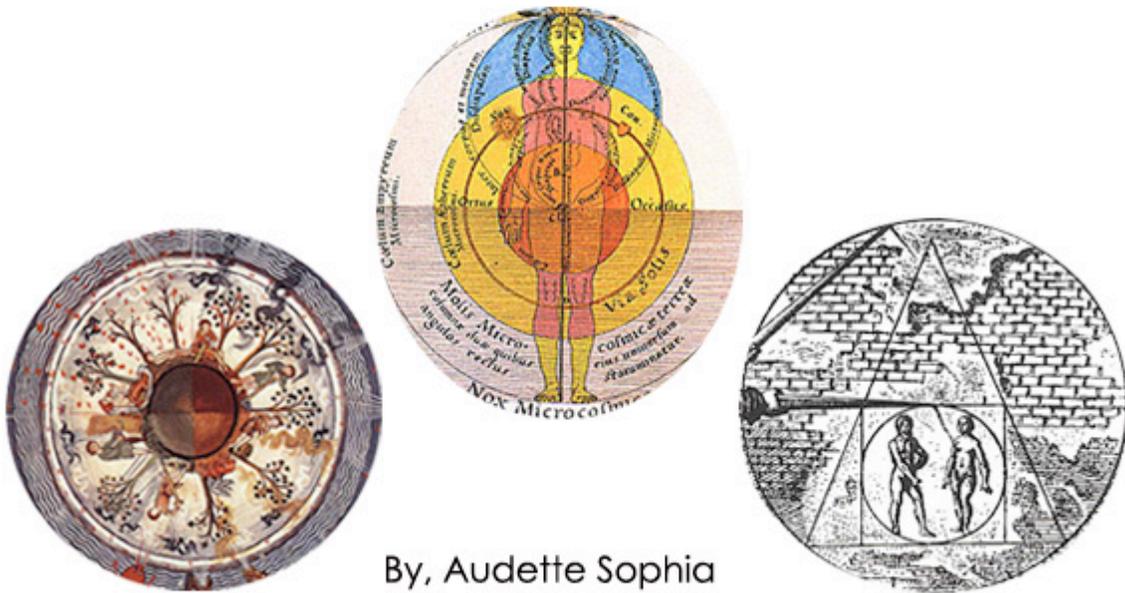


# INTEGRATIVE ARTS



By, Audette Sophia

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## INTRODUCTION

The integrative power of the Arts offers us a means to identify and express ourselves in our uniqueness, as well as connect us with the universal. This paper will explore the relationship between creative self-expression and self-integration. In it I will highlight some models and frameworks through which we can both deepen and expand our understanding of why and how creativity supports the unfolding and realization of human potential. I will introduce 4 key psychological pioneers of the emerging field of Integrative Arts.



## CREATIVITY

**cre · a · tiv · i · ty**- the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc.; originality, progressiveness, or imagination: the need for creativity in modern industry; creativity in the performing arts.

That dictionary definition is a great starting point in defining something that could be seen as undefinable. Creativity is the activity of the uninhibited imagination. Creativity is the authentic self-expression of our uniqueness. In the words of Gabrielle Roth, "...art is not just ornamental, an enhancement of life, but a path in itself, a way out of the predictable and conventional, a map to self discovery." The arts in this context are seen as a bridge between inner and outer worlds, and the goal is not to conform to some external expectation, but to express our inner self in a way that is both authentic and artistic. Art, as an expression of creative inquiry can open us to new depths of insight and original ways of connecting with our world.

"The provision of medicine for the body and soul is one of art's many functions. Other aspects of art, and especially its importance as a commodity and its role as an indicator of ephemeral tastes, have dominated our culture and alienated us from the healing muses." (McNiff 3) This is an important perspective, and points us away from the aesthetic, elitist art paradigm, and towards re-claiming the positive powers of art for everyone. In the act of creative self-expression we affirm our own identities by connecting 'inner' and 'outer'.

Human potential is vast and becomes manifest in many ways. Words are limited in what they are able to convey. We are physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual beings containing rich worlds of feeling and imagination. Some of these inner states can only be accurately represented through creative modalities such as movement, metaphor, melody, and image.

