

## CREATIVITY



the human heart

“The seemingly obvious and simple act of listening with complete respect creates space that invites each person to begin to show who they are, and what they want for themselves and their community.”

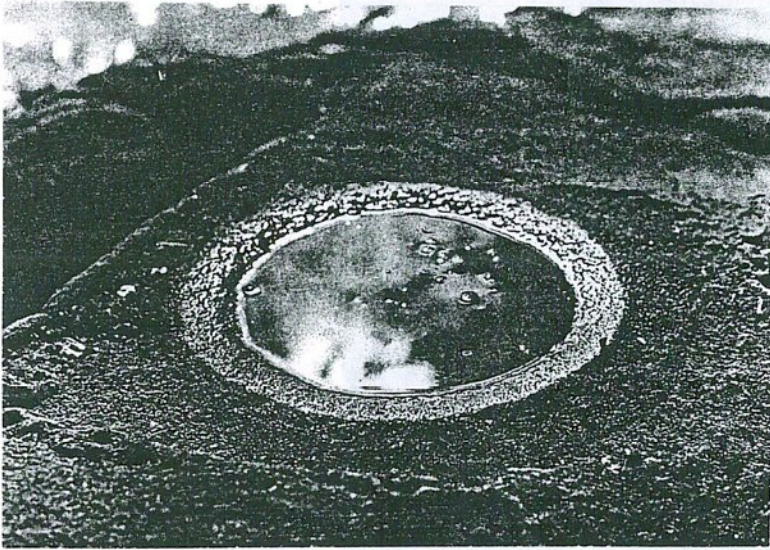
– Betsy Damon

In a special workshop on October 20th and throughout the project, we used mapping as a creative process, for which Trout Lake provided information, inspiration and image. We explored the metaphoric and literal connection of the lake water with our own hearts. Water is blood and tears, origin and end, the historic root of community. The lake calls on the most fluid part of us. Its surface reflects and gives back. Its inner depths are mysterious; they teem with intricate, invisible life.

Trout Lake's constrained circumstances and threatened future pose a powerful analogue for the ways we all struggle with demons, fall silent, and fail to find a creative voice.

We worked with clay in the pottery studio throughout the day one Saturday, looking at pictures of bowls and maps, and considering the bowl as both map and metaphor.

Petroform Bowl, Salt Spring Island, photo by Beth Hill



We considered the petroform bowls carved many thousands of years ago in intertidal zones along the Pacific Northwest Coast. What is a bowl? A bowl is a *container*. It is a *round* object, a metaphor for unity and for the earth, like the alchemists *rotundum*, the most basic structure of the universe. A round thing is also a sign of the body, just as a body – in its wholeness, its separateness, its function as a container of infinite complexity – is a metaphor for the world.

A bowl can hold water and also earth, fire and air. It is an image of wholeness. It stands for, or contains, meaning. A bowl like Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's *The Black Soup* holds anger and collects power.

A bowl that holds water will reflect the sky. It can hold memory, hold a place, and hold a sense of the human place and role in the world. Is it a map? A bowl, a circle, a *rotundum*, is also a map, if a map is a way to hold and encircle a place. A map, like a bowl, is a way to contain and reflect us in a knowledge of and a connection with the immediate world around us.

What is a map? A map is an image of a place. It can also be a *container* – of values, spirits. A map is a way to give the land a voice; it is also a way to forge human connections with earth and water, history and creatures. Mapping means developing a language to speak of place. It is a way of *paying attention*.

Doug Aberley points out that when land, nature, history and weather are invisible abstractions, we tolerate the destruction of the web of life more easily. Mapping is a way to intervene in the spiral of dissociation. Mapping means creating ways to defend, document and celebrate the places where we live.

A map doesn't have to be flat. It can be sculptured, like Susan Point's *Skookumchuck Narrows*. Point uses the Salish spindle whorl as an informing metaphor in her "map" of the swish and boil of the Narrows, of permanence and change.

