



Art in the Time of Covid

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Artists interpret the world, and right now it's an unfamiliar world we're living in. We're providing an opportunity for all of us to share our creative work inspired by this experience.

We are sending out periodic emails showcasing the Covid-inspired work of Rappahannock artists and others in the community whose creativity has been stirred by these times.

The art takes different forms — visual, written, video or audio — but deals in some way with the new patterns of our everyday lives. We encourage you to participate by submitting your art and describing how it's been affected by Covid. We also welcome feedback and will pass along your comments to the artists. Contact covidart@raac.org.

Davette Leonard

"In the beginning of the Covid lockdown I was frozen by anxiety and a sense of uselessness. I was fearful and uncertain and I couldn't feel the importance of my art in the situation we were all in. After a couple of conversations with people who were struggling, it hit me how tremendously necessary art is in times like these. With this realization the floodgates of creativity and work burst wide open. I have produced 11 still life oil paintings, 9 watercolors, 1 pet portrait, 2 abstract oil paintings (under my pseudonym, Clare Eladorn), numerous calligraphy pieces and an oil painting of a morel for my daughter on Mother's Day."



The still life painting shown here is my last painting and the brightest in spirit. I took advantage of the luscious things that Spring and Summer provided for my still life paintings. Hellebores were a favorite along with magnolias and quinces. These paintings create comfort with their attention to line, color, lighting and relatability. For me, when I begin a still life painting there is a sense of predictable outcome. They celebrate the beauty of nature and the material world outside of ourselves.



"The other painting shown here is an image of my insides turned outside. It shows what I feel and not what I think. It is a process that takes shape by my emotions and intuition. I allow myself to be guided by forces beneath the surface and from places of mystery. Some of the Clare paintings provide a catharsis, helping me to have a more peaceful self. Art has always been a life raft through difficult times."

Sally Haynes

A story of loss, part III

"I was home in Sperryville the stormy July evening when a house further out on Woodward Rd burned, but I didn't see the intense bolt of lightning that sparked the blaze nor hear the thunderclap that followed. I was barely aware of the wail of fire and rescue vehicles rushing headlong to the scene. Only a day or two later did I learn of the devastating fire that consumed a home built by artist Jeanne Drevas.

People familiar with the home were shocked and saddened but, for me, the news was doubly poignant. Even though I had never seen the place I had an attachment to it, for Jeanne built her house with materials that came from dismantling my father's commercial garage.



Teenagers Nancy Latham and her cousin sit on the island where gasoline pumps once stood.

In the early 70s, Amissville Sales and Service had to be removed to make way for the widening of Lee Highway. With the help of friends, Jeanne took down the building and recycled the materials to build her home in Sperryville. I was never in that home but I met the artist during the 2019 art tour. I don't recall if I told her of our connection as I admired the intriguing figures that make up her art.



A.C. Latham in his work clothes outside his garage with his first daughter Elizabeth.

My Dad, Armistead Clifford Latham or A.C. to his friends and acquaintances, grew up on a farm in Amissville but had no desire to be a farmer. He liked to tinker with mechanical things and became a skilled mechanic, electrician, plumber and welder. He was a popular man, not just for his skills, but for his intelligence and quick wit. Tragically, at 38, his life ended in an automobile accident.

The garage closed, gasoline tanks were removed and, for the most part, the building sat empty. It became a sometime playhouse for my three sisters and me and the cool dank basement was a spooky storage place for rows and rows of tomatoes, beans, pickles and peaches that Mom canned each year.



The youngest Latham daughter Susan sleighrides with Amissville Sales and Service as a backdrop.

Canned fruit and vegetables continue to be a staple of the Latham household.



When highway planning and construction began, I was intent on climbing the career ladder at Washington Gas, visiting Mom weekends and helping with plans for her new home. I was mostly unaware of the artist tearing down the garage stick by stick.

Many years passed before mutual friend Ned Overton scheduled a tour of Jeanne's unique house so Mom could see how she had used the garage. Jeanne explained every piece of wood and where it had been located in the garage, and my mother was really touched. When they finished the tour, Ned told Mom that Jeanne was also a potter and handed her a large blue bowl made by the artist. Mom held it, complimented the quality and handed it back. Ned pushed the piece back to her as he said, "It's yours, Merry Christmas!" Mom rarely lost control, but according to Ned they both struggled to hold back emotions as she accepted the bowl.

Fast forward. Jeanne sold the house, the new owners remodeled it, I moved to Woodward Rd. with no idea the house was nearby, and a strike of lightning turned its timbers, walls, doors and sills to ashes. Much like Dad's death, it was sudden and unexpected; there was no grace period to get used to the new reality. We all just did the best we could to adapt.

Mom is 99 now. She raised four daughters, never remarried, had a successful career in newspaper and printing businesses and helped the Amissville Volunteer Fire Department raise funds by frying chicken, making pies, collecting carnival prizes and selling raffle tickets for more than a half century. She no longer remembers the garage. My sisters and I, on the other hand, discovered that even 64 years after his death it was comforting to know a small part of Dad lived on in Jeanne's house. Now, that too is gone.

However, still holding center stage on a table in Mom's living room is Jeanne's lovingly crafted and beautifully rendered bowl. It is a lasting reminder of a garage, an artist, a friend and a day generously spent with Mom celebrating a memorable part of her earlier years."



Drevas' hand-crafted pottery with fern imprints.

EVERY member of the Latham family cherishes the blue bowl!



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Questions, thoughts: email covidart@raac.org