

THE WONDROUS NEARER DREW: CELEBRATING EMILY DICKINSON

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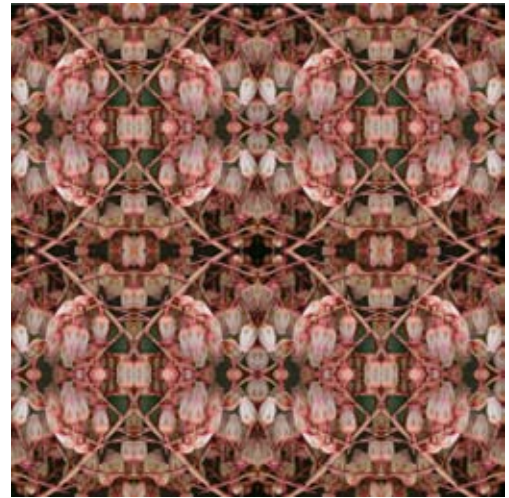
I sometimes feel I am leading life on two planes: one as an artist always looking at the world for inspiration and the other as a person living life on its own terms. For a long time, Emily Dickinson has been a part of my life as a person. Spending time with her poems has brought a respite from this busy world and a connection with a deeper reality. Her place in my artwork is more recent.

The Emily Dickinson Series brings my personal love of Emily's poems into my work as an artist. The first piece of the series came as a departure and a surprise. I think of the quote from Picasso: "Je ne cherche pas; je trouve./ I don't seek; I find." After many years of working on wordless sculptural artists books made from natural materials, I was revisiting my beginnings as a visual artist with a renewed attraction to hand-lettering and the word. A trip to Korea gave me a new excitement about color and the time I spent on the computer with the photographs I took there awakened an interest in experimentation with Photoshop.

On a crisp mid-April day in 2008, I took a photograph of our pink pieris shrub for the invitation to our annual May Day party. When I brought the image into the computer, I played around with cropping and then duplicating and rotating. I found myself with a kaleidoscopic square. Several lines from Dickinson's poems had continued to echo in my mind long after reading. One was "The wondrous nearer drew" from poem 93. The words and image seemed to be a perfect pairing both because of an inner sense of connection and because the poet was such a devoted gardener and lover of the natural world. I lettered the line with my brush cartridge pen, scanned it into the computer, and integrated it into the image.

After "The wondrous nearer drew", I took more photographs of flowers and read through all the poems in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* edited by Thomas H. Johnson. I concentrated on the individual lines rather than the meaning of the poems. I avoided all lines that had a sense of color, season, or object. It was important to me that the flower image not compete with or be an illustration of the words. I chose lines that I felt captured the beauty, freshness and mystery of her language—words to savor and hold onto. The flowers were found in gardens (mine, friends', and on garden tours) and in meadows and along roadsides. All are from Emily Dickinson's home state of Massachusetts.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IMAGE



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