

destination healing ~ southern new england

Windows on the Soul: The Visionary Art of Leanne Peters

by Karen M. Rider

Griswold, Connecticut

"One of the magical things about art is the many ways it connects us to our Source, opening our eyes and revealing who we really are," explains visionary artist and illustrator, Leanne Peters.

Visionary art is that which enchants us back into balance, helping us align the stories we tell ourselves with the story intended for us to bring forth into the world. Some artists like Alan Lee, illustrator of the *Lord of the Rings* books and films, bring stories off the page and into life.



Leanne Peters, though, is a storyteller in the guise of artist.

Her body of work, aptly named *Inner World Illustration*, carries us into a story beyond our ordinary lives, into the space between the light and the dark, between emotion and

intellect, between human and divine. Some element draws you into this space, this world—a spiral, an expression, an animal's gaze, the curve of light or the depth of darkness—then leaves you free to discover, even write, the story with your eyes and imagination. Each time you gaze upon one of her pieces, the story changes. You discover new characters, visit different places, embrace new thoughts and experience different emotions.

"*Inner World* is just another way of saying imaginary. Beyond the physical, there is a world that contains thoughts and feelings an individual can see in their own sacred way. The images often 'break the rules' of what we experience and know outwardly, allowing full control (and responsibility) of the story. I like the idea of 'world' in the name because there are many beings and entities, many perspectives and emotions in this space for me; all are interdependent on each other to exist. Connections are key to me."

Leanne is a self-proclaimed "terrible student" but sitting with her is to be in the presence of a soul wise beyond her years. She embraces All That Is with a lightness of being and a depth of understanding that immediately embraces those in her company—not unlike the intelligence and emotion evoked in her art.

"The thought-feeling relationship intrigues me," she tells me while sipping tea, the golden light of a late fall afternoon cascading across her chestnut hair.

"In this moment, I can think one thing and have one feeling; in the next moment, I change my thought and experience a different emotion. I sense a relationship between thought and feeling that is beyond the five senses. The art rises from the ether and manifests on the paper."



The Heart of Infinity

DISCOVERING HER TALENT

"It all started with a pencil and piece of paper. My dad could draw a bit and there were visual artists in my extended family," Leanne says of her foray into illustration and design.

Leanne "tried painting many times" but felt it was a "less intimate medium" for her work. "Pencil is... where I feel the deepest connection," she says with a soft smile.

Most artists develop their skills by copying the masters. Leanne was no different in that respect. In her early studies of master artists, she aspired to accuracy, emphasizing precision and clarity. Skills that are evident in the way Leanne renders emotionally charged detail – human, animal, or landscape—in her own work.



Blessed Mother

Despite the differences in content, she is a "huge fan" of the technique Norman Rockwell used in illustrating an idealized 20th century America. Observing her art, one sees that her content has more in common with that of another master, John W. Waterhouse. "He was known for mystical renditions of romance and the femme fatale, concepts that also intrigue me."

She easily shares her respect for other great artists including Alan Lee, Mary Grand Pré* and Kinuko Y. Craft.

"I am in awe of Lee's ability to reveal life-like qualities in the most mystical beings and places. I am enchanted with Grand Pré's imaginative work in pastels. [I love] the way she applies color and brings forth unique, dynamic perspectives... to tell a mysterious or magical story."

This vibrant artist has studied well and the lessons learned she has translated into her own interpretation of light, color and depth. In the collections, *Earth Magick II* and *Hidden Worlds*, one quickly appreciates Peters' ability to create a visual story that does not interfere with the viewer/observer's imagination.

However, the journey to visionary artist did not come quickly for Leanne. Noting the depth of detail in her illustrations, her high school teachers encouraged Leanne to follow a career



Dream Cloak

path in medical illustration. She had an interest in, and aptitude for, science, so it seemed a "natural way to combine her skills." Following graduation from Rochester Institute of Technology, she started her career in pharmaceutical illustration.

Leanne only spent a year in pharmaceutical illustration before venturing into corporate advertising design. Still, she is able to shine a light on a gift born of her experience.

"Medical illustration requires a visual translation of the detail and delicacy of organic tissues. I developed a great appreciation for life—its simplicity and complexity."

Her studies along with the integration of these two paths of experience became the foundation from which Leanne would realize that "clarity and accuracy are held within the eye of the beholder."

TURNING POINT / AHA MOMENT

"After a number of years in advertising, and going through my own struggles, I felt drawn to exploring what could be felt beyond that which can be substantiated by the five senses," she shares. Though she does not reveal the details of her "struggles," she mentions working extensively with "the journey out of despair."

