



In a dark time, the eye begins to see... Roethke

Art & Soul Online

April 17 – May 22, 2021

Preparation Information

Welcome! We are very pleased you'll be joining Doug for the virtual gathering of Art & Soul Online! Please read this letter carefully, as it contains important information regarding our time together with suggestions for how to tend to yourself and your space in order to cultivate as much depth and sacredness as possible. If you have any questions prior to the start of the program, you are welcome to email Doug at doug@dougvanhouten.com or Jeanine, Animas Program Manager at soulcraft@animas.org.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

This online program will meet via Zoom from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm Pacific time, on the following Saturdays: April 17, 24, May 1, 8, 15, 22, 2021.

There will also be an opportunity for two 1-hour one-on-one conversations with Doug, the first to be scheduled during the weeks of the program, and the second to be scheduled during the weeks of the program or up to a month after the program ends.

Out of respect for the entire group and the sacred space we are cultivating, please be on time and plan to stay for the full duration of our calls, as well as the full duration of the program. Please also make an effort to be a full participant during our time together. We realize that you will likely be sheltering at home and creating art and wandering from there. The more space you can create between you and daily, middle-world habits and routines, the more you will likely be able to shift consciousness and perception towards the natural world and the inner depths. This will serve your enchantment and transformative experience during the program.

Between our online sessions, you will be invited to engage in particular practices in the vicinity of the place you inhabit – either nearby wild lands, urban parks and open space, your own backyard, or a sunny balcony or patio – wherever you may encounter the natural world. Please note these wanders are the central experiential elements that will create richness, enchantment, transformation, consciousness shifting, and empowerment in your embodiment, all of which will serve the art practices/process. Please be sure to allow for plenty of time in your schedule to tend to them. We'll be sharing stories of our deepening into participation with wild nature and engagement with mystery.

ZOOM INFORMATION: Here is the link for our Zoom calls – we will use this same link for all of our online sessions:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82227381585?pwd=am50VVdFWmlqSkxCbGIVY3N1MTRFPQT09>

Meeting ID: 822 2738 1585

Passcode: 041276

One tap mobile - find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82227381585>

We'd like to start our group meetings promptly so please be sure to log on 5 minutes prior to each session and mute yourself in Zoom. Using a headset is helpful (wireless is best so you can move) to minimize excess noise. Prepare to be video-enabled for the duration of our time together.

Making ZOOM Meetings Sacred:

We don't have the luxury of stepping away from our daily lives to gather in a wild place together. The habits of our daily lives will constantly be bidding for your attention. Below are some ideas for how to tend to your time and space/container and make the most out of this online program:

- Set intentions and make a commitment to them.
- Plan on getting to your computer and getting set up 10-15 minutes early to work out any issues, shift consciousness, and arrive in a good way.
- Find a place in your home that is free of distractions.
- It might be important for you to be near a window, or outside, or comfortable on the floor. Please be sure the place you choose has a strong internet signal.
- Please be prepared to be present for the duration of the program. We will invite ample breaks to move and stretch.
- *We've also found it best to schedule additional time-blocks to be on the land or engaged in personal practice ahead of time.* Many people find time adjacent to our sessions being the most potent for maintaining a shift in consciousness. There are many distractions that can come up at home, and scheduling in advance helps for smooth transitions from Zoom to the wild.

FOOD AND WATER:

We invite you to nourish yourself during your own time and during breaks. Please do not eat during our group times. Feel free, of course, to have water bottles at the ready. Please take good care of yourself during our days together.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Please know that these immersions are intended to be highly interactive, experiential and participatory. We will be engaged in dialogue, occasional movement, group ceremony, council, practice, and reflection together. Despite being online, these Zoom sessions will ask more than passive participation from each of us.

Note that our sessions together will NOT be recorded to encourage live participation, and to ensure confidentiality. If a particular part of a session is to be recorded and distributed, the guides will let you know.

In addition to our online gatherings, your guide will be giving you nature-based invitations and tasks to perform on your own during the time in between our online gatherings. **Plan to spend significant time each week in a wildish place**, creating art, journaling and recording your dreams. The art that you create will happen almost entirely outside of our time together in group.

You will also have two 1-hour individual conversations with Doug to be scheduled, the first to be scheduled during the weeks of the program, and the second to be scheduled either during the weeks of the program or up to one month after the program ends. These conversations will offer you a unique opportunity to share your personal experiences and questions in more detail and depth, get more personalized guidance, and more fully integrate the material into your personal journey of soul.

