

## Gift

To me, love is the meaning of life. It moves us to give love and do many positive things. Love felt from family members and friends is very important in sustaining our lives. When bad things happen to loving people they sometimes falter. I had recently left a ten-year job on a stress leave. All areas of my life seemed to be stress filled. Stress from a relationship loss, and six-year divorce process with no determined end in sight, plus a constant and intermittent deluge of court costs and lawyers fees has contributed to this stress. Furthermore dealing with identity loss and the death of my father last year continuing with the responsibility of finishing my father's estate for the government has put me in a place feeling distressed and overwhelmed and emotionally drained. Even a loving five-year relationship was overshadowed with this continued stress. Throughout this time, I continually found and followed all kinds of positive motivational tapes and books and Internet advice to keep myself going. It all came to a particular defining moment when I felt, as time was passing, I had no control of my life and I was losing my hopes and dreams and the one thing that created a sense of love for myself; my love, enthusiasm and energy for creating beauty as an artist.

Beauty was furthest from my mind but after a month of stress leave, I applied for an artist residency/retreat hoping time away would help my emotional state. I arrived in Picton, Ontario, Canada in the beautiful Prince Edward County. While there, I met Polina Kudelkina who had also applied for an artist residency at Spark Box Studio. We introduced ourselves and began to get to know each other. I did talk about my personal life here in Canada and Polina talked about her home in St. Petersburg Russia. After the first couple of days of Polina's stay at Spark Box, I was amazed to see beautiful three-dimensional hand size objects such as balls, apples and hands that Polina produced with a burred needle and wool. These sculptural felt objects made me curious about the purpose of her visual art project. In our discussions at Spark Box Studios Polina talked about Viktor Frankl and his writings on the meaning of life and his survival from the concentration camps. Polina also mentioned that her present project is based on Logotherapy and Colorology of M. Luscher and G. Lkar and her experiences as a painter and that these together were important to her hand made felt works of art. As Polina's artwork progressed, I realized that the small sculptural objects were symbols to accompany one of the hand-made two sided flat felt images on a mono silkscreen print, looking similarly to a small blanket. Polina's intuitive sculptural objects and two sided printed felt images seemed to me, to be interesting and familiar and the only word that came to mind about them was beautiful. I saw three of these five images with accompanied sculptural felt objects finished before I left Spark Box Studio. They were also vivid in color but the purpose of these symbolic objects and images and the combinations of colors with the symbols at the time was obscure to me.

Polina Kudelkina described the purpose of each of five double-sided felt mono-print symbolic images and accompanied objects in an email to me. The following is an understanding and explanation of and expected results on the viewer.

- 1) Viewing the symbols of the moving hands in the sun- represents energy and should give the viewer a surge of energy.
- 2) Viewing the symbols of the angels in a circular soft form – represents a calming affects if the person or viewer is tired emotionally these symbols and colors will help them to a state of relaxation and calm, and would also help them to sleep well.
- 3) Viewing the symbols of the figure, apples and eyes – represents the sense or feeling that someone or something cares about you.
- 4) Viewing the symbol of a growing tree – represents inspiration and should stimulate creative activity.
- 5) Viewing the symbols of figures (monkeys) climbing up rocks or mountains, or the stem of a tree – represents a sense of purposefulness. The viewers should feel a surge of energy to fulfill a sense of their purpose.

Before I left Spark Box Studio Polina gave me a special gift. She had carefully made a reversible felt scarf and a matching reversible brooch. I thought they were wonderful and again beautiful. I realize now, that they are more important than just a contemporary fashion statement. They are a healing gift. They are symbols of what Polina was wishing for me. When I think of the conversations that we had about my life and the amount of stress I was experiencing at the time, and how I felt about my art making, I see how she saw an opportunity to put her visual art project into action. The important part is that the scarf and brooch were not just visual they were to be experienced in an interactive way. Imagine wearing the scarf below in image **A** and **B** with the accompanied brooch. Together now with my understanding of the symbols above the scarf and brooch take on new meaning. Visually the imagery of the scarf reminds me of a ladder or vine, which the figures in the above description would climb and the colors used are the same as the tree and eyes images combined. Even the leaves are echoed in the brooch. The physical position of the scarf on my body when I wear it in a way tries to relieve the stress that collects in my shoulders. I would have to visually view it in the mirror every time I choose to wear it and so it becomes a visual and physical experience. She has conveyed and given me a way to see consciously what she wants for me, but possibly helps my subconscious to heal and move forward. If I understand the purpose of the scarf correctly, she is telling me that she and others care for me, and wants me to be inspired and to stimulate my creative energy in my art with a sense of purpose. The above experience for me was therapeutic. Thank you Polina!

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**A**



Scarf & Brooch Polina Kudelkina

Photo Kim Wilkie

**B**



Scarf & Brooch Polina Kudelkina

Photo Kim Wilkie