

Ep #186: Filling the World with Beauty



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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The podcast episode I have for you today is not one that I planned, not one any of us would ever plan. And I also hope to offer you a stitch. Martha Beck often refers to a community of people who feel that they are menders in this modern-day world. And I know many people in this Art School audience identify as menders. Yes, you are the capital-C Creatives.

And I think that also usually means you're a born mender. You are a born healer. You are born with a great capacity for empathy and a vision for the world and a desire to leave your mark in meaningful, beautiful, loving ways.

And so, what I want to offer you today is how to continue to move forward with your mending when events in the world can seem to cripple a heart and a spirit so loving and caring and feeling as your own.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Oh, my friends. I am happy that you are here again with *The Art School Podcast*. Let's see if I make it through this episode without crying, breaking down. Probably not. And I also felt – feel – that today is the day to record this podcast and to really shed any nonsense performative ego ideas that one should be able to keep it together in times like these.

So, as things happen these days – a lot has happened since I last recorded podcasts for you. And particularly weighing on my heart and mind, and I'm sure for many of you, are the recent tragic events, the shootings in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas.

Now, I have to admit, I don't even know if I'm pronouncing Uvalde right because so far I have only been able to read the events or watch it with the

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TV turned off and closed captioning. And so quite honestly, part of me has no idea what to say in this episode. And also, I knew I just couldn't record a typical episode.

And I think that's because this really isn't just business for me. This really is a community. You are humans on the other end of this and experiencing all the things that we're aware of and experiencing in the world, again, from the recent tragedy yesterday to the one in Buffalo, to the ongoing horror in Ukraine.

And I'm thinking right now of a message I received recently from one of you who I've never met, in person, or I haven't even had the privilege and honor of working with you closely in an Art School program, but this is from a listener who shared with me how she's been listening to the podcast every week.

And she shared a very incredible, courageous story of what she's creating in her life while navigating very challenging times. So, thank you, Robyn. And from the other side of the world, pretty much, when I received her message, I was out on a walk around our prairie and I then walked an extra two or three laps, which is about two or three miles, because I didn't want it to be lost on me that that's a person on the other end, who not only took the time to leave very generous positive feedback, but that's a person who shared how this connection and what I am using my voice for and this platform for, she shared how it's changing her life and what she's doing with it.

She's really taking the coach with me seriously. So, Robyn, A-plus-plus-plus, gold star, valedictorian of the Art School. You all are valedictorians of the Art School. But seriously, it's really easy for that to glance off the brain and to be like, "Oh that's nice, but I certainly don't want to get a big head."

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And at the same time, I wanted it to sink in on a deeper level, since I don't get to see most of you, and I don't get to hear from or connect personally with most of you. I wanted to make those connections in my neurons, in my heart, in every fiber of my being, that I am connected with you.

And something she said – she said many things that stuck with me and struck me. And one of them was when she said, “You know, when you talk about this being a community, that has been really helpful for me, even though I haven't met these other people, to think that there are other artists, other women, men too, around the world and that they're all part of this community listening, that that has felt really helpful, to feel connected to this kind of community, to this kind of movement.”

And I just thought, wow. That was certainly something that felt like I knew was part of the vision. I can't even say I made that up because it felt too grandiose. But it felt like handed, delivered part of the vision. And then, to hear that that's actually beyond just what I had hoped for, what the vision was, but that that's actually felt by even just one other person. And I know it's not just one.

I, again, I needed to take that in and to really let it sink in, to honor how sacred and meaningful that is. So, I keep thinking of that now, and I kept thinking of that when I was thinking about this particular episode and creating this for you. Because part of me was like, “I don't think I can create a thing. I don't know how I'm going to speak.”

And again, I'm grateful for you, moving through this, as I try not to break up. But I was thinking about what she said about really, for her, feeling the community of it. And I wanted to honor that and tap into that and to the healing power of that. And maybe it's too early to heal, but to tap into what it is that community can do for us in times like these, by moving forward with an episode and also acknowledging, for myself, of course you can't just carry on with business as usual.

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It's not usual. This is not normal. And it's not okay. And things like this bring you to your knees, or lower, because they should. Because this is not okay. And this should never be okay. And I think it's something that we are finding our way into as a community, how to feel the depth of grief and rage and horror, and not to be so devastated by it that we don't do something, not to be so devastated that it wipes out all of life, but that we come back to being torch-bearers, light-bearers, creatives, visionaries that we are. And together, create the vision for how we are going to move forward, to hold fast to the things that are not okay, and to offer, again, our vision of how things can be and will be and to find strength to carry through with that, to create that.