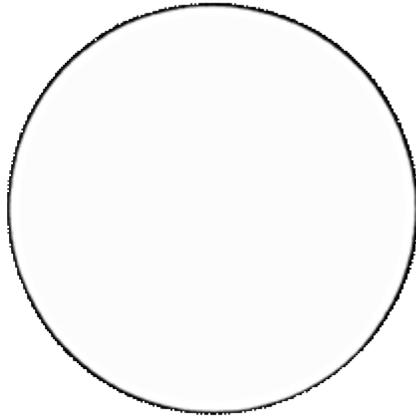
This vantage point of creativity necessarily takes us outside of the traditional sphere of 'art' into the domains of psychology and spirituality. This exploration into the integrative power of the arts brings science, psychology, art, and religion together. *"Beginning in the early twentieth century, pioneering thinkers in a number of fields began to reintroduce and reconceptualize the holistic perspective of our ancestors, thereby reclaiming the creative purpose and power of the arts to heal, to educate, and to facilitate consciousness."* (Halprin 39)

At this point it is helpful to point out a distinction about the dual nature of the creative arts. Similar to our in-breath and out-breath, or the spiral that moves both into the center and from the center outwards, the creative stream can be followed inwards as a means of self-inquiry, and extended from the inner, out to others through self-expression. The inward spiral path is one of exploration and the process of deepening self-understanding, while the outward expanding spiral path is about giving voice and outlet to what we know and who we are. Both paths are valuable and equal, and both result in an enhancement of dialogue, understanding, and connection.

This perspective helps us steer away from only valuing the productive, end-result orientation, and honors both the process and product of creativity. This recognition of the paradoxical dimensions of art (inner and outer) leads us into the recognition that art is far more than the product or outcome. The art object is ultimately inseparable from the process of its creation. In art we discover this to be true for everything, including ourselves.

In the artistic process, we ourselves become the art in progress. "Our creativity enables us to receive deep psychic material, struggle with and transform it." (Knill 87) Far from being an arbitrary

amusement, art entered into from a holistic approach becomes a profound catalyst for personal growth and evolution.



## **INTEGRATION**

What am I talking about when I say self-integration? Words like integrity and integral refer to a state of wholeness. So, an integrated person could be said to be one who has found a balanced harmonious relationship to the parts of themselves, including the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects. What I am calling self-integration has been called by other names such as self-development, personal growth, and self-actualization. It implies an integrity of being, resulting from healthy relationship between the poles of our being; right and left brain functions, rational and intuitive, conscious and subconscious, physical and spiritual, etc... This does not mean achieving some perpetual balance and being without conflict or pain, it is more about being honest with the full spectrum of ourselves and following the conflicts all the way through to their resolution and our evolution.

*“Integration implies a previous state of disintegration. Often, what brings a person into therapy is the experience of falling apart, of splitting into discordant fragments, of losing a central self around which the personality coheres. This breakdown is a necessary stage in the development of the self: it represents the breaking down of the false unity of narcissistic self-identification.” (Levine 21)*

At this time, fragmentation seems to be a pervasive experience, internally in individuals, and also in our families, communities, and cultures. Instead of denying and resisting this and covering up its symptoms, we can see it as an opportunity for evolution, for a new cohesion to emerge from what is unraveling, and trust in and facilitate the process. The integral perspective recognizes the necessary and growth-serving role that breakdown and disintegration play in the process of self-integration. As Levine goes on to say about the end results of this identity crisis: “The person is now identified not with the ego or persona but with the ground of his or her being. Whether this ground be called the “unconscious” or “God”, it is clear that what has taken place is an integration of the personality on a deeper foundation. It is a movement toward wholeness and unity.” (23)

Integral psychologist Haridas Chaudhuri claims that “Broadly speaking there are three inseparable aspects of human personality: uniqueness or individuality, universality or relatedness, and transcendence. (74) Creativity can help us to harmonize and strengthen our relationship with any and all of these aspects. Through the arts we can affirm and communicate our uniqueness, connect with cultural and universal currents, and access spiritual and transcendental states.

*“Virtually every spiritual tradition distinguishes the self-clinging ego from the deeper, creative Self; little self as opposed to big Self. The big self is transpersonal, beyond any separated individuality, the common ground that we all share.”* (Nachmanovitch 29)

As we expand beyond the narrow view of the arts as entertainment, ego gratification and product, we join the many pioneers who have found much more broad and meaningful frameworks through which to engage the power of creativity. I now turn directly into the field of psychology and to four schools of thought, which have contributed to a more holistic perspective of the human psyche and the recognition of the importance of creativity and the arts.

