

The Artist's Almanac

November 2007

*And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well.*

T. S. Eliot, after Julian of Norwich

The drought is broken by five consecutive days of steady rain, and, except for the dead trees and shrubs, is now but a memory. November enters gloriously, with cool sunny days - days for long walks in the woods and first fires on the hearth. Though it will end in overcast cold, with the light fading soon after lunch, it begins with one of my favorite days – All Saints.

The paroxysm of Halloween is past, the time of pumpkins and children playing dress up. Just as Mardi Gras's wantonness contrasts with Lenten fasts and the joyous feast of Easter, the mocking of the dead at Halloween contrasts with the honor due them on All Saints.



The Congregation – Bill Puryear, Artist

November is when reality sets in. Summer is past. The trees lose their brilliant leaves, the winds and cold rains begin and we bring the last roses inside before first hard freeze. Every instant our future is fading into our past and in November we reflect on what is real.



Adagio – Bill Puryear, Artist

Just as Spring is a time for sowing seed and looking forward, Fall is a time for reaping what we have sown and for looking back. The cool air, lowering skies, and flowing creeks invite reflection. We come upon our old hunting coat in an upstairs closet and think of our first quail and every dog we have hunted with. At Thanksgiving we savor more than the food, the memory of those who have sat round this table with us, those whom we love.

Nothing is more real than our memories. The French Existentialist, Louis Lavelle, writes,

“No one can doubt that in memory there is often to be found a light and a depth which did not belong to the object at the moment we saw it, nor to the act at the time we performed it. Memory has detached the event from time and endowed it with a kind of eternal quality...The memory of an event is always there at our command, and can be endlessly revived. It is a new form of existence, intimate, stable and purified....”

No man forgets his mother or his father. Nor his spouse, his children, or the least of his loved ones. The Vigil for All Saints is not a gruesome time, but a joyous one. In November, just as the life of nature retreats into the cold earth, the intimations of the spirit abound.

He continues,

“...though we be unaware of it, the dead are close to us and are always ready to respond to our call and to exert on us a far purer and more disinterested influence than that which they exerted in their lifetime. ...It is in memory, as soon as we close our eyes, that we see the significance of every event in our lives and of every action we have performed. ...It is through memory that our soul enters into itself and becomes aware of our inner essence; through memory, also, without any effort of will on our part, the saints manifest their holiness and receive the honor which is their due.”

In November the fallen leaves line the banks of the creek. Then a gentle rain falls for five days and I am there, on the old iron bridge, looking down at the limpid water flowing below. It is perfectly clear, moving at a leisurely pace, carrying the bright yellow leaves, slowly turning them over and over, heading for the river, the ocean, or who knows where. I shall never forget that sight.



Rites of Passage – Bill Puryear, Artist

Venues

**Fine Art in Brentwood – Show and Sale November 30 -December 2, 2007,
Brentwood Academy 219 Granny White Pike, Brentwood, Tennessee**

**Bill Puryear, Featured Artist, Gallatin Junior Service League – Ninth Annual Art In
Bloom Show - February 22-23, 2008, Bluegrass Country Club, Hendersonville,
Tennessee**