



Maryann Ficker

A BOOK

OF FACES

*For all my friends, old and new, who sat
for a painting and shared their stories.*



“Why struggle to open a door between us,
when the whole wall is an illusion.”

— Rumi

To Open A Door

For 13th century Sufi mystic, Rumi, the wall between us may be an illusion, but in the 21st century U.S., the wall feels very real. This book, along with its accompanying deck of cards is a knock at the door, a peek through a crack in the wall, to see what we might have in common with another, to find out, if we are willing, if there can be an exchange through the wall.

The images on the cards and in the following pages are from fifty-three oil paintings on 5" x 7" panels that were painted from life. Each person was asked, when they sat for their portraits, what they would like to bring into their lives and what they would like to release from their lives. The participants had been given these questions and most had given thought to their answers ahead of time. They spoke about how the changes could be realized. Each of the portrayed had time for reflection, for planning and, sometimes, for change between two painting sessions. The text, accompanying each image is the result of notes that were taken during these sessions and so, reflect back to the portrayed what they said; what was on their mind, their situation at the time and the advice they had for themselves.

This gathering of people is not meant to represent a particular group, or breadth of people, or even a random sample. They are, simply, the people who showed up when asked to participate, those who were interested, willing, available and found their way to the painting sessions. They knew what they were getting into, agreed to it and sincerely participated. Each of the portrayed has their own particularities, although there are common threads in the texts. All of us would like to release fear, anxiety and negativity from our lives, and all of us want to be joyful and happy, though not everyone spoke of these things. Each person applied their own wisdom and experience to their individual situation.

You can use the cards and accompanying texts as a way to connect with the portrayed and explore your common humanity. See if you can learn something from their struggles, intelligence and judgement. How does the Book of Faces speak to you, in your life, about your trials and circumstance? As with other divination tools, such as tarot, oracle cards, runes or the I Ching, you can ask a question and seek an answer in the form of advice, or, more sagely, you can ask a question and seek understanding. Listen to what the cards and text have to say to you about your issue. Does anything speak to you? What does it bring up for you? Is there something for you to learn?

If you are familiar with tarot or other cards, use your experience and intuition in posing a question and choosing cards. For the novice, it is suggested that you first make yourself fully present and relaxed. Take a deep breath, hold it for a moment and let go as you exhale and relax. Let go of physical tension and bring your attention fully to the present moment. Choose a concern that you would like to address. Try to formulate it as a question in which you do not relinquish your agency. For example, rather than asking, "What should I do about...?", try asking "What do I need to know about...?" or "What are my options regarding...?". Pose your question and then let go of your agenda or wish for a particular answer, so that you can hear what the cards have to say. You

can be creative about how you choose the cards in answer to your question. Shuffle them, lay them face down and randomly choose one, or two. Or shuffle them until one or more pop out. Or shuffle them, lay them face down and choose three to represent past, present and future influences on the situation. You might choose a card to represent each of the people involved in a situation and then another card to represent an outcome. Pick three cards to represent thoughts, emotions and actions regarding a situation. Make up your own methods or use traditional card layouts, such as the Celtic cross. After you choose cards, use the Book of Faces to look up the meaning of each card, which is the text associated with the card. The texts are presented in alphabetical order, by name of the portrayed. Read the text and listen for the parts that resonate with you and your query, some of it may not apply. Try conversing with the cards. If a card brings to mind another question, ask that question.

Through a crack in the wall (or an open door), can you be touched by someone else's struggles and wisdom? Can they help you see something in a new way and perhaps gain some understanding?





Brando

Brando

Get outside and play! Also, exercise your imagination. Find sources of inspiration for your imagination and spend time with them. Use your creative talents to bring your ideas to life, to empower you and help the forces of good overcome evil in the world.

Spend time with your best buddy or mentor unearthing reading material, movies and whatever sparks your flights of fancy. Explore these together. Having an interested companion on your journey always makes it more captivating and exciting. With your imagination inspired, draw on whatever creative skills you possess to conjure up your invented world. Imagine yourself in this world and how you could use your particular gifts or superpowers for the benefit of all. Draw on your expressive ability to make this world meaningful to others and more concrete.

Exercising your imagination can be complimented and balanced by getting outside and exercising your body. Keep it fun and active. Invite your friends and family to play your favorite outdoor sports with you. This will benefit them, as well as you. Your imagination, creative expression and your joie de vivre are your superpowers. Use them to do good in the world.





