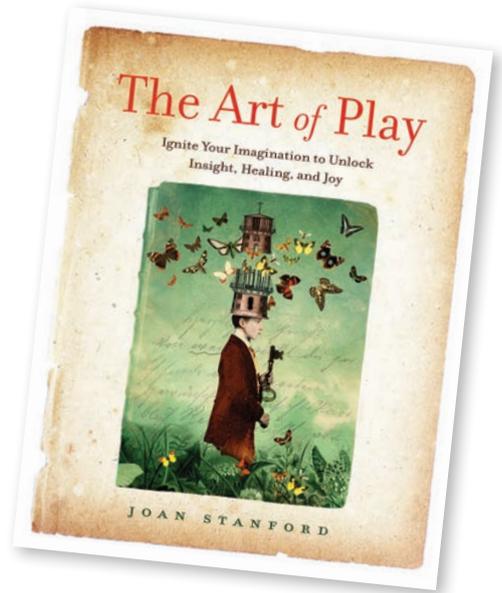


BOOK REVIEW

THE ART OF PLAY: Ignite Your Imagination to Unlock Insight, Healing and Joy

By Joan Stanford



Reviewed by Peggy Templer



Author Joan Stanford.
Sid Garza-Hillman photo.

The Art of Play is a beautiful and very touching book. It is a compelling composite of memoir, coffee table art book, and a how-to book on healing through art therapy. The book focuses on how to recover and reclaim the joy, unfettered creativity, imagination, and spontaneity we all once had as children, by expressing ourselves through artistic play.

The author, Joan Stanford, stresses throughout that one need not be a trained artist to be able to draw, paint, sculpt, collage and write in ways that are soul satisfying and personally meaningful. She illustrates her own journey, as she intuitively learned to address adult crises, disappointments and doubts through a process of exploration and discovery with a variety of art media. Throughout the book, Joan

encourages readers to go beyond the usual stumbling blocks that prevent us from accessing our child selves through art, the most notorious excuse being “I don’t have the time.” She shows us how to debunk that myth and carve out the time to be creative in ways that are soulfully rewarding.



Much of the appeal of *The Art of Play* is in the full-page color plates of Joan’s own artwork, each piece illustrative of some state of mind, some insightful vision, or some crisis that inspired it. Also extremely noteworthy is her poetry, another form of art beautifully crafted by the author.

Joan Stanford is able, in this book, to infuse us with “a sense of wonder that opens our eyes to the extraordinariness of existence.” She takes us along on her own journey of self-discovery and encourages us to “invite your child self to come out and play.” This is a journey well worth taking, with a perceptive and gently motivating guide.

The Art of Play, published by She Writes Press (2016), is available at Gallery Bookshop, Stanford Inn by the Sea, and the Mendocino Art Center, as well as online and at other bookstores.

Connector, collage, 6" x 5".



Yellow Bird, collage, 5" x 4.5".