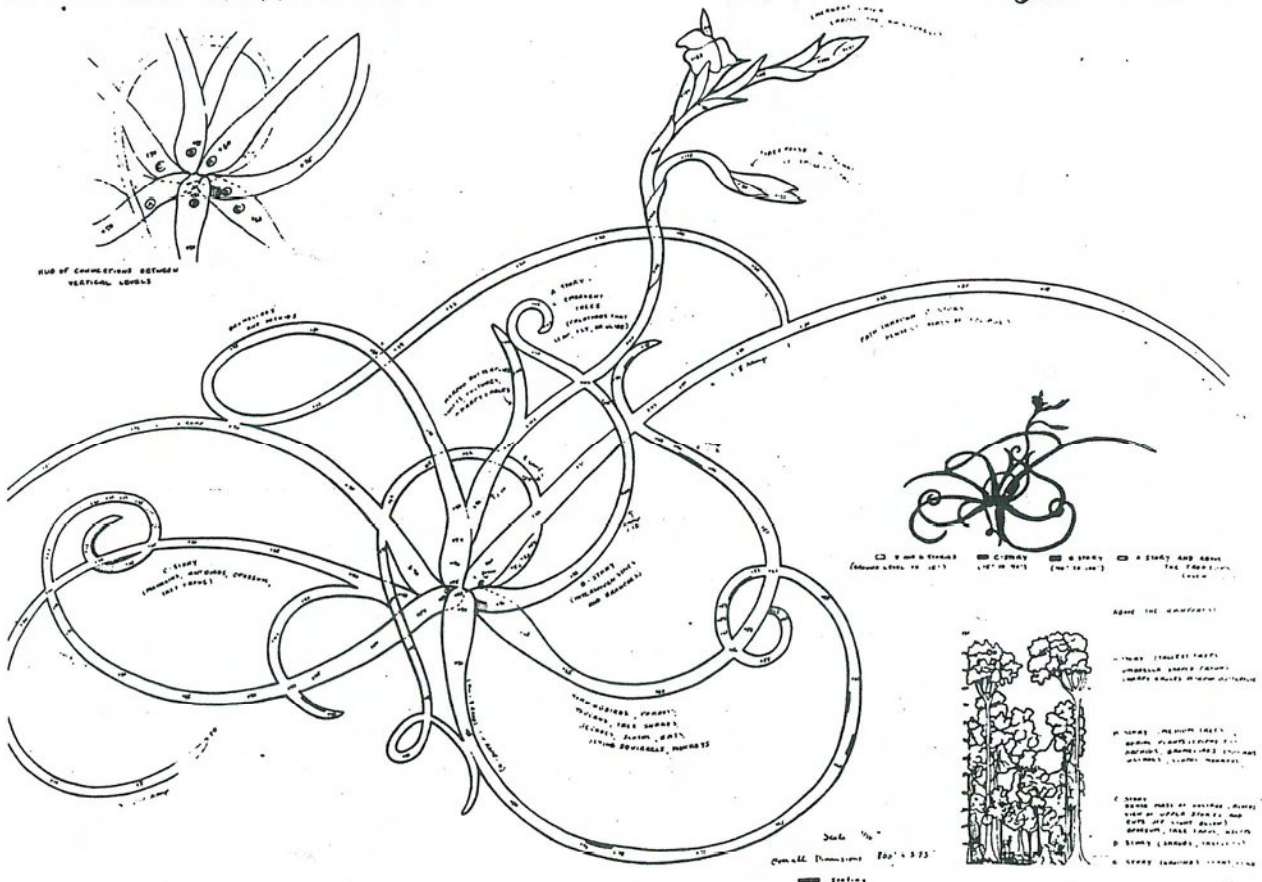
Jane Ash Poitras' *Blackboard Series* can be seen as a map. She maps a collision between cultures and different knowledges of place. Florence Benedict's *Sweetgrass Ball* is a kind of map of the world, because it is a globe, a bowl and a ball. It is a piece to hold water, air, earth and the smell of prairie.

A map could be a park, as in Patricia Johanson's *Park for a Rainforest*. Johanson used the form of a native plant, built on a gigantic scale, to create a vertical park that charts rainforest zones, and allows people to enter and witness the rainforest without damaging it. The map-as-park is a sculpture. It is also habitat, designed to accommodate birds, bugs and flowers.

