



## ***Close to the Sun***

Dorothea Stockmar

*Everything seems to be good as it happens.*

*There is no need to distinguish between good or bad, perfect or imperfect, complete or incomplete.*

*Like facing the sky: there are no such things as good or bad clouds!*

*The sky is simply blue.*

*Put at ease, I feel like I am in heaven. It is the day of my arrival; an arrival after a long and extended journey. And the sky was blue.*

## A glimpse of insight into another world

Dorothea Stockmar

Many people do not like to talk about connections between the living and the dead. Talking about these issues can often lead to being considered odd. Surveys, however, show that experiences of spontaneous Near and After-Death Communication through which “contact” with deceased persons might be experienced can considerably lessen the grief of a bereaved person, in particular of people who have lost a life partner or child. As a grief counsellor, having experienced the pain of loss myself, I completely agree with this statement – a statement which can be found in a number of articles dealing with grief. Especially after the sudden death of my 17-year-old son nearly four years ago, I found out how meaningful and helpful near-death experiences can be.

Even though I felt like I had followed my child into death right away, in time I learned to approach loss and pain in a more spiritual way. It still seems incomprehensible to me, but in all I did to express my grief, when I was painting, shaping clay or stone, making collages from bits of paper or writing down my inexpressible feelings, I came closer to my beloved child, although in a different light.

At the same time I heard about a new therapeutic method called IADC (Induced After-Death Communication). It's a therapy which was first introduced by the American psychologist Dr. Alan Botkin in order to support the natural instinct of the bereaved searching for those they have lost. I still remember how surprised I was when I realized the strength I was able to draw from this therapy. Together with the trauma psychologist Juliane Grodhues, I later wrote a book about my experiences (*Like a Wave from another Shore – After-Death Communication between Art and Psychotherapy*). I am sure this therapy will be of great help to people dealing with pain and loss. For me it constituted an important milestone, bringing to mind my earlier near-death experiences.



*Breakthrough*

Fifteen years of work as a volunteer in the hospice movement, and especially an internship at a Buddhist hospice in Japan 2005, have given me the opportunity to come close to death. In the mountainous region of Japan in the middle of winter I had my own near-death experience (NDE). I came to see what can only be *seen* by the heart.

In order to come closer to the message of my heart I began to search for means through which I might be able to express my impressions of NDEs. Thus I chose art as a tool. I did not stop painting. Night after night and day after day I let my feelings flow out of my mind into my paintings. Thus my near-death experiences became visible: Insights like reflections in a very far away mirror.

I asked myself where all the images that inhabited my canvas came from. I had no answer. Thus I began to look for words and expressions which might underline my paintings and bring the message of my experience closer to the viewer. “*Dying is the most difficult part of evolving*” was one of the expressions I chose as titles for my pictures.

Together with Angela Linders, a filmmaker and saxophonist, I started experimenting with sound, words and pictures and arranged so-called "installations" which should bring the idea of a near-death experience closer to the public. In Germany we already had the opportunity to present these installations: once in a church event, and the other time as part of an exhibition during FlotART in 2012. For the last installation I chose the title "And the sky was blue". I intentionally skipped the subtitle, "Near-Death Experiences in another Light," for I was afraid that people might refrain from coming. How surprised I was the other day when a famous political magazine, *Spiegel*, fluttered into my house showing a lead article dealing with near-death experiences.

I immediately felt affirmed in my activities. The time seems to be ripe for dealing with presentations focussing on a new consciousness. I got the feeling of having arrived at the right place with my pictures, such as the exhibition with two other artists at the opening of the German NDE Network conference 2011. (Alois Serwaty, Chairman of the German NDE Network, has already reported on this exhibition under the title: "Transcendence – and the Window to Heaven was Open" in *Vital Signs*, Winter, 2011).

