

Tales From Joy, 2022, #3

Hello again, dear readers.

Thanks again for your heartfelt response to the Tales. You might be surprised to know how very vulnerable I feel when I send them out.

The mural to the left is new this year.... It is near my morning meditation spot on the bay.



I've been studying the difference between looking and seeing, for decades. For instance, I had looked at the mural above and admired it a couple times before, but didn't actually "see" it until after I had expanded my rainbow radius one morning last week. I finally saw that the man is insubstantial....one can literally see through him.



The artwork that is so plentiful here in La Paz is astonishing to me, subtle and soulful and skillful.

I've noticed that when I am busy being "someone" solid, doing something terribly "important" (e.g. cleaning up or prepping Wattle Hollow before a retreat), I often don't see much...even my own artwork!

Carmen (the daughter-in-law of my landlord) told me that she grew up with this artist... named Elti, so I may get to meet him.

La Paz is currently in Zone Orange, regarding its pandemic status. If we enter Zone Red, which is one level more severe, the beach will become off-limits here in town. The police will spend all their time, like last winter,

chasing locals and tourists off the bay side of the street and asking all the "Chucks" (my dear neighbor who considers himself immune and above all this nonsense) to wear a mask. Then I will do my dawn meditations somewhere else...and ride my beloved clunker bicycle to the outskirts of town.

La Paz has expanded the bike trail system since last year, and there seem to be far fewer cyclists out there these days ... it's a heavenly situation for me.

I navigate my itinerary according to the wind. When it is blowing heavily (usually coming from the south) I don't want to be returning home riding against the wind, tired and without sufficient energy. I have discovered that the euphoric sensation that I am riding "like the wind" usually means I am riding WITH the wind behind me.

And when I do have to ride my bicycle on the streets, I have changed my tack: Instead of trying to stay out of everyone's way, close to the parked cars, I now ride smack dab in the middle of my lane. Otherwise, motorists zoom past within inches of me and my bicycle.

To avoid all of that, I often ride a mile south to the central plaza, lock the bike, and then walk wherever I'm going, on my shopping missions.



Last week, I asked my Spanish tutor, Sr. Sergio, to meet me in front of this statue, so we could read the plaque and translate it together for that day's lesson.

It was an homage to the skill and dedication of countless millenia of fishermen worldwide





A few days ago,
I sank into a
very deep
meditative
sweep at dawn
by the bay.
When I opened
my eyes, I was
presented with
this image
directly in front
of me:

...as if the
sculpture briefly
came alive...

He seemed to



vanish ten minutes later, walking north on the beach.

That was the morning that I finally “saw” the mural of the man with the goats, instead of just looking at it.

I am incredibly fortunate, as an artist, to have a high percentage of visitors to Wattle Hollow who do “see” what is there, especially after a day or so of meditation.

