

Life in Review

By Constance Scrafield

When philosophically we agree that the ticking over from one second on the clock to the next brings in a whole New Year, which we interpret variously as a new beginning with new resolutions and renewed hopes, that constitutes a sort of psychological miracle, in this writer's opinion. That we agree to it; that everywhere there is a second's tick to a new year, whether it is the same second but, on another date, or whether it is that second but in a different time zone ...we still all are in accord about the principle and, by and large, the importance of moving into a new year. Yes, yes, you curmudgeons are out there, going to bed early to prove you do not care but we who sing and kiss and down a glass of sparkling wine outnumber you and keep the hopes and wishes coming.

This paper has been pre-occupied with the Review of 2022 both as a town and, this week, interestingly as an arts community, as though the arts is a separate entity from the rest. Maybe: art is enduring, like nothing else. Maybe: artists are different, the impulse sometimes quite undeniable to the artist, irresistible, irrepressible ? not exactly driven like an athlete or a business person, an inventor or a politician. Maybe: the reverence for art, the emotional and even to-the-soul influence it can have, the need and the hunger to have art in our lives sets art apart.

Over the pandemic, access denied us to viewing art or attending live performances mattered to us. So, they devised lots of ways to share, to perform. A virtual life stood in with online everything and we learned a couple of things about ourselves and our relationship with art, both as artists and as people longing to see and to listen.

We learned that art is an essential aspect of what we are. We have to create and we have to appreciate. Many folk also met their own, heretofore unknown, artistic selves. So many began to create visual art and writing (a review of their own lives) and learning to play musical instruments (?you are always happy when you play a ukulele!?).

We learned that when we have too little access to art, we create it ourselves because the need installs the impulse.

Science is funny, you know. After so many thousands of years, science is ?discovering? that which has been known all along. Like realizing that all life is interconnected on a very basic level, physically and intellectually.

Recently, scientists are (finally) beginning to understand that there is music and art within the other beings living on this planet. In the oceans, there are songs ? not only from whales, typically naming their calls as ?whale songs,? but more than that, from other marine life, the chirps and moaning at last can be heard as having form and sense.

On land, likewise the twitters and calls from all of nature have begun to have meaning and rhythm to scientific researchers. They could have experienced these revelations very long ago if they had consulted the people of the land, who already knew about the songs and the meanings they heard everywhere. There is evidence that some animals and birds are leaving designs with rocks or other material for no practical reason. Are these something creative for their own sakes?

That art is a basic need for us, it can now never be a surprise when everything to which we are connected in nature, in the whole of this earth is based in ?art,? if we are allowed to define art as the natural extension of what is best of every living thing. For hundreds of years, we have been learning about the inevitable reflection of all of life that each stage of humanity has left behind, in caves and tombs, carefully preserved to last as long as forever agrees.

What is basic must be obvious. Why should we be surprised at such discoveries when we could just as easily admit that the art in our lives, in our history, in the nature around us is as expected as our need to breathe?

There could be a level of denial. We are, after all, creatures of destruction and that is reflected in the art we produce as well ? the warnings, the social commentary, may be considered radical and less important.

The old saying promises ?the pen is mightier than the sword? because it remains after the sword is broken, because no tyrant lives longer than the words written against the tyranny. That is history and the pressure is always on. Art is fearless as even eventually we are.

A day of recognition is due, for the imbalance is too extreme and even a king can lose his head. No blood will run in the streets this time though. There are other ways to claim the rights of life and the time to achieve true balance and rescue the deprived is now.

Then they will flourish and the artists among them will paint and sing and soar again.