

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

*Pam Rosenblatt*

### **Sanghi: Artist at heart/Student of Life (MindFu)**

On one Saturday in January 2013, Sanghi enters the Au Bon Pain in Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts and sits herself down at the Bagel Bards table. She introduces herself to the people at the table, and starts speaking about her artwork and poetry. To her left is Pam Rosenblatt, the arts editor of *Wilderness House Literary Review*. The two women converse, and they decide to hold an email interview and then arrange for Pam to see Sanghi's artwork at a future day and time. The interview that follows is the result of this initial meeting.

*WHLR: How would you like your name to be written in the arts article? Would you like to let us know your current age? What is your occupation?*

Sanghi: Sanghi. I will be 57 years old by 2/3/13. My occupation - artist at heart/ student of life(MindFu) - evaluating life through making sense of life experience and connecting the dots in life between art, science and religion. I once said the following words and quoted on *Hopkinton Crier*. "Artists and poets, we are the scientists in nature, we discover and distill our living wisdom by living it, feeling it and practicing it." Sanghi, Poet, painter and walking woman

*WHLR: Did you go to high school? Did you graduate? Did you attend college and graduate?*

Sanghi: I skipped three years of high school, so you can say that I did not graduate high school. However, I did graduate from Illinois State University and hold BFA.

*WHLR: What field of study did you pursue? Art? Poetry?*

Sanghi: Fine art - painting.

*WHLR: At what age did you realize you enjoyed art and wanted to become*



## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

*an artist? Do you remember how it felt to pick up a paint brush for the first time?*

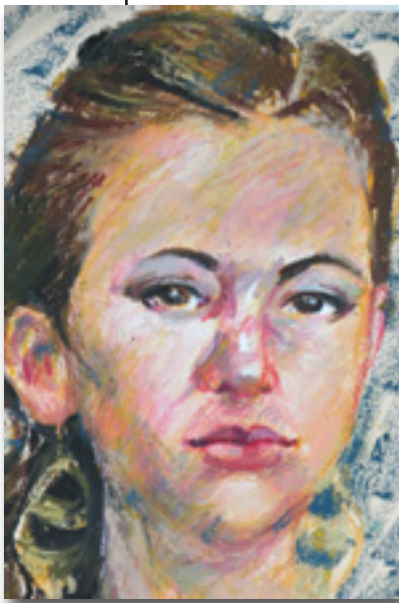
Sanghi: It was always a part of me like the breathing. I loved doodling and playing with colors. Holding brushes come as natural as the children who grew up in Asia learn to hold chopsticks. Growing up under my parents, we always had papers to doodle on. I was always doodling and the brief time when my mother sent me to an afternoon art class the art teacher always raved what I do. I think it wasn't that I was anything special but I had a tendency to conveniently forget the teacher's instruction of coloring neatly inside of lined shapes. I became lost in playing with the materials. And teacher always made a big fuss about my painting for it was different than others.

*WHLR: Are there any artists in your family?*

Sanghi: I do not know. I remember my father used to work with wood in the backyard. I heard from my uncle, his finger pointing at a black and white portrait on the wall in his house, that this man is a well-known scholar, our ancestor.

To tell you the truth, my siblings were separated as young children and grew up in a different environment and patched together loosely with bandage. We compartmentalize in our own way... As far as I know... I am the only one in family who is an artist, not afraid to being a childish - whether they accepted me or not. I scribble and dabble with anything that I can put my hands on.

*WHLR: You're originally from Korea. How did you like living there? And when and why did you immigrate to the United States? Were your passion for art and freedom of expression some of the reasons?*



Sanghi: I hitched to America when the opportunity presented itself. I came here with the string that my younger sister's American father had thrown to me and open arms invitation of American government who supported our family's reunion. I love freedom and embrace all American forefathers' far seeing high vision and their independent freedom loving spirit that gave a birth to this nation. With a big dream at heart, no money, no English I came to America. Dreaming that someday when my English gets better I will delve into art. Now I am expressing myself in English, not only to face my own fear but to celebrate life as a full citizen of American.

*WHLR: What is your artistic specialty? Drawing, painting, sculpture?*

Sanghi: I am now interested in all healing art - color, words, melodies, Taichi, etc. I wasn't always



## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

like that. I did not used to paint people either but now I feel affinity with people. And the subjects are everywhere. So I paint people and their mood or my mood, try to capture not only the likeness but the light. I love all painting materials. Each painting medium offers a different texture and qualities so I might have to change the way of applying them. For instance, watercolor, I add water to thin down colors or reduce water to control the intensity of color but in pastel, the harder I press the pastel stick it become opaque. And the more lightly I press the pastel stick, it lightly softly pastes glazing under color to show through. For my own convenient, I work with dry pastels, oil pastels, watercolors, oils, and acrylic house paint. My pastels are mostly drawn on Canson Mi-Teintes Paper, and the watercolors are painted on Fabriano Paper. I am interested to find beauties in ordinary things in everyday life.



