Why does a Pittsburgh resident come to MOLLI to give classes and lectures on art? That was the question the committee asked when VICKY A CLARK, Ph.D. submitted a proposal for her first course. They didn’t know our family lives here and as her sister, I encouraged her to combine her talent for teaching with longer family visits. MOLLI staff provide such excellent support, and class size has grown from 16 to 70+ as the word spreads through the members—a known phenomenon in MOLLI class registrations.

I had experienced her expertise and passion on numerous family trips to Thailand and Japan, London and the English countryside, New York to Los Angeles., and a recent introduction to the amazing Venice Biennale. Her nieces loved to museum hop with her, and her great-nephews have joined the group. So I knew that she would be a hit with MOLLI.

Her zoom lecture last summer was called “Figures of Thinking” where Cheese Graters, Viet Nam War Reenactments and Cinderella’s Shoe recreated in ice stimulated conversation about what is art, who gives it meaning and how are we the viewers to make sense of it. Including artists of various identities and ethnicities Vicky helps us see beyond the specific image into the lives and thoughts of artists in the contemporary art world.

Vicky is a multi-hyphenate: independent curator, art historian, college professor, mentor, writer of books, articles, and critical reviews. Her best-known show was Comic Release: Negotiating Identity for a New Generation where she explored the images and messages of cartoons, comics and graphic novels. Her co-curator called her a smart and prescient curator, always ten years ahead of the curve. She originally studied late medieval art but swerved when working at the Carnegie Museum of Art, where she was introduced to contemporary art and never looked back.

The fast-moving world of contemporary art also offered her the opportunity to travel the world, visiting important exhibitions and visiting local artists. An unexpected experience came with two recent trips to Pakistan as a visiting scholar invited by the American Embassy and a Pakistani foundation. She did her usual art activities always accompanied by an entourage including an armed guard. She even met the President. When not traveling, Vicky loves her life in Pittsburgh where she remains a fixture in the art community continuing to write and organize and jury exhibitions.

Eclectic and quirky, Vicky is a unique combination of a 60s SoCal girl and a dedicated feminist. She is a voracious reader, a tennis addict, and frequently attends theater, dance, and opera performances. She is a work of art herself with her signature glasses and shoes from her vast holdings. She drew from her own wardrobe to channel Janis Joplin on the last day of her art of the sixties class when her students dressed as an op art painting, characters from Mad Men, hippies, astronauts, etc., sharing a sense of humor and fun.

I am looking forward to my sister’s return in early August when she will discuss Migration and Immigration as a point of entry into the art of our times. In the meantime, she suggests watching the PBS series about artists of our century called Art 21.

by Myrt Westphal
A Neophyte's Discovery
By Dave Levison

Has writing changed me? Anymore, my mind less resembles the trash can at the park, overflowing with rubbish and random dregs of the day. My internal dialogue doesn’t roam and wander as aimlessly as a young male lab set loose in the streets. Fleeting, and varied thoughts are now netted and sifted through for bits of gems. My inner musings tend to careen towards form; like a flock of geese launching haphazardly to eventually align in the sky into a V-shape that will continually adjust, refine, and reshape into something that works slightly better, or at least differently. I find myself making more conscientious observations; thinking in images and trying on phrases; piecing different words together to see if a more perfect combination reveals itself and captures the intention and vision of the moment. I wade through the senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch) more purposefully, considering how any one of them might create clarity, translate an experience, shape a story, or whisk me back in time. My ears don’t perch so passively. I’m thrilled to notice what fills the air. I readily hear the orchestra of soft winds playing through the leaves of the cottonwood tree that guards over the backyard. And it is with appreciation that my nose does more than take up space on the front of my face when it can capture the scent of a cooking roast and cause me to envision the kitchen of my youth.

Perhaps my frontal lobe is being tweaked. Anymore, I can’t simply drive across town. I now, “navigate a route through the midtown maze of roundabouts and lights”, all the while wondering if the verb is strong enough or are the adjectives appropriately descriptive? Maybe it is all too much. There’s no more casual morning glance out my kitchen window. Now my new writer’s mind visualizes, “the arc of yellow white light looming lazily over the ridge as a new day shuffles into existence”, my ears seeking the sweet smooth silkiness of alliteration. Instead of half-noticing the blur of black flying past in my peripheral vision, the bird now demands my attention and becomes, “a raven rocketing across the sky with the purpose and dead reckoning of a tomahawk missile”, having been inspired by a classmate and fellow writer to see more than before in this curious winged creature.

And hooray for onomatopoeia! As it’s not just words that create the endless possibilities for the writer’s mind to ponder. We can honor the sounds that surround us by mixing up letters in ways guided by our ears and imagination. What sound does a clump of wet snow make as it slides off pine boughs and lands in eight inches of itself?