Dana

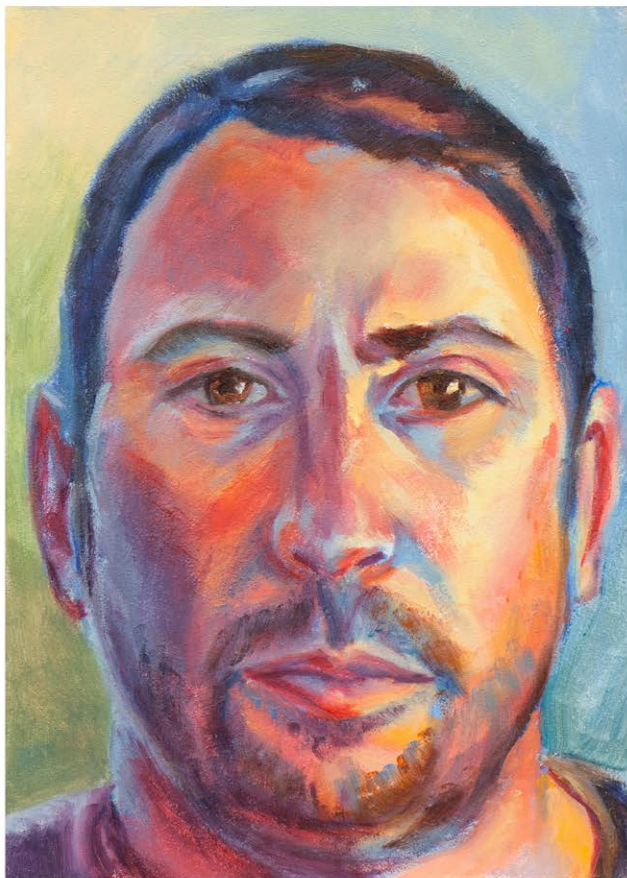
Dana

This is a time of transformation, a time to let go of what is no longer true to you, making space for the new to come in. You may not know what is coming, but know that something will come that will inspire change and growth.

Your body, your spirit and your life situation are all energetically connected. Changes in, or issues with, your body parallel what's happening for you spiritually and in your life. What manifests in one area will show up in the others, as well. For example, a wisdom tooth can be thought of as your tooth that chews on spiritual wisdom. When you lose it, to decay, it is because you haven't made the decisions necessary to maintain that tooth, i.e. to brush it and take care of it. This is a physical representation of what is happening in your life and spirit. Perhaps you have not made the decisions necessary to tend to your spiritual growth. You have not brushed off old beliefs that no longer hold true.

In this moment of transformation, let go of old religious or spiritual beliefs from childhood that no longer hold true. Also, let go of the parts of your job, occupation or business that no longer interest you. Your body and soul will need to heal from letting go. Take time to mourn whatever is lost and to honor its release. Recognize that this is a sensitive time, and you need gentleness, kindness, comfort and love. Be gentle towards yourself, and ask it from others. Be aware that when we release, we receive. Make room for growth. Generate more self-understanding - become more you, more comfortable with who you are. Make decisions based on what you do and don't like. Be direct and clear about what you want and need; be bold and courageous enough to create it. Generate a mindset of limitless possibility in your business. The most important thing to remember is that it is all a celebration. You are constantly growing and changing for your highest good. Give attention to what is happening in your body, your life and your soul and you will see the changes taking place.





Darren

Darren

Consider issues of blame versus self-possession. How do they operate in your life and in the world? It is easy to get entangled in a web of blame, but if you are open, the universe will provide you with opportunities to learn of a way through.

Blame can be a tool. There are people who do bad things. Blaming holds them accountable. On a personal level, blame helps you identify your boundaries and what hurts you. We are conditioned to blame, but it is not an end in itself; it is a means to what lies beyond. You will be presented with indicators showing you the way through blame to forgiveness. When you arrive at forgiveness, that is the point at which you are completely in control of yourself.

When you are enmeshed in blame it can be hard to find a way out. Observing interactions in nature, traveling to other cultures and religious teachings can help you step outside of yourself and see how blame functions. For example, in nature, the relationship between prey and predator demonstrates that good and evil depends upon your point of view. The mouse can not expect to receive an apology from the hawk, who is just hungry, after all. Another example is a situation in which a do-gooder, attempting to make corrections to the balance of power, causes more harm. Intentions may be good but the execution is wrong. Observing this, we can learn that not everyone who causes us harm, wishes us ill. Also, we see that we are all part of an ecosystem. We must be careful where we place our good intentions and take responsibility and corrective action when unintended consequences prevail. Traveling outside of your native habitat, you may even bump into your own power and privilege, which you were unaware of. If you seek ways to overcome your sticking points, the universe will provide lessons and inspiration.