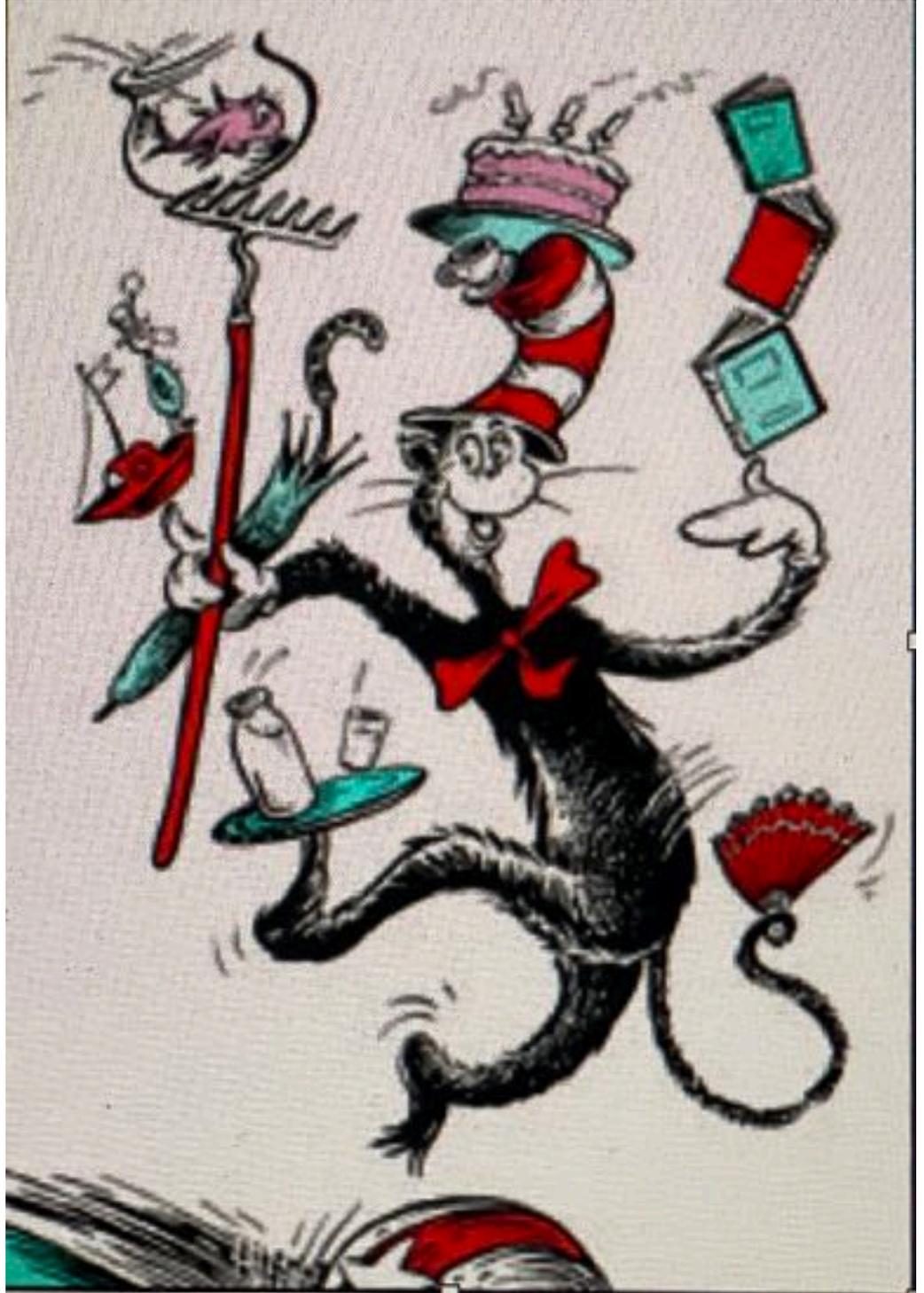
Yesterday I finally settled on an image, dear readers, that might help you visualize the continually rotating and vibrating stack of rainbow spheres I was (rather hopelessly) trying to describe in the last Tales:

Dr. Seuss also achieved the impossible task of illustrating the ineffable and dynamic journey from macro to micro, and back, in

Horton Hears a Who,...

for those with the ability to see and hear.

_I have always referred to Wattle Hollow itself as



Dr. Seuss meets Gaudi

I also promised, in the last Tale, to share more images of my energetic caches - those places that help me maintain the ballast to sail on through these stormy times on the planet.



I've begun singing a childish song to myself at dawn lately, since my birthday (to the tune of "Happy Birthday"):

Happy pinky bath-day to me 🎵
🐣 etcetera.

