

Special Glasses

Open your mind and share what's there



Art making and the human condition

A conversation between Jan Spragge and Nora Camps



Art is your birthright

A conversation: Art and the human condition.

Jan Spragge interviewed me on The Jan Spragge Show, Northumberland 89.7 Cobourg, Ontario. The interview was considerably more than a quick catch up on my recent work. What transpired was an hour-long deep-dive into creativity, art-making and the link between art and the human condition.

I had moved to the countryside from Toronto, to just north of Port Hope, Ontario. At the time of this interview I had a studio and a small gallery space in one of the oldest buildings on Port Hope's main street. Jan and I met several times, we had talked about how art should not be forced; about how it is, for me anyway, a response to what I see and feel. Jan is a natural at engaging people and making them feel comfortable enough to share their stories. Jan is good at digging deep and that's what she did in our interview. What follows is, more or less, our conversation.



Walton St. Port Hope Studio

I walked up one side of Walton Street and down the other asking building owners, shopkeepers and the Mayor if there was an attic I could rent to paint in. Eventually I found a two level space with a fire escape as my entrance. It was perfect.

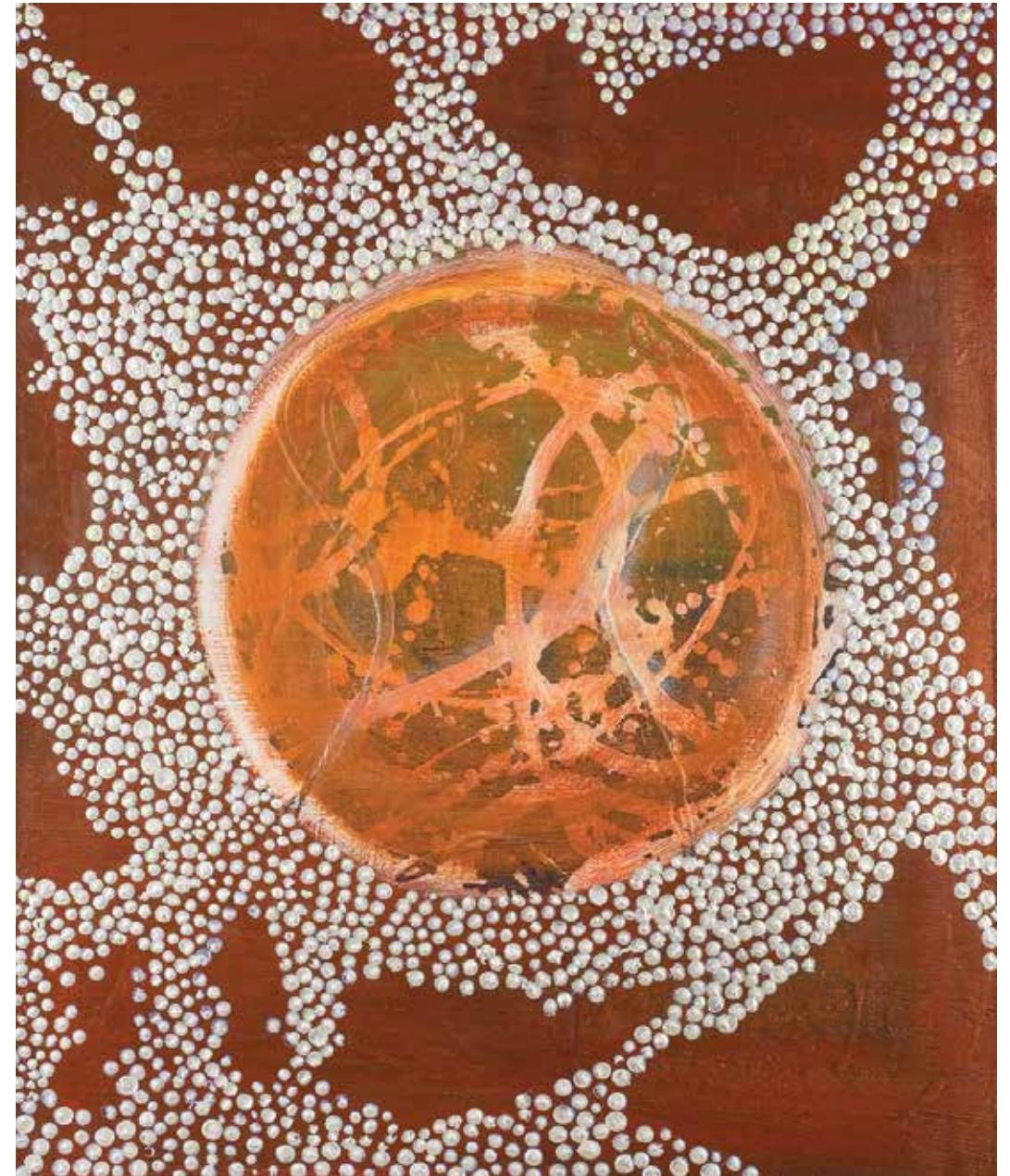
Jan: Nora is a visual artist, a storyteller and someone with a decidedly creative spirit. Nora has described herself as a conduit for ideas and stories usually told through her paintings. Nora, tell me about how your work has been a reaction to an event.

