

2018 Melva Bucksbaum Dedication to the Arts Award
Isa Catto Acceptance Speech
Presented by 2017 Recipients Charmaine Locke & James Surls

Thank you Genna. It is such an honor to receive this award in a valley filled with wonderful artists to choose from. And—here's to our friends James and Charmaine who show up for artistic community at every turn and have tremendous generosity of spirit.

And thanks to all of the spectacular staff and volunteers at The Art Base and to my husband—I was lucky to marry another professional creative and that has made all the difference.

I promise I'll be brief. My father used to make this gesture when he thought anyone was speaking too long—so you know what to do if I ramble.

Anyone who is here tonight understands the importance of the Art Base and its mission, but we have a lot of work to do.

We are in a time when arts education is rarely a treasured part of learning and of the school curriculum. There is a clear and present danger of the arts being dismissed as peripheral, irrelevant or, as equally troubling, simply an accessory to the wealthy—instead of a necessity for a vibrant society.

Every artist, and anyone who is passionate about the arts, needs to champion them in every way possible, and we can start by showing up for each other as a cohesive community—locally and nationally. For example, we have to push back on the perception that local artists are sub-par or amateurs or that art is just for the super talented, or for the anointed art stars and their celebrants. We all belong.

I know the world would be a better place if we make more room for people to be creative, especially kids, and if we honor what my friend Marcia Butler calls the creative imperative. When anyone one of us creates anything, we lock into a narrative beyond the to do list, beyond class barriers, the endless labels and assumptions, the sinister allure of status and money, the distraction of our wretched national and global news.

Instead, you tap into a deeper world altogether and that vibration carries forward into your immediate environment and how you move through it. You become more curious, more authentic and you learn how to solve nonlinear problems. When you create, you have access to a vast subconscious plane—where you are reminded of your insignificance, along with your significance.

We need to nurture and celebrate these creative efforts—big AND small—for our collective spiritual health and the health of this planet. So, let's be advocates in every way we can by working to integrate the arts into every facet of our lives.

I am so grateful to places like the Art Base who hold this creative space for us all. Thanks again.

Colorado-based Artist Exhibitions
Anika Chapman
Senior at Roaring Fork Highschool

Hello everyone!

My name is Anika Chapman. Last year I had the opportunity to participate in the Claudette Carter ARTmentors program. This experience was one of the most amazing and meaningful experiences of my life. Through the art base, I was able to work with my mentor, Summers Moore, for five months, preparing me for the an art show here at the Art Base. Being selected for this program has meant the world to me.

I learned so much about myself as an artist in this program. My mentor and I worked together through the process of Concept, Creation, Curation and Exhibit. I discovered and was influenced by the art of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Vivian Maier. I visited museums and galleries with my mentor, I met many local artists, and I attended a painting class with Amy Beidleman here at the Art Base.

My work evolved, and so did I. I learned that art could be a platform to express not only beauty, but also my thoughts and feelings about the world. Over the course of 5 months I created 5 multi-media collage pieces, and had the amazing experience of having my work exhibited here at the Art Base.

This summer, I had the opportunity to take a collage and gouache class at Anderson Ranch thanks to a scholarship that I received through my participation in this program.

On Monday, I am starting my Senior Year at Roaring Fork High School. I am preparing my college applications and I am applying to art school in the fall. The subject of my college essay will be about my experience in the Claudette Carter ARTMentors Program.

I would like to thank all of you for supporting the Art Base. I am so grateful for the opportunities that this program has given me.

Art, Healing, and Hope

Elizabeth deWetter

Good evening. My name is Elizabeth de Wetter. I have lived in the valley for 9 years. The Art, Healing, and Hope class here at the Art Base has truly and positively shaped my life over the past 6 months.

Since I was young, I have loved creative expression, from musical instruments to singing to art to writing. But the way I did creativity as a child and adolescent is different in many ways than how I create now, and this is in huge part due to the work I've done with Sherri Gaynor, the expressive arts therapist who runs *Art, Healing, and Hope*. When I moved to CO at 11 years old, I was filled with anxiety and had no idea what to expect. I have many memories of my need for everything I did to be perfect, personally, academically, and creatively. My art of course followed this same pattern. I was so focused on perfection and attention to detail that I sometimes would choose not to draw, paint, or create something I knew I wouldn't be able to execute perfectly. Obviously, this hindered my creative process. I believed that there was no point in me making something if I couldn't do it perfectly and make it good enough that people would value it. Therefore, often I did not value my work because nothing is ever perfect. And when I did it was only after hours of obsession, erasing, and re-doing. Even then I'd be dissatisfied. It also meant that art was rarely a form of self-expression and more often just another activity I obsessed over to try to make perfect so I felt like things were okay, like I was okay, like I was good enough.

