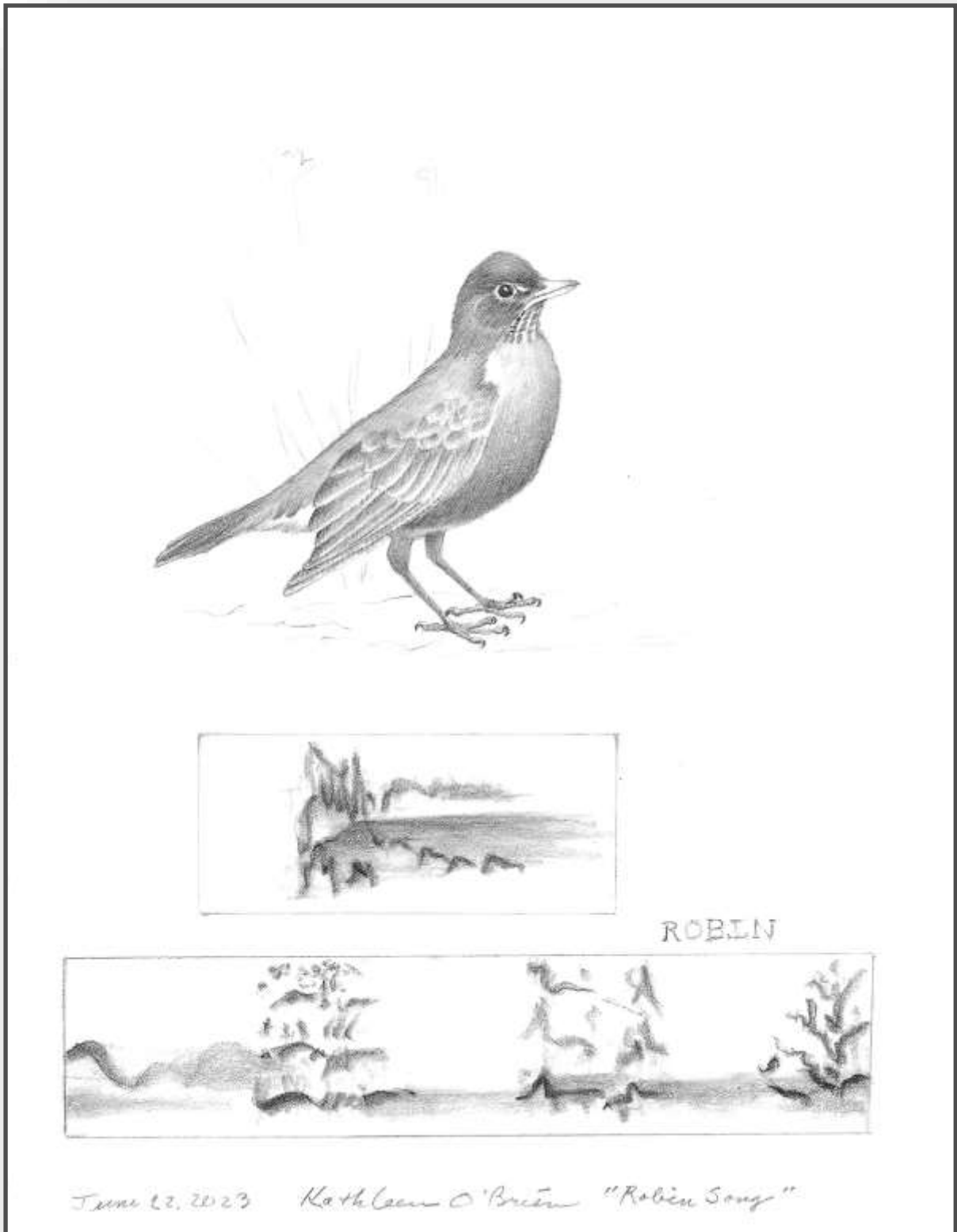


I wasn't so blank, as next I became curious about going in the opposite direction using dry black medium on a sheet of drawing paper. This time filling spaces within with notes of birdsong as I was hearing them sing. Some loud some so soft.

The graphite shades range from 4h to 8b and darker shades with lithographic crayon and handmade vine charcoal served to express their communication. Birds have always insisted on having a presence in my life and art.



