

A LIGHT IN THE MIST

A HEALING ENVIRONMENTS PUBLICATION
VOLUME ONE, NUMBER TWO

THE WAY OF TEA THE ART OF EVERYDAY LIFE

An Interview with Dr. Randall Weingarten
by Doree Allen

There are no shoji screens, tatami mats or tea utensils in Dr. Randall Weingarten's peaceful Palo Alto office, but when he begins to talk about tea, the room becomes a world apart, graced by these images of the Japanese tea ceremony. His dedicated apprenticeship to *Chanoyu*, or the tea ceremony, began over fifteen years ago when a variety of circumstances gently led him deeper into the aesthetic and spiritual experience of tea. Taking time from his psychiatric practice, Dr. Weingarten generously shared a summer afternoon with me, talking about the intricacies of tea and the ways his involvement in it has influenced his life and work.

DA: In Okakura Kakuzo's *The Book of Tea*, he speaks of "teaism." What does he mean by this term?

RW: I think that was his word for describing the whole frame of mind and the practices that go on within tea; the whole world of utensils and the whole craft-world of architecture, pottery, calligraphy, stone, woodwork and metalwork. So "teaism" is both the overarching philosophy, or point of view, and it is also the very practical activities.

DA: You mentioned earlier that you have discovered that tea is hard work, in what ways, particularly?

RW: It's physically hard. Any time I offer a tea as a host or enter a tea as a guest, there is a great deal of preparation that has to go on: the cleaning of the tea room, the selection of the utensils, the building of the fire, the creation of the meal—all the considerations that go into defining a tea. It is a creative activity, and as with any creative activity, you can structure it and then invite people to participate in that structure, and then what happens is totally spontaneous. So there's a great deal of hard work in tea; it's delightful work because it is a way of offering a gift. Japanese culture is a gift culture. For example, a host would rarely drink tea at the tea, because the activity of serving the tea and doing the various things that the host does are sources of delight, so the only time a host would share a bowl of tea would be if there was only one guest. You

wouldn't want the guest to be lonely so you would share it, or if the guest insists. Once you're in the tea room, the host has ceded you the room, it's your room. So one of the most amazing things is that the tea begins when the guest invites the host to come into the room.

DA: Could you talk more about the tea ceremony as a gift?

RW: It is really a consideration; the way in which you consider the other. I think part of the teaism is that when you take the other into real consideration you cannot help but touch and be touched by that.

DA: I was especially intrigued by Okakura's notion that teaism is "essentially a worship of the Imperfect as it is a tender attempt to accomplish something possible in this impossible thing we know as life." How do you interpret this observation?

RW: This is a different level of humility. In addition to being a gift culture, my sense is that Japan is also a regret culture. It's a culture in which people are always apologizing and saying, "I'm sorry, I didn't do enough. I wish I could have done more. I would have liked the water to be a little hotter. I'm sorry it's a little thin." There's a sense that "As much as I've endeavored to make it the best that it can be, there is always a way in which it will be less." That becomes an aim: to respect the value inherent in the imperfect. There is a season of the year in tea, sometime around October or November, and it's associated with the feeling of *nagori*. At this particular season there is a lingering feeling that the year is coming to an end. There's a sense of moving toward the death of the seasons, and that something about the cycle of teas is changing. And at this particular time of

year all of the old, worn out, threadbare things are brought into the tea room and cherished. Even as they are going over the hill, losing that radiance, they are still prized. So maybe that's what Okakura meant by "Imperfect."

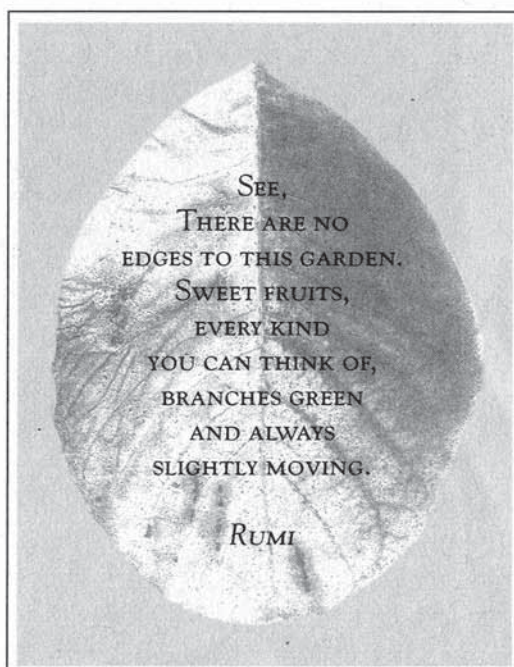
There's a very interesting book called *Wabi-Sabi* that really captures this aesthetic. The *wabi* aesthetic is the revolutionary moment in tea, which is the fact that both tea itself could become an authentic spiritual pathway and that things could be revered that were ordinary, that were simple.

DA: How did your interest in the tea ceremony develop?

