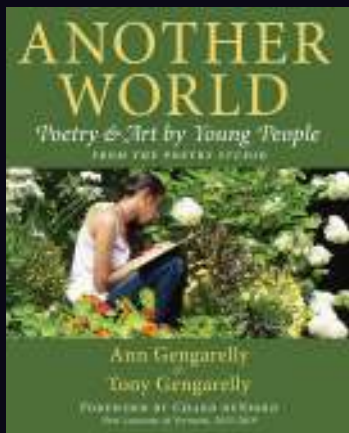


ANOTHER WORLD: *Young People Speak Through Poetry and Art*

BY ANN GENGARELLY AND TONY GENGARELLY



"This must be another world far from the blood and violence sheltered from pain and death. Poppy, scarlet chalice can have nothing to do with our blood-stained newsprint. These gentle flowers, white-frilled trumpets have no relation to our drums of war. . . ."

So begins *Another World: Poetry and Art by Young People from The Poetry Studio* (Luminare Press, 2021) with a poem, "Another World," by Hannah Christensen, written at age 10. Hannah's metaphorical garden was inspired by the gardens at The Poetry Studio in Marlboro, Vt., where the poems and art for *Another World* were born.

Indeed, the *Studio's* beautiful garden setting is another world, but so are the poems and art created there by young people, five to seventeen years old. Filled with clear vision and wisdom, they display values of kindness and compassion, connection and healing community, reverence and respect. They challenge the mainstream culture to consider

and appreciate an undervalued source of enlightened creative expression. These young people show us their world as it is and help us to imagine another. Once recognized, the unique qualities of their extraordinary messaging through words and images are inspiring to witness.

One cannot help being impressed by the young people's capacity to pierce the myths of childhood with insight into the present complexities of life and still emerge confident and with a sense of place and determination to create a better world. As "outsiders" due to their age and time, these students express with insight and clear vision what they will not soon forget.

Claire Holmes, a former *Poetry Studio* participant, age 17, writes:

My time [at The Poetry Studio] has been crucial to my development as a human being. I'm so glad I started at the studio at such a young age and then continued to take classes as I grew up, because what was taught at the studio also applied to the greater world. Not only were we learning how to become poets; we were also learning how to become people.

Developed under circumstances that provide the freedom and safety to go inward, the following poems and images are revealing examples of what young people are thinking and feeling and have expressed through their poetry and art.

Ella Bathory Peeler, *Defiled by Society*, Handcrafted book title page



Untitled: "I have seen the bleak routine patterns. . ."

I have seen the bleak routine patterns of human nature. Time around us was like a carefully picked judgment. As adults forgot they were adults, kids stopped hoping. They just waited and watched, their tongues hanging out like dogs looking for love. And we watched, hoping we were more innocent than we felt.

By Ezra Marder
Written at Age 14

My Broken World
Everything around me is broken. Earthquakes that leave houses crumbled like breadcrumbs, people's spirits cracked like shattered glass. I do not understand why the universe is dawdling and not fixing our broken world.

By Ava Rosenzweig-Davidovits
Written at age 10



Erin LeBlanc writing by the frog pond

It is not just the place and its natural setting, but the rituals and creative practice developed by Ann Gengarely after years of experience as a poet-teacher.



Poetry Studio Mentor Trey Wentworth and Hazel Harris



Leah Sutton-Smith—Bookmaking at The Poetry Studio

The website of *The Poetry Studio* is thepoetrystudiovt.com.

Galaxy of Stars

I am a twig, and I am sitting
and singing to myself.
I am a river, and I make
the stillest flow of music.
I am a leaf flowing through the wind
like a shade of sunlight through a tree.
I am a flower, and I am flowing
with the noise of cool rain.
I am the world in a galaxy of stars,
stars that sing into my heart.

By Samuel Garbarino

Written at age 9

Determined

They say I'm not good enough,
that I'm too different.
They say I get lost in my own
thoughts, that I won't come back.
They say my mind works differently,
that I choose the wrong path.
They say I don't have the power,
yet they have too much.
They say I'm too determined,
that my compass is jumbled up.
But that's just who I am.

By Maise Sperling

Written at age 12

The poems and drawings reveal the young people's regret but at the same time contain their strength to move on. They learn how to become more aware of kindness and love, to practice reverence and respect for nature and discover their own destiny as caring members of a more universal and enlightened community.

I Come From

I come from love,
love from nature,
love from flowers.
I come from peace,
a relaxed feeling
in my heart.
I come from respect,
respecting others,
respecting myself.
I come from flying
in the blue, sunshiny sky,
imagining I am
a sweet, beautiful humming bird.
I watch over
everyone with love –
the trees, the sky,
the sun, the flowers,
and all people.
My spirit follows all mankind
like a shadow follows me
as I walk on a sandy path.

