

## Winter 2022 Cover Artist Susie deVille

### Question and Answer

#### ***When did you and Art fall in love? + Was there an a-ha moment or did it naturally grow?***

I grew up in Highlands, which I consider to be one of the most beautiful places in the world, and, therefore, was very fortunate to have been surrounded by Beauty from the very beginning of my life. I was also blessed with parents who continually conveyed their profound appreciation and respect for Art--whether made by Nature or made by human hands.

As a child, I was primed to pay attention to the alchemical power of Art, and so when I began making my own discoveries through playing in the woods, reading literature and poetry, going to museums to see works of art, viewing handmade artifacts, listening to music, and going to performances, I recognized the feelings of reverence and enchantment I experienced as familiar. Consequently, I paid very close attention to what the artist was doing or had done and the effect it had upon me.

I remember reading Steinbeck's *The Pearl* over the course of a Saturday, holed up in my room, when I was about fourteen years old. I can still feel the electricity of his prose course through my body and shake me with his layers of metaphor. I had always loved reading, but that was the moment I was powerfully aware of how an author could take you on a journey to the depths of your soul and reveal yourself to you by focusing your attention on imagery with universal themes. Similarly, my heart shattered into a million pieces when I turned the last few pages of Rawls' *Where the Red Fern Grows*. Steinbeck, Rawls, and countless other writers reached out through their books, motioned me over to their table, and suggested I sit down and try this world of writing myself.

#### ***How did Art show you that being an author, entrepreneur coach, and artist was your true calling?***

While the power of Art has been revealing itself to me my entire life, a catalytic moment was in 2006 in an Innovation & Creativity class that was part of my masters in Entrepreneurship program. We watched a *Nightline* episode which featured the Palo Alto design firm, IDEO, and their design thinking process.

As I watched the film, my eyes darted back and forth trying to take in every detail, every comment, as if I were experiencing REM sleep with my eyes wide open. And then one of the design leads said, "Enlightened trial and error succeeds over the planning of the lone genius."

The top of my head came off.

Concrete, gathered onto the surface and soul of me over the course of thirty-nine years, cracked in racing fissures through the gray matter that hid my authentic self. Chunks of limiting beliefs,

small and fearful thinking, gathered from a lifetime of listening to how others thought I should live, calved from my core and hit the floor.

His comment perfectly captured what had me in such a trance of excitement over how IDEO worked and created. You don't have work under the knives of judgment. You don't have to go it alone. You can experiment and play in a group of innovative, fun people and solve things together. The way to your best creativity was to be wild, bold. Unapologetically yourself. Your voice and vision mattered. You can positively impact the world, one idea, one person at a time.

I left that class, vowing to learn everything I could about innovation and creativity. Soon thereafter, I launched the first iteration of the Innovation & Creativity Institute (ICI) and have been researching creativity and working with clients over the last 15 years. In 2015, I began a deep journey into art making and writing.

Little by little, I learned how to see, recover my creativity, and finally disbelieve the lie that I was not an artist. As I developed my skills, I changed the ICI curriculum once more, reflecting the lessons in art making I was experiencing. With each new creativity course, whether it is a course in abstract painting or a class teaching the art of cooking sublime French sauces, I take each insight and enhance and expand how I think, experience the world, coach, and teach. An ever-evolving, delicious process of becoming that benefits my entrepreneur clients and readers.

***Name a few photography inspirations/mentors.***

I became interested in photography through my dad's fascination with capturing images. I had a Brownie camera growing up and took a ton of really awful photos. We'd drop the film at the pharmacy on Main Street and pick up the prints a week or so later. Even though the pictures I made were truly terrible, Dad continued to encourage me. He gave me pointers on how to frame my subject and remarked about the power of cropping a scene in your mind so that you and the viewer would see something compelling. Little by little, I began to understand how to direct my point of view in a way that excited me and prompted new ways of seeing and appreciating even the most seemingly mundane objects.

Bill Cunningham, who was a fashion photographer for the *New York Times*, is my favorite photographer. I just loved who he was as a person, his spirit, his joie de vivre. He rode his bicycle all over the city in pursuit of capturing compelling street style, grinning away, disarming his subjects, and telling the ever-evolving stories of what was happening in the American fashion scene through his images.

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***Have you studied other art mediums?***

In addition to writing and photography, I enjoy abstract painting (acrylics and watercolor), sketching, mixed media work, and collage. I credit local architect, musician, and artist, Knight Martorell, for being my introduction to the world of sketching and watercolor. I am indebted to The Bascom and him for easing me into those forms of art making with such thoughtfulness and fun. I have also taken art classes in Florida, Taos, and Europe as well as online. I love cooking and have taken culinary classes in Paris. I will travel to Provence next year to attend a cooking school held at Julia Child's former summer home. There, we will learn how to "cook from the hip" *sans* recipe.