© Patricia Johanson. *Tillandsia Streptocarpa: Park For a Rainforest, The Vertical Garden. Site Plan, Amazonas, Brazil, 1992 - ongoing.*

A plan for a rainforest (Tillandsia streptocarpa): The Vertical Garden

© Patricia Johanson 1992



A map could be an installation like Suzanne Lacy's *Underground*. Lacy built a railway line along the path of a buried river as part of an installation addressing domestic violence,

A map could be performed; it could be painted; it could be sewn or sung. Jean McRae walked through the streets of Vancouver for several days, knitting images of monuments. Her work maps the ostensibly public streets as an arena where women's culture is invisible.

Seated Human Figure Bowl, from Cowichan Bay, drawing by Beth Hill



A map could be a bowl, like a Salish bowl made some centuries ago. Utilitarian objects made by First Nations people are stories about the world. They are ways of speaking of and to the place they live in. Whatever the bowl was made to hold, it also holds this sense of place.

A petroform bowl in the intertidal zone catches water that flows in and flows out. Like a lake, the carved bowl is a place of stillness and reflection. What is a lake? Like a bowl, or a body, a lake captures and contains water as it flows and cycles down from the sky, through the earth, to the ocean and back again.

### *Self-Portrait with Metaphoric Objects*

Contemporary Western culture describes the material world as if it were dumb and devoid of meaning. People at other times and places experienced the world as studded with symbols. Objects held messages and animals brought insights. The world was always speaking to them. We discussed how we might open ourselves to a more intuitive wisdom, and find ways to let the world speak to us.

First, we reflected on the questions: Who am I? What do I bring?

We considered the bowl as a metaphoric object. Each participant was given a plain, light green bowl to use as part of their installation, if they chose to.

We walked separately in the park looking for other objects that spoke to us about ourselves. Could a leaf, a stone, or a piece of grass represent some aspect of the self, or inform us of some important quality? Rather than seeking objects that would represent some aspect of the self we already understood, we sought a place of “not knowing,” looking for things that beckoned to us.

We collected five objects, and brought them back to the studio where we arranged the objects collected, seeking a sense of “rightness.” Some of the participants incorporated other objects from the room, or things they had made. Then each one of us introduced the others to their piece, deciding whether to explain the piece, ask for audience response, or experience the work in silence.

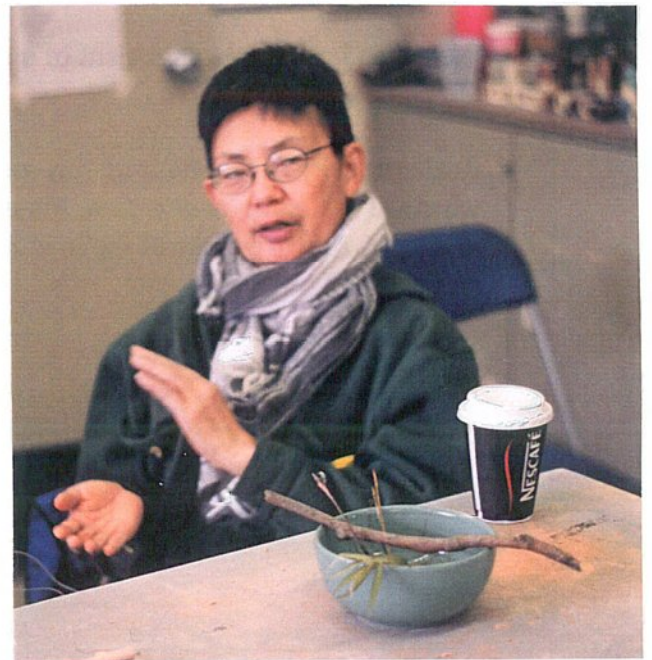
We looked for meanings that spoke to us through objects, and also through the relationship between different objects. Where we placed things, and the intervals between them, might be as important as the objects themselves.

We asked how the arrangement of metaphoric objects would have to change to represent the person we would *like* to be.

Real creativity can come from this space of openness, when we don't know the answers, when we ask and *pay attention*. Mapping is a way to describe this kind of exploration and response. A map speaks of the intersection between self and world.