Art as a reaction to an event

Nora: An earthquake struck Japan, creating a powerful tsunami that caused massive loss of life and incredible damage; it rewrote the landscape of coastal Japan. I found myself asking existential questions about how and why this disaster had happened. I mean, we know how it happened; the tsunami was caused by underwater tectonic activity. It was a natural phenomenon. There was no evil party. I thought about how Japan would rise, reinvent itself and begin again to live and thrive. A crescendo, an obliteration and then the human heart carries on. The beat goes on. I began to paint in rhythmic strokes, and I painted what I felt, what I imagined to be the truth of anywhere that suffered such devastation and then rises up to be alive and thriving once more. What resulted is my painting called 'African Beat,' which contains the story of how we all go on, how the beat continues, how those

that are spared go on and on. Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale... the beat goes on and on.

At the time of this painting, I was hosting a monthly vernissage at my home studio. My patrons were welcome to visit and to bring a guest to see what was on my easels. On this particular day, 'African Beat' was on my easel in the final stages of completion. I explained that the painting was a response to natural disasters, specifically in Japan, but in other places too. The energy and positive life-affirming beats of the painting resonated with my Patron who instantly claimed the painting. She said the tsunami in Japan made her question life, security, beliefs. This story is a single example of why and how I use painting to tell stories, to make connections, to ask questions of the human experience.



African Beat — Acrylic on Canvas

Is the painting speaking to you?

Nora: Several times a year I would give a talk entitled, 'Live into your greatness and drift up.' I thought about the opportunity, the right, to live to potential. How could I paint that? What would 'potential' look like? Of course, for every person that would be different. Was there a way to tell that story universally? From this came a large painting called 'Arriving.' It was a marathon of intense days of work. Arriving became representational of what you, the viewer, were meant to do, your vocation, the thing you were born to do, 'arriving' from the depths of the sea.

When the painting was exhibited, several people asked me, "Nora, what is coming to the surface?" I replied that I can only tell the story, the story that there is something coming to the surface. You, the viewer, the receiver, must decide if the painting is speaking to you.

Are you are asking yourself what is coming to the surface, for you? That's the beauty of art; it's possible to tell a story so that people receive it in their way, individually, personally.

'Arriving' is in a permanent collection, hanging in the lobby of a Toronto condominium complex.



Arriving — Acrylic on Canvas

How to begin painting stories?

Jan: Art in all its facets is so integral to the human spirit. I'm thinking about cave drawings, drumming, chanting, painting in all genres.

Nora, can you tell us how to begin telling stories through art, particularly visual art?

Nora: I suggest sitting with a feeling. Giving that feeling time and space in your mind and in your body. Perhaps you are thinking about something you've read, something you've heard, something you've experienced in the past, or yesterday...or even how you feel when you watch the news. Feel it

all the way through. Ruminant on it. Ask yourself how it makes you feel, what colour is it and what shape and texture might it be? Also think about what this feeling/story/event means in the larger picture of your life or even for life on earth, on being human? Without being focused on what your painting looks like, focus instead on what it feels like.

I said to a young artist recently: Think about the story you are painting. Focus on the story and not the painting. There will be a convergence at some point, maybe not with this painting or the next, but if you focus on the story, your unique method of storytelling will emerge as your unique method of painting.



Landscape 11 — Acrylic on Canvas

On innocence and bravery

I was sitting in the Papermill Gallery at Todmorden Mills. The gallery was open to the public and it was a week after the opening of my exhibition. The exhibition continued for two more weeks. Sometimes people came back to see the work two or three times, sometimes they made an appointment for me to be there to meet them to discuss the painting. Often on second visits people brought someone with them. On this particular day an adult daughter, my age, brought her mother. Something in their demeanor told me they were both artists. The mother made her way around both rooms of the gallery quickly with much brief pausing. I sat undetected. Then the mother took

her daughter's arm and went from painting to painting. At one point the mother said to her daughter "this artist is very brave." That's all I heard. I thought about her comment for a long time that day and since. Am I brave? I do feel the wonderful 'possibility' of creation, of making, doing, sharing and being. I am creating from a groove or flow state. For example, when I start with a blank canvas, I ignite my method and if I am in the right groove I will explode from my rocking chair, step up onto the wooden riser, and completely immerse myself in the painting. It's usually intense, somewhat messy and always exhausting.

Perhaps I am more innocent than brave. I am not interested in what is popular, accepted, or collectable. I paint and have painted for many years because the act of painting feeds me and provides flow in my life. What fuels you? Keep it close. Feed it often.