The *Birdsongs* series that began in the spring will continue into 2024. The project involves musicians who are composing music inspired by bird's songs. The intention is to have a concert with the art presentation. And to be a traveling show with recordings of the compositions.



The graphite drawing of the bird, in this illustration a Robin, is accompanied by its sound signature captured on the Merl in app in the gardens.



Brown Betty, Brown Bob and Baby Betty and Baby Bob

Out of all our bird neighbors, perennial Brown Betty, a Carolina Wren, claims top tenant. That's why I chose her for a new brand banner. Betty and Bob produce at least three families a year here. Betty chooses deluxe accommodations in the cornucopia basket on top of the porch closet. Or inside it in a plastic Kroger bag full of bungee cords. Or in the folds of the east porch curtains when they are tied to the column. Or behind a box on a stack of doors on the north porch. We had to say no to her choice of the grill. I heard a new call coming from the grill cover the other day and surprised two little babies who froze when they saw me. I froze also and backed slowly away. Not an hour later we had an intense thunder storm, Betty had lured them under the porch. A few days later I spotted them again, plump little fledgling twins on the lilac bushes on the west. I am thrilled that they love it here.



It was enjoyable to show collages and jewelry at two Gallery Hops in Danville at CAMP.



I completed work with the editor on the “Time Journey” chapter, that I can share in 2024 when it is published. By request I wrote a chapter for a geography book

edited by Stan Brunn, *Time Journeys* titled

From Inner Realms to Outer Worlds; an Artist’s Time Journey.

To illustrate my 54 years as an artist I created a grid of 25 works from each decade. This grid is a combination of them all. See all grids and the abstract on

[this post.](#)



On short notice we had a few days vacation, so we got away from it all. It is a beautiful drive from our place through the Cumberland Gap to Hot Springs NC. Hot springs are usually our first choice for taking a respite from the day-to-day. We found a charming cabin and settled in to do nothing except soak in our private spring tub, play in my [art journal](#), walk, eat and rest.





The overlook at Cumberland Gap National Park. Bel was little nervous.



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The bead demo was inside the visitor center at Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, a calm and cool starting place for the Jazz Festival.

The set up was perfect, my display table in between two large cushioned benches. Most people were there for the music, but those interested in beads had the opportunity to sit unrushed and settle into long excursions through time and experience the wonder of the human touch and ingenuity of bead artistry that dates back 30,000 years.





Having the displays of the old beads inspired awe. I was glad I had cataloged them, giving people a chance to feel like they were in a museum or library.





