

Inside the Artist -  
Joy Spontak  
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### Tell us about your journey in art / as an artist.

When I was young, I was always drawing. Although I did not have a lot of art supplies, I always had pencils and crayons. No one else in my family was an artist but I was always interested in drawing. It became clear that this was my destiny in life. I feel blessed that I had this passion at a young age and it gave me direction. At 70 Years old I still have this passion and it is something to be grateful for. I was born in New York City and I applied to the High School of Music and Art. I had to apply (along with other children from all 5 Burroughs) and I got in at age 14. It was the happiest moment of my life. It was so important to me, life or death (at that age!), I felt so grateful. I'd never had art lessons and many of the other students had previous training. I had many teachers but one singled me out that first semester and saw something in my work. His name was Robert Kabak. I had the honor of speaking with him 35 years later in New Mexico. I was visiting and he lived next door to my friend....and was dying of cancer. I got to tell him how important he'd been in my life and I was able to remember things and make him laugh. He was my first mentor.

I studied Fine Art and received my BFA at the City College of New York and continued painting. I became an art teacher briefly in NY in the public schools, but realized it was not for me. I then became a social worker at the Bureau of Child Welfare and eventually started working with pregnant teens in 1968. I came back to this job in 2001 until 2014. I painted throughout. In the 1980's, I started entering pieces in art shows and winning awards. Billy Brauer was another mentor of mine and helped me to grow as an artist.

I was in the first group of artists to attend the Vermont Studio Center at Johnson in 1984 along with 34 other Vermont artists. We got to work for 1 week in beautiful studios for free. I became close to many of these artists. We went to each other's shows and we've stayed friends since that time. The Vermont Studio

Center is now a shining place on the planet and has grown to be an international artist center. To me it is a magical place.

Also during the 1980s, I got invited to teach in different venues and realized how much it (teaching) meant to me when people wanted to be there. I tried teaching in Vermont public schools but I wanted my teaching to be about supporting arts versus disciplining students. I also taught as an adjunct professor in five different colleges. While teaching at Vermont College, they started a Masters of Fine Arts program and so I went for it and had the most amazing two years. At the time I was still teaching and my daughters were teenagers, it was quite a time of amazing growth. This was in 1992. I got to do what I wanted to do with all the supports and it was an extraordinary experience. While there, I worked with Billy Brauer and Janet McKenzie (I had met her in 1984 at the Vermont Studio Center).

I continued teaching after getting my Masters and gave workshops for anyone who wanted to take them. It was an extraordinary gift. I believe an artist is the best thing to be in the world. There is an independence and freedom to create whatever we want to. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But the freedom to explore is a great feeling.

I currently teach workshops and I love working with beginners of any age. They believe that they cannot do it but yet they are willing to try because they showed up. I've been teaching drawing to all ages for many years and it is always fun to see their surprise as the class evolves. I believe we all already have creative abilities. It is my job to facilitate and give confidence to students to try it at whatever level they are at. I create a safe, non-judgmental place for whatever their artistic ability is. We are all creative beings and we can do amazing things. It comes through in each student's work and everyone's work is different even with the same instruction. It is a reflection of who they are. There is a belief that talented people are artists, when really everyone should feel creative in whatever they choose to do (music, art, theater).

This has been a fruitful approach and I love sharing it with the world. I used it for work in nursing homes where I had children paint with elders. They (elders) loved the life it brought (into the nursing home). I received a grant for this partnership and it culminated in a show, "Visual Memories of the Land" in

Montpelier. The kids painted their world today and the elders painted their memories.

I had a psychic reading and she shared that my paternal grandfather (my parents had escaped the holocaust) was happy because I am an artist and had stated that my role is to "work with color and light and share it with the world". This is how I've tried to live my life. This experience made sense to me and gave me that connection to the grandfather I'd never known.