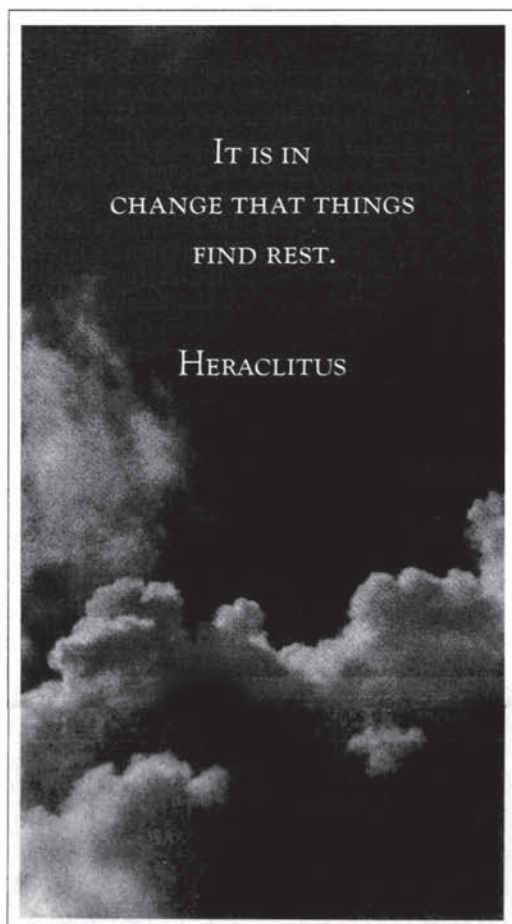
RW: Well, it's a complex question. I tried to study meditation on my own--this was about twenty years ago--and I was reading a lot of Alan Watts, and then I got the idea, "Well, I'll build a tea house in back." Having grown up in New York, I didn't have any carpentry skills, or anything like that, so it turned out to be a very rustic area, but it was nice. And I planted some maples around it, some tiger lilies, and we had tea out there; we just sat and had regular tea. I didn't know anything about Okakura or *The Way of Tea* at that point. Then I went through a crisis in my life, and in the wake of that I was thinking about some things I might do--new ventures--so I got the idea of starting a course in cross-cultural psychiatry at Stanford. My notion was that we would use some kind of central ritual or public activity--whether it was baseball in our culture, or the tea ceremony in Japanese culture, or Balinese parades--and use it as a lens to see if we could focus on what the intrinsic values are in the culture. So I started reading about tea, and then I wanted to go see a tea, and then went to Foothill, where I met my teachers. So then I started studying in San Francisco. It kind of meandered, you know.

DA: How has your involvement with the tea ceremony influenced your work as a psychiatrist?

RW: It's been perhaps the most important influence on my professional work, but to try to articulate what that all is....I once wrote a paper about "Psychotherapy and a Bowl of Tea" in which I tried to interrelate some of the core elements of psychotherapy to the core elements of tea--but I don't think that's what it is about. It's more of a sensitivity to being present with another, yet being able to keep the form steady and alive. And those are hard to do: to be present, to keep the form steady, and



to keep the form alive so that it just doesn't become an empty ritual or a dry thing. In my field we always talk about learning the person's language. In a sense, we have to be very receptive to learning how to speak in the way that someone else is speaking. They have to become good teachers, too, and we have to help them become good teachers, because then we can have a real dialogue, and in the course of that dialogue, hopefully, we can hit on those issues that are really the sources of trouble and pain, and find ways to help that. There is a way that in learning a person's language and in making use of materials at hand you have to flow with what's given.... That kind of interplay is always going on in tea in remarkable ways, and it has sensitized me to that in my work.



DA: Has tea become a form of meditation for you?

RW: It is very much like meditation. When you watch people do tea, it looks so intricate and sometimes it's daunting. "How can I learn that?" Yet, you learn the way a child learns. And in a sense, in meditation practice that early mind--that beginner's mind-- is so deeply cherished. So even though it is a source of humiliation to be making these mistakes, on the other hand, it is such a revered state. I'd like to go back to that last question you asked, "What has helped my work in psychiatry from tea?" I also find that if I change my environment--I'm always changing my environment a little bit--if I put something here, a flower or a bonsai tree or an object, or something like that, people notice. I'm not doing it to get them to notice it, but I find that as people are in here and we work together, they start noticing more carefully. So that's the other thing; it's the carefulness that tea has introduced into my work, as well as the "considerateness" and the invitation to be really present.

DA: Might the tea room be considered a healing environment?

RW: Actually, I've never thought of the tea room as a healing environment, although I'm absolutely certain the possibility for that exists, but it's like all things in Zen, the more intentional it becomes, the further you get from it.