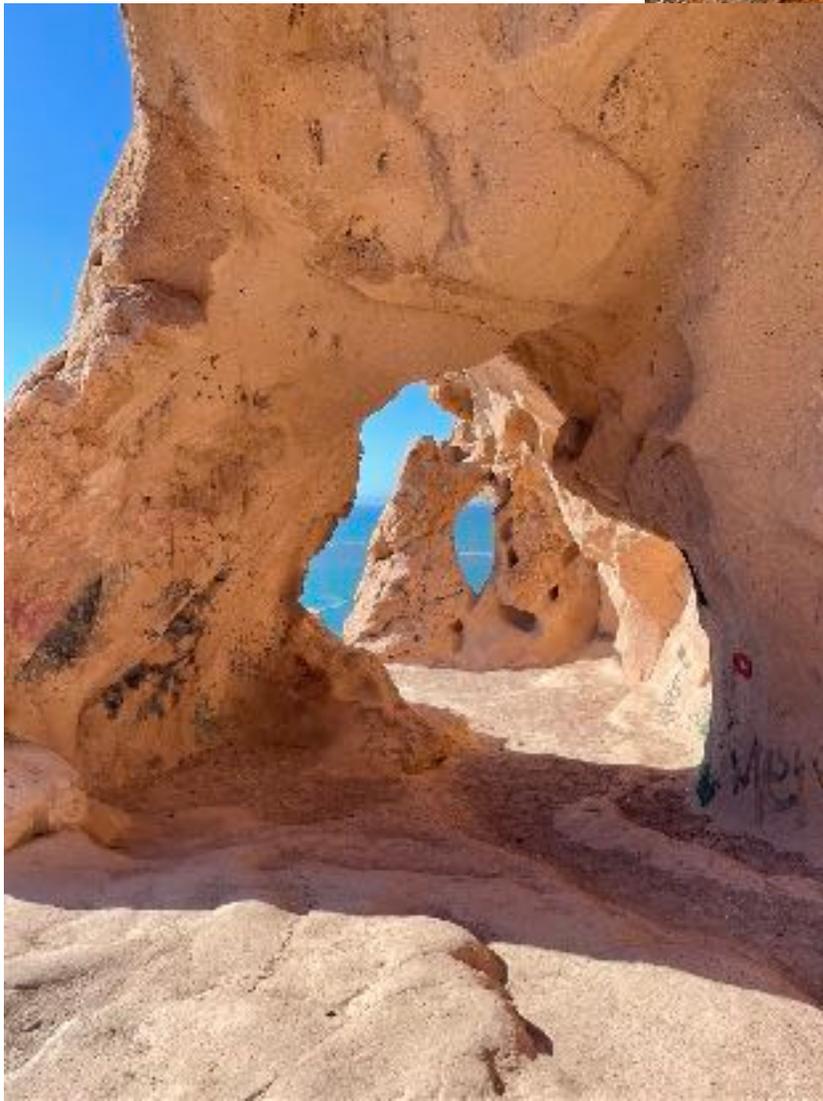
I hope that each of you readers will find a way to visit your own sacred sanctuaries often. It can begin with sunrise, an altar in your home.., or a tree or house plant that speaks to you with a clear energetic current of light.

Sometimes the journey (either metaphoric or actual) can be an important aspect of your pilgrimage.

The Cerro de Calaveras (Skull Hill) as it is known locally, is just such a site for me. It's several miles north on the bike path, against the wind, and then a respectable climb straight up...



This photo on the left is about halfway up.



I hear it calling me this afternoon, if the wind isn't too intense today.

Reflections on Maechee Sansanee, Part III

This photo (2019) is from the very early days of SDS South, Khun Mae's second retreat center toward the south of Thailand.

The woman on the right is Mei Oo. She donated this land, and led decades of Traditional Healing workshops (Dhammachat Bambat) at SDS, the Bangkok center.



Next to her is Khun Mei's sister, Tum.

I took Mei Oo, dear Tum and and their team to Cambodia in 2019, to share natural healing

techniques with the monks and students there.

Next to me is Nawng Joy, who was Maichee's constant assistant and my best friend in Asia. Nawng Joy was rarely far from Khun Mei's side.

Nawng Joy literally means younger sister Joy...so this is a very personalized appellation....Since I was usually the oldest person in any group, everyone was "Nawng", except the nuns..

Khun Mei/Maechee Sansanee had a magnetic charm that elicited immense devotion and excitement from a diverse group of architects, artisans, gardeners, craftsmen, monastics, philanthropists, and students.

I often described her as the Oprah of Thailand, applying wisdom



to the everyday trials of modern life.

Women especially found a kindred spirit in her hands-on approach to the complications of finding balance and focus within a complex and crumbling traditional Asian society.

From birthing to sexuality to deathing, Maechee offered fearless and freshly infused models of coping skills, especially for young professional women and youth..

Suffering is to see, not to be.



There was absolutely no one like her and no apparent successor. I cannot imagine how this vacuum will be filled.

But there is a huge pool of energy, intent, and beauty left behind.

As I'm fond of saying: *Something will happen.*

Something inspired and positive, I am guessing.

And finally, dear readers, I cannot close this Tales without noting the passage of another legendary teacher from our midst.

Thich Nhat Hanh, popularly known as “Thay” left yesterday.

