

GAHR FARM SPRING REVIEW

Title photo by Niek Bowen

Hello Family and Friends!

Spring has long sprung after a relatively mild Oregon winter. When the rain stopped we went outside to the new “Mom’s Deck” to enjoy the view or delve into a good read al fresco.



Elaine, Red Sea, Dad (Ted), Jesse, Thea on the new viewing perch.

The lawn has been staying a manageable length even with our warm wet spring weather. It’s a fun ride and we’ve seen a lot of Ti Gahr this spring as he’s resumed his mowing avocation. Ti states that for anyone who wants to ride, they’ll find the safety video informative for avoiding any mishaps. For the trails and the barn meadow, we still use the tractor and the big mower.



Ti on the new 22hp 48” John Deere riding lawn mower.

Recently, Dad did a photo shoot for an upcoming Nature Conservancy article with photographer Bruce MacGregor. We haven't seen those photos yet, but Jana Rofsky, quick with her camera, caught him standing in the rain waiting for his picture to be taken. <http://www.brucemacgregorphotography.com>



Abel, the amazing carpenter and remodeler, found wood to keep us warm for a while with a couple of loads of downed Douglas fir. It just needs a little splitting and stacking and we'll be all set for winter.



Our neighbor whose boundaries encircle the farm, The Nature Conservancy, is continuing their ecological restoration and monitoring efforts. This spring Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz headed a survey of Nelson's checkermallow (*Sidalcea nelsoniana*), a plant listed on the Federal and State Threatened Species List.

This spring we have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with Amy Halloran-Steiner, LCSW. She is exploring ways to use the natural setting of the farm for work with her clients. In addition, one of her aspirations is to work with youth groups utilizing the setting of the barn meadow fire pit (and the farm fireplace for those occasional Oregon rainy days.) Working with Amy is a continuation of education and retreat outreach efforts by the farm over the past 20 years.



The rainy days of Spring are a good time for introspective activities such as knitting, playing board games, reading books, sip-

ping hot beverages, and for some of the creative ones among us, writing poetry. Mary Bailey, Brian's mother, is a poet with sly hu-

mor. She and Mom (Harriet) were longtime friends and the Incahoots newsletter recently featured this poem in memory of her.

Harriet

*She called us the M&M's of Incahoots.
Said that's short for Mom and Mom
When inflating balloons and tying bows,
Our fingers became all thumbs.*

*She said "This is not in my line of expertise,
And my other life is calling me."
"I'm just a social butterfly,
That's really where I should be."*