*"When conscious life is characterized by one-sidedness and by a false attitude, primordial healing images are activated – one might*

*say instinctively – and come to light in the dreams of individuals and the visions of artists."* -Carl Jung



## **CARL JUNG**

One very important pioneer of this field is Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Jung was interested in the unconscious level of the human psyche, and thus found himself studying symbology, mythology, archetypes, dreams, and mandalas. His findings provide a lot of support for the foundation of the integrative view and use of the arts.

In seeking his references to wholeness, I come upon his work with mandalas. Jung's first experiences with mandalas was through his clients drawings and descriptions of dream imagery, and later became substantiated and contextualized through his study of Eastern traditions of Taoism and Tibetan Buddhism. He viewed the mandala as an expression of wholeness. *"Although "wholeness" seems at first to be nothing but an abstract idea, it is nevertheless empirical in so far as it is anticipated by the psyche in the form of spontaneous and*

*autonomous symbols. These are the quaternity or mandala symbols, which occur not only in the dreams of moderns who have never heard of them, but are widely disseminated in the historical records of many peoples and many epochs.” (Jung 30)*

Jung was not a cultural philosopher, he was a psychologist, so his interest in myth and mandalas was in how they reflect and support the psyche. In his cosmology, the individual not only has an unconscious, but is also connected to what he calls the ‘collective unconscious’. This helps to explain why the same symbols and themes show up in individual psychological processes and in cultural symbols, myths, and systems. For example, the Jewish Star of David and the Taoist “yin yang” symbol could be said to represent the collective level of a united anima and animus. Jung believed that these two fundamental archetypes of the human psyche must be harmonized as an “indispensable prerequisite to wholeness.” (Jung 30)

Jung put great importance on the process of harmonizing these dual poles of our being and identifying and integrating our shadow, toward the goal of what he called individuation. He recognized that this process brought us into deep, unconscious and trans-rational levels of our being. I think one of his main contributions to the movement of psychology toward holism was his validation of these deeper levels of consciousness and his willingness to engage the psyche in its own languages of imagery, archetypes, symbology, and dreams. “As has already been pointed out, the union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness is not a rational thing, nor is it a matter of will; it is a psychic process of development which expresses itself in symbols.” (Jung 318) What Jung is illuminating in this statement and in much of his work is this inner track of human development, belonging to a mythic- archetypal, primal-creative realm. He points to the importance of symbolic languages to help us to become more conscious of and connected to this dimension of our being.



Image By Carl Jung, Switzerland, 20th century

## ABRAHAM MASLOW

This theme of balancing anima and animus, yin and yang, conscious and unconscious, reoccurs in many mythologies and philosophies. In more modern neuro science, it would be referred to as balancing the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Abraham Maslow had an interesting perspective on this, and categorized these two poles as the primary and secondary processes. Primary processes are childlike, imaginative, spontaneous, wild, metaphoric, poetic, mythic, and reside in the deep layers of the self. The secondary processes are logical, sensible, rational, realistic, mature, and generally functional in the external world. Both of these are important and necessary. But it is dangerous to the health of the whole person for there to be a disconnection between, and lopsided bias toward either one of these.

*“What I’m leading up to is that out of this unconscious, out of this deeper self out of this portion of ourselves of which we generally are afraid and therefore try to keep under control, out of this comes the ability to play- to enjoy- to fantasy- to laugh- to loaf- to be*

*spontaneous, and, what's most important for us here, creativity, which is a kind of intellectual play, which is a kind of permission to be ourselves, to fantasize, to let loose, and to be crazy, privately. (Every really new idea looks crazy, at first.)"* (Maslow 85)

At its extreme, the control or repression of primary processes results in a rigid obsessive compulsive person who is afraid of their own emotions and impulses and so is stunted in any authentic and spontaneous expression. Ideally we find a balanced healthy relationship between both poles. *"In the healthy person, and especially the healthy person who creates, I find that he has somehow managed a fusion and a synthesis of both primary and secondary processes; both conscious and unconscious; both of deeper self and of conscious self. And he manages to do this gracefully and fruitfully."* (Maslow 89)

Maslow also made a significant contribution to general psychological theory with his now well-known pyramid illustration of the hierarchy of needs. Up until this point, Freudian analysis and mechanistic behaviorism dominated our way of looking at human motivation. What Maslow proposed in his model is that after our basic physiological needs are met, we move onto safety/security, and then need for love and belonging, and then esteem needs, then cognitive, aesthetic, and finally at the top of the pyramid, self-actualization and transcendence. The bottom four he referred to as deficiency needs, and said that only when these needs were met could we move on toward fulfillment of our growth needs.



