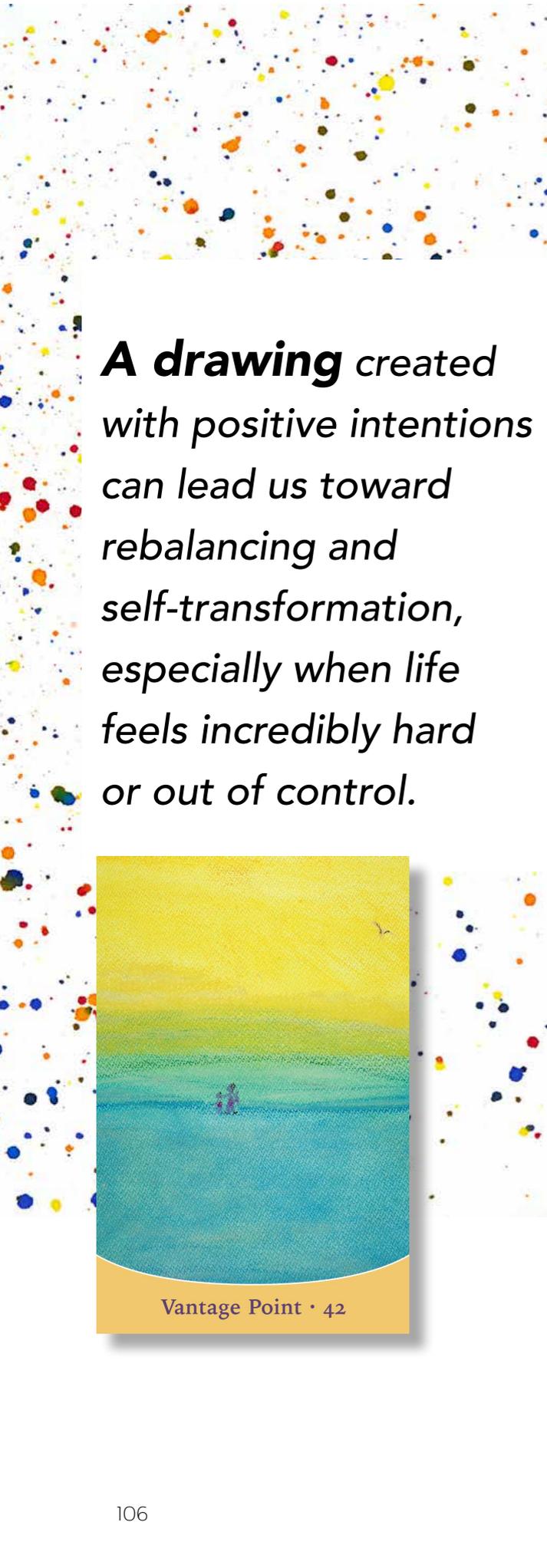


Visualizing Intuition with Genesis Art

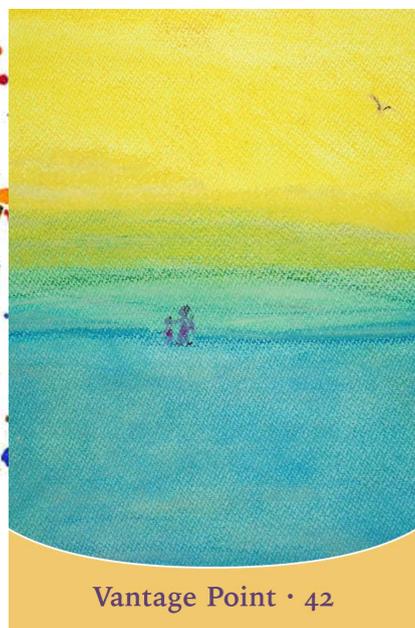
LIANE WAKABAYASHI

Liane Wakabayashi had no intention of becoming an art teacher, much less an artist, when she majored in art history in college, eventually becoming a Japan Times feature writer specializing in the arts and holistic approaches to self-exploration. In 1995, however, Liane began developing the 44-card deck of Genesis Cards, which led to her teaching a transformational way of drawing and painting that she calls Genesis Art Workshops.





A drawing created with positive intentions can lead us toward rebalancing and self-transformation, especially when life feels incredibly hard or out of control.



Kyoto Journal: Well, what exactly happens at Genesis Art Workshops?

Liane Wakabayashi: At Genesis Art Workshops you learn drawing, painting and collage techniques to access intuitive wisdom. You revisit the familiar everyday world and draw subjects that you may have thought you could never draw, like realistic flowers, lifelike trees, children running around in play, even a self-portrait with clear resemblance to yourself. Drawings become a springboard for heart-to-heart sharing. Your intuition knows exactly what you need to draw in order to open up communication from the heart. This is where the deck of 44 Genesis Cards comes in: to help you dig deeper into the message that gave rise to the drawing and share it.

What if you have no interest in or aptitude for drawing?