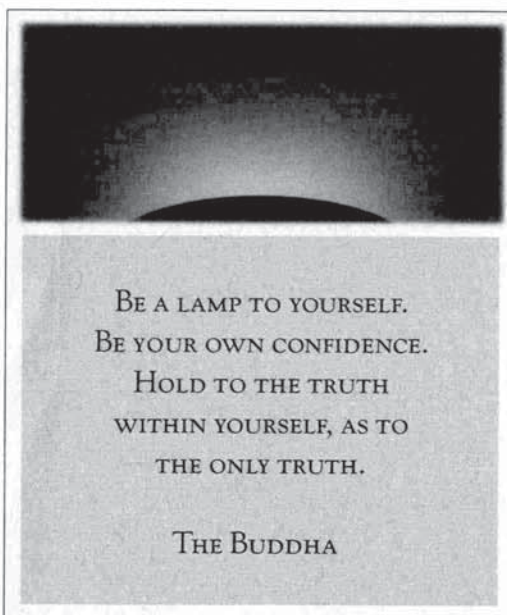


It's that kind of paradox. So if you intend the tea room to be a healing environment, or a spiritual environment where people are going to commune with the divine or the sacred, it may not. It may happen, but it may not.... My sense is that tea is a really organic, alive thing, a process. And as it moves into different cultures and into different people, it expresses itself differently.

Meanwhile, let us have a sip of tea. The afternoon glow is brightening the bamboos, the fountains are bubbling with delight, the sighing of the pines is heard in our kettle. Let us dream of evanescence, and linger in the beautiful foolishness of things.

Okakura Kakuzo, The Book of Tea

If you'd like to learn more about the history of Chanoyu, its relationship to Zen philosophy and to the wabi aesthetic, Dr. Weingarten recommends the book Tea Life, Tea Mind by Soshitsu Sen as well as Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers by Leonard Koren.



JOURNEYS IN THE SAND

One of the most popular rooms in Healing Environments is our sandtray room. Sandtray technique, or sandplay as it is sometimes called, is often used by Jungian analysts or children's therapists as a tool for directly accessing the subconscious. Offering a "map" of a person's central issues, sandtray can be effectively used to reveal hidden conflicts or work through painful emotions.

Commonweal, a small nonprofit on the Northern California coast which



works with cancer patients, has found that it helps patients come to terms with their illness. At Healing Environments we have found sandtray to have universal appeal. We believe it can be modified to benefit us all.

Our sandtray room is lined with shelves of small, evocative objects--a bottle of sand labeled "extra time," a small building on fire, a bucket of miniature money. Our sandtray, a handhewn, round antique cheese-making tray filled with concentric circles of sand, sits on a coffee table in front of a loveseat. Visitors are invited to select those objects to which they are drawn for some mysterious reason. They are asked to "turn off their brains," to operate intuitively, rather than analytically. The objects are placed in the sand again without conscious thought. Once the sandtray is complete, its creator is invited to step back and survey the miniature scene. Does it tell a story? Would he or she care to share it with us or perhaps reflect upon it silently? The results are often dramatic.

A friend of my teenage daughter produced the following sandtray: A delicate, winsome fairy stood in the center of the circle, surrounded by objects of foreboding. The seventeen year old girl was eager to share their meaning with us. A pair of dice symbolized the chances she took; a gun stood for the violence in her life; an hourglass represented time running out; a compass reflected her lack of direction. "And this house represents my home," she said, "but how can I show it is broken?"

My thirteen year old son produced a sandtray which unwittingly revealed his inner conflict over our family's dissolution: down the center of the sandtray was a white picket fence. On one side of the fence a miniature surgeon was operating under the caption "healing," a tiny trunk was labeled "abundance," and a large gold heart bore the title "love." On the opposite side of the fence chaos reigned. Tiny soldiers were locked in mortal combat, tanks patrolled, a peace-keeping U.N. truck lay overturned.

A Commonweal cancer patient produced a similar scene of mortal conflict at the beginning of her week's stay. Soldiers and tanks waged a desperate battle with her cancer, which was seen as the enemy. At the end of her week-long retreat of poetry, yoga, deep relaxation and walks on the beach, the woman produced her second sandtray: a transformative scene in which her illness was symbolized by a sparkling crystal gem, offering wisdom and insight transcending pain and loss.

The power of sandtray technique is not to be underestimated. Two years ago Traci and I packed up several hundred of our objects to take to an East Coast conference on Health, Immunity and Disease. We were not surprised when one cancer patient broke into sobs, sharing with us that the beautiful dollhouse bride reminded her that she might never marry and the miniature dollhouse cake labeled "Dad" brought back memories of her

father's abuse. But we were somewhat taken aback when a therapist, whose sandtray had superficially appeared to represent a perfectly ordered and happy life, came to us the next day in tears. Reflecting upon the miniature map of her subconscious, she had come to the realization that she was unhappy in both her marriage and her job.

Commonweal, the small nonprofit where I worked for several years as a Research Associate, experimented with the parameters of sandtray technique. Marion Weber, Commonweal's resident sandtray expert, took four hundred small objects and redwood lawn edging to a conference on Art and Healing in the Midwest. There, in a series of workshops, she constructed large group sandtrays in which twelve participants could create communal scenes of healing. In the most dramatic of these, three of the twelve participants had lost children. That session became a moving example of the healing power of ritual, as the group mourned their loss collectively.