Coming together over art

Jan: I know on one of your social media pages there's a beautiful visual of two people embracing, two young girls, as I recall. I love that you chose that image as one of the things that happens at your exhibition openings. That visual story just takes things to another level again doesn't it? Heartfelt, human, person-to-person, all ages.

Nora: When people come to a gallery, most people come 'open,' if you will. They come open and ready to receive, to allow a connection to the work, to see if there will be a connection to the work. I believe that for the most part, people come ready to see how what is being shown does or does not speak to them. My goal is to share my work so people can see if the work relates to them. If they decide they need my work, it means that story has become a piece of the fabric of their life. The artist, in attendance, appreciates that people came to see, to spend time with them and the work. There's usually a clinking of glasses and some nice snacks. The Thursday night opening at art galleries is a beautiful tradition.

I hope you come to an art gallery with an open mind, that you come to see and to be open to the possibility. At the opening of an exhibition there is generally greeting and often some hugging.



These are two of my four nieces. Bringing kids to galleries is so important.

A painted story meant for you

I had a show of paintings in the upper gallery at the Balzac's coffee shop in the Distillery. I had printed 200 accordion-folded cards featuring the paintings in this particular show. The show ran for two weeks and at the end of the first week I had run out of cards. I looked in the bin to see if someone had tossed them out; I inquired of the staff and was told it was a particularly busy week and that the cards must have been taken by visitors to the coffee shop and the gallery. Eventually the show closed and almost two months later a surgeon at a downtown Toronto hospital called to ask about the availability of one of my paintings that was at the Balzac's show. He said he had one of my accordion folded cards in his car, in his kitchen, in his bedroom and in his locker at work but he realized he needed the actual painting. He came to my home studio to look at the painting once again, we talked about what it meant to him. He left with the painting. Eventually every painting featured on my accordion promotional card sold. Of 200 cards, it seems each person had taken multiple cards home with them.



Suspension — Acrylic on Canvas

Some people have taken pictures of my paintings and used them as start-up screens on their computer or phone, never wanting or needing more than that. That's fine too, because they are having a relationship with my work. My painting or a poor quality facsimile thereof is somehow, part of their life, part of their story. That is my goal. It often takes time to realize that a painted story is intended for you.

“I could paint that”

When you visit public galleries, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ottawa Art Gallery and galleries in any major city in the world: arrive with an open mind. Allow the work to settle on you. A white canvas? Why did the artist create that, what were they

saying? Why are you so affected in a good or an aggrieved way? What is the story?

A pet peeve of mine is when someone says, “I could paint that.” Well sure,

maybe you could, but you didn't. The artist did. What were they saying, why did they feel compelled to paint the way they did? And if you go home and paint your own UNIQUE painting – what would it be? And why?



Compressed Scape — Diptych, Acrylic on Canvas

Jan: I think connection is something so many people are craving. That's what I find doing this radio show and in my own life. That connection is essential and somewhat lost and I think a lot of the work you do has to do with that connecting. Connecting to the land, connecting to that actual essential earth that you can pick up in your hands. Connecting to sound, connecting to the paint as it goes across canvas, to story, to person. Connection is a huge word, isn't it, in your work?

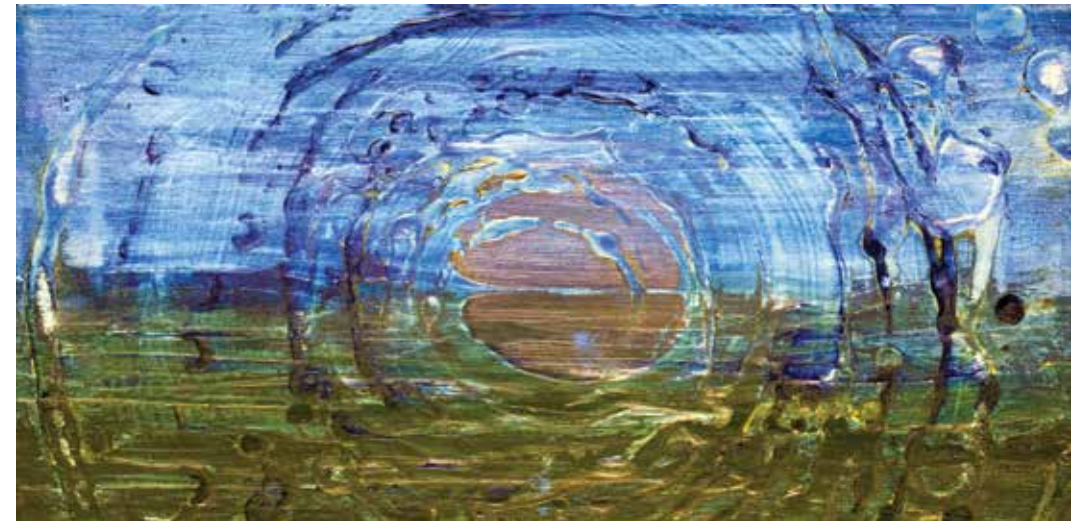
Nora: I'd like to tell you a little story. Not my own story, it's a story my husband heard and he shared it with me. There was a grade two art class and on this particular day, the teacher said, "Today we're going to be drawing portraits of someone we know. We're going to draw the head and shoulders of someone we know." There was a little girl who thus far hadn't shown much interest in the art class but, on this day, she was bent to the task with the pencil tight in her hand, head down, working on her portrait. The teacher approached her and said,