This model greatly expanded the scope of psychology as a representation and validation of the full spectrum of human need and motivation. Its effect also included a movement away from orientation to psychopathology and a movement toward health, growth, and fulfillment. Of most significance to this discussion are the phases of self-actualization and transcendence. Maslow studied a lot of extraordinary people and found that there were commonalities between them and that really he was studying a type of person. People who are in the self-actualizing phase were both oriented to personal growth, but also were almost always involved “in a cause outside their own skin.” They were often passionate about a vocation or calling to be of service in their unique way, and were also characterized by an appreciation of life.

Once a person is self-realized and fulfilling their potential and purpose, the natural evolution is to transcend the personal self and become more identified with relationship to the universal or spiritual. This could most certainly be considered a foundation stone for the later development of the field of transpersonal psychology.

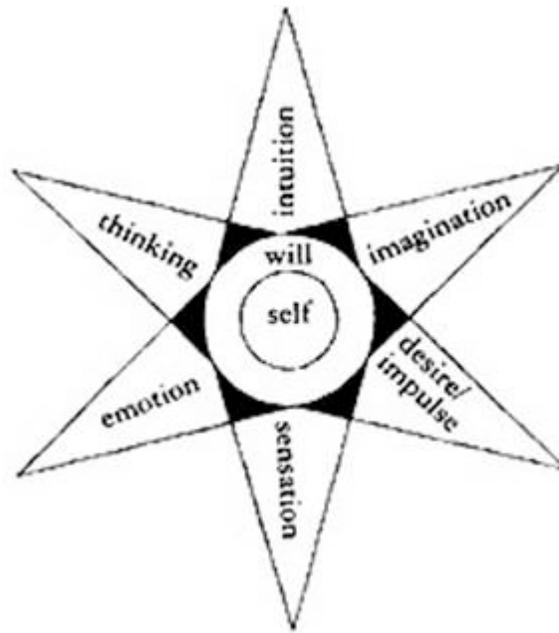
Maslow's study of self-actualizing people brought his attention to creativity, as he found that many of them were highly creative people. "My feeling is that the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualizing, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing." (Maslow 57) This is a very strong statement drawn from his experience that points to the integral role that creativity has to play in the actualizing of human potential and the cultivation of wholeness.

In fact he put creativity along with fulfillment at the very top of the pyramid, in the domain of Self-Actualization.

*"Creating tends to be the act of a whole man; he is then most integrated, unified, all of a piece, one-pointed, totally organized in the service of the fascinating matter-in-hand. Creativeness is therefore systemic; i.e., a whole- or Gestalt- quality of the whole person; it is not added to the organism like a coat of paint, or like an invasion of bacteria. It is the opposite of dissociation."* (Maslow 69)

The opposite of being disassociated is being fully associated, with all the aspects of the Self. Creativity becomes synonymous with this healthy relatedness which Maslow calls "systemic, i.e., a whole". Through his insightful framing of human development in a pyramid of ascending drives, he illuminated a pathway toward creative self-actualization.

Some of the other pioneers who's work helped to evolve the field of psychology in the direction of holism include existentialist William James, Gestalt therapy's founder Fritz Perls, Alderian Psychology's founder Kurt Goldstein, existential- integrative psychology's founder Rollo May, and Psychosynthesis's founder Roberto Assagioli.



## **PSYCHOSYNTHESIS**

Psychosynthesis is a prime example of a psychological framework whole enough to include the heights and depths of human nature. Psychosynthesis was developed by the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, and expands humanistic psychology to more explicitly address the spiritual dimension. As the name hints at, the focus of psychosynthesis is to “...achieve a synthesis, a coming together, of the various parts of an individual's personality into a more cohesive self.”