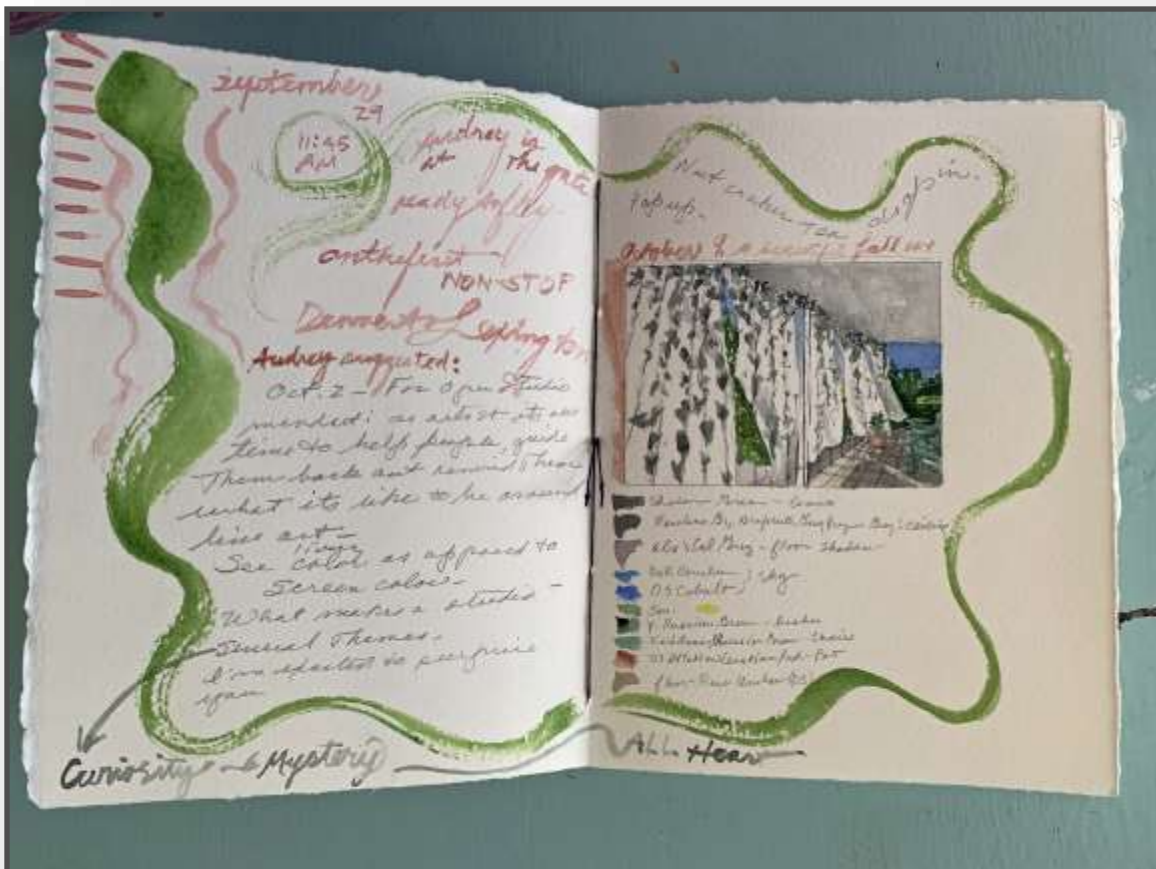
This is a study of *Dark Vase with Lilies* by Shirley Trevena.



Longmont Out Loud (LOL)

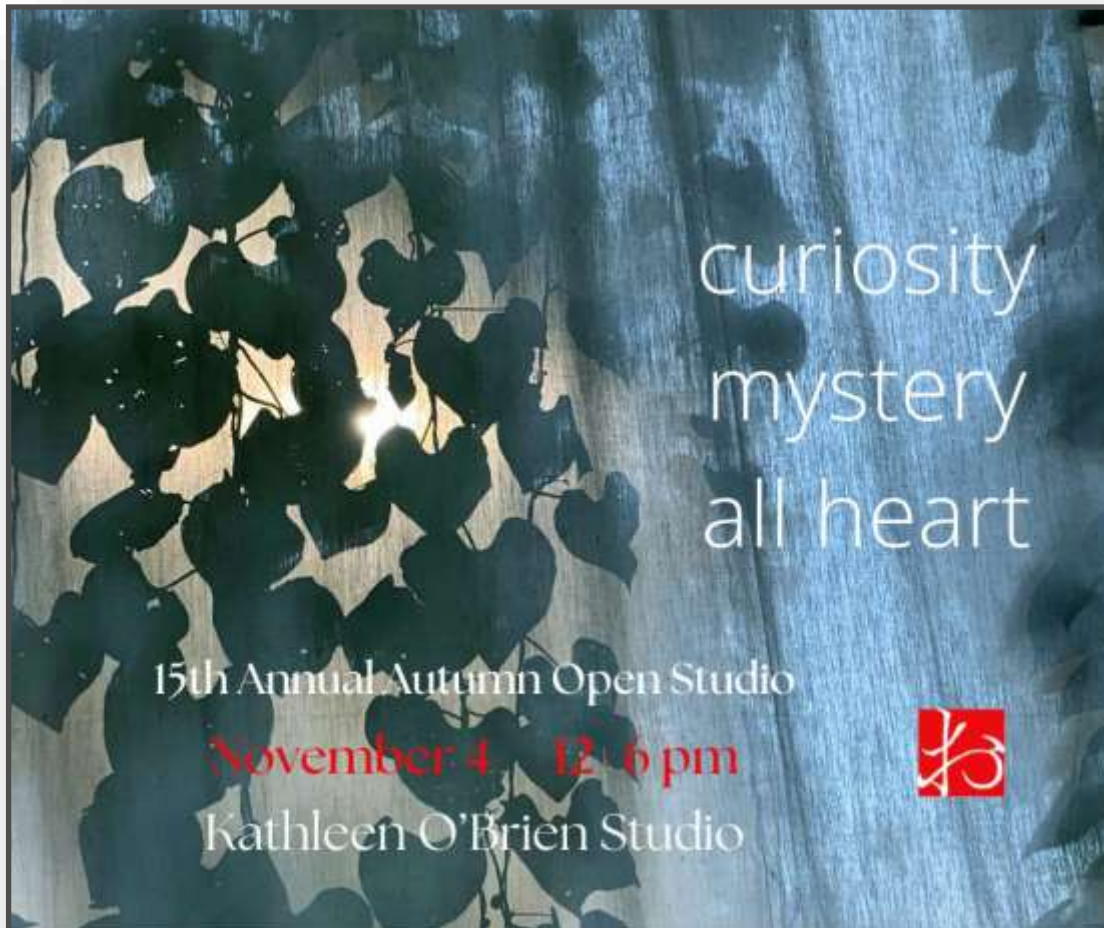
I was thrilled to have my daughter visit. How luxurious to have conversations! She needed a break from recently launching a life time dream, [Longmont Out Loud \(LOL\)](#). As a maven she knows so much about collaboration and bringing folks together around laughter and caring. She gave me a few tips when I discussed a theme for the autumn collections.