The difference between my art as a child and my art at age 20, is remarkable. Though I still find myself striving for perfection and obsess over the details at times I now ask myself, am I doing this for me or for someone else? I am learning to do more for me. *Art, Healing, and Hope* is helping me not over focus on the "right way" to make art, or the "right" way to be. Ultimately, though it isn't the point, I think this really helps the strength of my art.

What I have come to realize over the years, but most acutely since being a part of *Art, Healing, and Hope*, is how art is not just about creating something pretty that people will want to hang on their walls, rather it is an expression, and one of the deepest forms of expression we as humans possess, alongside music, dance, and writing to name a few. Art is not meant to be perfect and it is in fact the imperfections that make it more beautiful. *Art, Healing, and Hope* is never about who can paint the most "beautiful" picture, draw the most realistically, or make the "best" piece for me. It is about one's individual process through life's highs and lows. It's less about the end result than the process of making the piece.

Art, Healing, and Hope provides a community of people with whom I can be my honest, authentic self. I don't have to filter the positive and negative and show up in a particular way if that's not how I'm feeling. I can just be myself and that is so incredibly freeing. The group is consistently supportive, accepting, and validating and help me to know I am never alone in my struggles. It's okay to not be okay. What's not okay is to pretend everything is fine when it's not, because this hurts me and the people around me. Authenticity is key. Tears shed in a circle of loving people can be so healing because they increase connection and hope. Sherri holds such a tender space for us all to share, listen, and be heard.

To be perfectly honest, I would never have attended this class in the first place if it were not offered for free. As a working college student taking some time off from school due to a need to address my personal health, I don't have tons of expendable income to be spending on art classes, but when I heard about a free class I jumped on the opportunity, figuring I had nothing to lose by trying it out. Little did I know how much it would transform my life. Now that I see its amazing impact, I would be so much more likely to support it financially, but I realize that is not an option for all the participants. Obviously, you all recognize the value of art or you wouldn't be here tonight, but I urge you to continue supporting the Art Base for classes like this. Our community needs more opportunities for art, healing, and hope, and as the name suggests this class offers all three.

One of the greatest gifts I have been given by this class is another outlet to be able to process through emotions instead of stuffing them deep inside, ignoring them, fighting against them or getting consumed by them. The third month I attended this class was one of the most transformative experiences I had. As I was making my piece, tons of emotions began to surface. The biggest one was anger. Although I've come a long way in my relationship to anger, I still have to work on allowing myself to feel it and not pushing it away because I think it is unacceptable. Anger, just like all other emotions are always acceptable, what matters is how I relate to them. If we label emotions as good or bad, we hold ourselves back from having the complete human experience, unhindered by judgment. But during this particular class, I actually let myself feel. As the charcoal on my page spread over the paper, covering everything my wetted brush touched, I allowed the anger to rise up, and I kept breathing. Although some judgment and resistance came up, I just kept feeling instead of disassociating. Yes, I was terrified that the anger and host of other emotions would consume me. But after finishing my piece and talking about it with the other beautiful souls present in the room that day, I felt an odd calm. When I got in my car after class, I was okay. This was new. I didn't have a total meltdown or inability to cope with the rest of the day, rather I felt proud of myself for being able to feel and move through the feeling to the other side without getting trapped. This class was incredible for a number of reasons and showed me not only the power of art, but also my own strength, something I often struggle to recognize.

This class has opened a whole new method for healing, and one I didn't realize existed. The art I create now, because it comes out freely, without tons of judgment and editing, ends up being not only more beautiful but also more meaningful than something I might have previously spent hours painstakingly drawing and erasing to try to make "perfect". Making art brings out things I didn't know I felt, which is sometimes scary, but also so amazing. Sometimes we can't find the words to explain how we feel or describe what we think, but when I am given the space to create something with my hands using all kinds of paints, pencils, collage, and more and given the time to make what I want without imitations I feel I can truly express myself.

This class has been an indescribable gift. And although I can't speak for everyone else who has participated, I can say for sure that we are all healing together. Sherri is such a gift to this valley and has made a magnificent impact on my journey toward healing. This type of work saves lives. Art is healing and it is necessary. Just as we need air to breathe, we need art to heal.