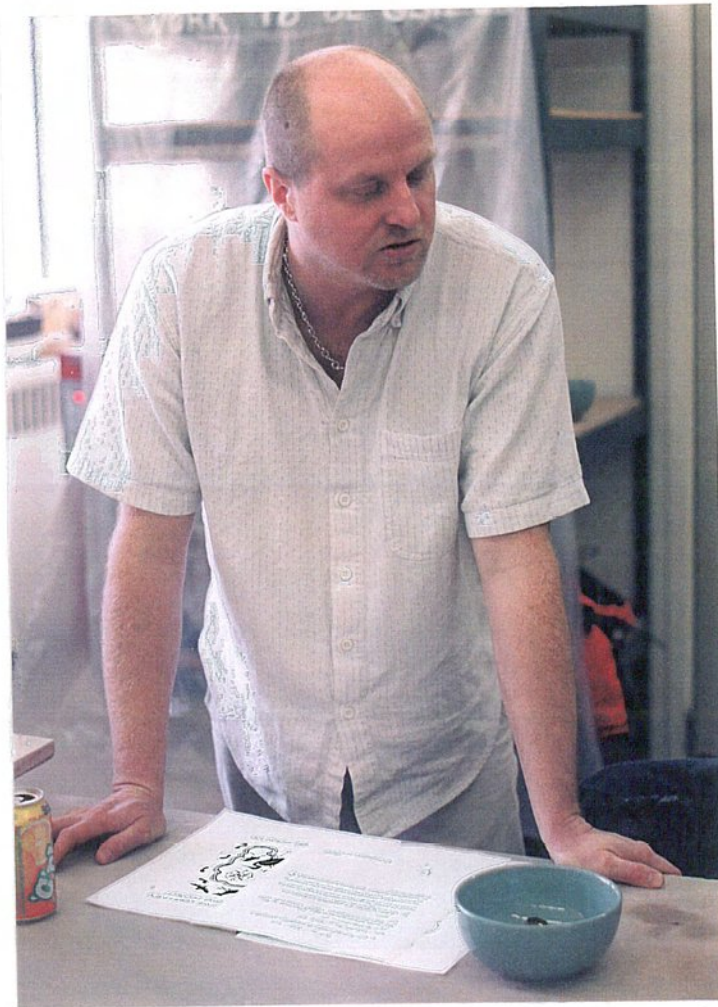
left: Caroline Bell, "Self-Portrait with Metaphoric Objects." above: Caroline Bell at work on her piece. below left: Haruko Okano, Trout Lake Bowl. Below: Haruko Okano discussing her "Self-Portrait with Metaphoric Objects"





above left: Karen Stanley, Trout Lake bowl in progress; above right: Tarrynea, Trout Lake Bowl; below: Caroline Bell and Huber Moore with Caffyn Kelley, discussing Huber Moore's "Self-Portrait"