The self through this lens is seen as comprised of the core self, the sub-personalities, the super-conscious, and the transpersonal self. One step toward bringing the many parts of the self into healthy relationship is transmuting and redirecting the biopsychic energies, particularly sexual, aggressive, and combative tendencies. These energies need safe containers to be explored and healthy outlets for expression.

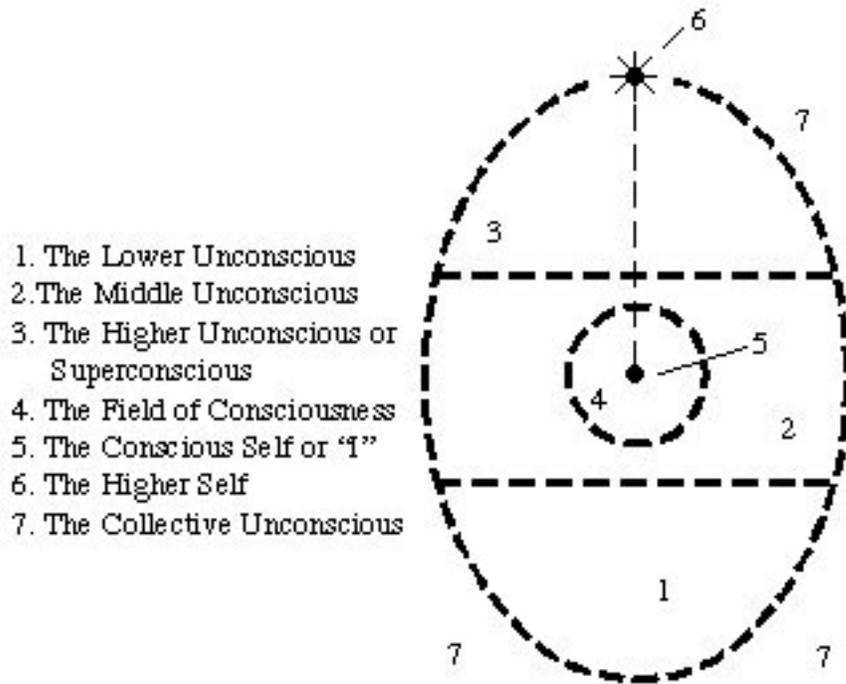
Another central intention of psychosynthesis is the awakening and releasing of the super-conscious spiritual energies, (sometimes known as the higher self), which has a transformative impact on the personality. The last main focus of psychosynthesis is the arousing and development of the center and will, thus strengthening the human capacity to harmonize conflicting drives and impulses toward

creative and responsible action. Following is a metaphor for the orientation of psychosynthesis to the core self..

*“A helpful image is that of an orchestra, where the musicians represent the different parts or aspects of ourselves. Without a conductor, there would be little cooperation as each of the musicians would attempt to get their favorite music played according to their own interpretation. Acceptance of and submission to the conductor results in integration of the orchestra, and this would subsequently be reflected in the music. Where the conductor represents the self, the transpersonal self can be thought of as the composer or the producer.”*

The Egg diagram is a map that shows the various levels of consciousness as seen through the lens of psychosynthesis. This is a one of the most inclusive and holistic psycho-spiritual models of consciousness.

Looking at this model (below), I gain an insight into my own thesis. It's something about dotted lines, about transcending boundaries and achieving communion with that which is beyond us, and gaining experience of the full spectrum of consciousness. Does this not help explain the way humans push at the edges of their ego's egg, and seek expansion through success, sex, music, myth, drugs and religion? Does it help to explain the prevalence of shamanistic practices, rituals, trance healings, psychotropic plant ceremonies, rites of passage and initiations?



### **DARIA HALPRIN & THE LIFE/ART PROCESS**

Daria Halprin is the daughter of dance pioneer Anna Halprin, and a psychologist and movement teacher. Though she does have a psychological background, I turn to her work to provide us with an example of how the preceding collection of philosophical frameworks is tangibly ‘embodied’ and applied to individuals and groups. Along with her mother she has developed the Halprin Life/Art Process, which is a holistic movement based form of therapy. As the name suggests, one of the goals of the work is to strengthen the metaphoric relationship between art making and life circumstances.