By Kiersten Bayer

Written at age 9

Back to the Shore of Tranquility

Though your sun may only rise
if the gate to your heart is open,
Though your moon may only set
when you find beauty in your sorrow,
Though the ocean may pull you into
a pool of despair,
may you ride the waves
back to the shore of tranquility.

By Tae Weiss

Written at age 13

It is not just the place and its natural setting, but the rituals and creative practice developed by Ann Gengarely after years of experience as a poet-teacher. Ann begins her poetry classes at the Studio with a circle, a ritual space where everyone offers their best selves to one another. An atmosphere of reverence and respect for their authentic voices and for those of their peers, for the natural environment, for *The Poetry Studio* and the gardens that surround it, is quickly established and helps create a safe environment where students of all ages dare to write about whatever is begging for a voice.

During this time Ann will offer a theme or a prompt that might help to stir up the creative juices and provide an anchor in a sea of possibilities for writing. But, always there is the opportunity for the students to stray from the theme, to “turn inward” and pay attention to whatever is critical for releasing their inner thoughts and feelings.

After the initial circle, the students disperse and discover a spot to begin their writing. If you were to visit *The Poetry Studio* in summer, spring or fall, you would see poets walking around the gardens, sitting



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on one of the decks or nestled in a chair on the porch. You might also notice a teacher sharing a dialogue with a student; a nuanced process where the teacher is present for what the student needs without imposing on the voice of the writer. These dialogues in no way suggest the kind of editorial revision that might turn a student away from writing poetry. Rather, they become a portal through which a young poet has the opportunity to clarify an image, to be present for what the poem wants.

Year 'round, the *Studio* offers an opportunity for the students to illustrate their poems, to provide imagery that supports their work in the form of drawings and paintings. Tony, who offers a class in bookmaking for the summer workshops, said: *"There is no formal art instruction at The Poetry Studio. Rather, we facilitate the creative process by supplying appropriate materials, and when requested by the student, model images and/or stencils to help with their drawings. No comments are made that might inhibit a naturally free expression. This kind of unrestricted visual expression — the result of an uninterrupted need to communicate — naturally becomes a partner in the creation of a poem."*

During the week-long intensive classes in the summer, the students create "beautiful books" in a variety of formats to hold their poems and artwork. Their book pages feature decorative presentations with collage and colorful imagery highlighting the poems. Pop-ups and "windows" enliven the writing. The books, which range from

hard cover folios to signature-sewn fold-over paperbacks to hard cover editions with diamond-patterned spines, become works of art themselves, as well as vessels to hold the poems and images that often take on a new look in relation to each other.

In the final circle where the students share their work, each provides a dignity for the other as they see and listen to what is being offered. They feel empowered as the poetry and art reflect their feelings and thoughts, and, in turn, they have the opportunity to recognize themselves in other people's writing and in the images that accompany it. In many ways an invisible thread ties the writer/artists together, making each feel less alone in the world; creating the possibility for rich community, something for which we all hunger. Remembering their time at the studio, students often talk about what is especially powerful. Many value this last circle where they feel totally heard.

This creative circle of humanity continues to widen after each poetry session, as parents and friends gather to hear the poets read and admire the art that accompanies their poems. *The Poetry Studio* has become, in effect, a healing community built on the sharing of deep-seated human concerns through poetry and art – a community that reaches toward a broader definition of humanity and our place in the world.

There is a need in our society to provide safe spaces to reflect and create, for our youth and coincidentally for ourselves. Our schools and daily routines are too often

roadblocks for deep listening and learning. We in effect need to find another world and to discover, with the appropriate means at our disposal, what we truly think and know, to make it work for us and help nurture our community as well. This is often best done through artful creativity, which needs to be respected and made more widely available. In any case, the creation of a nurturing and healthy community through introspection and enlightened expression should be our goal in the many contexts where it can happen.

From the book's "Afterword," Ann Gengareilly concludes: *"If we are to build a healthier place in the world for everyone, might the creation of a poem or a drawing offer a symbolic way to get close enough to wrap our arms around people who have experienced injustice or unbearable loss? . . . Powerful connections from a poem and drawing shared can span the empty spaces in our lives and provide ways to interact with the larger community. To raise the human spirit through poetry and art should not be considered as a question; rather, it is imperative that the voices from this book tap us on the shoulder, reminding us that our children's creative expression can be a compass for how we should travel from today into all the tomorrows."* ✉

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Chloe Rosner and Ellie Friends—Poetry Studio Books on display at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center