"I've rebelled. I've complained. I've resisted and I've asked 'Why?'" she casually admits, "At some point, I realized there are two ways to ask that question. The first is full of blame and suffering. The second way is soulful; it's a process of seeking answers with intelligence and emotion. When a person is in this place authentically, insight comes through the ether and healing occurs."



Release of Fear

"Several influential people in the holistic and metaphysical fields opened my 'inner eyes' to the power of thought, intention and emotion in healing and feeling well. I am in awe of the power of the imagination and what it can do to help people heal," she added.

Storytelling and the healing process had a strong pull on her as an illustrator—on what she most wanted to manifest through art. Leanne's journey as visionary artist began.



Power To Grow

INNERWORLDS: PROCESS & CONCEPTS

For Leanne, working in pencil allows the work to evolve at its own pace, which is important to her creative process. She explains:

"I begin with a black-and-white line drawing that manifests into a constantly shifting visual journey for the observer-participant. Shading is added gradually through lines. The tooth and integrity of the board (Bristol: Vellum) is preserved as much as possible to hold the color yet to come. The drawing and shading is then sealed with white colored pencil and layers of colored pencil are glazed on, layer by layer; further rendering, modeling and detail added to completion."

Common to all of Leanne's collections, in particular pieces such as "Snow Day" and "World Beyond," is a stunning use of color, texture and composition, feeling and fantasy that bathes the observer in magical tranquility. Her illustrations give rise to memories, dreams and wishes as the images come to life within the world she has created. This rare talent places Leanne in the company of another rare talent, the "imaginary realist," Kinuko Craft.

Craft is a remarkable artist, equally well-known for precision and depth as she is for the jewel-like luminosity in her depictions of mythical creatures and fantastical places. I tell Leanne that I see many similarities between her work and that of Craft: The mystical feminine and Celtic influences, ethereal and

animal guides, and imaginary realms. I notice Leanne is blushing. Humbled by my comment, she expresses gratitude.

"True, I am inclined toward the mystical feminine but I always consider balance and relationship between the elements in a piece. So, depicting the masculine within the feminine and vice versa. I look at the way opposites counterbalance and embrace one another. I love the idea of holding a center point to emotions. It's very challenging for me to keep that balance, but I love the work of it."

"Windows" are another prominent concept in Leanne's Inner World. Almost as if she were channeling a Druid Priestess, Leanne shares the wisdom that weaves through her art:



"Windows capture a significant moment in a person's mind. Windows frame your perspective, allowing you to 'see' differently even if only for a fleeting moment. Seeing in a new way becomes an opportunity and a catalyst to take action steps out of a rough situation. The observer/viewer 'leaps' through the window under her or his own steam—goes where she needs to go to heal, to find balance or to feel whatever is needed at that time."

"Feeling good requires understanding feeling badly. Its yin and yang. Feeling whole and balanced requires opening to both the light and the dark, engaging it, experiencing it, releasing it."

CONSTRUCTING & RECONSTRUCTING THE STORY

In all of the *Inner World* collections, the same story never manifests twice, not even within the same piece. Leanne explains how this happens.

"Within all art, there is the story constructed and the story observed by the viewer. Each person sees and takes away something different. Even at different viewing times, the same person sees the same piece differently. Creation is not passive nor is observation. Artist and viewer co-create."

I ask her what her greatest hope is for her art. For a moment, she slips into her own inner world, then adds,

"I hope that the final work, what comes through the ether and manifests in light and color and imagery, is what the viewer needs at that time and that it helps all it can."

"All of life is to be celebrated and experienced—its many stories told in all forms."

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*Grand Pré is the illustrator of the Harry Potter Books among thousands of other commissioned works. Information on all of the artists mentioned in this article can be found by going to each artist's home page. For details, contact Karen M. Rider.

Karen M. Rider, M.A. is a freelance writer specializing in holistic and metaphysical subjects. Her articles, profiles, book reviews and promotional copy appear in local, regional and national publications including Door Opener, Natural Nutmeg, Angels Among Us, Dream Network Journal and The Writer magazine. Karen also writes fiction centered on the awakening of human spiritual potential. Her first novel is underway. She is co writing Eating... The Angel Way with intuitive medium Annie Kelleber due to publish in 2010. Karen lives in Cromwell, CT. Learn more: KarenMRider@comcast.net or call 860 638 8140. Visit Karen's Blog: [The Writing Parent www.thewritingparent.blogspot.com](http://TheWritingParent.blogspot.com)

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