When Commonweal hosted a conference on Art and Healing, Marion invited each participant to bring ten "sacred" objects from home. Forty of us sat in an immense circle in Commonweal's "great room." One at a time, as the spirit moved, we rose and shared with the group the meaning of one of our sacred objects. We then placed it reverently in reference to the other objects around a central silk cloth. Over the course of several hours the power of collective meaning grew

as the circle spontaneously created two powerful intentions--to heal and protect loved ones and to heal and protect the planet.



Just as sandtray technique can be improvised and expanded to offer groups the healing power of ritual, it can bring the meaning of symbolism into individual homes. One of my closest friends had already constructed a sandtray at home for her three daughters when her husband was cruelly taken from them. Brain dead and on life support, he lay for a week without hope of recovery. One of his sensitive nurses taped a small green malachite turtle, which had been a precious goodluck symbol of hers, to his palm. Shortly after John died, his widow Lexi and I found ourselves in Marion Weber's Healing Arts Center in Stinson Beach. Surveying the tray of small objects for sale, Lexi blanched. There in the center were three miniature green malachite turtles. **KS**



If life is a blank canvas then experience is the paint and texture that fills it.

I believe socialization has worked in such a way as to deprive us of our individuality and thus, in times of great need, we find ourselves unable to cope. In talking about Healing Environments, Kate and I encourage those who come for tours to talk about what type of healing environment they might want for themselves if they suddenly found themselves bedridden in an institution. At first it may seem a foreign concept, yet when the mind starts to create its own dream space--well, hopefully you already have a vision of it in your own mind. It is through the exploration of and the



celebration of our identity that we may attain that transformative state called healing. I challenge you to take a moment or two, remember, write or videotape personal experiences that make up who you are. Look back on your own life and see what memories come to mind. Family vacations, holidays, school days, your first competition, victories and even

humiliations. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of memories that just get stored within us; how sad to leave this world and not leave some mark of our existence. I hope Andy Warhol was right--that we would all have our fifteen minutes of fame--or how about just a few moments of appreciation.

Richard Stone, M.S., has written a short paperback book entitled, *Stories*. It is an inexpensive (\$4.95) guide for the recollection and sharing of personal and family memories. I would hope, in time, every hospital and hospice would include it in their library. Mr. Stone gently takes the reader on a path of remembering personal events as well as the time inspired by friends and families. Healing Environments often serves as a reminder of the highly individualized lives that we all have as well as the common denominators of emotion that we all share. Taking people through our space often gets the wheels of remembrance turning--it's wonderful. You can see the happiness or absolute sorrow in another person's story. It's exhilarating to see someone light up for a moment and get beyond their facade. In order to allow those moments to arise, however, we need time and a listening ear.

An example of the possibilities that exist within storytelling can be found in Monterey, CA. There is an AIDS house with a house manager, Marie Wainscoat, who enjoys making educational documentaries. With her years of training in nursing and film, she has helped clients store a part of themselves on videotape. She hopes to create a room in the house where patients can take their own video cassettes and record their stories whenever the feeling arises. In one such case, a woman who first felt timid about the camera later created thirty

personal videotapes. One for each person in her family. Marie refers to the process as "therapy that turns into a love poem."

What I would like you to do is this: encourage people to open this window of their lives for introspection. For institutions that do not offer such programs, consider how your program or ward could improve its commitment to patient care by enabling a patient to record his or her life in order to leave some trace of it behind.

For institutions that do have programs, please take a moment to summarize what you do, with an example or two of how it has worked so we can include it in our resource guide. **TT**



WE MAY WORRY ABOUT DEATH
BUT WHAT HURTS THE SOUL MOST
IS TO LIVE WITHOUT TASTING
THE WATER OF ITS OWN ESSENCE.

RUMI



NORTH HAWAIIAN
COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

On a recent trip to the Kona Coast of Hawaii, Traci and I were inspired by a visit to the brand new North Hawaiian Community Hospital. This small community hospital is a striking example of what community spirit and holistic vision can bring to health care. The nonprofit fifty-bed facility at Waimea offers patients the benefits of personalized care and alternative medicine in a truly healing environment.

Each of the patient rooms has wheelchair access to an outdoor lanai, or patio. Every room has a large display alcove with a shelf suitable for setting up a personal shrine. Nine different cultures are represented in Hawaii, and NHCH is determined to honor them all. The nondenominational chapel has stunning views of Mauna Kea, Hawaii's principal volcanic mountain. Beautiful Koa wood benches bring nature indoors.

There is a communal kitchen which visiting families may use to prepare beloved family recipes. Birthing rooms are made as homelike as possible. The work of local artists has been sought to bring healing murals to the interiors. In the C.T. scan room, for example, a morning glory vine (symbolic in Hawaii for healing) underscores a rural Hawaiian scene. A large mural honoring the hospital's community donors represents native Hawaiian communal roles such as fisherman, farmer, and stone carver.

