



From the artist

© The Woman and the Blank Art ©

I consider myself a devotee of the creative force, wanting to know all that I can. I have trained myself on multiple levels to engage and nurture creative flow in myself. The natural companion to this kind of personal vocation is witnessing creativity in others. I watch without judgment which has helped me learn many things.

One year while I was presenting my CLAIMING FACE curriculum at a conference called, Teachers for Social Justice, I witnessed a powerful woman not make art. As usual, I lectured and then set the attendants to task on one of the projects from my book. The Frida Mirror. It is one of my favorite projects because it holds the potential to highlight internal, often nonverbal experiences in a powerful and simple way.

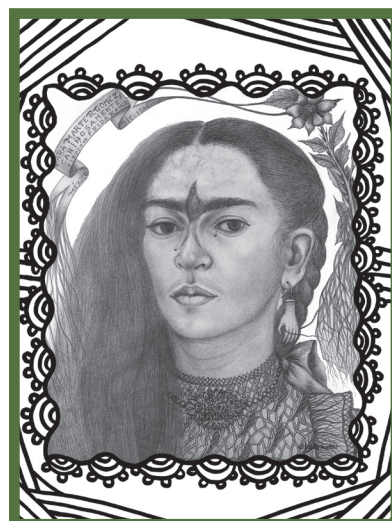
After the allotted time for art making, I had the attendants share about their work. I heard beautiful, meaningful stories, the kind that usually come out of doing this project. And then I got to the woman who did not touch her handout at all.

I was fascinated. I hadn't seen this before.

She was mad. She said that she had not been told beforehand that she would be required to make art in class and this was unacceptable to her. She seemed offended, possibly even hurt or something about fairness. I'm not sure. I think much to her surprise, I did not respond to her words, but told her that her art was perfect. I reminded her of my second rule, there is never a right or wrong way to make art and that by her making these choices and sitting there with herself and her blank handout, she was making art. And that I appreciated hearing the thoughts that were behind her choices.

Then we all had an amazing conversation about art that is blank. One woman had been deeply moved by a large painting in a museum that was entirely textured white. We talked about the blankness of it and what it conveyed and how it made us feel and the political power behind some of it and so on. The woman with the blank page participated. I cannot know whether or not she had been looking for a conflictual experience with me or the class, or if she had some deep rooted feelings about making art, or she just wanted some control over her life. What I do know is that making art (or seemingly not making art) without judgment allowed it to be what it was, an opportunity to see herself and be seen by others without judgment.

When I look back and remember how the woman with the blank page appeared while she sat and waited for the art making time to be over, she seemed to be a full body NO. A unique response to have while attending a free conference and attending a class that was one chosen out of many. But I want you



The Frida Mirror



be you. be full. be beautiful.

to know, it was fine with me. That's art. Whatever comes up for you, BE yourself. Listen to yourself. You don't need to be anything different than who you are, not for me, not for anyone.

If you're not already, this is an opportunity to notice if judgment comes up about how you should or shouldn't behave in this course (beyond the "ground rules" of course). Because there is no judgment here, it may be easier to see any judgment that comes up as your judgment on yourself. Pay attention to yourself. Do you secretly think there is a right or wrong way to do the activities, or in what order they should be done? Are you concerned you're not creative enough? Do you feel that you are failing or bad in some way if you don't do all of the activities? Do you feel that others in the class are having an easy time while you are having a hard time? Are you concerned that others in the class might see that you are less than you think you should be? Or do you feel that you need to perform? Outshine others with your creative power because you're an artist? Sometimes these thoughts are far below the surface. Sometimes we are saying them to ourselves all the time and don't even know it. Whether you are aware of any inner judgment or not at this point, just know that there is room for everything here. Deep respect for how your creative force moves through you is the foundation of this work. I trust your creative guidance already!