Today, I am painting again more often. I've retired from social work and have done some workshops when asked. I have one piece in an upcoming show at the Senior Center in Montpelier, opening on November 30th. It's always fun to put work out there, although I don't sell much. I'd much rather spend time painting than marketing my art. Retirement has freed me up to have more time to work on art. I think the job of the artist is to play and problem solve. One of the things I've learned about my own process is that it is a conversation between you and whatever (piece) you are doing. You do something to it, it suggests something to you, and you have to think about it to move on with the piece/process. Thinking about how you'll work this process; feeling, changing, working it past how you originally intended it, because things change. I've tried to apply this process to my life.

I feel grateful that I have made it this far. It is a goal of mine to be creative in my work and then think of life in that same way. I

am in an artist drawing group that meets weekly and a critique group (with many I've known for 40 years) where we meet monthly to talk about and share our work. Vermont has such a strong, supportive community of artists and I am grateful for it.

**What is the medium you most like to work with/in? What draws you to this medium? What do you like about your materials?**

The main medium is pastel and I love it! Both drawing and painting with it is immediate. The colors are gorgeous and rich and can be layered or changed/wiped off. It is also a forgiving medium.

Drawing is my first love and I love to lose myself in observation. You can take any object, concentrate and meditate on it and enter another way of being. I like working from imagination as well to see how far I can take it and what other dreamlike qualities emerge.

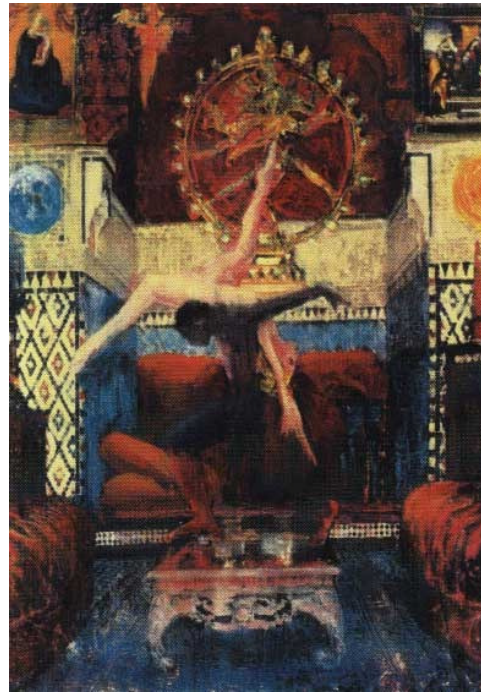
I also enjoy oils, mixed media and collage. I often combine them in one piece. I like to create space to explore and work with other mediums (like sticks and plaster) and I often have multiple projects going at one time. I've recently begun including LED lights into my work. I bet my grandfather would like this!



**What most inspires your work - Has there been anything that has been life changing or that has influenced your practice?**

I think going to graduate school as an adult. I received my Masters in 1993 and I was 48. I was teaching students, was the

mother of two teenage girls and I was focused a lot on what was happening in my life. My art became connected to my concerns as a mom and artist and was more internal. It was during the time when AIDS became rampant. The teenagers I was working with and my own children were all awakening to sexuality at a dangerous time and it was an important message for me to share; how to protect oneself but still convey the power and importance of sexuality.



Education about HIV and the news suggested sexuality synonymous with death. I felt I was able to connect with teenagers and I felt powerful as an artist. I combined my skills as an artist with an issue important in my heart. And it resonated with lots of people. At an art show, I had teenagers come up to me and say thank you. I still feel like these are some of the strongest pieces of my life.

**What blogs or books are you reading or would recommend?**

The reading I do on a daily basis is the New Yorker magazine and the New York Times. My interest when I read is more in terms of what is currently happening. We live during an

incredible time, particularly related to space/universe and the exploration of the multiverse and research on the brain. The technology that gives us access to these areas in the last 25 years is incredible. When I worked with teen moms, we talked about the importance of stimulating kids to develop their brains. Since then, there has been so much more research about brain development, especially in teenagers and the early years. I read a lot of non-fiction and love to read about discoveries. I like to watch the programs on the cosmos by physicist/cosmologist, Neil Degrasse Tyson.

Both the cosmos and brain development are being explored and studied in a way that will change the future in many exciting ways. If I were starting again, I might be inclined to study neuroscience as well as being an artist!