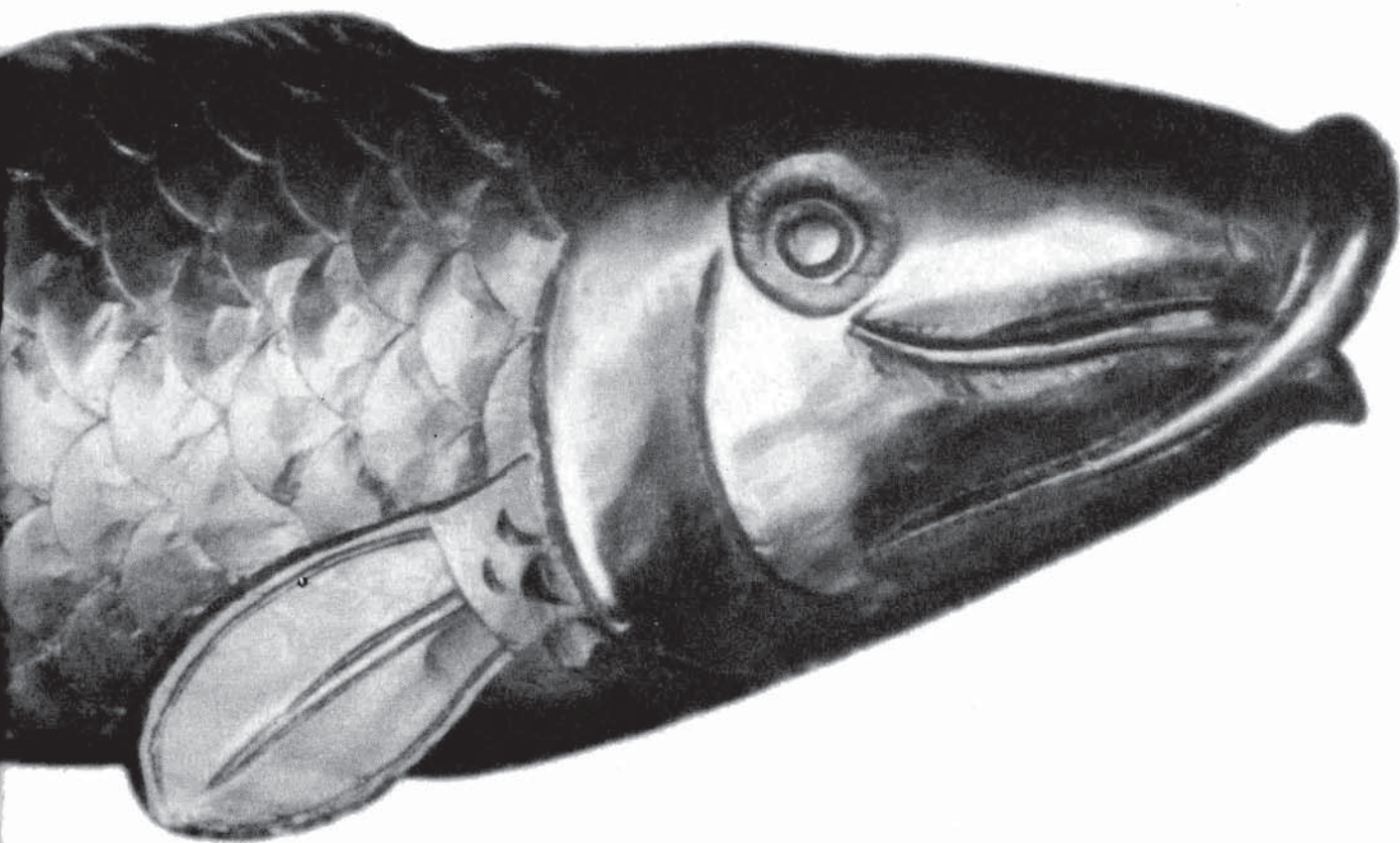
Innovation extends well beyond aesthetics. The hospital Healing Center makes practitioners of the state's five

licensed alternative therapies available to patients: acupuncture, chiropractic, naturopathy, massage therapy, and clinical psychology. In addition, all of the hospital's nurses are trained in therapeutic touch, a noninvasive healing modality for marshaling the body's own healing energy.

Earl Bakken, inventor of the pacemaker and retired CEO of Medtronic, spearheaded the drive for the revolutionary hospital as its board president, but its success is owed largely to the depth to which it is inter-

woven with the local community and responsive to its needs. When I told Susan Pueschel, Director of Development, it represented the wave of the future, she countered, "No, it is very much where we are today." Mainland take note. **KS**

For more information or copies of "Project 2010--On the Current Crisis in Health Care and Its Implications for the Hospital of the Future," call the NHCH office at (808) 885-4444 or write NHCH at 67-1125 Mamalahoa Highway, Kamuela, HI 96743.