Art connects us to each other

"Oh, Beth, who are you drawing?" And, the little girl, Beth, replied, "I'm drawing Jesus." And the teacher said, "Oh, I didn't know we knew what Jesus looked like." And the little girl said, "We will in a minute." I think that, through art, we have no shackles, no constraints. Our connection to the world is through our own imagination and our ability to reach beyond our experience.

We imagine what Jesus is to us, what a tree is to us, what a sea is to us, a blue sky, a lovely relationship, a deep sadness. Think about how you're feeling, about what you are ruminating on, the nuances of that feeling, on how you would tell that story. And, if a line was a visual reference for it, what kind of line would you draw? Is it a rough line, is it aggressively drawn, is it sweeping,

is it angular, is it circular, you know because you feel it. This is the way to think about creating expressionistic art. There are singer-songwriters, documentary film-makers, photojournalists, poets, puppet makers ... each one is fundamentally moved by a story or a feeling or an attitude and they translate 'that' into the present moment stylistically through their medium.



From a seed — Acrylic on Canvas

If we have learned to technically, classically paint before we have learned to develop our imagination, to be able to tell stories, it may be very hard to untether our minds, to liberate ourselves so that the story comes first, so that we can judge if we have told the story, before we judge the quality of our work.

Art is a love affair

My vocation, is to, through my work, tell stories, share sentiment, offer space for self reflection. The story might be about the life of a person in a single 24-hour period, which is a painting I've just finished so it's top of mind. It's a painting of one day in one person's life. I just want people to entertain these notions and do

something with it, maybe just feel it, or to think about it and be inspired to create their own story. Draw it, knit it, quilt it, cook it, write it, dance to it. Creative energy is so important to the health of the individual and to the health of the community because that's how we share, that is how we mark time, heal, communicate.

with art. Going to concerts or making music and thinking about how the music makes you feel, making art or going to art galleries and sitting on a

bench and looking, feeling the work. Being open to the question: How does the work make me feel?

Jan: What a beautiful invitation. The word 'invitation' is beautiful. When I walked into the radio station today, you were inviting a young man who works at the station to share his own story. So finding, inviting and sharing story is truly your vocation. It is how you move through the world and what a beautiful invitation that is and has been for me as well. I've created some beautiful things because of your personal invitation to me. You say art is a love affair, I really love that. When you say that, why is it important for you to put that out into the world?

Nora: As human beings, we prioritize the things we think we need in order to be happy. Right now I'm thinking more about soul-inspiring things; Community, Relationships, Nature, Art.

It is my experience that once you have art in your life, in any way, your life will be enriched to the extent that you will not want to live without it; making any kind of art, collecting art, engaging



Stand of trees — Acrylic on Canvas

When I say 'art is like a love affair' I say that because it is a matter of the heart. It speaks to something inside you, it could be quiet and personal or loud and expansive but it is happening to you intimately, personally, uniquely.

Whether you are viewing, listening or creating art – once you invite art into your life, it will become part of your being, your very own language of connection, of telegraphing sentiment, of synthesizing emotion.

Nora: Years ago I made a painting titled ‘Sixty Thousand Unique Thoughts.’ The inspiration was that most people wake at the same time every morning, they check their phone, get out of bed, go to the bathroom, turn on the coffee machine, have breakfast, get dressed, peruse the paper, drive/walk/bike or simply move to their home office and then go about their day in much the same way they did yesterday and last week and even last year. If we purposely change how we go about our day, we could entertain a whole new realm of possibility, we may encounter new people, see things differently, we could actually think new thoughts. So, stepping out of the confines of routine and perhaps purposely getting up at sunrise. “I’ll meet you at five o’clock Jan, at the lake,” and how doing that will alter not only the day, but the experience of the day, thus liberating the mind for unique thoughts. That is ‘Sixty Thousand Unique Thoughts.’

Always the student



‘Sixty Thousand Unique Thoughts’ — Acrylic on Canvas

Initiative.

Intention.

Action.

