

Through the Lens of the Rockpool.

Chris Sage



Matins

*Somewhere, out at the edges, the night
Is turning and the waves of darkness
Begin to brighten the shores of dawn*

*The heavy dark falls back to earth
And the freed air goes wild with light,
The heart fills with fresh, bright breath
And thoughts stir to give birth to colour.*

John O'Donohue

The warm days of January, remind me of blissful hours spent, knee deep in the rock pools of Red Bluff, under the gentle tuition of my father. This sacred school, where sound, colour, texture, smell and sheer joy, all came together. A perfect storm, setting me on my journey.



The mystery and the beauty of the changing colours of the sea and the horizon was a magnet. But most often then my gaze went down to the tiny life in the pools. Periwinkles and mussels, their shell homes igniting my imagination and love of the seashell. I would rather my bowl of shells than any string of pearls. I often hold them and turn them over, marvelling at shape and colour.

I believe my role as a teacher has been to help other young people gaze at nature's basket of gifts and to explore the beauty in the micro and tiny worlds within.

To create, or for me, to paint, is to be part of the creation story. To engage with all our senses is to be fully alive. There is a sense of wholeness or holiness when we respond to our natural world.

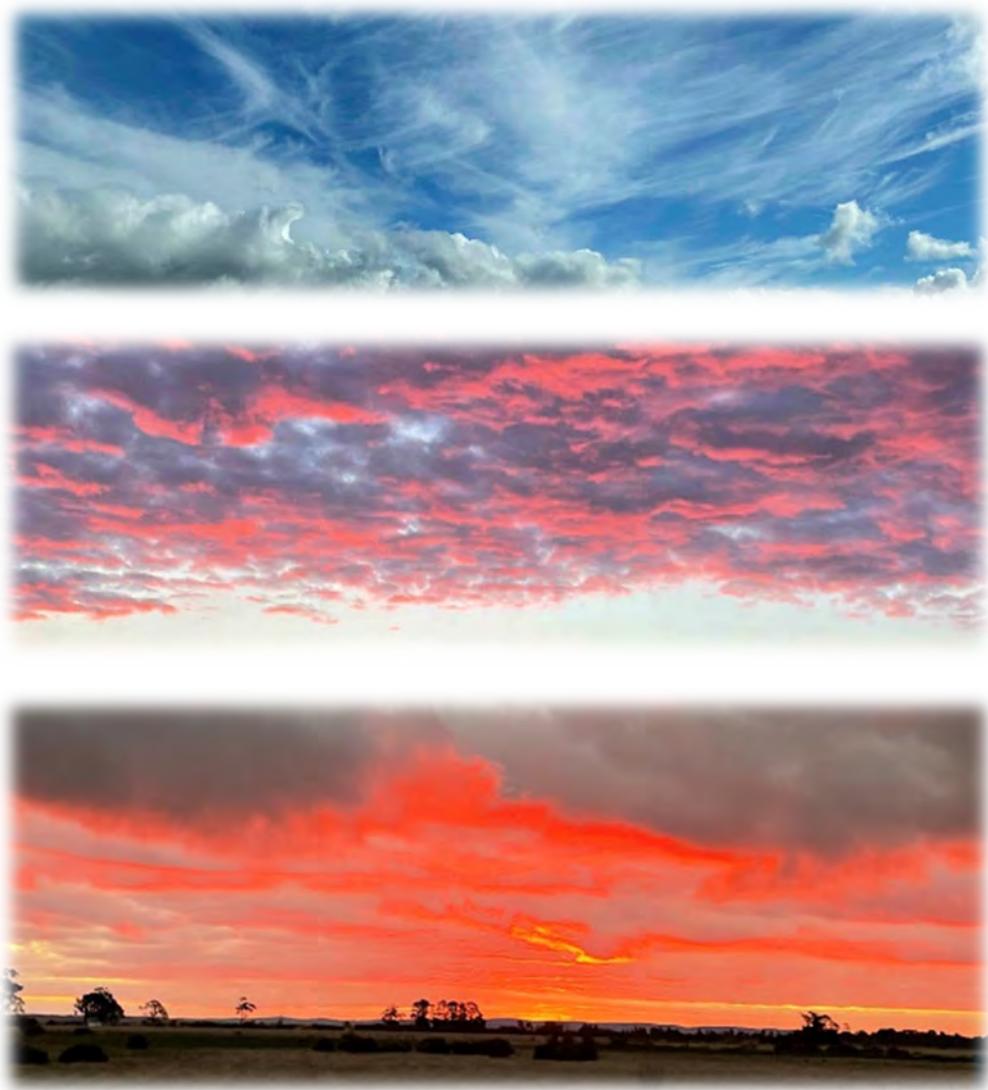
I am generally too busy. I find it hard to stop. I have tried unsuccessfully for most of my adult life to meditate. Failure!

