



ART-IT'S CLINGING TO LIFE.

Art is clinging to life- life as we know it now, for it's all we know and all we ever will know.

Stay with me here.....let's have a chat.

Firstly, let me ask you a couple of questions. How many galleries do you go to that have walls covered with images of the dead? I don't mean images of people or animals while they were alive...I mean dead. Kicked the bucket, Fat lady has sung, bit the dust, bought the farm, assumed room temperature, cashed in their chips and well and truly gone home in a box? None? Why not, I mean, what's so bad about looking at dead thing? Aren't they beautiful? Good subjects.....they don't move. Jokes aside, there isn't much that's pleasant about death or dying. And so I felt inspired to explain what artists do and why we are so attached to the living, and share with you an experience that will change my life as an artist forever.

We've had some tough times of late. Above are some photo's of little friends that we have- or had. Yuki, my white cat (alive and 12 years old), Tarot, my 23 year old cat who just passed, and, Hubert. He died 5 years ago at the age of 16 and he was my soul dog.

Strangely, like all tough times, although something has been lost, something precious has been found. Let me explain. And it all comes back to art.

My little one, Hudson is feeling it the most. The changes. The loss. It's hard to give 5 year olds answers to big questions that elude us as adults. He's 'clinging' to me at school drop offs. I'm getting in a mess (and trouble lol) because I find ditching him when he's a blubbing mess - and running, difficult, and probably making it harder for him.....everything is making him anxious. He's lost his stability and sense of permanence of things, and now asks "do you promise you'll pick me up mummy?" How do you explain death, I mean really explain it? I don't think you do. You have to let life grow back into their heart again.

There's a story coming upcan you tell that it's going to be interesting? But hey, this is my experience now, and you can lock me up if you choose to, but again, stay with me. It's worth it.

On the 14th of July we lost our loyal and beautiful old friend, Tarot. He was 23. In the last few weeks of his life he started to want to sleep right under my feet whilst I drew every day and on my head in bed. Yep, right smack on my noggin- keeping it warm. A few days before he passed, he

stumbled over my head and I smelt something. It was a smell I knew well. It was the smell of death. It's sweet. Not like raspberries and sugar lollies. A sickly sweet, musty and sweaty, not like old socks, more like sulphuric acid, it's unmistakable and once you smell it, you cannot unsmell it.

I stopped everything and looked at Tarot. We were there. At the end. And I knew it was coming fast. Although he was still walking, eating and enjoying his existence, I knew, just from his smell that a process had started in his body that I couldn't stop. Nature was going to win.

I watched Tarot the coming day, he became more sleepy and sought me out everywhere I went. I would stand up from the desk and make a coffee and there he was, right at my feet looking up at me. He was telling me everything I needed to know and I opened up my heart to hear it- as scared and devastated as I was to learn about what was coming, I had to be there for him.

Hudson said the next day "mummy, there's a dying smell".

Yep, a 5 year old. I had said nothing. He knew nothing. But this is what he said. Suddenly, selfishly, I didn't feel alone in the losing battle with life.....there was another witness now. And so the slide down began.

Tarot stopped eating two days before he died. Hudson and I took it in turns to try to feed him, but Tarot had decided, no more. Hudson read him books and sang to him, stroked him as he slept and alerted me when he woke and we passed the baton and I took over. Hudson had to go to school, but the day before Tarot died he knelt down to him and said "please don't die when I'm at school Tarot, I'll come home soon and help you". That day was a messy one for both of us...we both cried at school and both were struggling to grasp how the following hours would play themselves out.

I lay beside Tarot all day, researching pencils, watching youtube videos and talking to him about the past 23 years....Tarot looked up every now and then and gave a tiny meow. He knew I was there. We were intimately and spiritually connected now and we were embarking on a journey that only one of us was going to come back from.

Still with me here?

As soon as Hudson walked back into the door, Tarot seemed to let go and take on the business of really dying. His breathing changed, it slowed down. Long breaths, long breaks inbetween. I put Hudson to bed, and accidentally fell asleep with him. I woke at around 10pm, and hurriedly went out to see if Tarot was still with us. He was.

The next 3 hours are now unexplainable to me. As an artist, as a person intimate with colour, philosophy and spirituality, what I am about to tell you will be farfetched to some. But here goes.

Got your coffee? Let's do this.

I rested beside Tarot and he lifted his head one last time. A tiny meow. He said to me "you went without food to feed me, thank you", and lowered his head again. I put my head to his, and held his paw, and seemed to slip in and out of a place that became more and more real, not dreamlike, not a fantasy.....real.

What I saw defies what I know about colour, light or sound. There were colours and light everywhere, shimmering colours that flowed and brilliant light that didn't blind, instead it warmed and settled every cell in my body, it became my body. They weren't opaque colours or even colours that I could recognise or touch, they were layers of light and as the light particles danced, so too did the colours, and every single colour made music. Beautiful music. It was the most crisp, clear and harmonious sound I have ever heard, drenched in flowing colours. I really have no words, I'm struggling to put familiarity around it, but I just can't. It was a place, in-between here and there.

"There" she says.....you mean Heaven? Well, yes, I do. What else could this place be?

So there we were, Tarot, slipping away, me, slipping in and out of the 'now', and Yuki, my white cat, who stood guard like a warrior, upright and focused, on the kitchen bench. It was dark, there were no lights. The three of us were enduring the end- together.