Nora: A woman who works here at the radio station was telling me about a 95-year-old woman who had just mailed in a poem about living here in Cobourg. I would say that at 95-years-old, this woman had considered how she was feeling today and possibly how she was feeling about her life. The facts are: she began to compose a poem, she sat down and she wrote the poem and then she put it in an envelope and addressed it to the radio station, then she put a stamp on the envelope and she got herself to a mailbox and posted her poem. She got it done. She didn't just have the thought, she followed all the way through. This woman, at 95-years-old, took the initiative, and with great intention, acted on her idea. I love this woman without meeting her and I can well imagine that she made her life whatever it is through her own initiative. Jan, you received her poem, you shared it, people commented on it, they probably called her, she fundamentally changed her life by that action and perhaps she also changed the moment, the



Dancing figures blue — Acrylic on Canvas

day, the idea about living for people who heard her story and her poem. We all have the possibility: it could be a poem, a line drawing, a painting, it could be using your phone to take photos, it could be a dance, could be anything. The creative response to what you're feeling or what you're thinking about, is life affirming, quite possibly life changing, and very healthy.

Creativity has been likened to the flow of water in a common garden hose. If you don't have an output for what you're feeling, the hose gets stopped up, your feelings get stuck, blocked

and your feelings remain in the deep, dark recesses of your condition. It doesn't matter if your output is 'good' by anybody's standards, or 'poor' by anybody's standards. The fact that you expressed your story, your sentiment and that it flowed out from you is what is healthy.

And, you know, if you keep producing, your skill level will change, because you will be a student of your own medium. And, the more you do something, the more proficient you get at it.

Jan: It seems the word engagement is big there too. Before the break, Nora, we were talking about so many wonderful invitations into new spaces, and I wondered how you've evolved through this process for yourself? There must be so much richness and juiciness in this process for you in bumping up against other people as they discover your art as well as your storytelling?

Nora: I should tell you, my mother is a painter and we have quite a few painters in our family. I grew up in a home with music and my mum would draw on every piece of paper that was laying around. My mum is painting still. But when I was a young teen she allowed me to use her paints, which is incomprehensible to me because they were oil paints and I now know what they cost. I think painting and just the idea of creating was accessible to me. I was never told that I was or wasn't the creative one, I simply did my thing which from an early age was reading, drawing, painting, photography, writing stories and poems. Going to school felt like a waste of my time because I was otherwise engaged and productive and always learning.

On my website www.noracamps.com on the Artist Statement page, right at the bottom it says 'Listen'. It's a ten minute audio file called, 'If you've had a birthday in the last 365 days, this is the story of you.' Born from a conversation I had with a woman who said she was not creative, was not a creative person. And, I responded, "Everyone is creative, we're born creative, we are by our very nature creative entities". Over the course of your life you may have been told you're the smart one, your sister, she is the creative one. Or they're the good looking one, you're the sporty one. And my point is that other people have defined and programmed you.

If you've had a birthday in the last 365 days, this is the story of you.

How many times, Jan, have you heard people say I'm not creative? Anyway, this woman I know, this wonderful caring woman has listened to this audio file on my website. She's listened to it at least five times and she's ready to launch. So, to all of our listeners, I invite you to go to noracamps.com to the very bottom of the artist statement page and to listen as many times as you need to, to that audio file, 'If you've had a birthday in the last 365 days this is the story of you,' because I think it might release people from the confines of this imposed program that they've lived into.

Jan: I love that. That release, that launch into the juiciness of life, it's huge. What gets in the way? What kinds of things have you heard back that really get in the way for people?

Creation is a journey to self

Nora: When you're a young child, you just pick up crayons and you just draw, and you just make lines and shapes and you use colours. Sometimes, all the colours, and sometimes very prescriptively. But, then, when you're about six years old and you're in school, the person at the desk beside you starts to draw something that looks more sophisticated than something you would draw, so you try to draw what they're drawing and you're not able to. And, you become very frustrated and that's the first inkling of the idea that I can't draw, I'm not creative. And then someone at home says the same and it's definitely set in your mind: I am not creative.

Buy some big pieces of paper and get yourself some crayons or coloured pencils or watercolour pencils or finger paint or all of the above, and just sit with them in front of you with nobody watching you and with no time constraint. Begin by making a line like you may have made when you were three years old, a line that represented how you feel about your day. Just make that first line and then make a second line and then think about what colour or combination of colours you feel like. What I'm describing to you here is an exercise I do regularly. You could make a painting of who you are today. How do you feel when you sit back and look at it, without your usual judgement? You might find

that those lines and shapes and colours are exactly how you feel. Painting, or artmaking in any genre can be cathartic. Learn to disassociate from the critical internal voice, learn to feel, not think. Now imagine that someone comes over and sees what you have produced and asks,

very personal, it is, first and foremost, a personal expression. I have had the benefit of my parents, my partner, and my kids giving me the time and space to create and I now understand what a gift that was/is.