Whether you believe you have talent or not becomes completely irrelevant in Genesis Art. The aim is to take you out of an imaginary courthouse where you think your art is judged, where you believe there is a right and wrong way of drawing, and enter a state of mind which is free-flowing, joyful, and inspires self-confidence. Genesis Art by its very nature is sociable, and invites meaningful conversation. Talking about aspects of your own art mirrored in elements on a Genesis Card strengthens self-esteem. I believe this

is why so many well into their adult years are drawn to this approach. A drawing created with positive intentions can lead us toward rebalancing and self-transformation, especially when life feels incredibly hard or out of control.

Where did you find the inspiration for this?

In 1995, my husband, Akihiko Wakabayashi, a therapist and teacher of Eastern Medicine, used drawing as a tool in a “Consciousness Training” workshop he was conducting at Akahigedo Clinic. He began by explaining that art could be a powerful tool for visualizing exactly what it is you want to manifest in your life. I drew a self-portrait of a radiant and very pregnant me. I was so intrigued by the power of one drawing to shift my thinking from “Will I ever become pregnant?” to “Look! I have conceived!” Instinctively I could feel that this drawing wasn’t an illustration but more of a blueprint. This became the primary rule of Genesis Art. When you draw, you are literally drawing things toward you with intention, drawing aspirations, dreams and hope into tangible form.

I studied art history at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and received an MFA in arts administration from Columbia University. I worked more as a commentator on art when I was a feature writer specializing in the arts for *The Japan Times*, in the late 1980s. I never in-

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tended to become an artist, certainly not an art teacher. However, after reaching for that very first box of Rembrandt pastel crayons, I was hooked on drawing. Four months after my long-awaited child, Mirai, was born, in January 1998 I was hanging sixteen framed paintings and pastels for my first exhibition, at a restaurant in Aoyama, an area of Tokyo I loved for its creativity and elegance. If I, a journalist, could draw from instinct rather than art education, starting at the age of 36, certainly anyone could.



How did the Genesis Art Workshops get started?

In 2000, I was having tea with my friend, the award-winning illustrator Andrew Boerger, who was also a writer. We were both in the early days of crossing over into different mediums. Andy and I were excited to share a realization. Since creativity is simply a flow of energy expressed through us, why not focus on getting others to experience the energy in unfamiliar mediums?

We conceived of a series of in-cafe creativity gatherings, calling them “Genesis Workshops.” At our first venue in the atelier-like backroom of artist Traci Consoli’s inspirational Pink Cow Restaurant, our 25 home-made laminated cards with art on one side and creative writing exercises on the back were strung on a clothesline. These pieces of art were gradually reworked into the Genesis Cards.

The Genesis Cards resemble oracle cards, but I don't encourage people to use them in this way. Those who do so are missing the point. The artistic image on a card, including its symbols, labels and numbers, exists primarily to spark dialogue with your own art. To use the images on the cards to glean personal information is like reserving a room at a hotel and mistaking the hotel door card key for the hotel room. In other words, your own art is the most reliable source of intuitive wisdom.

Did you intend Genesis Art to be used for art therapy?

I had no therapeutic intentions, unless art therapy can be redefined as a recovery from the mistaken belief that only special people were put on this earth to make meaningful art! My friend Chihiro Yoshida, who became a nursing home resident at the shockingly young age of 47, awakened me to the fact that the opposite was true. Chihiro was diagnosed with advanced multiple sclerosis. When I visited her in the autumn of 2008, I hardly recognized the fragile woman behind the walker. Chihiro had been a Butoh dancer, a chef, a weaver, a knitter, and a shiatsu therapist. At a family restaurant close by the nursing home, we got comfortable enough to draw. For an hour Chihiro sat engrossed in a drawing, that looked to me like six amoeba

shapes floating in peach-tinted ether. Elaine Nardaya, our mutual friend, then suggested that we randomly select Genesis Cards.

I wondered whether it was sheer coincidence that the number of amoeba aligned exactly with the number of lotus leaves. The white lotus in the Valor Card offered such an apt description of Chihiro's current state of being, a white lotus, radiant and at peace, that she responded with the most wonderful smile imaginable and said, "Yes, that's me."

Chihiro's art had turned around a potentially awkward meeting where I imagined I was there to commiserate with her or cheer her up. Instead Chihiro, through her drawing, spoke volumes about the resilient spirit that is never diminished by a weakened physical body.

How has Genesis Art evolved over the years?

Genesis Art workshops began in an art studio in November 2007 on Nodai-dori, a shopping street near our home in Setagaya, and reopened in Okachimachi, near Ueno Park's national museums, a year later. Based on sketchbooks, crayons and the deck of Genesis Cards, these workshops are highly portable, so, when asked, I introduce Genesis Art at conferences, private gatherings and as a public service to people residing in places where they especially need cheering, such as hospitals and prisons, orphanages,



Bringing Genesis Art to Tohoku survivors in advanced years who have never done art since childhood has been eye-opening.

and retirement homes.

Following the Great Tohoku triple disaster of 3/11, I began offering pro bono Genesis art workshops in order to raise funds for Tohoku rescue and community revival projects. Bringing Genesis Art to Tohoku survivors in advanced years who have never done art since childhood has been eye-opening. Caroline Pover, who continues to work tirelessly to channel energy and funds into recovery projects in Oshika-hanto, the peninsula just above Ishinomaki and one of the hardest-hit areas by the tsunami, gave me some great advice. I was there to do Genesis Art with survivors, well into their eighties, who were confined to three small rooms in their barrack-like temporary housing. Caroline said: “You’ll meet people who have lost everything. Go with just the one simple aim to leave behind new memories.”

