

David Walker
Tech Homage (Leave Your Device at the Door)
Cell phones, iPods and various materials

Marshall McLuhan said, "We shape our tools and afterwards they shape us."

It is so interesting to step out of our culture and look at our obsession with electronic media. The internet has only been a fixture of our daily lives since 1993. Yet, how many of us can imagine functioning in the world today without the internet and all the gadgets that 'connect' us? We have some idea about what digital technology means for our economies and our daily lives, but what does it mean for us?

There has been a rapid evolution of language. New words have entered our vocabulary: google, facebook, texting, YouTuber, skype, facetime, twitter, selfie, selfie stick, blog, HD, laptop, emoji, jpeg, email, e-transfer... Now, huge amounts of electronic data are being generated around the world at a rate that doubles roughly every 18 months; data storage alone is a multi-billion dollar industry - data generated by human/technology interface.

What happens to our humanity in a digital age? Spanish Sociologist Manuel Castells calls it "a state of informed bewilderment". Petter Neby, founder of Swiss consumer electronics company Punkt says, "I think the 'always on' life is probably even worse than having a poor diet. Every day we are consuming more trash, and becoming more detached from real life and the ability to deal with situations head-on. Just look around, it's a disaster - and the sociological issue of our times."

When you enter a home, you take off your coat and shoes and leave them by the door. Can you put down your phone, tablet, or Mp3 player? Are there times or circumstances that we should set aside to be technology-free? Can you ditch your smart phone when you're on holiday so you don't spend it staring at a screen? For some, just considering this evokes feelings of both terror and liberation. Neby believes "This is about taking back your life, it's serious stuff."

"Marie-Laure imagines the electromagnetic waves traveling into and out of Michel's machine, bending around them. Just as Etienne used to describe, except now a thousand times more crisscross the air than when he lived - maybe a million times more. Torrents of text conversations, tides of cell conversations, of television programs, of e-mail, vast networks of fiber and wire interlaced above and beneath the city, passing through buildings, arcing between transmitters in Metro tunnels, between antennas atop buildings, from lampposts with cellular transmitters in them, commercials for Carrefour and Evian and prebaked toaster pastries flashing into space and back again. I'm going to be late and Maybe we should get a reservation? And Pick up avocados and What did he say? And ten thousand I miss yous, fifty thousand I love yous, hate mail and appointment reminders and market updates, jewelry ads, coffee ads, furniture ads flying invisibly over ever shifting landscapes we call nations." (From All The Light We Cannot See, by Anthony Doerr)

Tina Lindegaard
Altar of My Truth
Found and reused materials

When I began to consider the possibilities of creating an altar, I understood that it was important for me to draw my inspiration from my life, from the events and people that have touched me deeply along the way and, more importantly, why this was so.

As I was processing my thoughts and ideas, I ended up chipping away at the 'noise', the distractions, and the piece quickly moved from a broad, platonic interpretation to a more intimate and honest representation of what has shaped my truth and why. Quite unexpectedly, I found myself faced with my very exposed and vulnerable underbelly and, as unsettling as that may be, it is also the power of the piece and ultimately liberating.

I have created my altar using specific items or curiosities that have profoundly affected the way I conduct myself in my life. It is an eclectic collection of stuff, my stuff, seeped in history and significance and representative of what I understand about myself in relation to everything else.

This altar is an artistic offering of my truth, to be interpreted in accordance with each of our own set of diverse experiences or milestones. This is how we come to the ever changing and evolving truth of our lives. We all have it, shaped by what we have lived, endured and celebrated to this point in the journey, and always intertwined with everyone and everything we meet along the way.

Estée Sylvester

Bottoms Up

Ink, glass, metal, wood, mortar and a variety of found materials

With this piece, I was hoping to take the lid off, so to speak, and examine this standard porcelain delight that we all ritually visit and leave offerings to daily. Within modern history some cultures such as the Maori believed that excrement was the food of the gods, and thus the toilet would be a good place to find the gods.

In one Japanese tradition, the toilet god is a blind man with a spear who sits in the biffy. One was to cough before entering the bathroom so the blind man would know to sheath his spear.

Thank goodness things are different in our culture. We are very quiet about the privy. However, we have had so much experience visiting this space that I am pretty darn sure we have developed our own traditions. As a child I remember being afraid of the toilet and every day I would flush and run out as fast as I could! (Images of being sucked into the swirling water or toilet demons reaching up to grab me from the outhouse's darkness come to mind.) My father recalls his brothers using it as a space of refuge to hide from dinner dishes. Some use it as a place of solitude, a place to read a chapter...or two. Others might scroll through Facebook, write an email, text, make a phone call, drink a tea or even a beer. So, I've built my personal altar to the toilet gods as an offer of conversation and humor and thanks for their blessings of continued abundance, because sometimes one can't find a pot to piss in anywhere.

Coreen Tucker

Heart Space

Wooden bench and stones

Altars bring me to a place of center and connection. A visual bridge to the sacred and a reflection of my present intention.

They are an ever changing beauty created according to what is flowing in, through and around me. An extension of the expression within my Spirit.

Mas Matsushita

Hotokesan á la Mas

Local cedar, raku fired roof tiles, commercial ceramic tile, and a commercially made Buddha statue.

"Hotokesan," (pronounced, 'hoe-toe-keh-sun') is a Japanese term for a shrine/altar that is commonly found in Japanese homes. It is used to honour and celebrate: 1) family members who have passed and 2) special religious and cultural events throughout the year. It is also my understanding that most 'Hotokesans' are dedicated to Buddhism.