Happy Ending — Acrylic on Canvas

“Who was here, who did this drawing?” and you say, “Well, I did.” And they say, “You didn't do this because you don't draw, you're not creative.” You have to think the same way about compliments as you would about criticism, neither matter. Art is

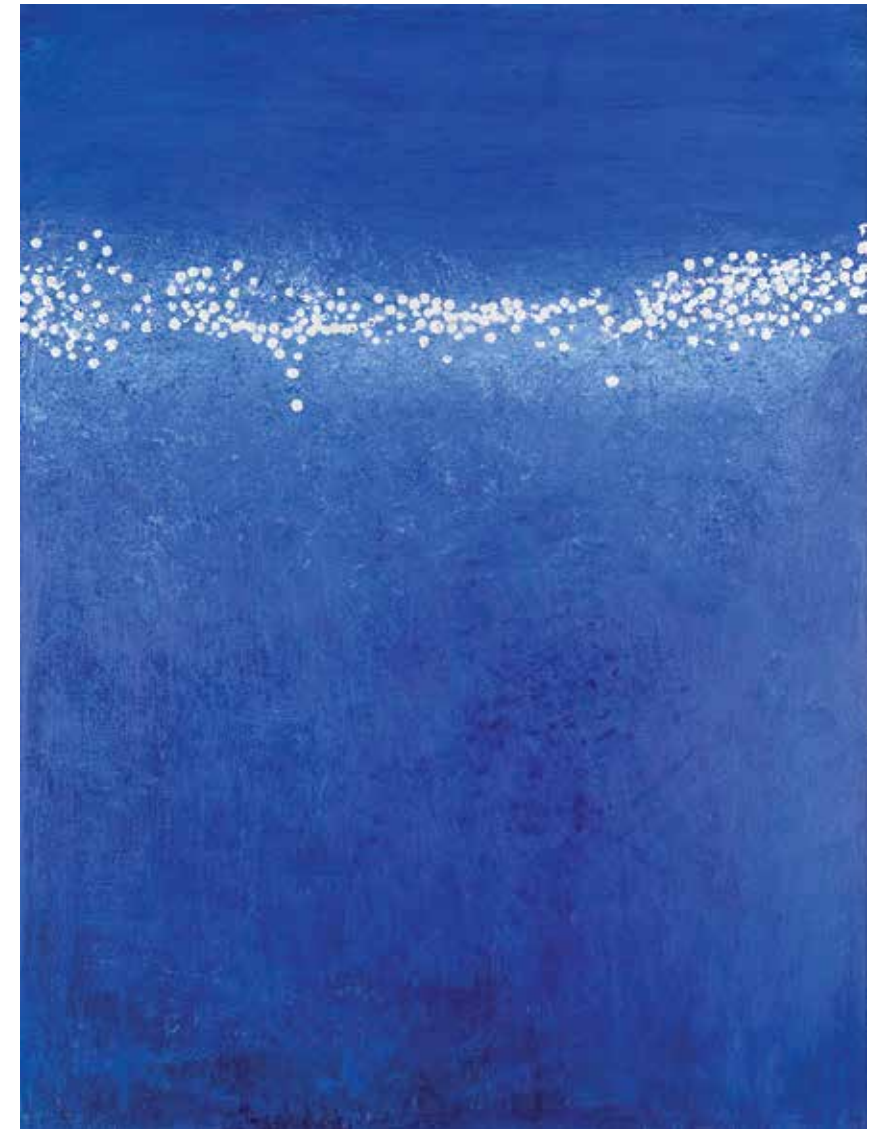
My role is to bring that possibility of art to as many people as I can, in as many ways I can across mediums. I encourage you to carve out the time and take up the space to create. Creation is a wonderful journey to self.

Jan: Absolutely it is, and to be in that place of dance, in that place of what some call spirit creativity or flow, whatever that is, in process, beside that finished piece. To be in that space, do you feel that the more time, if we think of linear time, spent in that space of creativity is a part of rolling that ball forward for self as well?

I mean, just being able to access that space and then to be able to...it just seems to have a life of its own. The spark, something has been set then, something's been set and then fanning those flames.

Nora: Somebody asked me to write the curriculum for a children's art programme a couple of years ago and I wrote, for the advertisement, "This will be the most expensive art programme you ever invest in for your child." And the reason is that after the first lesson, I will tell those children to go home and ask for a table in the corner of the house that is theirs and theirs alone, a time of the week, two or three hours on the same day. And, that I will ask for certain rules to be adhered to by the parents and the family and that the number one rule is that a parent or caregiver or sibling can never go and touch what's on that table. They can never pick it up and show visitors. That's a personal space.

I realised children need this, and adults also need this. Adults need this space, this is my space, this is my personal private area to create and when I'm here at my drawing table, I'm not in the house. You can bring me a glass of water, but you cannot speak to me, I will not come to the phone. This is my time.



Bliss — Acrylic on Canvas.