And then there were four.

In this 'state that I was in' I heard a familiar sound amongst the music....it was Hubert, my gorgeous basset hound that passed 5 years ago. I was a high pitched excited bark, unmistakably him and I went deeper and deeper into that place of indescribable beauty. The sound wasn't directed at me though, it was directed at Tarot. Suddenly everything started to have a pull to it, a vaccuous feel, and I was going.....there. Hubert suddenly saw me and started to bark at me, but I knew that something wasn't right, and I started to fall back, as Tarot went forward. I felt something say "go to bed now, this isn't for you" I woke, peacefully and totally relaxed and calm. I looked at Yuki, who seemed to 'nod' at me, kissed Tarot one last time, felt his warm rib cage rise and fall one last time under the blankets I had covered him in, and went to bed....still with colours, light and music in my minds eye, it was 1am. I was 'told' to go away, that Yuki, and Hubert 'had this covered' and that everything was 'going to plan'. This was a party of strobing lights and music that I wasn't invited to.

I woke at 5am and ran out to Tarot, and he was cold. He was gone.

Stiff. Lifeless. He had passed. I cried and cried. Hudson woke at 7am and said "mummy I can't smell dying anymore- Tarot has gone but its ok, we still have Yuki, and she's taken Tarot home".

What can you do? What can you say? I mean, this kid knew it all. He sensed it all and witnessed it all, from his point of view, and it was uncomplicated and real.....the whole thing was real.

Tarot didn't go straight away. He wreaked havoc with the electrics of the house, took the washing machine and a few light globes and a hard drive with him, lol, and racked up a repair bill that I wasn't happy about. Finally I asked him to please "go to the light!". His energy was so strong, but funnily, Hudson and I laughed and laughed every single time something broke, looked at each other and moaned "TAROT!!!!" lol. A week later, things stopped busting, popping and exploding.....Tarot fully crossed.

And so I come back to art. And part of me getting on with my art is getting all of this out, right down to the final thing that I really want to share with you, which I will do at the very end.

I have no idea how to translate what I saw into my art. I'm not sure if I'm meant to, but I'll look for the messages and let it flow as it should.

What we need is all here. It's now. Artists spend all of their time searching for subject matter, pleasing compositions and amazing new interpretations of things that are actually perfect just as they are.

Human faces, animals, the world around us are so beautiful. There's beauty in just about everything if you look hard enough. Throughout time, people have documented humanity and the places we've dwelled. We've painted, stylised, drawn, sculpted and photographed the moment as we saw it, and we have hundreds of thousands of books dedicated to bringing all of this historical beauty to the here and now.

This is real Art. This is our job guys. I can't imagine having a 'death drawing class', where we all go to a morgue and happily draw corpses, emptied of soul and energy, wandering around each other's drawings, critiquing and chatting away the time. It's called 'Life drawing' because that's exactly how we learn.....from drawing from LIFE (and the occasional dead animal if you're a wildlife artist lol).

It doesn't MATTER what anyone else thinks of your art. It's what YOU think that matters most and only YOU know how to be better at it, and it's called hard work. It only takes ONE person to like it and you have an award, and only ONE person to buy it and suddenly, you've sold.

I guess what I'm trying to share with you here, is that there is nothing more unique to you and more fitting to your existence than to express yourself in the now. Everything you need to inspire you is right here. Nowhere else. Look around. Look at the people who surround you. Look at your world and embrace it with reverence.....it's your reality. Whether you like it or not, life is taking YOU on a journey. Strap yourself in and embrace it because it's all you have. Train your brain to pay attention. Train your eye to discover the colours. Because believe me, there are colours out there that DO exist and they are pure and inconceivable. Find your artistic soul, discover, be curious, play and be in awe of YOU, because YOU are incredible.

Art really is 'clinging to life', because YOU are art. You are life. Without life THERE IS NO ART!

You can search all of your life for something that's missing, but you're not going to find it until it's your time. Full stop. Everything that you need to succeed, to endure, to develop and to be remembered is within you already. Including your precious talent as an artist.....just close your eyes and let the images come to you, then, find them and make that vision a reality. Let the colours sing to you, feel their vibration and don't question the inspiration, let it flow through you and out of your pencil.

Finally, aside from the art, this is what I really want to share. When your time comes, and it will, you won't be going alone. Someone you love, even if it's a dog, will be waiting for you and will guide home. I've been asked if I'm afraid of death now, and my answer today is 'NO'. What I saw and experienced was calming, safe and beautiful. Inconceivable beauty. I would have gone had I not been told to go back. Even if you are afraid, just remember this one thing, you will not cross alone.

But before you do any of that, go and make some beautiful art- and don't dilly dally. You're running out of time!! Art IS life. It just can't be anything else. Only you can give it oxygen to breathe.

Thanks for taking me there Tarot. Miss you little man. xx

For those what would like to know about people who had has a similar experience to me, and believe me, I've found many now that I've reached out, this is one story that accurately matches mine, section 4:

<http://www.near-death.com/experiences/with-pets/jan-price.html>

And here is a woman who has four cones and can see millions of colours.....I guess she will have some idea of what I saw too in the place in-between. Interesting read.

<http://www.popsci.com.au/science/medicine/this-woman-sees-100-times-more-colours-than-the-average-person,396736>