

In the Midst of a Moment: Slow Blogging with Barbara Bash

By Lyn Hartley

On a bleak February afternoon, a curious e-mail appeared in my inbox with an invitation from Barbara Bash to visit her visual blog. What caught my attention were the words Barbara used to describe the process she would be using to create it: "I will be posting more images from my sketchbooks occasionally, following the path of slow blogging."

Hmm, what a concept, "slow blogging." My interest piqued, I immediately visited the web site to find an intimate view of the world through the eyes of an artist. Reminiscent of her illustrated books, Barbara's blog consists of fluid images complimented by minimal yet striking words.

The process of entering the Internet world was not an easy step for Barbara. She recalls numerous attempts to find a way to offer her quiet illustrative expression into the fast electronic world: "I felt like I was holding a delicate little leaf at the edge of this huge rushing river. And I'm thinking, 'I'm going to toss my gentle offering in there? I don't think so!'"

Over the years, Barbara has kept illustrated journals and many friends and colleagues saw the potential of using the Internet to share this work with the bigger world. "People visit my studio, look through my sketchbooks, and respond to the intimacy of the form. My book *True Nature* explored this journaling form further, on-the-spot, fresh in the moment, visual and verbal. It has become a path of slowing down and self connection that I wanted to offer out to a world where everything is moving so fast."

A friend of Barbara's suggested she post her images from past sketchbooks. But she realized that she wanted the work to be new like fresh bread, created in this moment, in this season. "It was riskier and more interesting to open to the unknown. This fresh immediate voice seems to be the nature of the blogging form. My own version has become a kind of visual haiku."

This past winter, Barbara was looking through the Sunday New York Times and discovered a piece about people doing "slow blogging." The article deeply resonated with her: "rather than having blogs where you post everyday, people were using them as a form of meditation, a chance to self connect, to post at a slower pace."

Just the idea of slow blogging was the counterbalance she needed to enter the speed and force of the Internet. "The name slow blogging gave me some permission to trust my voice. It gave me a place to enter."

But she still didn't start her own web page, though the idea rumbled and ruminated within. Then in January, Barbara went to Obama's Inauguration in Washington DC. "Even though it was going to be bitterly cold a friend suggested I take my sketchbook. And I got a few things down - with cold fingers and wide eyes - walking down to the Mall. I caught some details and rode the energy!"

The illustrations from this amazing event proved to be the starting point for Barbara's slow blog. "The inauguration got me going - that sense of stepping into a new world. And I wanted to create something very text light, like a haiku. It's a format where I can offer something up and then hear back from people right away. I'm really enjoying creating something that is meeting a need for taking a break, taking a breath. It takes stepping into uncertainty to say, "I'm going to see what happens when I walk outside. I'm going to be open to what shows up, and record that. It's about staying with your experience. If it helps me connect with myself, it might help someone else connect with themselves."

And why is slow blogging so important to Barbara?

"Right in the midst of each moment, there is a space to be aware of ourselves. That is the true ground we stand on. I want to do that for myself and offer that reminder to others through this blog. From that slower view we might take a fresh look, and appreciate this precious world."

Check out Barbara's slow blog - True Nature -
at: <http://barbarabash.blogspot.com>