Octogenarians who hadn’t drawn since childhood opened up to painting. They thought that doing art was quite hilarious! The release of emotions through drawing was like nothing I could have imagined and it reminded me that in our results-oriented world, drawing for no other reason than for the sake of enjoying a bit of laughter is mighty good reason to draw.



Genesis Art takes us to the heart of the intuitive process—to let go of expectations and relax while our creativity and intuition work together to deliver the deeper meaning.



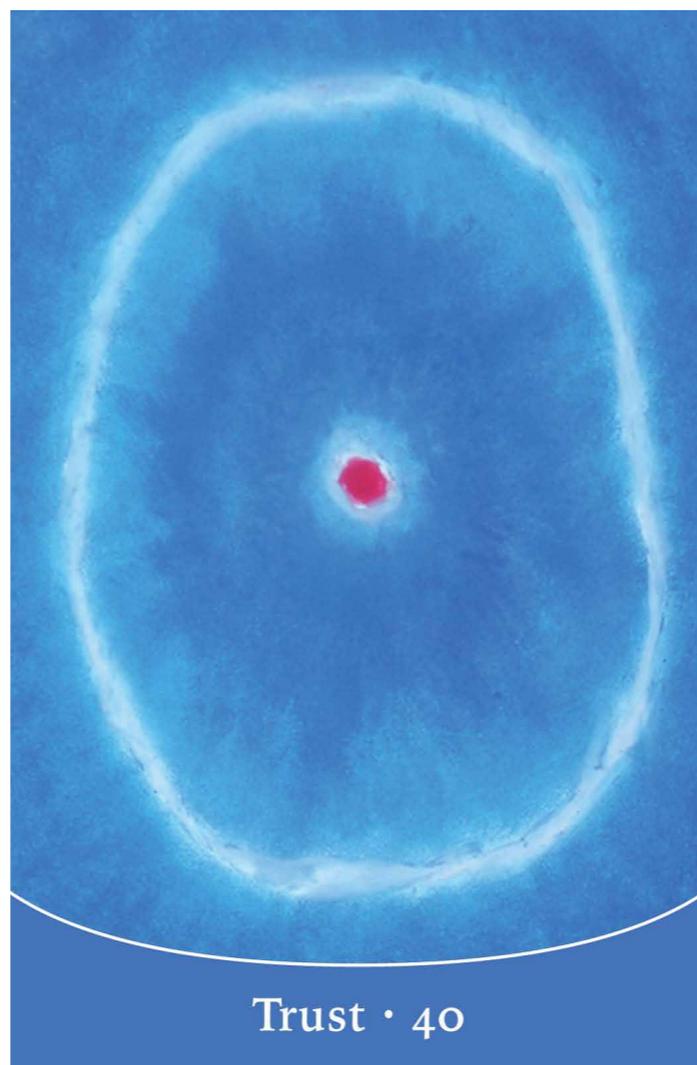
Have other groups of people responded positively to the Genesis cards?

At Sun and Moon Yoga, in Gotanda, Tokyo, the deeply intuitive studio owner Leza Lowitz is now incorporating Genesis Art into her Restorative Yoga Teacher Training course. “It’s a great way for my students to connect to their own creative processes and to make new connections between life events and circumstances that they might not have linked beforehand. The Genesis Cards are truly transformational.”

Finally, do you feel that you yourself have evolved through Genesis Art?

The discovery of Genesis Art and motherhood happened so close together in the late 1990s that my children, my husband Aki and I have grown up discovering Genesis Art together. We live in a small house. Our art studio is more times than not our kitchen table. The art supplies are in evidence everywhere, an easel here, a can of paintbrushes there, all squashed together with the school books and the dog’s cage. Doing art offers us all a way of stretching out of our normal routine and spending peaceful time together. Conversation flows easily and the Gene-

sis Cards add a dimension of fun and excitement to the process of finding new things we share in common. Seeing these connections every day can be quite hard when we are all in motion and



commotion, but sitting down together around the table drawing or painting is centering and calming, like sharing creative hugs. Seeing my children’s rich inner life expressed in beautiful colours becomes a reassurance that all is well. And when at times the art is a bit out of whack, hinting at inner disturbances, their art reaches me like a cry to initiate conversation in a direction I hadn’t previously thought about. Genesis Art takes us to the heart of the intuitive process—to let go of expectations and relax while our creativity and intuition work together to deliver the deeper meaning.



The Genesis Cards,
published in Japanese and English edi-
tions, come with a guidebook that offers
a variety of creative exercises, layouts,
and inspirational messages that replace
self-imposed beliefs about our artistic
limitations. [Kyoto Journal readers can
purchase this deck for a limited time for
¥3,000 (\$30) and receive international
mailing for free]. To find out about up-
coming Genesis Art introductory sessions
or longer retreats, visit
www.geniescards.com or email Liane
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