Hamish

Hamish

Seek solitude, peace, quiet and tranquility.

You are very sensitive, an observer, a thinker, who needs to spend time in contemplation and does best attending to one thing at a time. Having the disposition of an academic, you are studious and work well alone. At times, your innocence requires others to keep you safe.

Avoid unexpected, sudden change and sudden, loud noises. Be prepared when you engage in playful activity so that you expect the antic and can enjoy it. Maintain your boundaries; when physical contact becomes too much for you, be sure to remove yourself from the situation and find a quiet place for some solitude. Spend time in nature, observing wildlife. Find a place where you are elevated above the fray and can look down and analyze the goings on in the world below.





Hilary

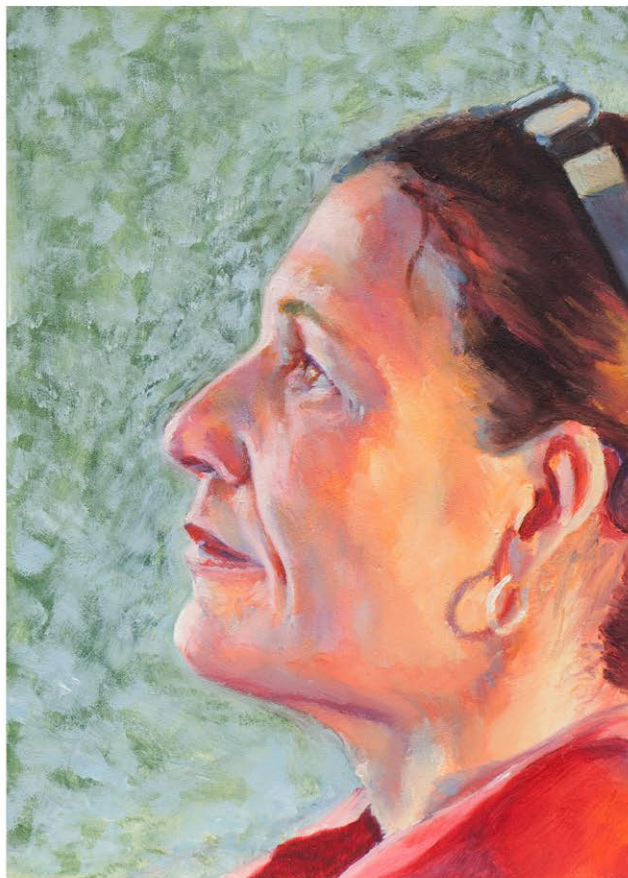
Hilary

You are a free spirit who values the freedom to choose to do what you want, when you want. Take each day and each moment as it comes, rather than constantly striving towards a goal. Accommodate spontaneity and free spiritedness into an overall structure of your life and maintain this framework as the status quo. But try to accept change, which is inevitable.

Within that framework, say yes to all opportunities, to everything that life has to offer. Say yes to fun, movement, dance, running, food, frivolity, art, excursions, and travel. Say yes to friends: to laughter with friends, activities with friends, being together and feeling comfortable together. Join groups, host gatherings and attend events. Enjoy the people you work with; get to know them and their families. Spend time with children – make them part of your life. Give of yourself; it is satisfying to be needed.

Your planet needs you, as well. Be conscious of your impact on the planet, and take it to heart. Feel every piece of garbage you generate. Teach the children in your life to be appreciative of their planet. Educate adults, too, when you see them not doing their part to protect the earth.