*“In this way our lives feed our art by making it real and authentic, and our art opens and reflects back to us image of who we have been, who we are, and who we might become. As we find our integrity in the ways we shape our bodies, movements, images, and feelings through art, with time and practice we are able to shape more creative relationships with ourselves and others.”* (Halprin 19)

The modalities utilized in her work are mainly movement, writing, and drawing, but also include active imagination, vocal exploration, and dramatic enactments. It is informed by humanistic and phenomenological psychologies as well as somatics, and rests on the foundational belief that “The entire repertoire of our life experience can be accessed and activated through the body in movement.”

The Halprin Process explores the interplay between the inherent knowledge of the body and its creative connection to our life stories. It has been applied in hospitals, schools, hospices, and been experienced by many individuals and groups over the past couple decades. The somatic and psychological framework offers support for the experiential and creative exploration that enriches and transforms those who take up the journey. This work represents an evolutionary edge of the psychological domain. This work offers an evolutionary edge in the personal domain.

*“Creativity connects us to the natural process that exists in all things on the biological, emotional, mental, and spiritual planes. Tapping into the energy of this foundational life force constantly moving in us and around us, we can reconnect with the innate human impulse for creation and evolution.”*  
(Halprin 85)



## CONCLUSION

All of this research both confirms and substantiates my own experience as a singer, poet and dancer. My life has been 'living research' into the full spectrum of transformative potential of the arts. It is very validating to find so many supportive philosophies and models that confirm, contextualize, and expand my own experientially based conviction that the arts not only help the self move towards wholeness, but also integrate the self into healthy relationship with the greater Whole.

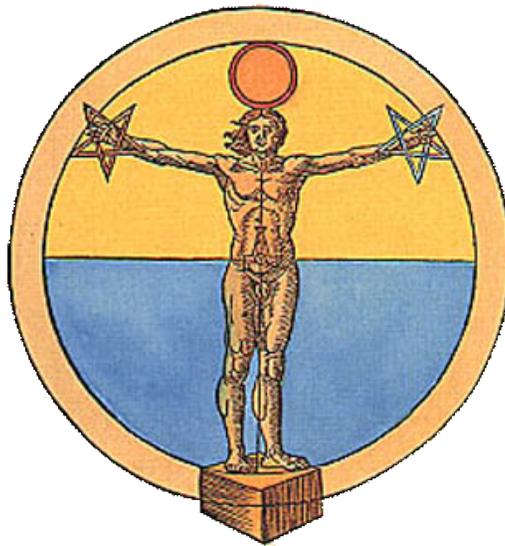
The creative self-actualizing individual does not evolve into some lofty pinnacle; they grow into being a person with integrity, within themselves and in all their relationships. This integrity naturally and organically finds expression in service; be it social, environmental, creative, or spiritual. Personal integrity is the foundation of a sustainable society.

Because uniqueness, inter-relatedness, and transcendence are features of the human psyche, self-expression leads to connection and community building, and creative communion leads to transcendence of the small self and service to the Whole. Thus integrative arts covers a vast scope, from individual to universal, from personal to transpersonal, and has something to offer everyone no matter where they are in the spectrum of development.

The self that is explored and expressed through creativity is also transformed through it. As the self changes and grows, the more the product of their creativity has the power to help other people on their journey of growth and evolution. Put another way, as you achieve greater levels of consciousness, what you broadcast from these places will have more transformative impact on others.

*“Life is sacred. Life is art. Life is sacred art. The art of sacred living means being a holy actor, acting from the soul rather than the ego.”* (Roth 147) As the artist moves beyond egoism and taps deeper levels of motivation and of their own being, the art they create better reflects the archetypal or universal levels of reality. When a group of

people connects at these levels, narrow individualism is transcended and various degrees of communion and ecstatic states can be reached. When a society leans heavily towards superficiality and individualism, as ours does, this communion can be a great force of healing. Therefore, creativity entered into holistically help us to transcend alienation on many different levels. We find in the arts so much more than a means of entertainment, we find a means to transform our perception and thus, our experience. The arts help us to know who we are and help us to stretch into becoming more of who we can be.



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**Audette Sophia** has a B.A. in Integrative Arts. She designed both the major and its curriculum, and spent four years exploring the many holistic applications of the arts, and synthesizing her own. She is a writer, multi-disciplinary performer, and the author of the interactive poetry book, *Poetessence*. She is a certified career coach and the founding director of Catalyst Arts, a web company that showcases the work of conscious artists and offers tangible support to creative entrepreneurs.

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