

December 2015

Artist's Statement: Autumn Nest

Sara Saltee
Center for Partnership Studies

Follow this and additional works at: <http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/ijps>

Recommended Citation

Saltee, Sara (2015) "Artist's Statement: Autumn Nest," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2, Article 9. Available at: <http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/ijps/vol2/iss2/9>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

The *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* is published by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. Authors retain ownership of their articles, which are made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial license (CC BY-NC 4.0).



ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

AUTUMN NEST

Sara Saltee, MA, ABD

Autumn Nest

Paper collage and found objects (2015)

Copyright: ©2015 Saltee. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Noncommercial Attribution license (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows for unrestricted noncommercial use, distribution, and adaptation, provided that the original author and source are credited.

One of the things I most enjoy about the art forms of collage and assemblage is that they allow me to make something entirely new from all the old, cast-off bits and pieces that flow through my life. By setting them into new relationships with each other, I gleefully stage conversations between layers of the past and attempt to generate new, harmonious wholes from the fragments of broken and worn things. *Autumn Nest* is no exception.

The paper strips that make up the “nest” are culled from Audubon illustrations (the careful viewer will see owls peeking out everywhere), wrapping papers, an old poetry book, even some strips of linen from a vintage hardback book cover. And the sweet wooden egg nestled in bits of left-over craft-store leaves from a long-ago Halloween party is itself a remnant of a long-ago Easter decoration...a little emblem of rebirth at the heart of this season of letting go.

In our article in this journal issue, *The Inner Work of Partnership: Tools for Making the Personal Shift from Domination to Partnership*, Susan Carter and I quote the writer Natalie Goldberg about the ways our bodies require time to sift and sort through the layers of our experience in order to make meaning of them. For me, creating collages and assemblages are my very literal way of doing just the kind of “composting” work

that Goldberg describes. Indeed, for me, art-making is a practice through which I experience a kind of seamless partnership with my inner self. Through the process of creating - the wonderful hours spent in solitude, sifting and combining and gluing and painting - I actively construct meaning for myself, I touch ground with my inner life, and I discover what I most need to learn.

Autumn Nest also resonates, I think, with the relationship that Susan and I reflect on in our article, between the quality of the attention we give to our inner lives and our ability to effectively and lovingly carry on our work “out there” in the world. I invite you to view *Autumn Nest* with a kind of double vision: See how the concentric circles seem to move inward, holding a nurturing, safe space for the gently glowing egg? Now, look again and see how they can just as easily appear to be rippling outward from the recessed circle? Holding just that kind of double vision - seeing our wordless, glowing inner worlds as both eminently worthy of our loving care and as the source of our outflowing energies - is precisely what living in partnership requires of us.

My hope is that *The Inner Work of Partnership* in concert with *Autumn Nest* will inspire your own reflections on the practices that keep you well and thriving, and perhaps even inspire a renewed commitment to taking up the creative practice that you love best. I know how easy it is to fall into the idea that our creative play is in some way frivolous or silly, not as important or impactful as our “real work.” But I can tell you that my creative practice does not feel frivolous or silly to me. Creative practice keeps me well, it keeps me connected to a deeper story, and it brings a direct experience of peace into my daily life. It is my way of accepting responsibility for caring for my own deepest needs. It is the necessary counterbalance to the extroverted work of teaching and coaching that I also dearly love. It is my form of prayer, and my way of deeply exploring the themes about which I have an endless curiosity: the complexity of identity, the nature of feminine power, the longing for freedom, and the mysteries of creativity itself.

Whatever that practice is for you, I hope that you will gently persevere with it, despite the many demands that life will place upon you. I hope that you will organize your life in a way that supports and honors the expression of your creativity, in all the diverse ways it may move through you. The truth is, our beautiful, embattled earth needs all of us human beings to be bringing forward the best of who we are. Find what it is that connects you to that, and refuse to close down that channel. We will all be better for it.

Sara Saltee, MA, ABD, is the Director of Leadership and Learning Programs at the Center for Partnership Studies. Sara is an adult learning specialist with 25 years' experience designing and facilitating engaging learning experiences in both physical and online classrooms. She has worked successfully with highly diverse students in settings ranging from universities and workplace trainings to community-based planning and social change movements. In collaboration with her wonderful colleagues at the Center for Partnership Studies, Sara has designed and facilitated CPS's webinars and online courses since 2009. In addition to her work with CPS, Sara is also a creativity coach and artist whose work can be found at www.sarasaltee.com

Communication about this article should be directed to Sara Saltee, MA, ABD, at sara@sarasaltee.com



Yes, Heaven is thine,
In a world of sweets and sour

Of cypress, I roamed with my
Of cypress, with my
the leaves they were withering and set;
in the lonesome October
splendor is beaming

EDGAR ALLAN POE

The Golden Darkness
Man

She rolls through an ether of sighs,
in a region of sighs

Thy grief, thy joy, thy mate, thy love,
With the fervor of

For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the

Out of which a miraculous
(Ah, night of all nights in the year!)

the skies they were ashen and sob
leaves they