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Unique Work by Canada's West Coast Artists

The extreme west coast is often characterized as the most “out there” edge of Canada and has become known internationally for artists of all sorts residing in the region and giving it their own particular flavour. They draw on life writing that explores what makes the west coast integral to their experiences, lifestyles and critical moments as artists residing in the far west, including the Gulf Islands, Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii. *Living Artfully* offers unique perspectives and insights to the interrelationship of creativity and geography. Passion for self-expression is closely allied with a desire to find a geographic place that respects and fosters both art and living.

Writers, visual artists, carvers and performers reflect on the private spaces of the arts – inner worlds and natural environments – and the public worlds of the arts – exhibiting, performing and sharing. In this collection, definitions of artist, artwork and artful are interpreted differently by contributors. They delve into the struggles and challenges as well as the joys and rewards of pursuing expression *out here* by asking: What critically creative moments have changed artists' lives? How does geography and place influence artistic expression? How do creative people prevail and thrive in a not-so-creatively oriented culture? Why is this place more meaningful than other places for so many artists?

The search for creative spaces where individuals find purpose and community has made the extreme west coast more than just a location; it has become known nationally and internationally for the rich arts opportunities and artists residing here. Contributors bring together in this collection a broad dialogue focusing on the personal and professional lives of artists. Their intention is to trace patterns of art and culture through narratives to inform contemporary understandings of Canadian culture.

This collection provides a rare insight into the ‘back stories’ that shape the everyday lives of contemporary artists, as such lives are evolving in Canadian society and as Canadian art and culture is maturing into a genre *uniquely* Canadian. This book offers a “road map” to living artfully, and to life writing by documenting and describing lived experiences. It is written in accessible language, and it will appeal to a general readership that includes individuals interested in life writing, autobiography, artists,



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artists' lives, contemporary writing, literary, visual and performance artists, and social and cultural expression. This anthology also extends to the arts and social sciences, including but not limited to areas of study that include Canadian Studies; Creative Writing; English; Education; Women's Studies; Social and Cultural History; Social Geography; Sociology, Visual Culture and/or Integrated Studies.

The volumes consists of four sections Earth, Wind, Fire and Water including forty four essays. Among the essays are:

- SACRED GROUND, SACRED HEART: A VIEW FROM WHALER BAY by Kit Grauer
- MY VICTORIA by Robert Amos
- WHO I AM, HERE by Mary Ann Moore
- THESE WORDS, THIS FARM, MY HEART: A JOURNEY OF LOVING INQUIRY by Ahava Shira
- THE AWAKENING OF THE ARTIST IN A YOUNG MAN by Adrian Dorst
- UNDERWATER STARS by Velcrow Ripper and Heather Frise

Editors & Contributors are available for appearances and interviews and can be reached through The Key Publicity, Heather Smith, e-mail: media@thekeypublish.com, Tel: 416-935-1790

About the Editors

A longtime resident of Canada's far west coast, **Anita Sinner** divides her time between Sooke and Montreal, where she is an assistant professor of art education at Concordia University. Her research interests include community art education, arts methods, relational aesthetics, life, and light writing and digital media. As an artist, researcher, and teacher, she brings interdisciplinary perspectives to social and cultural issues in education.

Christine Lowther is co-editor and co-author of *Writing the West Coast: In Love with Place* (Ronsdale Press) with Anita. She is also the author of *Half-Blood Poems: Inspired by the Stories of JK Rowling* (Zossima Press), *My Nature* (Leaf Press), and *New Power* (Broken Jaw Press). Her work has appeared in anthologies and periodicals including *subTerrain*, *Other Voices*, the *New Quarterly*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Poetry Is Dead*, *Walk Myself Home*, *Wild Moments: Adventures with Animals of the North* and on *Poetry in Transit*.



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Endorsements

"*Living Artfully: Reflections from the Far West Coast* is a compelling collection of love stories, full of wisdom and hope. In stories, ruminations, poetry, and art, the authors sing lyrically about their love for the islands they call home. Elemental and evocative, this book maps a complex geography of the heart by writing the earth with sensuous attentiveness."

~Carl Leggo, poet and professor, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

"To slip into *Living Artfully: Reflections from the Far West Coast* is to get swept away in the Tsunami of creative inspiration as these artists reach down for the wild coast inside of them. It is a vicarious journey into the magic where you'll meet a welcoming committee of wolves and a whale that literally glows with bioluminescence. Feel the longing as Gael Duchene seeks out the night and Libbie Morin confronts the blackening storm. Chuckle as they realize the true bargain of dispensing with "city goggles" as Michael Elcock agrees to help repair a roof and Michael Scott Curnes lures a lover away from mainland comforts. Savour the healing place in stories that bring poets Christine Lowther and Lisa Shatzky back to themselves and allow Keven Drews to take his own measure in his moving Letters to Dad."