Sometimes I sit in my rocking chair for the whole day or days until I know exactly how I'm going to tell the story that I'm thinking of and then I launch and begin. So, we need the time, we

need the latitude, we need the physical and emotional space, and we need to demand that for ourselves right from being a three-year-old to the end of time.

Spend time doing something which will make you feel happier, and I have to believe, healthier.

Jan: I love that. I just love that, that space. You're right, it's not just that physical space, but that emotional space. It struck me as soon as you said that, that emotional space is something people might have trouble finding, carving out for themselves in our society at this time in the world.

A personal revolution

Nora: There are things that rob us of time and space. Television is one of them. There are some amazing programmes on now, but you sit for half an hour and before you know it you've sat for two hours and now you're tired and it's time to go to bed. I think you need to decide when that time is going to be and what you're going to do to get into the groove and I think you have to be religious about it. It is not only a gift to yourself, it is a gift to everyone around you because when you have an outlet for telling your stories, whatever the medium, and again I'm a visual artist but we're talking about every medium, you're a happier person. You know, you aren't keeping all of these things in boxes, you are putting them out there. You could paint an entire canvas in brown, and say I am done, this is what I feel like, and that would be completely fine. And, I would say to you, there are canvases that are all white, all black or all blue. There is no wrong way to do it, but the right way to begin is to carve out that time and to protect it.



Decision 1 — 35" x 48" Acrylic on Canvas

Jan: And grant you that ability, that openness, to be able to connect. It's healthy in a myriad of ways. I'd really like to play one of the pieces that your composer put together about your work. Can you tell us a little bit about how that came to be?

Nora: We discussed the painting 'Arriving' earlier in this interview. It's blues layered over blues with opalescent shades of white bubbles coming to the surface. Something is about to emerge through the bubbles to the surface, it is that exact moment in time when the surface will be broken and something revealed. It is that precise moment in time. Of course the painting does not provide the answer to what is coming to the surface... it brings you to the surface, to the moment of expectation where you peer to the surface to see what is there. You know that something is coming to the surface but it's up to you to understand what is arriving in your own life... to ask yourself what is arriving in your own life story. The painting really seemed to have a life of its own where it asked a fundamental question: What is coming to the surface in your life? I contacted a composer in Paris, Louis Steinberg, and asked him to view the painting, and without overthinking the task, I asked him to tell the story of the painting – as he felt it, and to compose, in stream of consciousness, how the painting would sound. Steinberg accepted the challenge. What results is the painting, it is the intention, it is the story. Fluid. Demanding.

Jan: It's a wonderful thing. When I was listening to this piece of music while preparing for our interview, I was awestruck by the connection, by the invitation you extended and how broad reaching it is and yet how deeply personal it is. These connections are tremendous aren't they? A single painting, a companion piece of music, to elicit what? A memory,

a deeply held feeling, perhaps something we weren't even aware we wanted, needed, understood.

Nora: Absolutely. One thing we didn't talk about before, when it comes time for me to show my work, I don't want people to say, 'I like it, I don't like it, that's good, I don't understand it.' I want to see how people respond to the work. It's the response that's so very interesting. Steinberg composed for a second painting, but he started to compose as an artist with his creative brain engaged rather than simply feeling the painting. The second piece of music is lovely but it simply didn't have the same quality as 'Arriving'. This piece is particularly wonderful because it was created in stream of consciousness. It was just as he saw it, as he heard it in his head, as he felt it. It's so honest and that's why it works so well.

Jan: Wonderful. Well, this is Arriving, Tell us the composer's name once more.

Nora: His name is Louis Steinberg, he works from his home in Paris, France.

To hear Steinberg's musical interpretation of my painting 'Arriving', visit noracamps.com and under Artist Statement, you will see 'Musical Expression'. Hear and feel this work.

Jan: I understand you're working with other composers now?

Nora: I often think about how a particular piece would sound. Steinberg has opened that door for me. I'm sure I will ask other composers to 'feel' a painting and evoke or synthesize music and sound to accompany my work.

Jan: What things in your life have been helpful to getting in that space where that cognitive thought is left behind and being in that creative space? What's helpful would you say if someone wants to spend more time there?

Putting cognitive thinking aside

Nora: Well, there's been so much talk and books written and a great interview on CBC about introverts and extroverts. I think as a society, and in business schools, and in life, the person who speaks loud and quickly is the extrovert and they are applauded. But, to create art you have to ponder and linger and you have to kind of hang back and see how you feel. How are you feeling? How does this make you feel? And, you're not going to just respond, you're going to synthesise it, and you're going to own it. If it's great sadness, if it's exuberance, if it's the smile of possibility.



Fluid — Acrylic on Canvas

Creative freedom is right over there

Nora: We were talking when we were on break about how people can begin to express feelings and stories. If you went and got some big pieces of paper and some pencils and you just put them in a corner of your home. Don't touch them if you don't want to, if you're not ready to, but just put them there because that means that you're vested in the possibility. Or, if you've always had a guitar or harmonica or you want to dance, you are open to beginning. It's the admission that you are ready to begin, that you are going to allow yourself to have freedom to be and do.

