

Why Does Art Matter ????????

An Essay by artist Edna Floretta

Nov. 18, 2020

Why does art matter? First of all, art is everywhere, down to the sweater you are wearing to the bag your fries come in. But more importantly I'd like to talk about the Fine Arts and their ability to change the world. In this essay I will be discussing two artists, myself and Frank Moore.

Frank Moore is an example of a person with the most extreme physical handicap. He had cerebral palsy. This left him unable to walk or talk, with little control of his arms and hands. Yet, inside his brain lay a genius of enormous importance. His life-long body of art, writing, performance art, music, and hosting radio and television shows is a more profound body of work than most people without a handicap. He communicated by using a pointer tied to his head unto a board of letters and words. The fact that he communicated at all is a miracle unto itself. But not only did he communicate, what he had to say is some of the best writing on Art and Life that I have ever read. He is best known for his Shamanic eroplay performances. Where he encouraged the audiences to get naked and touch each other erotically to break taboos. His work is being archived on the internet by his life partners Linda Mac and Michael LaBash. There are thousands of videos of both his performances and his television shows and they are still uploading. They also put together a documentary series featuring Frank's videos and writings called "Let Me Be Frank". I would have to

say that Art saved his Life and gave him purpose. Even though Life fated him to a terrible physical circumstance, he found inspiration and Beauty in Life. He most certainly had a lot to say.

The same is True for me. Art saved my Life. I was not born physically handicapped, but was diagnosed with one of the most severe mental illnesses, schizoaffective disorder. Which is schizophrenia PLUS bipolar. I can't tell you how many times I almost committed suicide, yet I chose to Live and make Art. Not only did I lose my mind to the point of being catatonic, it destroyed my body too. I gained over 100 pounds on my antipsychotic meds. It left my schizophrenia in remission, but I was still dealing with being bipolar. I, at age 48, have created a huge body of work in art, video, music, performance, and writings. While still sane, in 1999, in Berkeley Ca., I checked out a book I found in the art section of the library called "A Study in Misery". When I took it back to the Sherman House co-op where I was living, and opened it up, a voice came to me so strong which said, "the woman in the picture is you, and the man in the picture is now your friend Jacki". It was a picture of Frida and Diego. Who the hell would want to be Frida Kahlo? But when I read her life story, my whole life made sense finally. I can't tell you how much it hurts that the whole world has Frida Mania, yet no one knows of my current body of work, which I find even more diverse and intense and provocative and political.

Both Frank Moore and I had something in common. We were both highly artistic, spiritual, and had intense love for humanity. We both hoped that our Arts would create a "Butterfly Effect" in this world filled with Rotten Ass Shit!!!! And unlike our President, we believed that "Black Lives Matter". I made a performance video called, "Mommy, what does Nigger mean?" I had been horrified by the conversations I overheard while bartending in small town Ohio. When I was 15, my mother had me locked in a mental ward where I was scolded for

wanting to go to prom with a boy with black skin by the doctors and diagnosed with Oppositional Disorder. I have spent many a day in African American Churches, because to me, there is no better place to feel the human's spirit.

Both Frank and I were against War and the insane amount of money spent on military while human needs weren't being met! My father was in Vietnam in the Navy. He was drafted there against his will. He worked the flight deck, and had to load bombs that killed many people and bag the bodies that the planes brought back. Still to this day, he is a terrible alcoholic and screams at night in his sleep. It made my life one of Misery. It's a trickle-down effect. I am Vietnam. A friend of mine from high school recently got in touch with me after spending many years in the Army stationed in the Middle East. He was suffering from severe anxiety, terrible nightmares, and insomnia. Can you imagine my horror when he told me, "The thing I do best is kill people."????????? Nooooooooooooooooooooo

Both of us felt it important to be Free to express your sexuality and be accepted for who you are. My brother is Gay and I am bi-sexual. I live with so much pain because of witnessing the struggles of my dear brother to accept who he was. It was obvious from an early age. Many nights I heard him cry himself to sleep. When he finally came out of the closet as an adult, my mother said, "It is against God!" I was so fucking pissed off. "God is the one who made him that way!" I don't believe in the "human made" perceptions of God. To her benefit, now my mother fully accepts him, and treats his life partner like a son.

Both of us used self-nudity in our Arts, along with other artists such as Karen Finley. We used nudity to rebel against society's norms, to show vulnerability, sensuality, extreme emotional expressions, but most of all to reveal Honesty. He was attacked by Jessie Helms for his

use of nudity and used as an example of why not to federally fund the Arts! Being nude is an expression of Freedom. I guess Jessie Helms didn't really desire to be Free.

Both of us had a "World Mind" and were open and cared about the other countries around the World. Knowing the complete Truth, that we are all brothers. We had this despite the Propaganda that Capitalist, all powerful America is constantly pumping through the Media. Shame on America, for wanting to be Imperialists. I personally crave the culture and foods of other countries !!!!!

I am only writing this Essay, because last night I dreamt of Frank Moore, who passed away on October 14, 2013. In my dream we were alone and he suddenly died. I pumped his chest with my hands until he came alive again. Then we were with a group of artists painting murals at a school. I returned the next day to finish painting, only to find the mural that Frank and I had made together had been destroyed by a teacher. I was So flipping angry. I became physically angry during my dream. The rage led to Frank and I speaking out about why Art is important to the mass media. I awoke and knew I had to write this Essay.

Both Frank Moore and I created with intense passion. Fiercely using Art to sustain us through our disabilities, and to help us vocalize our truths and our frustrations with all the horrible, unbelievable, monstrous things of this World. Both of us collaborated with and supported and videotaped other Artists who we admired. We did so not to use Art as a Commodity or something an art critic could smugly review. But we did so because it was as natural as Breath. And because deep inside, we both hoped that someday, somehow, our work would cause a "Butterfly Effect" in this world and be a catalyst for

change to PEACE, LOVE, EXPRESSION, ACCEPTANCE, TRUTH, and HONESTY upon this Earth that we ALL share.

Note, Frank told me about the Butterfly Effect with our work in my dream. We are not the only Artists working towards the goal of peace. May the Journey continue and come to pass sooner than later, for the sake of all.

Sincerely, Edna Floretta..... a broken, poverty stricken artist who keeps on trucking.