*WHLR: When you were a child, what type of pictures did you draw? How has your artwork developed over the years?*

Sanghi: When I was a child, I draw all subject matters: flowers, people, landscape, animals... I love flowers. And the flowers painting caught eyes of teacher and he enrolled me in the art club at school which was usually reserved people who can afford. I was an artist in house in an orphanage where the children did not have dolls so they will bring their tear-off notebook papers to beg me to draw dolls of their dreams and dresses so they can cut it off and have their own doll house games. Also, I was in a way an official holiday card director as the people in the orphanage recognized my handiness with art materials. I was even asked to paint a mural as well. The drawing skill and the ways with color always served me well. I used them to fill the gap between my language gap in the early ages and



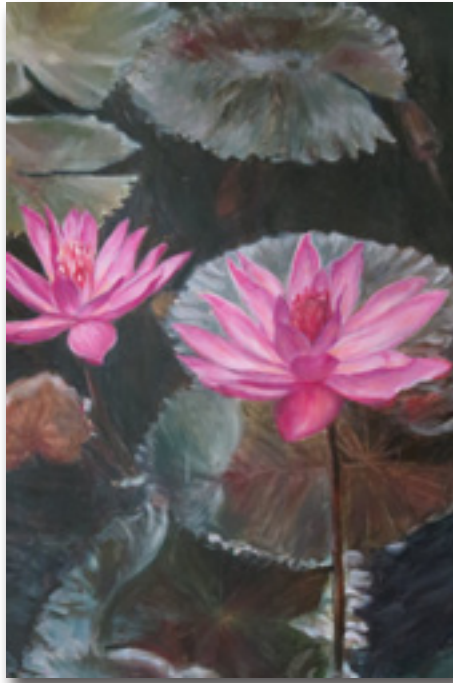
one thing led to another. I enrolled in a night school to graduate college, working two jobs. After receiving my BFA, I also worked as a graphic designer developing brand identity and packaging design using color senses.

After marriage, I followed my husband. His job moved us back to Korea. And for almost two decades, I concentrated only on house chores and raising a daughter. But I think how even when I was not holding a painting brush, I had to say that my eyes were always enticed by the swiftly changing sceneries around.

*WHLR: In your artwork, light and shadow are skillfully applied. Why use these techniques?*

Sanghi: Light and shadow always dance together and define edges and boundaries constantly changing, shifting shapes by the movement of light or

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1



shadow. Within the light, one can still see cool and warmness. And the same with the shadow, one can see push-and-pull warm and cool dance of the colors. Those make the shadows much more interesting and give more life to the artwork(s).

*WHLR: Please discuss one of your favorite artworks that you created. And describe your artistic creation process.*

Sanghi: One of my favorite art works, it is in someone's home but still in my heart. The title was "path". When my life was on the cross road, I painted purely for my own pleasure a landscape that reflected my feelings and put it in a show. And it sold! It encourages me that I can paint what I really care about and there are people who feel that. I am also drawn to sun – how it dabs and dashes and brings out beautiful enticing color. I don't always justify emulating my feel-

ings but I try...

Sometimes I am carried by stirring thought, impulsively pick up brush and paint, and unleash the feeling and mood and tone on paper... And sometime I linger and linger and get so saturated with fear and doubt, losing the initial inspiration. I love hearing the ocean sound and their songs... to paint the moving water and at time the calm water. I love people. Human features intrigue me. Human faces are art itself and it conveys so many emotions. I am drawn to people. When I paint portraits, I hope to capture not only the likeness but also some spirit of the person by catching the dabs and dashes of light and reflection. I enjoy quick sketching people with color and catching the various expressions and moods. Painting is always a part of me... even though these days, I play more with English words that I once so afraid.

Once I went to the National Portrait Conference in Washington and watched the Demo of Ray Kinsler. He was a very entertaining portrait artist and painted many famous people. I thought [that I could be successful in painting if] I put my heart and mind on painting. But, as for speaking English, it will take me some doing... extra doing... and I still fumble and tumble with English but I find that no matter what I do... speaking English is an essential...

*WHLR: Who has had the greatest impact on your artistic development? What person or artist?[Korean and/or American]*

Sanghi: I have to say that I was a lucky child when I was young and living in a [Korean] orphanage, the school art club teachers, even with their meager salary, provided me with art materials. And every afternoon they provided me with a place to paint and draw for two years without ordering me what to do... and always offering me encouraging words and

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

interesting art books to browse through. And a college professor singled me out in a design class, taught me how to use English style of watercolor. Eleven years ago, I was in so drowned with prescription drugs and confused, a friend told me to write because, in a sense, there is no difference between painting and writing. I can say what I want to say and forget the grammar and spelling... Writing is conversation with self. I do think that painting is learning or engaging self-mood.

*WHLR: Why do you create?*

Sanghi: I create... create is to live. Like gardening, nurturing the love within, a thought is a seed and an idea to sprout and grow. And by learning not only the materials and tools but also self, to create is a way to expand mind and heart ...

*WHLR: As a Korean woman, how do you view American artworks? What are the differences and what are the similarities?*

Sanghi: I associate myself more American than Korean for I love freedom and the very founding spirit of America. I like some Eastern Zen art painting that have much energies and celebrate human spirit. And I like impressionists work.

*WHLR: What message or words of wisdom do you have for people immigrating to the United States with dreams of artistic freedom/of creating visual art?*

Sanghi: Follow heart and be true to self. Never, never put self down or give up on your dream. Be strong and confident to stand for what you believe and live for life worthy dreams, especially those dream seeds that can enrich all lives and lifting spirit of world. Always ground and align self to center with high higher vision.

*WHLR: Please add any information that you think will help in making this a strong arts article.*

Sanghi: One thing, whether I paint or write or garden, I always unconsciously or consciously tinker my mood in. [It gives me] more reason to walk and clean mind heart and body...