*I never thought that on one day,
She would just up and fly away.
~Mary Bailey*

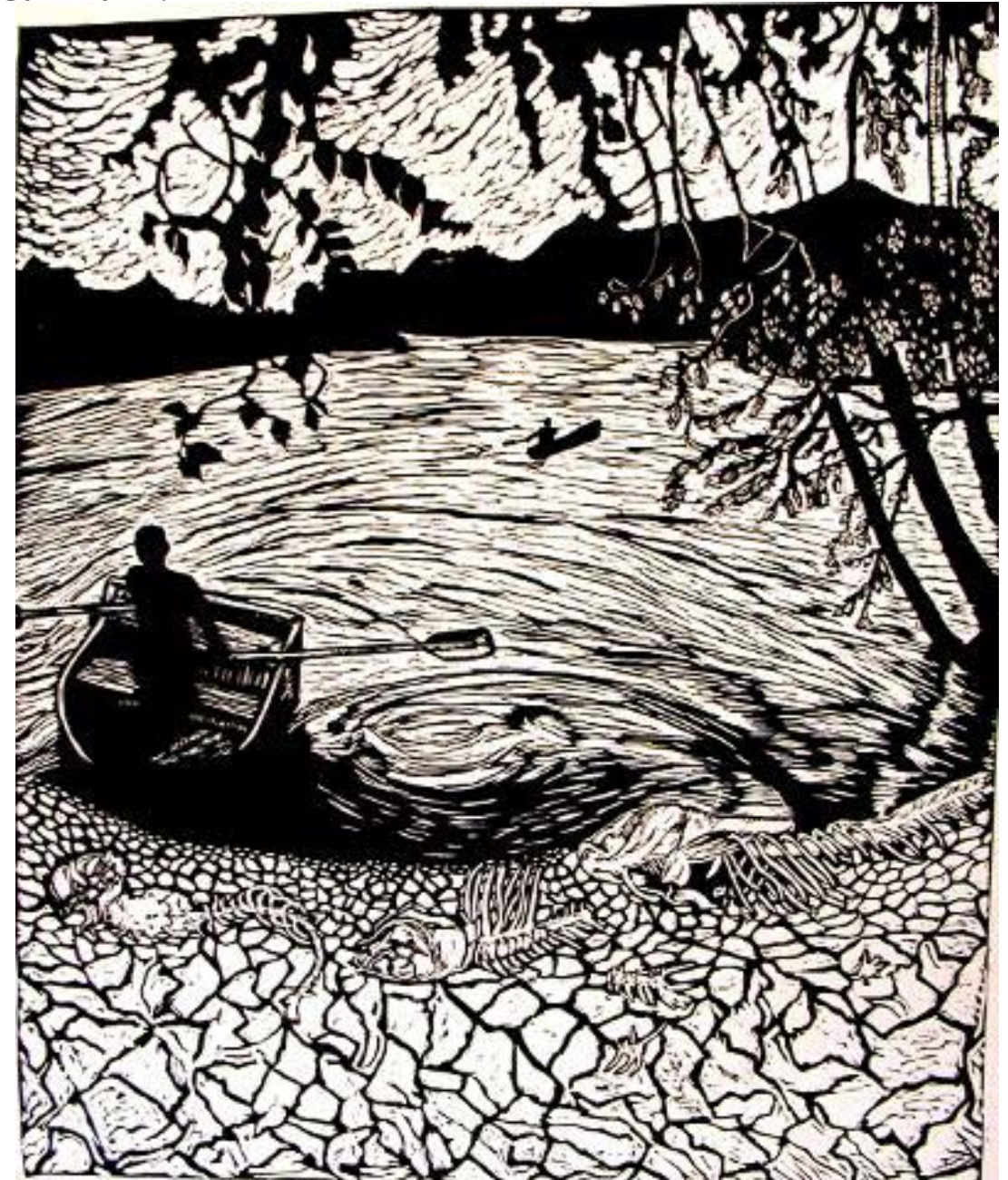


FEATURED ARTIST: THEA GAHR

The doors of The Gahr Farm have been blessed by the presence of many talented, interesting people from all walks of life - scientists, artists, writers, and many others. In this newsletter we will introduce some of these people, their work and its connections with The Gahr Farm.

Thea Gahr is the youngest of Ted and Harriet's 14 children. She has traveled extensively from Iceland to Australia, from Hawaii to Europe and throughout North America. Last fall she spent a month in Sarajevo.

I interviewed Thea on April 8th 2012 on the beautiful newly-christened "Mom's Deck." Thea, who I have dubbed the Gahr Farm Artist in Residence, and I had a nice chat in the sunshine.



Social Justice and environmental art.

THEA GAHR



The roots of this work in striving to make the world a better place are based on her home at the Gahr Farm. The farm has directly been a source of inspiration for her work as seen in the piece "Conversation."

Thea believes that the environment and social justice are intertwined and she traces her views back to growing up on the farm. When she was in her teens, the Farm was worked by tenant farmers and the soil was depleted. Later, the farm was placed in a conservation easement and the wetlands were created. It was then that she started understanding the role

of water and soil. As the wetlands filled with water, animals came and she watched the miracle of the land coming back to life. She has seen how just one person's actions can be beneficial. "We cannot remove humans from the solution to heal the land," Thea believes, "humans' capacity to heal and help the process is critical."



Another piece "Transformation," was inspired by a juvenile buzzard that visited the farm for a few days and was nicknamed "Buzzie" by Ted. "Transformation" refers to the way in which buzzards transform decayed lifeless matter by breaking it down and using it to nourish life.

"Art is already powerful, and if rooted in a social movement it is an effective tool for mobilizing and informing people. Art is a tool to be used as propaganda, inform, decorate, and inspire. It's one tool of many but it can be a way to fight against a blind accepting society of social norms that have been damaging to the emotional and mental well-being of great masses of people. It is a fight for diversity and creativity in a world that is more and more homogeneous."

-THEA GAHR



Thea feels that social issues are interconnected with care for the environment. What is good for some is not good for all, but people can find solutions and work together.

Although she is a true global traveler, Mexico and the farm have been the two anchors for her work. Encountering Mexico, she said she felt that her soul was filled. She has traveled all over Mexico and has been touched by the beauty of the people and how living a creative life cultivates respect and dignity while struggling against the classism and racism that is prevalent. She found that this way of life was in contrast to her feeling that many in the United States live homogenized consumer-based lives.

When in Mexico, Thea lives in a small collective that runs an autonomous school. She loves the lifestyle there where everyone pitches in to create meals and participates in a family way. She said the overall cultural template was the same as the Gahr family - one of working together, caring for and helping each other.

Thea's work has supported the Climate Change Caravan, Migration issues, the Colima Mangrove Ecology project and illustrated a scientific text on Mangrove ecology.

I asked her how she felt about the fact that the radical art of the collective in Mexico and the Just Seeds artist cooperative may be labeled as propaganda and in fact may turn off more moderately inclined people. She freely stated that this work is propaganda and working within that tradition is a tool of social change. She feels that even though there's a lot of "preaching to the choir," it's an attempt to balance out the counter-extreme message of consumerism and hyper-capitalism. In a way, it might be considered an antidote to the fear-based living that has seized so many communities in the U.S. She said their work was well-received by participants of the Cancun Climate Change Conference. In an interview with Melanie Maddison of Aorta Magazine, Thea explained her view on the place of her art: <http://www.aortamagazine.com/blog/women-of-just-seeds/>



Both of Thea's parents have supported her in her work. Her mom was a real source of inspiration and as an artist, Harriet had a working knowledge of how color, light and shadow affect a piece and offered her critique and guidance. She also inspired Thea by telling her if you can do one thing well, you can do many things well and firmly declared that "our job is to be ourselves and that is our gift to the world.

During the last year of her mom's life, Thea said she learned that you sometimes have to fight to be yourself and she learned that loving another was often in the details. She has found herself loving the quiriness of each person and often the thing that most defines a person is what they themselves do not appreciate - but it is what makes her cherish them. She loved her mom for her hugs, her ability to be fully present in the moment, for being feisty and loving at the same time, and for being opinionated and open at the same time.