***Are other members of your family artists?***

My dad was the consummate Entrepreneur-Artist-Engineer. A ceramic engineer with an MBA from Harvard, he was captivated by the verdant, ancient Appalachian Mountains and chose to open the Stone Lantern on Highlands' Main Street in 1960. From the day he opened the shop until the day he died, he spent his life dedicated to seeking, creating, and sharing Beauty and Art with his family and his customers. He could pick up a piece of antique Japanese porcelain and tell you when it was made, the properties of the glaze, and details on the culture which gave rise to it. Every item in his shop had a story to tell, and he revelled in teaching customers and sparking their passion and interest. He created a Zen atmosphere in the shop, down to the most minute detail. It was his canvas, his playpen, his source of unending joy and delight. He lived his life as a work of Art, knowing precisely what and who he loved, and immersing himself in what brought him alive. He spent his mornings in his studio, making the most stunning ikebana arrangements, some of which were three or four feet tall or more. He loved being in his studio, wearing a tattered, navy apron, making beautiful things to share.

***Have you entered your photos in shows or competitions (other than the Laurel challenge)?***

This was my first competition.

***Describe your process. Do you enjoy the planning and problem solving the most? Or what's your biggest thrill in the process . . .the finished product?***

Whether I am on a hike in the woods, on a stroll in a city, stirring a sauce, journaling, or standing in front of a work of Art, I am always noticing Beauty and letting it completely take me over. Doing so fills me with a zinging energy and inspiration for creating. I then want to share that inspiration and joy through my art, writing, and work with entrepreneur clients and readers.

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I am most interested in the exchange of energy that results in a transformational experience by the person who is engaging with my work. Whether through photography, my coaching work with entrepreneurs, writing, sketching, collage or painting, my goal is to take someone on a voyage, an odyssey of self-discovery and adventure, that leads to liberation.

Ultimately, I want to help people release what is not their true nature and embrace what brings them alive. From there, we gain agency over our lives and enjoy the beginnings of essential clarity that powers our ability to articulate who we truly are, what we love, and to whom we want to be a heroine. We come to grasp the essential changes we want to see in the world, and how we may catalyze them into existence.

As entrepreneurs, we become a magnet to our ideal markets when we have put ourselves back at the helm of our own lives, and fiercely protect our creative energy and boundaries. From there, we find the success and freedom we so desperately seek--and are indelible in the minds of our ideal clients.

My first book, which will be published in 2022, is written for entrepreneurs who are painfully stuck and riddled with self-doubt. They believe the path to success and freedom is through more productivity, better management, and strategies. They may not realize that the easier path to what they seek is by getting to the gut of who they are through reclaiming their inspired creativity.

My mission is to set entrepreneurs free so that they may feel endless, renewable joy and are empowered and clear to create, articulate, and realize the indelible impact they want to have in the world.

***Are you attracted to certain shapes/tones/colors? I noticed you have a super grasp on contrast.***

I find abstract art, which tends to be filled with bright colors and geometric shapes, to be uniquely compelling and energizing. I also love the soft, subtle, organic world of Asian art in all its forms. I am in love with artists' sketchbooks and inventors' notebooks which reveal on their pages a person's thinking during a moment in time. I love witnessing someone working through ideas and challenges and solving problems as they reach toward new understanding as well as new ways of seeing and connecting dots.

Contrast appeals to me as differences excite us, fill us with appreciation, wake us up. We can come to understand what it is we want by knowing clearly what it is we do not want. We learn who and what we love by experiencing things that dull or deaden us. We turn more toward our own True North through the edges of contrast.

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***Do you wake up with ideas in your head and can't wait to get started?***

I am a morning person and wake up at an hour most consider to be insanely early, between 3 and 4 am. The morning hours are rich with the ability to touch a part of your subconscious, and I love what I create during those golden hours. Ideas rush out of the ether during that time.

Most days, after I work for several hours, I take a hike with Sophie, my golden retriever, and bring along my journal. Walking in the woods completely fills the well for me and is a way to capture a second wind of inspired creativity. If you spot me on a trail, most likely you'll see me jotting down an idea in my notebook or pointing my camera toward something that has stopped me in my tracks.

### ***How do you want people to get in touch with you?***

I would love for folks to visit [InnovationandCreativityInstitute.com](http://InnovationandCreativityInstitute.com), learn more about how the work I do may be transformational for them, and sign up for my free, weekly newsletter. I endeavor to deliver compelling, inspirational content each week that addresses how we may fuel and leverage creativity in surprising ways. Way too many of us do not consider ourselves to be creative, and that belief is patently false. My goal is for readers to see what is possible for them, personally and professionally, and to reset what they consider to be the upper limits of how they can feel, live, and work each day.

### ***About the Photograph Capture on Whiteside Mountain***

I spent last winter working on my book at the family house on top of Whiteside Mountain. On Christmas morning, I was writing in my journal while seated at a table near the wall of windows in the living room. As the sun peeked over the distant ridges, the room began to be filled with the most impossible pink and orange hues. I looked up and gasped. I grabbed my camera, ran outside, and began clicking away.

**Susie deVille** is dedicated to helping entrepreneurs build wildly successful businesses by rediscovering their creativity and leveraging the power of their true nature. An author, coach, and entrepreneur who built and sold a highly profitable real estate firm, she has been researching innovation and creativity since 2005. She is the founder and CEO of the Innovation & Creativity Institute. Her first book will be published in 2022. For more information, visit [InnovationandCreativityInstitute.com](http://InnovationandCreativityInstitute.com).

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