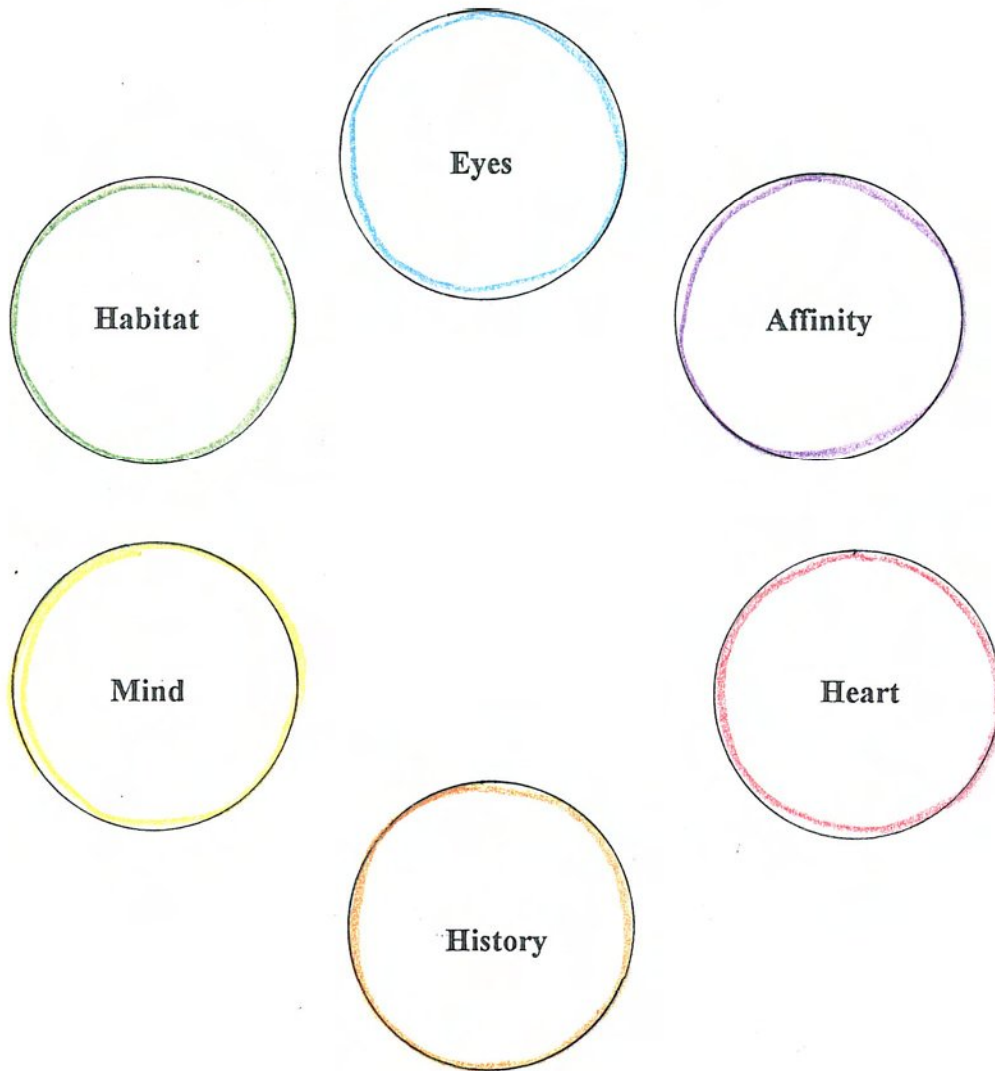
left: Frank Mitchell with his "Self Portrait." below: © Frank Mitchell, 2001, *Trout Lake Bowl*.

Frank Mitchell writes of this bowl: "A vessel to hold water, to be enjoyed for all its smooth and rough edges. Organic and man-made, a part of community, a vessel or conduit of personal spirituality and growth. This is our park, a place for our community."





*Self and World -- The Artist's Palette*



*Eyes*  
sensing  
attention  
perception  
exploration  
surprise  
delight

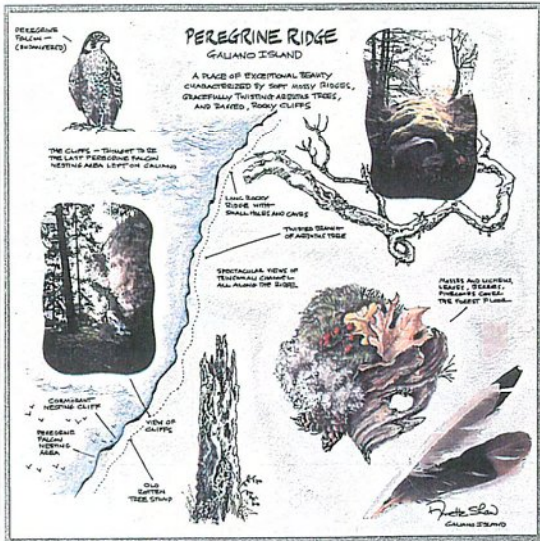
*History*  
memory  
knowing  
relative worth

