

**Lynda Gammon's *Studio Practice: Meditation Practice*
a response by Kegan McFadden**

And you breathe. There can be synchronicity where your breath is the same at age 6, 23, 47, and 68 and even at 97. At discovering bubbles, while falling in love, when clinching that dream job, just before you cease to breathe and leave your grown daughters to bury you. It keeps you going, it slows you down, it fails or sustains you, but still you breathe, until you do not.

4 minutes, four postures in the studio

You sit for a long time ... long is relative; hours for some are longer than they physically amount to and for others, in the spectrum of the universe, they are increasingly shorter. But you sit.

Standing is a proposition that can be taken several ways. What is the ratio of those of us taking a stand to the rest of us just standing around? Either way, still you breathe and you stand until you do not.

Walking is akin to standing, of course. One cannot happen without the other; this duality in motion gets us from one place to another, we hope.

Laying down is not giving up but refueling, unless it is among the instances where the struggle to stand, to walk, or to sit has overtaken the body and there is no other recourse. But even then, we do one only to gain back our time to the other. This is a cycle. Energy is redistributed. Thoughts come into focus and dissipate. Images appear only to be rejigged.

5 minutes, meditation on flowers

Yes, the image appears, or no it does not. The flower grows until plucked and positioned before its demise. A photographer once noted to the chambermaid at a hotel that dying flowers are just as beautiful as their former lively self and that he would appreciate her not replacing them so fastidiously. But an image nearly never dies, until it does, and so we look for that beautiful decay. The death rattle of a philosophy just before it vanishes. An aesthetic coup.

The image acts as a document, and in this way its uniqueness is less important than its mutability; to act as frame only to be reframed, a print on the wall (or several) offers the information as a document of that print, or those prints, on that wall. The document is folded into a book small enough to take with you, anywhere. Thoughts emerge to dissipate to reemerge through memory or device only to travel.

This monochromatic palette is also how memory works -- in black and white with a million shades in between, some of which even trick you into conjuring a light spectrum, but let's be honest, what's left to rattle around our minds is, more often than not, a dull shadow of the real event having passed through our cornea. Just as memory breaks down over time, so too has the imposed divide between two and three dimensional space been made askew with the combination of photography, assemblage, and ceramics. In this way, sitting, breathing, standing, and laying down all coalesce. This is not about what came before or what might transpire; this is only now. The only truth is that flowers are alive, if only briefly. Legs tire. Lungs collapse. The sun fades out. Colours dry up. These vagaries of impermanence remind us that what most hold true as beautiful all too often falls short.

The shadows cast, from eyes that dart and then crawl; from the stems that sprout up and spurt petals only to spit them out; from a shutter that actually captures light to burn it in place and then from vessels that keep it hidden away; shadows from our elegant if not clumpy respiring bodies erect, or at ease, even supine, are cast.

6 minutes, meditation on poplar tree

The stuff of trees. Gnarled but an impossibly sturdy trunk. A garden is never not reduced to strips, blowing and growing and snaking and reawakening only to be cut back, in the shade of some enormous tree that is not there until it is.

Representation is never the goal. Why would it be? The job of the artist, and the pursuit of the meditator, is not to capture anything the eye can already see or what the mind might remember but rather offer a glimpse at the spaces in-between each.

The large recreation (approximation) of the artist's studio backdrop --PRACTICE SHELVES #5-- engages with tropes of still life painting ... a flattening of space, playing with perspectives of foreground and background, perhaps even horizon, and is surprisingly true to scale! This nod to production, the stuff beyond thought, includes materials used in both analog and digital photographs: An inkjet printer butts up alongside buckets that once held processing chemicals; notebooks and scholarly tomes mingle with reams of coated paper and the special light-tight boxes used to preserve film negatives. A duster. A lense. Metal shelving brackets. This installation is bookended more than twinned by the new --BREATHING-- assemblage of long strips of photographs of leaves cut at various lengths and shown frontways and backwards, intermingling among shelves presenting hand-thrown ceramic vessels used for ikebana. Translated from Japanese to "making flowers alive", the art of ikebana cannot help but reinforce its opposite -- a *momento mori*. "More than simply putting flowers in a container, *ikebana* is a disciplined art form in which nature and humanity are brought together. Contrary to the idea of a multicolored arrangement of blossoms, *ikebana* often emphasizes other areas of the plant, such as its stems and leaves, and puts emphasis on shape, line, and form"

When paying close attention, echoes take shape -- camera tripods piled atop one another on a shelf morph into ceramic stems laid out with the acuity of a hybrid botanist-cum-documentarian. The stuff of life, whether as image or as hand-moulded recreation, is now laid out bare for examination. A minimalist, poetic, autopsy . Is this mourning?

"These 'still life' assemblages are studio practice and at the same time are about studio practice." LG

25 minutes, meditation on the studio wall

The artist herself appears, over and over again, in this selection of images bound into discrete artistbooks -- Lynda in the studio; Lynda at Victoria Shambala; Lynda outside, meditating on a tree whose enormity I am still reckoning with; and Lynda in collaboration with Trudi Lynn Smith in their shared Chinatown studio. The way she breathes anchors you; holds you in space but can also bring you back in time. Thirty years ago, in her studio on Fisgard Street, Lynda made a meditative drawing, a sort of scribble that orbits itself as a node to a larger sculptural work. The drawing was eventually covered over with a board, only to be excavated in her more recent rental of the same unit -- what a strange remembering, to walk the flights of stairs above the grocer, to wind your way around door frames and to the back of that building where the large windows frame a rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood and you think to yourself -- I wonder if that tiny universe I created is still trapped under the clapboard. But still, this will never be again.

To think about proximities ... of location (Fisgard to Store Street) of relationships (to oneself and to her collaborator) of earth or clay to vessel and then flower ... of studio to temple. Of practice to practice.