Jan: Yes, that creative freedom, that place, and maybe even get your pj's on and be comfy. At least be prepared to sacrifice your clothes to paint or to wild dance. To avoid perfection in favour of feeling, of freeing yourself.

I think that connection with nature is something you feel very strongly about and do a lot of work in, and I think that's another place to go for inspiration isn't it?



Collective Energy — Acrylic on Canvas

Achieving a kind of ‘wildness’

Nora: Absolutely. There was a show on CBC yesterday about what is wilderness, and is it a meadow or is it forest. Wilderness has an absence of human factors. How every community should have an area which is wilderness. Which is trees and just whatever grows. Not only as an inspiration but to remind us how far we’ve come from wilderness. I’m driving in the car listening to this thinking oh my gosh, there’s a story. You could launch on that story so easily, wilderness, how we need wilderness. And, how it could improve our human condition.

Jan: I love, in wilderness, that word wild. To me, that wildness, that is inspiration and I think that there’s a lot of fear around wildness creation, everything that has to do with the juiciness, I think our popular culture can really try to put a kibosh on that in a really fierce way. So, bringing out that wildness sometimes in the privacy of one’s own home, or nook and cranny, or with your back up against a tree, whatever way you can do that, it’s helping the whole world.



Nora: I remember hearing a teenager say to their mother who had been painting, is that a real thing that you're doing? The mother's painting was beautiful. I paint with my hands and I use knives, I don't use brushes. Working with your hands, it's very physical, and she had been painting with her hands and this piece was beautiful and it was heartfelt and she didn't have the words to speak to her son so she said nothing. In her heart, she was okay with it. And, I think going back to this idea that there are so many things that are confining. You enter this way, you exit this way, here's the walls. Creation, art, is not like that. If you can think it, then you can do it. And, the longer you think of it unencumbered, the more detail you will have for when it comes time to, in my case, get out of the rocking chair or off the riser and begin to work. And, sometimes very quickly building up and releasing paints and energy, which is one of the beautiful aspects of expressionism, the energy force that you feel around a story or a principle or an idea.

Jan: No doubt, and a beautiful invitation. Today has been a beautiful invitation to our listeners and thank you for that. It's been really nice Nora.

How do people find out more and how do they find your wonderful studio?

Nora: The studio and the gallery are by appointment because when I am working I am alone without phone, computer, music... Please visit my website and feel invited to communicate with me by email. I do have exhibitions coming up usually twice a year.

I encourage you, at every turn, to think about bringing art into your own life, and to making art of any description. Also, I encourage you to spend some time in contemplative solitude and to create art in a way that is uniquely how you feel. Carl Jung talks about individuation and personality development. I think about individuation and standing alone in your art making.

Jan: I urge people to go and visit the online gallery of Nora Camps, a place of inspiration. Thank you again Nora for spending the time today. And, thank you for listening, it's been a pleasure. Thank you again Nora.

Nora: Thank you Jan. It's been my absolute pleasure.

Nora was in conversation with Jan Spragge of The Jan Spragge Show, Northumberland 89.7 Cobourg, Ontario.

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Jan Spragge

Jan moves through the world encouraging others to carve out and explore their own spaces of expansion and possibility. Moving with natural curiosity has prompted Jan to explore life in a myriad of ways including inviting the richness of personal story through radio interviews, supporting seekers through spiritual companionship, and blending her photos to invite something new to emerge. She points to what's possible - when creativity, innovation, and divergent ideas are woven together creating that which has been in a state of possibility through space and time. Jan can be found with camera in hand on the north shore of Lake Ontario. Find out more at janspragge.com.



Nora Camps

With story on her mind, Nora digs in and paints, expressively, with her hands. When Nora Camps began her career in commercial design, she and many of her contemporaries came from a background in Fine Art. Sensibility of space, colour and rhythm were key ingredients of seeing, sorting and organizing elements for commercial art. Today Nora is a Story Teller and Fine Artist – intertwined in experience and output.

Nora's expressionistic work includes themes of meditation, the natural world and reaching for potential. Her paintings and photographs are in private collections across Canada.

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THERE IS NO LAST WORD



Life is messy. There is red paint everywhere. Lyrics are often based on otherwise soul destroying situations. A natural disaster of Herculean proportion is the inspiration for a painting that gives hope and comfort. A life, a death, a dearth, a joy expressed provides something akin to comfort and sometimes even joy. Art is yours. It is for everybody. It cannot and will not be defined although we do like to categorize it. Making art is your birthright. Sit in your own version of my rocking chair and feel what you're feeling and imagine how that would look, or sound, or how you would move in dance or any number of endless possibilities for your unique artistic expression.

Art is a love affair. It is for you.