Johanna

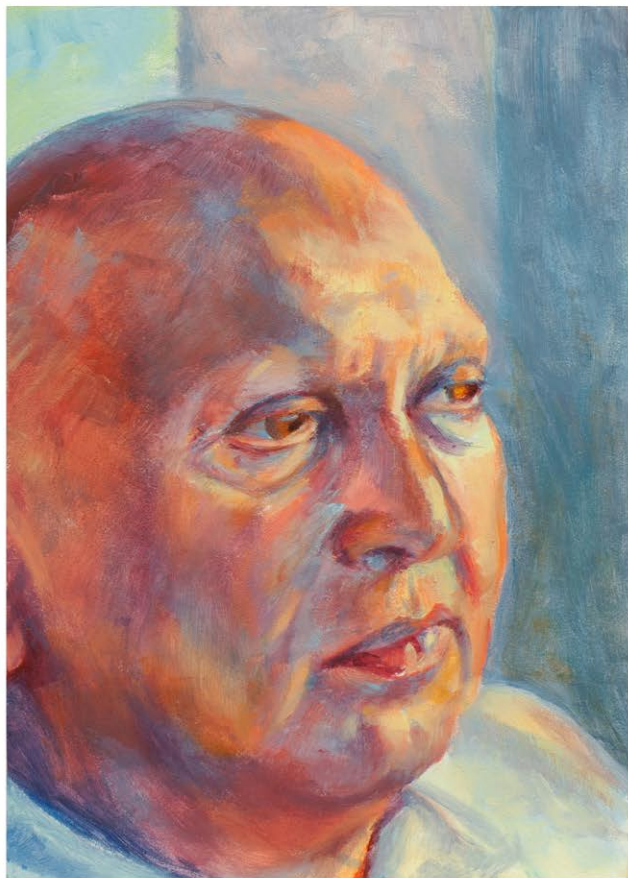
Johanna

You find yourself in multiple positions of authority at this time. Having earned these positions, you can now become comfortable with power. It no longer serves you to be quiet, small, contained. Don't let others impose limits on the influence that the positions confer upon you. Take on an attitude of fearlessness, expansiveness and big-heartedness in wielding power. Expand beyond the stereotypical execution of your duties, and test the limits. Balance the obligations of your role as leader with using your authority to do good in the wider world.

In the past, you may have felt the impulse to 'fix' yourself, to be considered morally good and to be absolved. Release the 'shoulds' you carry around and direct that energy of needing to correct yourself outwards, using your influence in efforts to correct real social problems.

Compared to men, women in authority can be expected to apologize for exercising control. Expect this double standard, be ready, and don't self-censor. You do not have to abide by the expectations that other people have for your role. Remind yourself of this. Be aware and observe how interactions and expectations are playing out. If you assume confidence, you will be surprised by how much respect you receive. When there is pushback, you can raise the issue that bias may be involved. Be willing to push boundaries – you can take up more room than you thought was possible.





Rohit

Rohit

You have received the beauties of life, have not missed out on anything and feel satisfied. Health can be a concern, but as long as you do everything you can to take care of yourself, you can only wish for better health. Maintain a poetic view of life. Here to wander through the garden of life, you come with nothing and go with nothing. There is nothing to accomplish, other than to wander.

Here is a story. A passerby encounters a man sitting idly under a tree, and the passerby asks, "Why are you just sitting there, doing nothing? Why don't you go do something?" The sitter asks what he should do. The passerby tells him to go to school, and the sitter asks why he should go to school. The reply is, "You should go to school so that you can then get a job." They banter back and forth like this, with the passerby telling him that he should get a job so that he can then get married, so that he can have kids, so that he can retire, so that he can then sit under the tree. The sitter replies, of course, that he is already doing just that.

The point of this story is that you come to rest, to die, only after you have completed the cycle of life. As long as you have desires, you have not completed the cycle. When all desires have been fulfilled, death comes, we go away and then there is nothing. All the stuff you desire in life will have no meaning in the end. Your desire is what gives it meaning. Desire is what keeps you going through life.





Teresa

Teresa

You need to slow down and learn to be present. Make plans for the future but planning for the future does not mean living in the future. Assess your values, live by them and plan by them.

Devote more time to rest, travel and being with friends. Too much idle time would not be good, though, as you are a doer who cares deeply about social injustice and need to make a contribution towards righting the wrongs you see around you. Plan to implement some major life changes in the future with these priorities in mind. Life, however, can not be lived in the future, it can only be lived in the present moment. Savor each moment, it is where the magic of life happens.

Anxiety can cause you to worry about what is coming next. When you worry about what is next, you rush. When you rush, you not only miss out on life, you make mistakes and waste time. This can feed the anxiety. Woah there, slowdown! You want to interrupt this cycle. Stop what you are doing, breathe, count to ten, appreciate the moment, interact with whoever is present and then continue. Anxiety can also have physical causes, which you may want to look into and remediate if possible. Plan a future that will not require you to work so much so you have time for travel and friends. Allow yourself time for a break before you go on to the next phase of your life which will include work that gives you an opportunity to contribute to causes that you believe in.