But when I paint, every fibre of my being becomes acutely aware of something in and beyond me.
I switch off to my normal world and surrender to the flow
and for that time I am immersed in the flow, in the precious Now.
There is nothing else that seems to matter.
A sense of bliss prevails.
Time stops.

No rushing forward.

My hands always work intuitively,
picking up brushes and squeezing out different colours.
There is no theory.
All else falls away and a door opens to the Center.

Most recently, my attention has been taken by the vastness of skies, of horizons and sunsets.



Artists respond to their times if they are authentic.

There is a shift in my vision, in my recent work, there is a sense of tomorrow, of hope and of boundaries way beyond us.

There is a deepening connection to all that is precious under the blanket of our skies.

The Gift for Us in This

Madeline Duckett rsm

The lens on life of the artist is a gift to us all. Chris Sage, a talented local artist and sculptor has shared something of this gift in the above reflection for January.

As we launch into a New Year, we savour the pearls of wisdom and inspiration hidden in the words of both John O'Donohue and Chris Sage – a poet and an artist speaking to our hearts and opening the "door to the Centre" that Chris has mentioned.

The year just passed has been "heavy with darkness" for many, but as the New Year begins, perhaps our hearts can be filled with what John O'Donohue describes as "fresh bright breath" and our thoughts stir once more "to give birth to colour" – a colour slowly breaking into our COVID-darkened world, if we have the eyes to see it.

For many of us, the past two years may have been "dark" but they have also provided space to reset our values and so highlight for us what is truly important in life. Chris points us to a path into the simplicity of this way of seeing as she speaks of the "basket of gifts" all around us in the "micro worlds within" even the smallest of nature's creatures.



On the one hand she speaks of her futile attempts to "meditate", but then proceeds to share the meditative, contemplative experience and power of being totally absorbed in her creative gift of painting. In this, she invites us too to discover that activity which draws us to "surrender to the flow" and be immersed "in the precious Now". That place where "nothing else seems to matter and a sense of bliss prevails" - where "time stops" and there is "no rushing forward". How descriptive of what we try to do and be in our CEN time at 4.00 pm! This deepening into the Now is in itself healing – for ourselves but it also radiates ripples of healing and colour to those whose worlds are darkened and hurting in all kinds of ways.

That is meditation indeed, dear Chris – full presence to the deeper flow of life within! That is contemplation in action! And how much we need this now! In CEN times, yes, but also in other activities that bring us into that Now of fuller presence. Some may experience it in walking, in gardening, in listening to or making music – in the experience of any number of the diverse avenues into contemplation that Nicole shared with us in her two reflections in 2021. The greatest gift is to discover or deepen further into that place or activity that "opens the door to the Centre" for each of us individually. Mystics, poets and artists of all kinds point us towards it and can help us discover it if we don't already recognize it in ourselves.

In our regular CEN contemplation time that "door to the Centre" opens and becomes a communal door through which we pass into a field of graced presence to the eternal NOW. Here we support one another in the contemplative endeavour but we believe that we also help heal a world still needing "to give birth to colour".

Finding, following, and savouring our own unique path into this contemplative presence to that "something" that lies "in and beyond us" would be a worthy goal for this New Year as we open again to the endless possibilities it holds!

As we look forward to 2022:

- May it be for each of us a deepening into each NOW of our lives so that we can be more and more fully *present* to the flow within all life.
 - May we discover our own unique path to the Centre.
 - May we thus encourage others to find and live into **their** own unique way to the Centre so that together, we upbuild the larger Heart of the world around us.
 - Above all, may we have eyes opened wide enough and hearts deepened sufficiently to see the new world arising from within the world we know now.