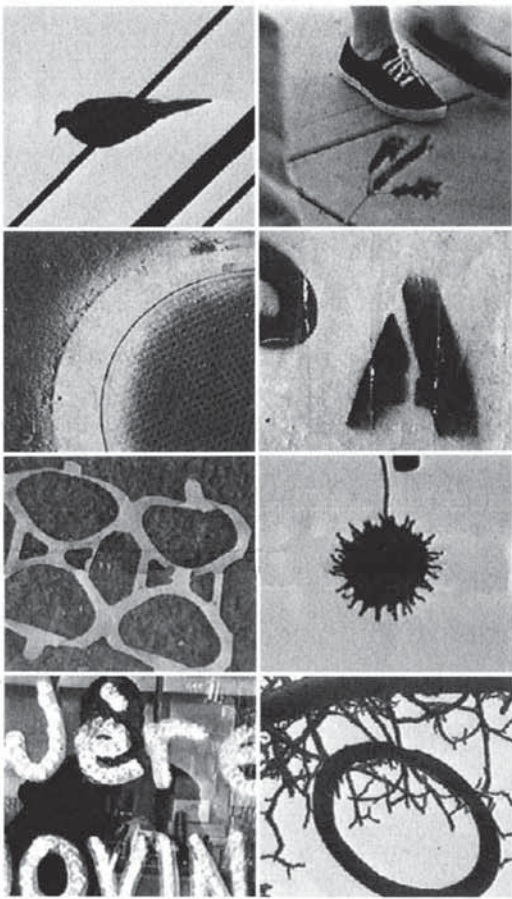


GIFTS OF THE STREET

The major reason my studio is in downtown Palo Alto is that it's a perfect walking distance from my home--about three miles. If I stretch out I can make it in forty minutes, but more realistically, I stop for coffee, and it takes an hour.

Exercise is the wrong word for it. Exercise implies a measured workout, but there's no work involved in this kind of walking. It's fun. It's my idea of a good time.

My walking has taken on a new twist, it's become an art form in progress. Walking has everything to do with light. A glare on wet pavement. Sunlight trickling in through trees and bouncing off car windshields. The reflection of an ominous figure in a window pane.



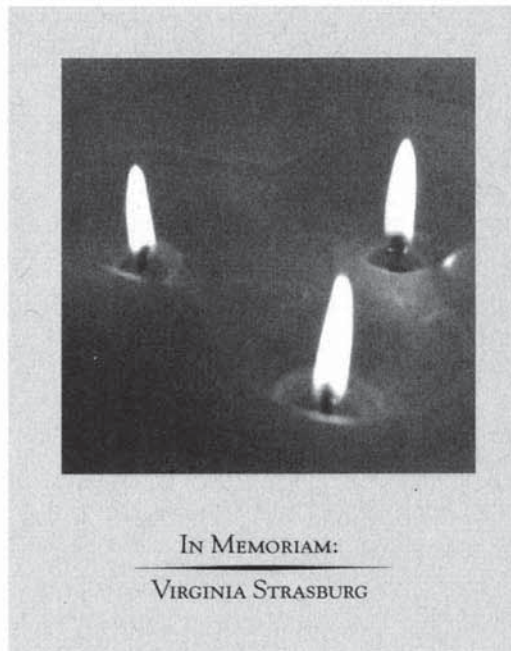
Many times I carry my camera. I have no plan or objective. I take pictures of forms and shapes that I'm attracted to. A manhole cover with a streak of pink paint sprayed on it. A bottle cap resting on blades of grass. I seem to be attracted to visual phenomena that are unplanned, that just happen.

Walking is different from driving a car or riding a bicycle--or even jogging for that matter. Walking provides one the opportunity to stop and examine details. Actually, the slower one travels, the more one is likely to experience the sensory pleasures.

Walking was not always my first priority. For some reason I could always find a meeting I had to make, a reason I needed the car, or I'd misplace things unintentionally that took time to find until there wasn't time to walk.

I first discovered the real benefits of walking at the Pritikin Institute many years ago. There, walking is everything, you get up at 6a.m. and walk; exercise, and walk some more. All day long, everyday, along streets

and beaches until you feel something is missing unless you're walking. After the Pritikin experience, I knew walking was the key to maintaining my physical health, but ultimately, it was most important to my mental well-being. **SS**



We would like to thank the family and friends of Virginia Strasburg who so generously contributed to Healing Environments in her loving memory.

HOW CAN I HELP?

If you are moved by our mission and would like to help, we would be most grateful for any of the following:

- 1) Please share with us the names and addresses of any and all individuals and/or institutions who you feel might benefit from receiving our newsletter or informational materials. Gift subscriptions are a wonderful way of giving both to others and to us.
- 2) Please share with us your personal stories of struggle, of triumph, of despair, of hope--your visions of healing environments--your ideas for comforting the suffering. We hope to showcase them either in our newsletter or in our library.
- 3) Please consider hosting an Evening of Hope to support our work and send healing energy throughout the world. If you cannot either host or attend such an evening, please consider sharing any size donation you can afford. It will be most gratefully received.