*Mind*  
concepts  
symbols  
names  
critical faculties  
analysis

*Affinity*  
connection  
preference  
choice

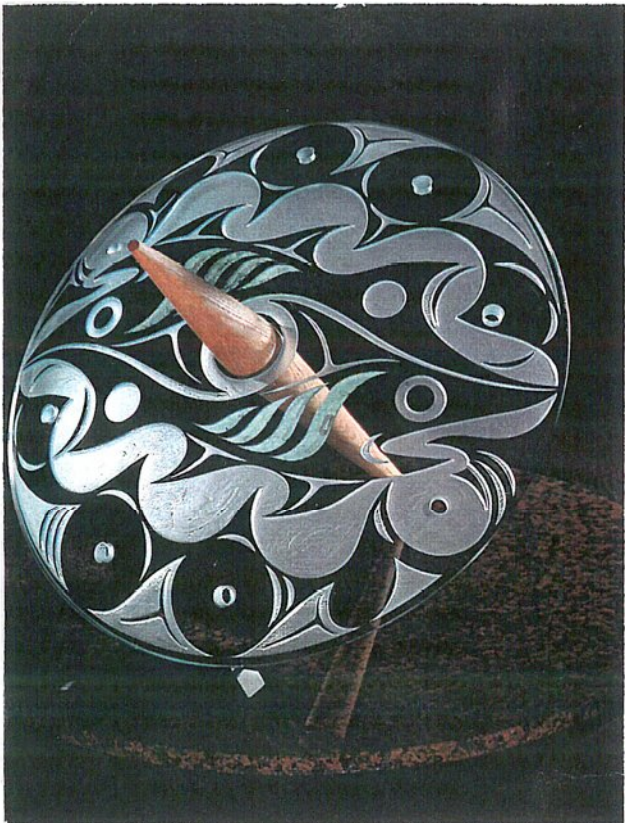
*Heart*  
feeling  
energy  
intuition  
instinct  
mood  
passion

*Habitat*  
nourishment  
environment  
need



© Annette Shaw, *Peregrine Ridge, Galiano Island*, used with permission. Originally published in *Giving the Land Voice* by Sheila Harrington (ed.). Annette Shaw used drawing, photographs and found objects to make an image of a cherished place.

"Water forms and informs every movement and detail of our world including the shape and motion of our hearts." -- Betsy Damon

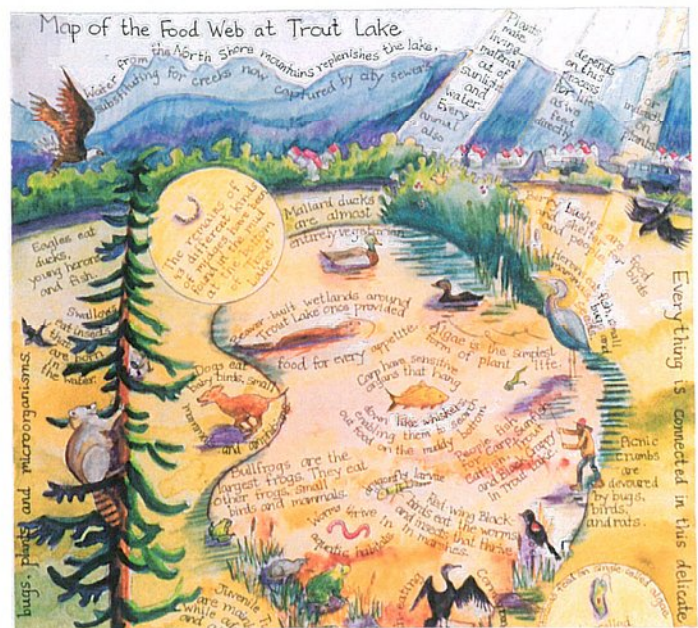


© Susan Point, *Skookumchuck Narrows*, 2000, used with permission. Susan Point carved glass with an intense, rhythmical design incorporating traditional Coast Salish imagery. Her "map" communicates the rush and thrill of Skookumchuck Narrows.

right: *Water and the Human Heart*. In this colour-enhanced angiogram, healthy sections of the coronary artery appear on the left as wide, pink ribbons. Diseased sections are shown on the right, where the artery is narrowed and blood flow restricted.



below: The North Shore mountains are an important part of the experience of Trout Lake, so Caffyn Kelley included them in her "Food Web" map.



"All is born of water, all is sustained by water."

Goethe

right: Marc Chagall created a kind of map in *I and the Village*, 1911, Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

