

Vignettes in Stone

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AN ARCHWAY

The towering solidness of a stone archway belies the activity of its construction. Similarly a painting, or piece of prose, appears before me like a thing unto itself, divorced from its aesthetic production.

And yet the process of creation, the miracle of bringing into being, has not disappeared: the painting is still held together by the strokes of a brush applying pigment to paper; the prose necessarily consists of words, sentences, punctuation marks and the white spaces of the page; while the archway relies on each stone resting, one upon the other, in a continuous interplay of harmonious forces.

Often we try to construct lives as archways, nervously striving to hold ourselves up as solid structures, searching for some keystone of stability, constantly afraid that everything will come tumbling down around our feet. But when we momentarily abandon this compulsion to be in control, allow ourselves to accept the inherent interdependence of all life, we may begin to live – imaginatively, creatively; constantly becoming.



“Archway”

Painting by Jean Weiner



"Door"

Painting by Jean Weiner

DOORS

Never exclusively open or closed, doors are magical.

Standing in the street in front of a closed door, I have already imagined the existence of the space on the other side, for the wood of the door transforms the separation of interior and exterior into the osmosis of connection. Yet on approaching an open door, I now hesitate, hindered by the invisible barrier that separates the outside from inside. The half open door may entice me to peer in, but my furtive glance already alerts me to the pulsating presence of the stone threshold.

Doors, then, speak to us about the mystery of inter-being – how we are simultaneously both separate from, and intimately connected with, the world in which we live. The wonder of a door is not where it leads; rather, it is its allusion to this inherent interconnectedness of people with things, of selves with doors.

In my relationship with a particular door – the door of my house, or of a village in Provence, or in a painting – I feel the resonance of our mutual recognition. The door beckons, leaning towards me in silent greeting. Enlivened by this encounter, I am awakened to the call of the world around me.

WINDING STREETS

How enchanting is a winding street!

Seduced, I am carried along by its gentle curves. I wander. And in this wonderland of undulating paths, narrow passages, and bulging buildings, I encounter a different story of life's journey. The quest for endings via the straight line, the shortest course, the fastest road, yields to the embellishments of fantasy and a logic of digression.

No longer desiring to know my way – to learn the names of streets and map their paths – I surrender to the unknown. The winding street invites me to experience the here and now. The sensation of uneven paving stones under my feet, the echo of my steps, and the surprise that awaits me as I turn each bend – this pleasure is the story of life's circuitous route.



“Street”

Painting by Jean Weiner