In this piece I've incorporated actual items from family members and my artistic interpretation of what a modernized 3rd generation Japanese-Canadian "Hotokesan," would be in 2015 . . .

This piece has been created mostly from my childhood memories of Hotokesans at various relatives' and friends' places. The woodworking portion of this shrine is dedicated to my father, as one of his trades was a cabinetmaker. Just two years before my mother's passing, a revelation in my life was the discovery that she was a practicing Buddhist. It had been my mother's salvation and how she coped with the Internment and the stresses within her life. She had kept this a secret from my sister and I all this time. Therefore, I dedicate the Buddha symbolism to my mother.

Enjoy!

Mas.

Mieke Blommestein
Honoring Women
Gypsona, plaster of Paris, alginate, cotton balls, water

Love, Honor, and Respect All Women

I invite you to come with me on a journey to love, honor, and respect all women.

Great Spirit, I am Mother.
I was made by You so that the image of Your love
Could be brought into existence.
May I always carry with me
The sacredness of this honor.

Creator, I am Daughter.
I am the learner of the Traditions.
May I carry them forward
So that the Elders and Ancestors
Will be remembered for all time.

Maker-Of-All-Things, I am Sister.
Through me, may my brothers be shown
The manner in which I am to be respected.
May I join with my sisters in strength and power as a Healing Shield
So that they will no longer bear the stain of abuse.

I am Woman.
Hear me,

Women who love, when no love is
returned,
Thank you.
Women who share their stories and pass
them forward,
Thank you.
Women who carry their children and wipe
their tears,
Thank you
Women who love their beauty and are
able to share,
Thank you.
Women who heal the wounds of others
with love and compassion,
Thank you.
Women who raise and feed their children
with honor and pride,
Thank you.
Women who show the strength of love and
power,
Thank you.

Women who love themselves enough to
speak their truth,
Thank you.
Women who lost but gained inner
strength to let go
Thank you.
Women who dance and sing their song of
honesty,
Thank you.
Women who strive for balance and
equality
Thank you
Women who give unconditional love,
Thank you.

In honor of you all
We honor you.
Thank you.

J. I. Rogers

Cedar Spirit House

Recycled cedar stump, recycled cedar lumber, and a reclaimed cedar branch.

Handmade pottery, raven feathers and other 'found or repurposed' treasures.

For the show *Altars, Shrines and Curiosities*, I wanted to create a distinctly North American version of the *Spirit House*.

What is a Spirit House? In every culture, Spirit Houses take the form of a miniature house, abode or a temple, mounted on a pillar, on a dais or site of significance. Its function is to provide appropriate shelter for spirits, away from human dwellings. These shrines often include images of people, animals, or votive offerings to please these spirits. More elaborate installations include may include an altar for this purpose.

To accomplish my vision, I not only sought recycled local materials for its construction but for the internal elements as well. While the Thai version was the original spark of inspiration for this project, I discovered as I completed the main form that I couldn't ignore my love of the mythological or Faerie worlds. The scribing and spirals that adorn the outer shell are a personal tribute to those aspects.

What emerged, is what you see here.

Andrew Stacey
Railway Shrine
Steel, salvaged railway track components, enamel paint, fir timbers

I've been working for CP Rail as a Conductor and Locomotive Engineer for over 12 years, 10 of those in Revelstoke, where the steep winding grades and remote terrain make for some of the most challenging railroading in the world. Many of my co-workers, myself included, have superstitions and unique fears about our jobs as we embark on each 'tour of duty' since there are so many variables in each trip and many things that can go horribly wrong. There is also a history of ghosts and/or malevolent spirits that inhabit the valley east of Revelstoke and along the right of way. Additionally, I think we all feel Murphy is a full time employee and that the Train Gremlins are real; we just haven't caught any yet.

I do not consider myself a member of any rigidly defined faith or religion and yet I do have an avid interest in spirituality, religions in general and intangible forces that we may not recognize or understand. Therefore I felt it was important to melt many elements of our different faiths and religious based iconography into this project.

Before I began I envisioned the kind of road or trail side shrine one might find in the Andes or Himalayan Mountains for travelers to make an offering or say a prayer for safe travels. This shrine needed a deity or being to embody the spirit of the Railway God so I looked to Hindu Deities from India with their multi-armed menacing powers to affect our lives. I like the calm structure of the Zen or Buddhist pagoda's from Japan with their air of meditative stability. The pyramidal top with integral bell is drawn from our Canadian history tied so intimately with the country church steeple of early Christian settler's, once a common sight in every community along the rail line. Lastly, because I do think numbers have power, the number seven (7 pillars) of the Jewish faith representing creation, good fortune and blessing. It is my attempt at a non-denominational multicultural edifice for making an offering, making a wish, saying a prayer to the Railway Gods, to connect myself and my co-workers in an intangible way.

The entire structure is constructed out of used railway scrap save a couple of items that had to be included for structural or esthetic reasons. I'd like to extend my gratitude to our local Revelstoke CP Rail Management that allowed me access to the materials to construct this project. I'd also like to thank Krista Stovel for spearheading this project and donating the silver chafing dish which I feel is reminiscent of the silver service that used to be available on the Dominion and Canadian passenger rail trains that for many years connected the peoples of Canada.

Cherie Van Overbeke

Altar of Painted Stones

Found stones, acrylic paint and shadow box

Each painted stone represents a piece of me. Some are wishes, some are promises and some are memories. This piece is my own personal altar. I will look at the stones and reflect. They are reminders of my past, my present and my future. I can add a stone or take one away. Like me, it is always changing.