Writing prose or verse, it’s all like trying on various pieces of clothing to see what ensemble creates the look and feel suitable for the occasion; looking in the mirror, turning side to side, to view a different angle to see how it all comes together. Maybe just a small adjustment is needed, a scarf or a hat. Or maybe something more formal, say, a change from jeans to slacks. Or maybe, just cast it all aside and start over. It’s OK, have fun. It can all be reworked without much dismay. They are words! There is no environmental hazard awaiting from tossing one away and using another; no global shortage to cause us to ration our considerations; no taboo that forbids digging through the bin to retrieve a phrase that was once discarded. Recycle freely. We are at liberty to revise at our pleasure, or keep them forever.

Apricot Sherbet
By Mary Kelly

In my family, when we make homemade ice cream, it is 'always' Apricot Sherbet. I don't know when this recipe was first made, but I remember as a child sitting on top of a 5 gallon ice cream freezer, in my Grandparents backyard, helping hold the freezer in place as my Uncles and my Dad cranked the handle.

My Mom made Apricot Sherbet, I make Apricot Sherbet, and it is a cherished dessert that others don't understand. They want double fudge caramel ice cream. We remember turning the crank, anticipating getting to clean the paddle that swirled the ice cream around in its shiny round container, and gathering around to grab a spoon for that first taste of the sherbet before it went into the freezer to set.

When my kids were young, we would usually make the ice cream in the winter. We would go to the creek to collect ice for the ice cream freezer. We always had rock salt in the pantry and many times the cream would come from a neighbor’s milk cow.

For my sons last birthday, we gave him a whole batch of Apricot Sherbet for his present. We took it over in its own container for him to savor. When my Grandson had his birthday 6 months later and we asked what he wanted for his present, he said “can you make me some of that orangish ice cream stuff you gave my Dad?”

A couple of my grown son's friends were discussing the idea of Apricot Sherbet and challenging my son, “how could he prefer Apricot over Double Fudge Rocky Road.” He just smiled and said “It's pretty yummy".
As the fog of the virus descended,
Untethered, daily rituals suspended,
The depth of its novelty pernicious.
Of strangers and friends alike I'm suspicious, My goals and plans now amended.
Quarantined from all I took for granted, The privilege I have still unthreatened, What and who are essential are precious, I see through the fog of the virus.
Renewing my spirits on trails I ascended, Where exercise and social contact are blended.
Escaping the reality of a disease so malicious, Breathing freely the mountain air so delicious, While trampling the native phlox, unintended, I transcend the fog of the virus.
Dr. Sandy Sheppard is known to many in Missoula as a health care professional. She had an optometry practice in Missoula for over 30 years. However anyone who knows more about Sandy probably knows she is passionate about the arts and has a large curiosity about the world that causes her to be continually broadening and honing her own education.

Given these facts, perhaps you will not be entirely surprised that Sandy estimates that she may have taken upwards of 75 MOLLI classes over the years. When she was a busy vision specialist, she would fit in classes – if necessary – by taking a break from work, attending class, and then returning to her clinic. Continuous learning is what she describes as “the dessert of my life.”

Sandy’s path to Missoula was geographically varied. She grew up in a Navy family and so she moved with them frequently in her early years, living in several places on the East coast, in Puerto Rico, and in California. Her interest in the arts has origins during those nomadic years. Her parents enjoyed live musicals, and she was involved in theater for a while (a passion that she passed on to her oldest daughter). One significant memory that popped up in our discussion was a time in high school when she missed a day of school in order to visit an exhibition of Vincent van Gogh’s art.

It was very interesting to see how features of Sandy’s current life can be traced to early experiences. She mentioned that when she was quite young and her dad was stationed in Washington DC, she was taken to the burial of President John Kennedy. Then when she described her hobbies, the one that came to mind first was visiting presidential libraries. It was a hobby whose value she could articulate well: they are never crowded, and they really give you a chance to “walk in a president’s shoes.”

When Sandy started her own family it was with a husband who is Japanese American. So her two children are Japanese American. This fact she said can feel strange at times, as a white woman, but it is clear that it gives her a keen appreciation for issues of cultural identity. Even though she is no longer married to Ron Wakimoto, they are still friends and she is happily partnered to Dave Blakely. Both of her children currently live in California where there is a great deal of ethnic/cultural diversity. Her youngest daughter works in the Bay area as an Intuitive Eating coach and her oldest daughter works in the California penitentiary system as a theatre teacher.

When asked about her recent MOLLI experiences, she pointed out that for her the new online class format works quite well – she is able to absorb the material with few distractions and having the lectures recorded provides appreciated flexibility.

Sandy is unmistakably a woman who keeps very busy. Her current personal goal happens to be to become “an outstanding docent at MMAC & MAM.”

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