She said “it’s OUR time for artists to help people, guide them back out into the world, remind them what it’s like to be around live art; see living color as opposed to screen color.” That set the stage (Audrey would laugh) for my heart to open and hear. It’s a process of integration, doing the work, letting the story reveal itself. When I heard these words in my mind, I knew I had my theme; curiosity, mystery, all heart.





Remembrances of the Home of the Ancestors shrine, created 17 years ago for an art show. In it were pencil drawings of my parents and grandparents with feather shapes torn out and collaged over the drawings. This symbolized their passing into spirit. Those feather shapes of Japanese paper were attached to stem fronds. Petal shapes from the paper were fastened around poppy seed pods, an homage to them as veterans. Some were placed in my grandfather's Cuban cigar tubes that he repurposed into a palette knife holder. Creating this brought comfort to me.



To read about how I came up with 15th Annual Autumn Open Studio theme, Curiosity - Mystery - All Heart, [click here](#). I imagined new features for the event, like Greg's talk about the ancient history of the land and the studio inhabitants.



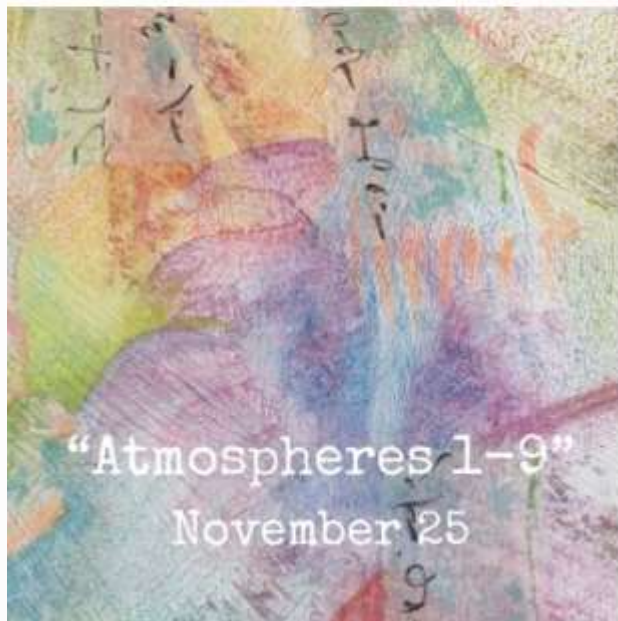
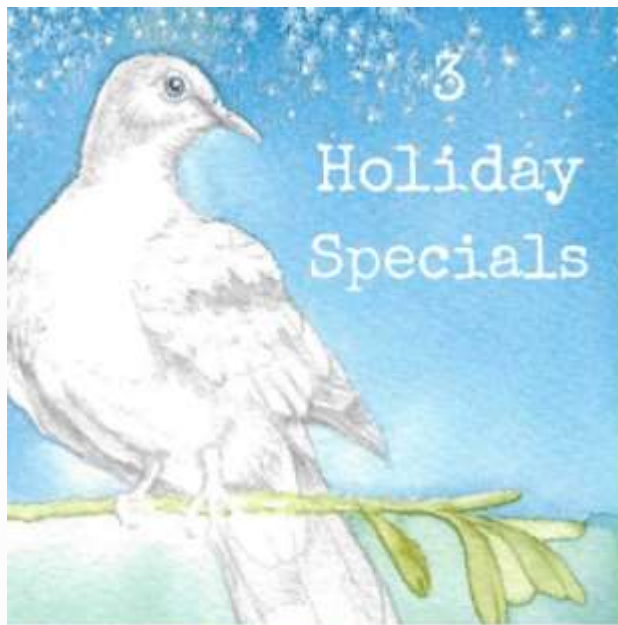
The Hummingbird Room at the Open Studio.