A WORD ABOUT FINANCES

Healing Environments is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the relief of suffering. We have been blessed with a benefactress who covers our core expenses. If, however, we are to retain our status as a tax-exempt public charity, we have five years in which to prove "public support." In order to prove "public support," we must raise at least twenty percent of our annual budget of \$150,000 from individual donors. It is for this reason that we must ask for donations.

WHAT'S HAPPENING



This month we welcome Yasuko Ikumi, our intern from Japan. Yasuko was one of fourteen Japanese healthcare designers to visit us last November on their way to the Eighth Annual Symposium on Healthcare Design in San Diego.

Yasuko was so inspired by what she saw on her last visit that she has returned with the intention of learning more in the hope of bringing her own version of Healing Environments to Japan.

After attending classes at Harvard, she will return to the Bay Area where we plan to connect her with local leaders in the field. After she returns to Japan in September, Yasuko will host Traci on her parallel visit to Japan in October.

We continue to have a steady stream of visitors to our showcase in Palo Alto. In addition, newsletter production takes a great deal of our time. We are working hard to increase our circulation, in an effort to share our ideas in an ever widening circle.

Plans are underway for an Evening of Hope in early December. Our next newsletter will offer suggestions for weathering the holidays when struggling with a life-threatening illness or coping with a recent loss.

We send you all greetings and a profound hope of healing.

OUR STAFF

Kate Strasburg: *Co-founder*
Traci Teraoka: *Co-founder*
Sam Smidt: *Art Director*
Doree Allen: *Editor*

WHAT WE CALL
FATE DOES NOT COME
TO US FROM OUTSIDE:
IT GOES FORTH FROM
WITHIN US.

RAINER MARIA RILKE



REVIEWS

SPIRITUALITY AND MEDICINE

Last December, a quiet revolution was underway in Cambridge, Massachusetts. One of the country's leading medical schools was hosting a conference on Spirituality and Healing in Medicine. Harvard Medical School's Department of Continuing Education, in conjunction with The Mind/Body Medical Institute of Deaconess Hospital, under the direction of Herbert Benson, M.D., assembled an imposing array of scholars, medical professionals and religious leaders.

Their objectives were fourfold-- "to promote an understanding of:

- 1) The relationship between spirituality and healing from the perspectives of major world religions.
- 2) The scientific evidence for the effects of spirituality on healing.
- 3) The physiological and neurologic effects of healing resulting from spirituality.
- 4) The relationships among healing, spirituality and mind/body effects."



When the brochure arrived at Healing Environments, informing us that the entire conference had been recorded on video, with presentations from leading Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic scholars as well as their medical counterparts, Traci and I were elated.

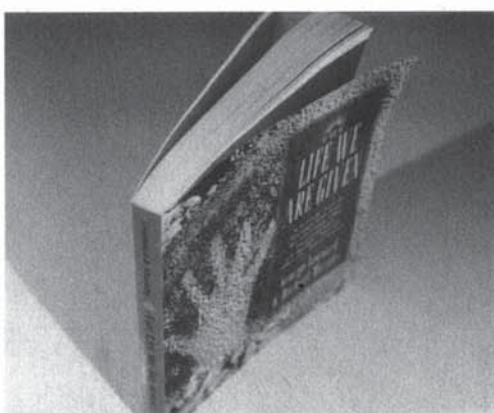
A visiting Stanford resident was incredulous. Had Harvard Medical School truly done such a thing? Yes, it had. We salute Harvard, the Mind/Body Medical Institute and Herbert Benson for serving as a beacon of enlightenment.

A 36-minute summary videotape entitled *Healing Words, Healing Practices*, narrated by Dr. Benson, can be purchased for \$29.00 (\$27.00 plus handling).

Please make your check payable to Harvard Medical School and mail it to: Harvard MED-CME, P.O. Box 825, Boston, MA 02117-0825. For further information you may call (617) 432-1525.

THE LIFE WE ARE GIVEN

It was in the San Francisco airport on the way to Hawaii that I picked up a copy of *The Life We Are Given*. It was no accident. I had been looking for a way of integrating my belief in the mind-body connection into my daily life, as well as searching for a community of like-minded individuals.



Authors George Leonard and Michael Murphy are both pioneers in the human potential movement. They have taken it a step further in creating ITP--Integral Transformative Practice--designed to test the outer limits of human potential through a disciplined daily routine incorporating affirmation, exercise, transformational imaging and meditation.

After graduating from Stanford, Michael Murphy went on to found Esalen Institute, renowned in the sixties for spawning the exploration of human potential. George Leonard, after serving as editor of LOOK magazine for sixteen years, became equally fascinated with the outer limits of human capabilities.