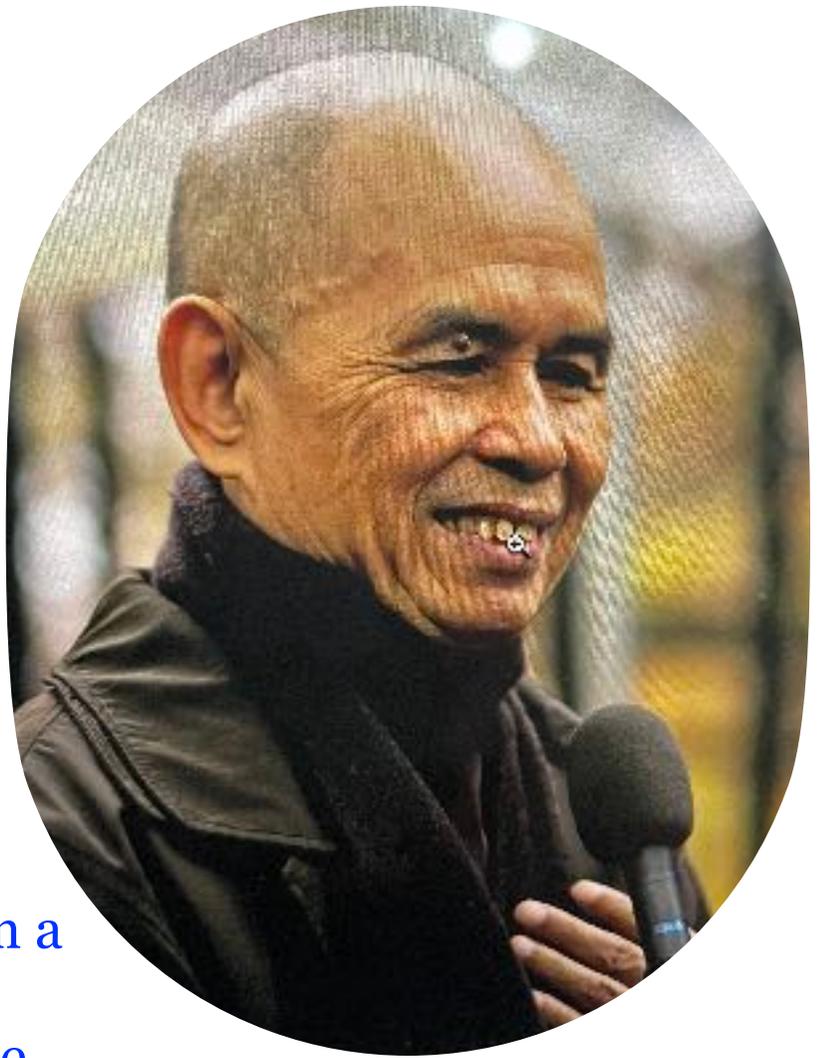
Thay revised the institution of Buddhism and virtually “midwifed” its transition from a dusty, top-heavy monastic tradition in the 1950’s into the political, social and environmentally conscious vehicle that it has become today for millions of people worldwide, though some of them don’t know of him.

His quiet grace and steely determination intermingled with the luminary seers of our century, most notably Martin Luther King and Thomas Merton.

My dear friend Mark Cain wrote to me that Thay had

passed into the clouds today

followed by many more notes from Dharma brothers and sisters since yesterday.



As a breathing example of Thay's impact, (moving from macro to micro here) let me illustrate the ways that Mark Cain has implemented the Plum Village principles of community (or Inter-Being, as it is known) right into the daily routine on his own organic farm:



At dawn each workday, his young international team of garden interns STOPS... to listen to the bell in silence for a few minutes. Then each member checks in with a personal note of gratitude, a dream or a predominant emotion.

Listening with compassion is the primary aim.

A farm team that works incredibly

hard in arduous conditions and long hours can easily lose perspective and equanimity.

Everyone is invited to join Mark for a half-hour silent meditation before dawn, or a 90-minute yoga session at mid-day.

Mark has traveled extensively across the U.S. giving conference talks to the next generation of new age farmers about this emotionally sustainable model for the future.

I have many friends who are following, as I have, the funeral and memorial ceremonies around the world, from Thay's root temple in Vietnam to his major center in France to Magnolia Grove in Mississippi....

They are looking for a way to skillfully temper their tears and gratitude with the wisdom that lovingkindness is never lost.

My friend Kate, another longtime devotee, just wrote me:



Yes, Thay has left his body and is now the body of the cosmos.

It has been a deeply transformative experience already, beautiful coming together of community from the moment we heard.