My heart is full of sweet memories when I think about the 15th Annual Autumn Open Studio. My mind is full of amazement that it was the best open studio to date, after considering that it might be the last. It's not that mobs of people showed up, about 30 did. [The Force of Friendship](#) showed up, from the first early arrival to the last moment of the six hours I was constantly in the presence of a friend, old and new, who came because they love art, learning and fellowship. A new tag line was born, "everybody needs beads"!

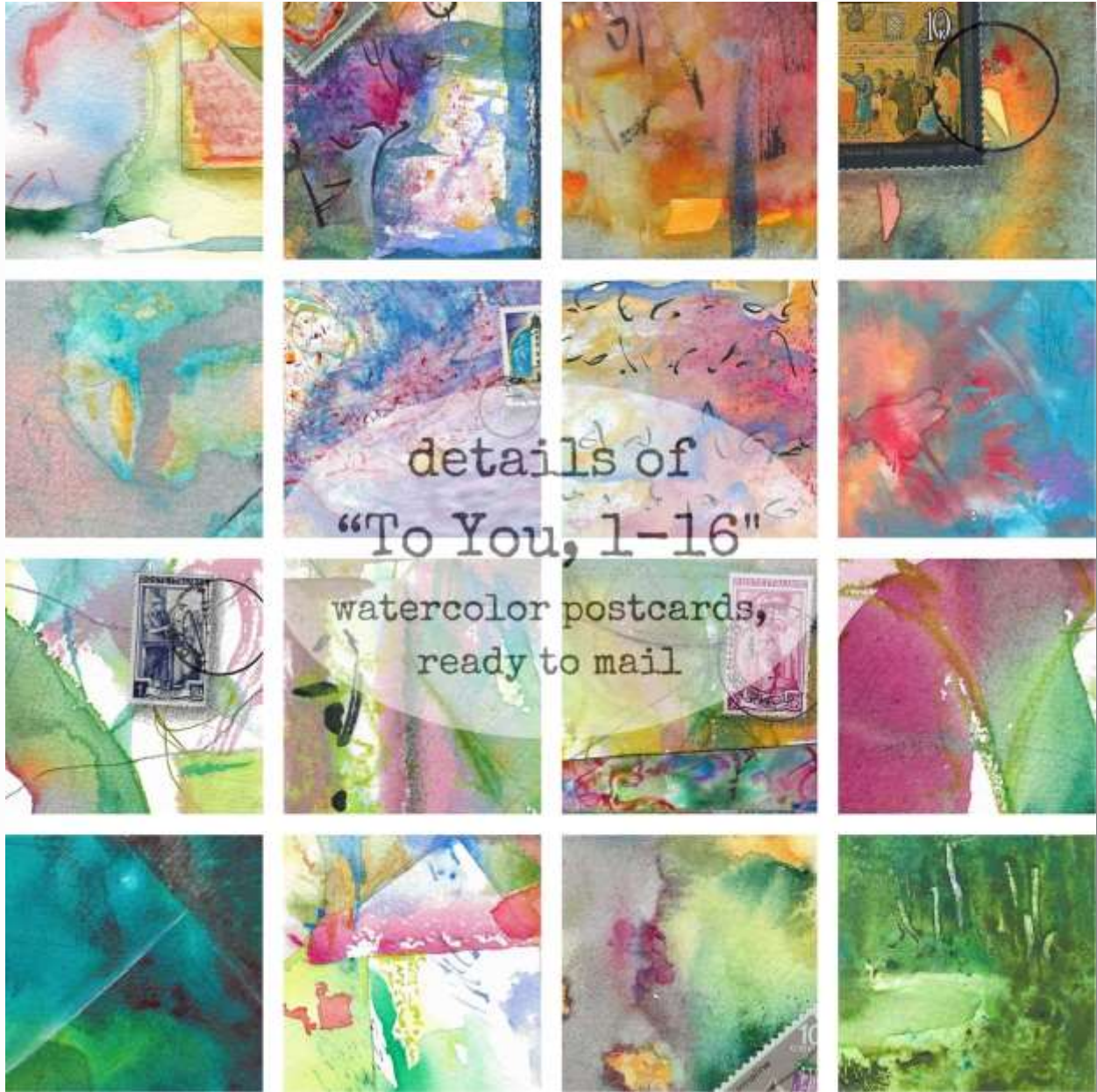
To be able to tell art revelers that everything they see is the latest art from the studio is a source of pride for me. The studio is still my favorite container to present bodies of work because it is the context of the essence and vibrations of the land from which it was created. The result is people are inspired by the intentions and mission that creates the art, that is "tranquil art for trying times".