~Erin McMullan is editor of *One Mush: Jamaica's Dogsled Team*,
Sambaa K'e Then and Now

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Editors' Q & A

1. What inspired you to write *Living Artfully*?

Although there is ample discourse on the arts in urban contexts, community, rural and remote artists have fewer forums for sharing their art-making, their points of view and in the process, their contributions to Canadian art and culture. This collection was inspired by our love of place as well as our recognition that there continue to be gaps in the conversations that define contemporary understandings of art, artists and geography.

2. What surprised you most while writing this book?

The absolute conviction and enthusiasm of the authors to the project, and their willingness to participate in the review process, promotion and advocacy, reflecting again their passion and commitment for this collection.

3. What were the challenges (research, literary, and logistical) in bringing this book to life?

The most challenging aspect was finding a publisher with the vision and mandate to support this project in the ways we were committed to fulfilling as co-editors and as a collective. The opportunity for writers to participate in a process that values their participation, contributions and their creative ideas is rare. As a result, the voices of the authors are rich, textured, even raw, and compelling.

4. What are the most important points that you would like readers to have gained and appreciate after reading your book?

The scope and depth of the collection is unique, weaving traditional domains of the arts, the academy and our relationships to geography together in ways that document and demonstrate evolving and emerging practices of Canadian art and culture. As a colleague recently commented, this is a collection in the folklore tradition, creating a record of how we inscribe ourselves in the places we call home.

5. Why is this book unique?

Few exemplars engage in questions of identity, geography and the arts from contemporary regional perspectives. Such conversations add to the breadth of our



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understandings of who we are and why we do the work we are compelled to undertake as artists.

6. What advice would you offer your readers so they can make the best of the out of the book?

This anthology is a collective space, a community of practice of emerging and established artists that offer their perspective on the arts (visual, literary and performative) and how the arts intersect with their experiences of the far west coast of Canada. The diversity of works include award-winning First Nations playwright and poet, Janet Rogers; Victoria-based painter and writer Robert Amos; internationally renowned artist Avis Rasmussen; Tofino's Mark Hobson; from Haida Gwaii, noted Canadian author Susan Musgrave; award-winning film maker Velcrow Ripper; and from the academy, professors actively involved in shaping the emerging field of arts research, including dancer and educator Celeste Snowber, professor emeritus Bill Zuk and many more.

7. What are the common features between the artists who participated in this volume?

This collection of life writing includes various forms of expression – essay, memoir, diary entries, visuals, and to a lesser extent poetry – with the aim of providing an intimate portrayal of what makes west coast geography integral to being an artist.



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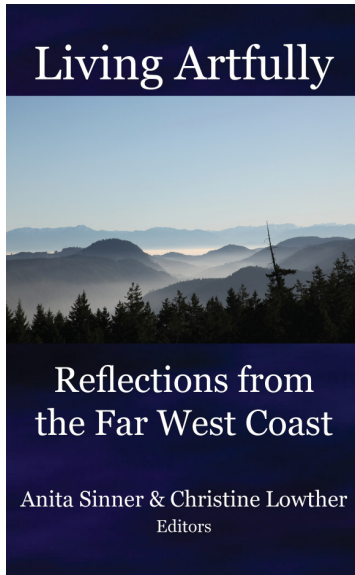
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Synopsis

The extreme west coast is often characterized as the most "out there" edge of Canada and has become known internationally for artists residing in the region and giving it their own particular flavor. *Living Artfully: Reflections from the Far West Coast* offers unique perspectives and insights to the interrelationship of creativity and geography through intimate portrayals about the lives of artists. Writers, painters, carvers, and performers reflect on the private spaces of the arts - inner worlds and natural environments - and the public spaces for exhibiting, performing and sharing. Artists delve into their life journeys, the struggles and challenges as well as the joys and rewards of pursuing expression out here. Forty-two emerging and established artists have contributed to this collection, including award-winning First Nations playwright and poet Janet Rogers; painter, writer, and arts advocate Robert Amos; internationally noted artists Avis Rasmussen and Mark Hobson; renowned author Susan Musgrave; award-winning film maker Velcrow Ripper; and from the academy, dancer and educator Celeste Snowber, professor emeritus Bill Zuk and many more voices that shape what it means to live artfully on the far west coast.

Contributors

Robert Amos, Greg Blanchette, Karen Charleson, Peter Cressey, Michael Scott Curnes, Robert Dalton, Adrian Dorst, Keven Drews, Gael Duchene, Michael Elcock, Mike Emme, David Floody, Heather Frise, Kim Goldberg, Kit Grauer, Keith Harrison, Melody Hessing, Mark Hobson, Wanda Hurren, Jan Janzen, Susan Kammerzell, Heather Kellerhals-Stewart, Shirley Langer, Bernice Lever, Christine Lowther, Sandra Gwynne Martin, Sharon McInnes, Mary Ann Moore, Libbie Morin, Susan Musgrave, Margaret Murphy, Avis Rasmussen, Roland Rasmussen, Velcrow Ripper, Janet Marie Rogers, Ahava Shira, Lisa Shatzky, Anita Sinner, Celeste Snowber, Joanna Streetly, Marla Thirsk, Johanna Vanderpol, Janine Wood, and Bill Zuk.