And that is something that we are going to have to do together. And our structures in the world are so changing. Society is changing. I have been revisiting, doing a deep dive, re-dive back into the works of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung's work around transformation, things like *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, for any of you that are familiar with that, alchemical work, using symbols as transformation.

And so, as I am rereading Joseph Campbell's work and he's talking about, in our modern world, we have noticed a lot of our structures are crumbling and changing, as they should, many of them oppressive. That also means there are certain mythologies that served us to guide us, to hold us in the past that no longer work for us. And he used this metaphor of the meaning and the power and the importance of mythology for humans.

He illustrated that with this metaphor of talking about marsupials, like the kangaroo. So, humans, as we know, are one of the few species that are born, quote unquote, way too early. We are completely helpless when we are infants. We're cast out of the womb and then completely dependent and helpless.

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So, again, quote unquote born too early. And so are animals like kangaroos. The kangaroo, however, is born once, but then crawls into the mother's pouch, which essentially serves as a second womb. And that second womb helps it continue to develop, to be safe, to be comforted, to gain strength until it's ready to actually be fully born into the world.

And so, Joseph Campbell was saying, as humans, we don't have this physical second womb. But what mythology, the structure of these stories and these archetypes, to guide us, to hold us, to comfort us, have acted like is essentially a second womb for the human psyche.

And so, what is happening now with so many of the old mythologies gone, and science has kind of taken place of where there used to be mythologies. But the challenge, the difficulty, the problem with science as a complete replacement for mythology, he says, is that science acknowledges that nothing is certain. You know, this theory is correct, but scientists are always knowing. That theory is only correct until we know better, and then a new theory emerges or a new idea about how we think, an explanation of how the universe works.

And it's all happening so quickly that there is no time for there to be staying power. There is no time for it to actually be cemented into our society in a way that serves as that second womb for the full development of the human psyche.

And so, he says then, where we are, is we must find ways to develop our new mythology. How are we going to develop our psyche, our individual psyches, and collectively as a society? And he says, over and over again, that this is the job of our poets, of our artists, of our creatives, of our visionaries.

So, coming together in communities like this, all you poets, artists, creatives, visionaries, you deep feelers, you with access to the imaginal,

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you with the ability to have a foot in both worlds, this is the time to come together, when we feel so shaken, in particular, and to allow that to rearrange us, as it should, but not to obliterate or annihilate our ability to love and to move forward.

And so, what does that look like, just right now, today? Yesterday, to be honest, when I first heard about this, I was feeling so obliterated that I was worried I was hardly feeling anything at all. And then, all of a sudden, it would come.

And it thought, this feels like the worst yet. You might think – I certainly didn't hope for this. You might think, after years of experiencing this, witnessing this, and it always feels like a personal tragedy. And I think it should. That you would be more jaded, and I wasn't feeling that way. And I am sure many of you were not either.

And so, there still was this part of me though – and again, I thought of something that Martha Beck talks about. You know, I mentioned she talks about the menders, and she also talks about turtle steps, like when faced with something so impossible, so daunting, that what you can do is to take the tiniest step, a turtle step.

Think of the step you want to take, and then cut it in half, and then cut it in half, and then cut it in half again, and then cut it in half again. So, I was thinking about that, and I was thinking about, I mean, for sure, thinking of the mothers who would not be hugging their children. And that brings you to your knees.

I was thinking of, of course, give money to – and I will include in the show notes all the places you can also donate money, to Sandy Hook Promise, to the Brady Foundation, all of these places that are working for gun control and legislation, and also for how to spot and stop and prevent someone

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who is feeling isolated from community, who is in danger of carrying out this kind of violence.

So, I was thinking of all of those things. I was thinking of the year that there was the bombing in Boston and the year of Sandy Hook and how that was another time that just brought me to my knees. And I created a painting at that time called Fill Life with Beauty and it was an intuitive painting, and there's an angel in it that is on her knees.

And I had this vision of an angel that kept coming back to me on her knees, brought to her knees. And then I also realized, devastated, and then also poised for flight again.

And the message that came through to me at the time was, what is mine to do? What is mine to do here? What can be done? And it was fill life with beauty. And that has also always resonated with me as a core, simple, humble thing that I can do.

And then, so yesterday, every time I walked by my children's picture frames on the dresser, bedroom, anywhere else in the house, it's something about their school pictures on my dresser, it just triggered thousands of different emotions and thoughts.

And I started to fall apart, sit on the bed, and I look over to, on the bed, I have this beautiful pillow that was made for me by my beloved friend Betsy. And she made this pillow that looks like my art. I've called it the Victory Series, before it's the Winged Series. It's 3D sculpture. There are wings in the center and it's often a heart in the middle and radiating colors from that heart. It's a very profound symbol for me. I won't go into it now.

