

A Special World For Young Writers and Artists

"Another World: Poetry & Art by Young People from the Poetry Studio"

Ann Gengarely, Tony Gengarely, eds., Luminare Press, 2021.

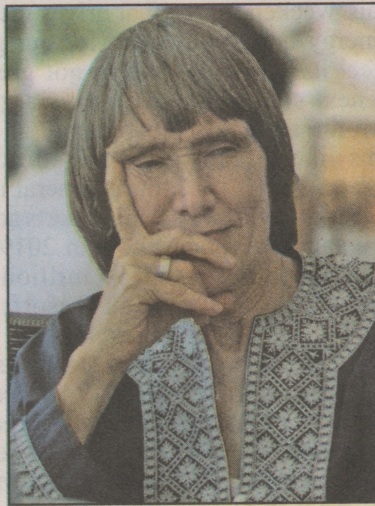
The Poetry Studio, which has nurtured the talents of the young people whose work appears in this splendid anthology, flourishes at Ann and Tony Gengarely's property in Marlboro. The Poetry Studio opened its doors to young people ages 5 through 17 in 1995, and it has offered after-school and summer programs ever since. The Gengarelys have made the studio a center, a gathering place where one can center down. The children enter through beautiful gardens, meet to discuss poems, and then scatter, weather permitting, among trees, flowers, and ponds, to write down their thoughts in ways that are both beautiful and evocative. If they have difficulty expressing their thoughts, they can ask Ann Gengarely or Trey Wentworth, the studio's longtime assistant, to share a nuanced dialogue that encourages them to find their way. Similarly, they start in on their drawings and books with materials that are always at hand; when asked, Wentworth shows them ways of developing perspective, collage applications or original bindings.

The result of this gentle guidance is poetry and art created by young people who have learned to look at, listen to, and love the world around them from the vantage point of a safe place. As 10-year-old Hannah Christensen's title poem describes the Poetry Studio: "This must be another world/far from the blood and the violence/sheltered from pain and death./Poppy, scarlet chalice/can have nothing to do with our blood-stained newsprint./...and the daylilies,/tender golden trumpets/do not voice/the harsh call of war."

Samuel Garbarino, 7, is aware of the same contrast between the garden and the world: "Poetry is like love armies/that hold off the dark./ If poetry is locked/in a dark trap,/the world will turn black." In the studio, words are not dangerous or critical, they are flowers. As Erin LeBlanc, 12, puts it, "What if every flower bloomed a word?/ What if each stalk was a sentence?/What would you hear with your eyes?"

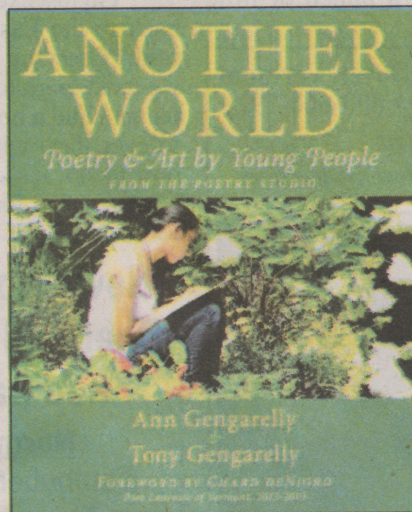
Paging through the anthology's poems, the reader constantly finds images whose understanding leaps off the page.

For example, Ellie Friends, 13, asks the little pine she addresses: "Teach me to love the stone/that blocks my path." In the same mode, Tess Bogart, 8, asks her special angel for affec-



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tion and smiles, but concludes, "When I'm angry,/put a flower in my heart." Difficulties from the "real" world receive the same careful attention as the flowers and trees in the studio's gardens.

Frida Rosner, 12, says "The wise man was wrong./The crack in my heart only grew./The place in between is a city of sadness,/an oasis of happy memories dissolving in a pool of my tears."

Claire Holmes, 12, reflects, "Last November, I saw my doubt in a wolf's body./He turned his head sharply,/eyes an icy blue/and thick, gray fur, soft like wings./Then he ducked under the trees,/tail nodding in the wind./But I still see him dawdling/in the throat of my mind."

Much of the art displayed here complements poems. In "Siberian Elm," by Rhys McGovern, 16, the haiku is part of a book page in which delicately drawn trees enhance the poem. In other cases, like "Reflection," by Maia Castro-Santos, 12, a self-portrait illustrates the poem. Most striking in its contrast of worlds is Ella Bathory-Peeler's title page, "Defiled by Society," a collage of newspaper headlines of tragedies, political events, and threats in which Ella's title is almost lost.

"Another World" is beautifully illustrated with original art and photographs of young people curled up amid the flowers in the Gengarelys' gardens, but it is a great deal more than a pretty book. It is a testimony to the talents of children who know what it is to "listen as carefully/as a deer listening/for a rustle of leaves" (Louisa Eichelberger, 5). These children have learned to describe what they have heard and felt

with confidence in their ability to create art that others will see and understand.

This anthology should find a place in every public school and every public library in the regular world where fear, violence, and simple inattention obscure the quiet sounds that young people hear and care for.