"Autumn 1-4", watercolor paintings using the same four colors.



Holiday Special, released in 3 parts. "To You" a series of watercolor postcards packed in a translucent envelope, stamped and ready to send for a special gift and new greeting card sets. Beads of the Season, a collection of rare bead necklaces and bracelets, with bead ID packed in a recycled sari silk pouch. "Atmospheres", a series of ethereal abstract watercolor paintings, 7x10" and Art Candy Boxes.





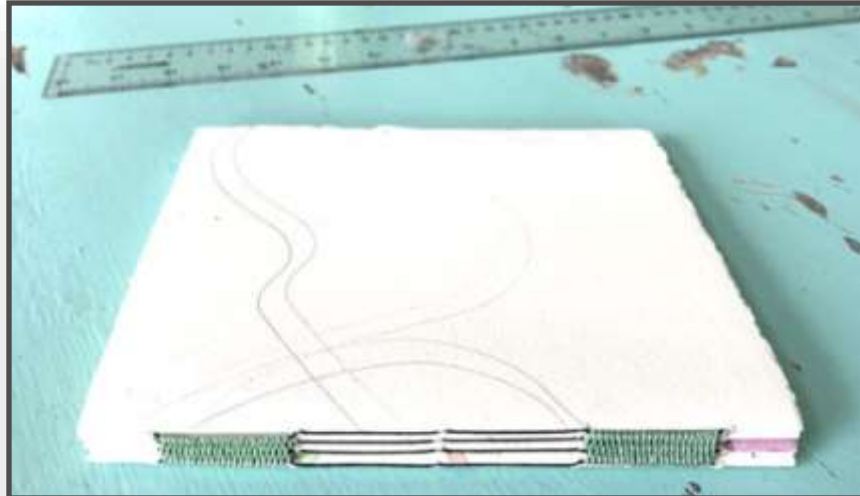


We had a lovely time at Clear Creek School house discussing our hopes and intentions for going forward. I visualize this as overlapping influence of Art Farms.





A new Christmas Card set.



Color Book Class - exploring color, tools and materials.

Bring your watercolors or gouaches, pencils, brushes, or favorite collage materials to the studio on January 20 for a day of exploring the FUN of your colors. Play in a 16 page handmade journal, like the one shown above. I provide the journal, lunch and watercolor palettes, water jars, towels and sponges. You begin to fill the journal with charts of your colors - either straight from the pan or as dabs of colors used in a sketch.

You may sample my paints, pencils, ink and brushes.
I can share a variety of approaches to experiencing colors.

Limited to 6 artists. To see more photos, [click here](#). Please Register by January 9, 2024.





Our annual neighborhood jamboree, to round off the year.
All the best to you, until next time around.