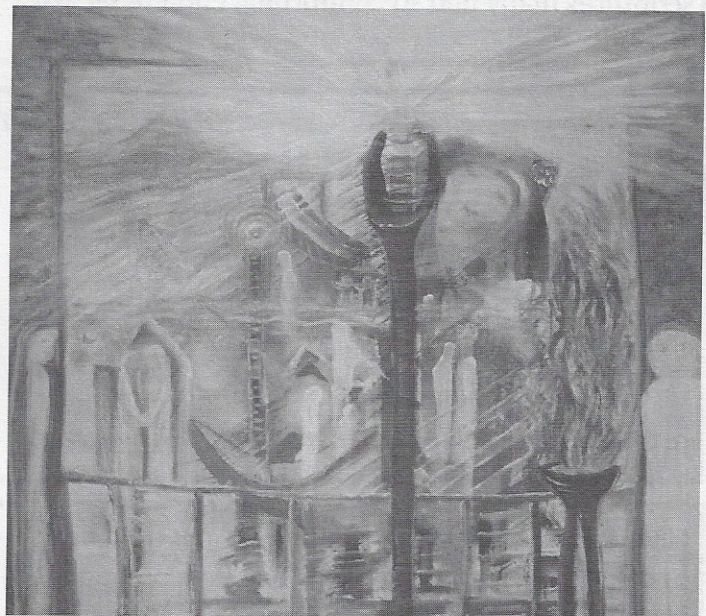
One of my pictures represents a tree missing a branch. The missing of a branch from the crown seems to me like the loss of my child. But at the same time it feels like an opening which allows me, at times, a glimpse of insight into another world.

"The Sky was Blue" is the night I died. There is nothing spectacular about dying – the whole life concentrated in one single moment. The thread of my life seems to extend on and on. I feel wrapped up in an all-embracing light. Not a sound is to be heard, deathly silence all over the place. A silence enamoured with love.

Everything takes its course while life outside passes by as if nothing has happened. To die seems to be the most natural thing in the world, like switching on the TV in order to look for a new program – a clicking sound of a kaleidoscope before all the scattered mosaic pieces form a new image: Different aspects of an old and familiar game! Everything

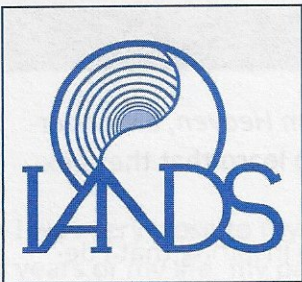
seems to be good as it happens. There is no need to distinguish between good or bad, perfect or imperfect, complete or incomplete. Like facing the sky, there are no such things as good or bad clouds! The sky is simply blue. Put at ease, I feel like I am in heaven. It is the day of my arrival, an arrival after a long and extended journey. And the sky was blue.

*Dorothea Stockmar is an artist based in Germany (Celle and Berlin), focusing on symbolic-creative impulses for healing grief and mourning. Audiovisual installations are based on themes like: "Picture of Language – Language of Pictures," "Healing of Art – Art of Healing, in a different light." She trained as a death and grief counsellor, interned at a Buddhist hospice in Japan, and processed her own grief, after her youngest child's sudden death, by painting and writing books: Ein Netz, das trägt (A Net That Holds), Santiago, 2010; Wie eine Welle vom anderen Ufer – Nach-Tod-Begegnungen zwischen Kunst und Psychotherapie, (Like a Wave from another Shore – After-Death Communication between Art and Psychotherapy), MEDU, 2012; Anker, Kuh und Kompass – Wenn aus Trauersymbolen Hoffnungssymbole werden, (Anchor, Cow and Compass – When symbols of grief turn into symbols of hope), MEDU, 2012. ☼*



*Burning fire*

To view Dorothea's artwork in color -  
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## Learning from Geese



Thank you to Patricia Suggs

For sharing her blog with Vital Signs:

[www.coachingchurchleaders.com](http://www.coachingchurchleaders.com)

I saw the most amazing sight the other day. A female Canadian goose was sitting on her eggs with the male goose a few feet in front of her standing guard. Near the nest was a white female goose and her mate helping this couple guard their eggs. Seeing this picture warmed my heart. A picture of love and loyalty.

As I ponder that scene, I find myself asking, 'what can we learn from them?' The world, our country, our state, our communities are fraught with problems, stresses and chaos. Even our families seem out of control at times. So what can we take from the geese that can help us move forward with feelings of love and peace?

Working in the area of conflict resolution has taught me that the most important thing we can learn to do is to listen, truly listen to one another. When there is disagreement, respect the other person and even at times, agree to disagree. We must demonstrate love and compassion in all of our interactions. We must show the loyalty of the geese.

Loving one another demands loyalty and grace.