And essentially, I wanted to create something. I always do in my art, but particularly with this series. I wanted to create something that would be a constant reminder of love. Because sometimes, it can be really hard to see

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where the invisible forces of love and beauty and hope and promise and healing, that they're still present. It can be really hard to access those.

And so, I thought – not a thought. It just came to me, this feeling that this would be healing for me, and hopefully others, to have something tangible, something for our physical Earth-bound, mortal, limited, humble creature physical selves, a physical, tangible reminder of the invisible forces of love.

And so, that was that series. And so, Betsy made me this pillow for my birthday that is my art but in a pillow form made by someone else for me. And it's like a beautiful abstraction, quilt work, and there's clearly so much love in it.

And so, I was falling apart yesterday, and I see my children's pictures, think about those mothers, fathers, the community, the children. And then, I saw that pillow and I saw the stitches, I just saw the stitches and the stitches that comprised the whole.

And then I connected that with the memory of Martha talking about menders in the world. And so, I wanted to share that with you because, when I thought about what are the small stitches that I continue to make, what are the small ways I can continue to fill life with love and beauty, one was creating this podcast. A simple, humble stitch, but definitely extended in the force, the energy of love for you and the desire to make more tangible for all of us, like a true sense of community, to help us find that place, again, where we see ourselves as that angel that I painted in the picture, brought to our knees but still winged, still poised for flight, still able to access the fullness of the tragedy and also still moving forward, sometime when you're ready.

So, that is what I wanted to offer you, that your stitches matter. The ways that you fill life with beauty matter. The ways that you feel and love, including when it breaks your heart, when it feels like it crushes you, that

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matters, and that you also are this winged creature. You can also use that heartbreak and compassion to be a mender, that as an artist, as a poet, that as an artist, as a poet, as a visionary, as a creative, your essence, your work now, your ability to care and your ability to keep afoot in both worlds is what will help move the world forward. And when that seems way too daunting, come back to the turtle step, and cut it in half three times.

What is the smallest stitch that you can offer? I promise you, it will feel to someone else, whether they take in your words from your poem, whether they take in your art, whatever your medium is of expressing love, that is your stitch that's going to help heal us and that's going to help knit together this new tapestry, this new mythology.

I think it's probably way too big of a task for any of us to be able to envision exactly what this new mythology that collectively we can create and write needs to be. In order for all of us to have this solid and sacred foundation together as a society, it's going to be so complex.

I don't think there's any pattern we could pick up from Joann Fabrics that would lay this design out. For sure there's not. But to not let that mean that it's still not what's ours to do, to ask yourself what's mine to do, what's my stitch to lay down, to lay down as best I can, to lay down in love, to lay down even though, I mean, I just had to start somewhere today and hit record and hope that you all would still be listening to me through my voice cracking and the long pauses and the lumps in my throat.

Just for you to know that whatever stitch you're offering and offering in love, to do that and let it go and to make the next and to let it go. This, I think, really is the highest - one of the highest purposes of art. You will feel the inspiration. You will feel something knock on the door of your soul as here, just do this. Reach out and offer this word to a friend. Paint this, write this, sing this, go here, do that, come together.

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Those places where you want to pull back and retreat, instead, just check that and see instead, what is the stitch that I can lay down, what's the turtle step that I can make. It matters. Your stitch, your art, your essence, it matters.

Thank you, my friends for listening to another episode of The Art School podcast. And so while this is a very different episode, because like I said, I just can't do business as usual, and this just goes to show that this is more to me than business, and this is more to me than art. As usual, lower-case art.

You'll also notice I didn't do a coach with me as usual today but what I wanted to offer you, invite you to instead was this: I just wish I could open a door and invite you physically into this community space all together. But instead, we can all access that with our spirits, with our imaginations.

Imagine coming together. Imagine that you don't have to experience these tragedies, whether they are just ones no one else knows about, or whether they are these personal tragedies that we are experiencing universally. Imagine coming together and feeling our way through the heartache, through the devastation together.

Imagine that kind of web, that kind of inner connectedness and community. And then imagine us together and individually and together sensing what is next. What is the next stitch each of us can lay down, can offer? How can we collectively as capital-C Creatives be on purpose mending, tending to one another, to ourselves, to the world? And it matters.

The way you fill life with beauty, which to me is with your essence, the way you answer that knock of the door of your soul that says do this, even if it's the smallest seeming thing, it says do this, take that, honor that, and make your stitch. I love you. Thank you so much for being here and I look forward to talking with you next time.