

Cultivating the Human Spirit through Art

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Originally published in August 2001 in New Century.

In his discussions on the topic of “Art vs. Arrogance,” President Ikeda noted, “Art is by no means unusual or extraordinary. Great works of art, just like the beauty inherent in nature, are a relaxing, refreshing balm for the spirit—a source of vitality and energy.” For artists like Jayne Story, this vitality is seized and cultivated in her life through her experiences and her Buddhist practice.

Jayne has a wide interest in art as she enjoys singing, drawing and painting. Musically, she loves folk, jazz and classical music. She recently performed in a medieval music ensemble of women signers. On her visual art, she noted, “I like to work from life, creating landscapes or still life works. Recently, I have started using a Chinese brush set and create from my imagination.”

For Jayne, culture was a big part of growing up. “I have always loved to sing,” she said. “My father plays the guitar and sings folk and rock music from the 60s and 70s. My mother put me in piano lessons when I was four and encouraged me to join choirs as a teenager.”

Her decision to pursue art came after living in Paris following her graduation from high school. While living as a ‘fille-au-pair’ (a nanny), she went to many art galleries and museums where she was inspired, “to enter into a ‘dialogue’” with the art she saw. Upon returning, she decided to go to art school in Victoria, BC at Camosun College.

Having studying in art school, Jayne has developed a deeper appreciation of it. “Art is exercise for the imagination, for the creative side of us,” she said. “Making art and enjoying art are natural parts of human existence; they are a part of the richness of life. I think we need art to be truly healthy. Art allows us to understand abstract concepts and creates a venue for us to understand what we may have in common with others. I find that even if I don’t really ‘like’ someone’s artwork, it still teaches me something about how the artist views the world.”

Buddhism and art are very complementary to Jayne. For one, her practice has helped her overcome the challenges of going to art school. “Because I developed courage and tenacity through chanting, I was able to finish the program even though I felt quite burnt out. Since graduating from Camosun College, my practice gives me the energy to pick up my sketch book even when I’m tired.”

Overall, Jayne noted, “I think the emotional condition of a person comes out in their artwork. So, if I have a strong practice, my Buddhahood must be coming out in the art and music. I find it encouraging and exciting to look at a painting made by an earnest artist or to listen to a performance where someone is giving it everything they have. I hope that my art and music do the same and more because I am basing my life on Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.