Drawing on Leonard's serious exploration of the Japanese martial art of Aikido, and Michael Murphy's fascination with extraordinary human capabilities in his book, *The Future of the Human Body*, the two men joined forces to extensively document and quantify the effect which the human mind can have on the human body.

ITP Kata, a forty-minute daily practice which includes a series of exercises followed by meditation and visualization, has been shown to have dramatic results on participants' selected goals. One woman in their two year study found that her cataracts disappeared. Another cured a congenital heart defect. All participants found an increase in health and vigor.

The book offers a brief history of the evolution of the human potential movement and Leonard and Murphy's role in it, followed by a step by step exploration of the component parts of the ITP Kata: The Tao of Practice, Transformational Imaging, and Meditation--as well as the roles of affirmation, exercise, conscious

eating, and community in the transformational process.

I spoke to George Leonard recently by phone. He reported that they have received 600 letters in response to their book. Thirty ITP groups have been organized around the country. Some have a special focus--such as an HIV positive group in San Francisco and a metastasized breast cancer group in Canada. *The ITP video may be ordered by writing ITP, P.O. Box 609, Mill Valley, CA 94942.*

THE MYSTIC VISION

The Mystic Vision is unique in that it offers daily quotes from all of the great religious mystic traditions. Compiled by Andrew Harvey, one of the foremost translators of our day, and Anne Baring, *The Mystic Vision* may serve as inspiration for one's own mystic journey.

Andrew Harvey has been called "one of a hundred visionaries who could change your life" by the *Utne Reader*. The youngest-ever Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, Harvey followed academic life with a lengthy religious pilgrimage. After exploring Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufism in depth, he concluded that we need to seek "a direct, unmediated relationship with the divine."

All of the world's great religions have mystical traditions. Simply stated, a mystical experience is one in which the individual comes in direct contact with the divine. It is significant that such experiences are often preceded by a period of intense physical or emotional suffering. It is as though one is driven to transcendence when one can no longer bear the world at hand. For this reason terminal illness or personal crisis may afford a unique opportunity for spiritual growth and transcendence.

What does a mystical experience look like?

I once had what I believe to be a mystical experience. In the midst of an intense personal crisis, I had lost twenty pounds in three weeks. One night, on the edge of despair, having lost my will to live, I moaned,



"If ONLY I believed in God." Without knowing what I was doing, I rose from my bed and walked directly to a large bookcase. Without hesitation I took down Thomas Merton's *Ascent to Truth* and opened it to a seemingly random page. My eyes fell on these words: "God is Truth. God is Reality. God is Love." "I believe in Truth, Reality, and Love," I thought, "Perhaps I believe in God after all." My recovery began. **KS**

AN INVITATION:
EVENING OF HOPE

We at Healing Environments would like to invite you to a very special event. On Saturday night, December 14th, 1996, we are organizing an Evening of Hope.

In homes, hospitals, and hospices, we are asking supporters of Healing Environments to host commemorative evenings to benefit our work.

If you, or a group of you, are currently supporting a loved one in their struggle with a life-threatening illness; if you have recently lost a loved one or if you are moved to commemorate those struggling with cancer or AIDS, or other serious illness, or if you simply wish to celebrate the spirit of Healing Environments, we urge you to invite a group of like-minded individuals to gather together in an intentional evening--an Evening of Hope.

If you inform us of your guest list, we will see that each participant receives a beautiful invitation, as well as a special candle to be lit during the evening, and a booklet of suggested evening activities. We ask that in return, each guest make a donation to Healing Environments of whatever amount they can easily afford. Those who are struggling financially shall be our guests. We would like all of you to join in the communal energy of the evening.

Our hope is that far more than a fundraiser, Evening of Hope can positively influence the healing energy in this country and beyond--and nourish the caregivers as well as comfort the suffering.

If you would like to participate, please fill out and send us the enclosed card. Thank you. Together we will comfort the suffering.

*O Spirit of Light,
who art both
infinite and eternal,
illumine our lives
and the lives
of those we love
and have loved,
with the healing power
of Thy
divine radiance.*

*Strengthen
our commitment
and courage,
that we may continue
to comfort
the suffering and
bring hope
to those in despair.
In peace, love
and thanksgiving.*

Amen.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to aid the current movement toward holistic medicine--toward treating the whole patient (mind, body, spirit) and encouraging hospitals, hospices, and individuals to nourish patients, families and caregivers with healing environments. What is a healing environment? We believe a healing environment is one that offers sustenance to the soul and gives meaning to experience. It is one that enables those who are suffering to transcend their pain by connecting to the universal through the transformative power of beauty and art, and that gives comfort through this connection.

For those of you who have not had an opportunity to visit us, a brief description of our facility may answer some of your questions. Our twelve rooms include an art studio, an art gallery, a meditation room, a Jungian sandtray room, extensive book, audio, video, and music libraries as well as sample patient rooms. We are available by appointment for consultation with both institutions and individuals. In the coming year, our goal is to reach out with this newsletter and make our ideas available to as many of you as possible.

HEALING ENVIRONMENTS
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