

Marquette Monthly

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Arts & Humanities

100 Day Project meant to inspire creativity in Marquette community, by Lucy Hough

100 Day Project meant to inspire creativity in Marquette community

Ann Russ and a group called PIA are working to create a community habit of creativity. Russ wonders, what would it be like if the entire Marquette community came together to create and foster a creative practice? She will be addressing this question with the 100 Day Project.

“Creativity is an undervalued resource in our culture, yet it’s invaluable. It’s about developing new ways of thinking. We’re all born with that capacity to create, but it gets beaten out of us, most of us, as we grow up,” Russ said. “The good news is that we can relearn it and it’s not that hard. Creativity is a skill, and like any kind of skill, it just takes practice... So the 100 Day Project is a structure that supports developing the practice of creativity, a habit of creativity. And 100 days is really long enough to grow a strong foothold in a creativity practice.



A 100 Day Project is a project a person decides to explore over the course of one hundred days. A person can either make one hundred individual projects or work on one larger project each day, but the idea is that there will be a set of guidelines the participant decides upon ahead of time, and so must work within those parameters throughout the course of the project. In the month of October, there will be an exhibit at the Marquette Arts and Culture Center in the lower level of the Peter White Public Library. Nine artists from PIA will show work they created in their own 100 Day Projects.

These disciplined projects are nothing new for this group. Some members have even done as many as five 100-day projects in the past. This exhibit will show the processes that come with working on a project for a long period of time.

“Every time someone in the group engaged one, there was always something transformational that happened. It took their creativity to a new place that they would not have gone to if they hadn’t done a 100-day project,” Russ said.

The artists featured in the exhibit will be Russ, Louisa Barkalow, Catherine Benda, Julie Benda, Jason Limberg, Diana Magnuson, Peg McNinch, Melissa Middleton and Elizabeth Yelland. The artists all have a different set of guidelines they imposed upon themselves, and they worked with different mediums.

There will be an opening reception for the exhibit from 4:00–7:00 p.m., Saturday, October 5 in the Arts and Culture Center Gallery, and the artists will talk about their experiences. The exhibit acts as a launching pad for the community project. The Marquette community is encouraged to conduct a project over 100 days from January 21 until May 1, 2014. Russ encourages everyone in the Marquette area to consider doing a project, including children, college students, business professionals and senior citizens. She has even talked to local schools and retirement homes about participating, so people have a supportive group behind them along this journey.

“People tend to think of creativity as just for artists, but it’s really practical. It’s for business people who want to come up with some fresh ideas of connecting with clients. It’s for engineers working to solve a problem. It’s for parents who want to raise children with a capacity to see the world in more than one way. So (creativity has) these real practical dimensions,” Russ said.

The purpose of this project, Russ said, is to promote the practice of creativity in the community. She believes creativity isn’t something a person has or doesn’t have, but more of a skill that can be developed and improved with practice. The idea is not to create one hundred perfect works of art; instead, participants are encouraged to try new things and not be afraid of failing.

Jason Limberg, who will be showing art in the October exhibit, worked on a 76” by 46” drawing with ballpoint pen during his one hundred days. He said he believes the discipline necessary to complete a project like this is ideal for anyone who has “any sort of goals, ideas or desires.

“This can be a new way of eating or state of mind, keeping a journal, taking fifteen minutes without distractions or creating works of art or craft,” Limberg said. “The practice of anything will only make it stronger and more engrained in your being and way of life.”

Anyone in the community who is interested in participating but has questions or wants help generating ideas is invited to attend informational meetings about the community portion of the 100 Day Project. Three Saturday meetings will take place at 1:00 p.m. in the Arts and Culture Center on October 12, December 7 and January 4. These meetings will be structured in a way to help people think of ideas by asking questions such as, “What is something you’ve wished you could spend time on or have wanted to do?” or “What are you passionate about?”

Then, before the start date of January 21, anyone who is interested in participating is encouraged to register on the 100 Day Project’s website. The website provides a sign-up where participants can clarify what they plan to work on and what guidelines they would like to impose upon themselves throughout the process.

And once the 100 Day Project begins, Russ hopes a conversation will take place on the group’s Facebook page about what struggles participants are encountering, how to break through a creative roadblock and more.

To close the project, there will be a community exhibit where participants can show their work in June 2014. Anyone who participated in the project until at least the twenty-first day can show their work.

More information about the project and a link to the group’s Facebook page can be found at The100DayProject.com

—Lucy Hough