We suspect that the depth of listening and insights available to us now collectively is greatly heightened in this time of crisis and uncertainty, and we look forward to the magic of our work together to support us to access those depths.

WHAT TO BRING:

- Be sure you have adequate clothing to match your local weather conditions so that you can plan to be outside during our days together, regardless of the weather temperatures.
- You may want to have items available to help you shift consciousness. We've found things such as smudge, aromatherapy scents, rattles, drums, evocative artwork or music, movement, and periods of silence and meditation to be helpful when shifting into sacred consciousness.
- You may want to have a special talking piece with you to hold while you are sharing in council.
- Always have a journal and pen handy.
- Smartphone, iPod, or earbuds for audio recordings (deep imagery, or wander invitations).
- Some of you might be called to create collages during this program. Please begin to collect magazines, calendars and other printed material. Send a call out to friends and family for their extra magazines and other printed materials.
- Gather any art material that you intuit will be a part of how you work with your imagery: crayons, markers, glue sticks, scissors, pastels, drawing paper, paint and brushes, masks, fabrics, found objects in nature, etc...

SAFETY PROTOCOLS:

During this online program you will be invited to participate in self-led activities — both indoors and outdoors — that cannot be supervised by guides. **We ask that you designate a contact person and notify this person where you will be wandering and when you expect to return.** Depending on your location and circumstances, we encourage you to be aware of your surroundings and avoid intrinsic hazards such as: extreme or sudden changes in weather conditions; steep, uneven, slippery or otherwise hazardous terrain; dangerous animals, insects or plants; water hazards around rivers, lakes and other waterways; becoming disoriented and losing your way. We also ask you to be aware and mindful of people in the area who may be looking to harm you in some way. Take care not to get yourself into any situation that could be unsafe or threatening to your physical safety. Depending on your situation, it may be wise to carry pepper spray or other defensive tools for protection from dangerous people and creatures. We also suggest you bring along items to keep yourself safe and well in the event of unforeseen circumstances, such as: extra water, food, rain gear, lightweight emergency blanket, emergency whistle, flashlight or headlamp, sun protection, first-aid kit, fire starter, compass, multi-tool, etc. Your safety is very important to us — please keep your heart open but watch your back and take precautions when wandering on your own — thank you!

POLICIES: Thank you for your payment! Please reference <https://animas.org/policy/policies-procedures/> for our complete cancellation policy. Once the program is confirmed, payments cannot be credited or transferred.

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES FOR ART & SOUL:

We believe that enrolling in this intensive is a significant step toward experiencing yourself and your place in the world from a soul-oriented perspective. In the coming weeks, we encourage you to attend closely to the worlds in and around you. Offer your attention to the edge of your waking consciousness (i.e., subtle and fleeting thoughts, feelings, images, perceptions, body feelings, memories, questions, doubts, waking dreams, daydreams), and record in your journal what you find there. Offer your attention more regularly and with care to nature. When something draws your attention — a chattering bird, a wildflower, the evening light on a tree, a coyote howl in the night — take time to allow your awareness to surround it.

More specifically, we invite you to *reflect and journal* upon significant images: visual images, myth, symbol, metaphor, song, gesture, dream, wild other, invisible entities, sounds, movements, landscapes, places, human-made or naturally occurring structures, encounters, and so on... that have captured your attention and have meaning for your life's journey. Perhaps you feel some of these images/experiences have, perhaps startlingly or gently, connected you — even if just for a poignant moment — to mystery, god, your deepest self, the gods and goddesses, a sense of destiny, something greater than human, the ensouled earth? Reflect on this invitation, take a walk with it, doodle, journal, wander... notice what comes up for you.

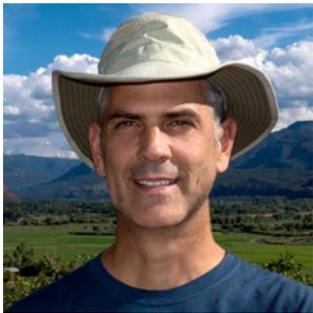
Next, *gather physical representations* of the above, as you can, and have them with you in a bag, a treasure chest, or tucked into your pockets. They can come with you in any form or dimensionality. These images are for you, to remind you of their mysterious presence in your life, to be with you in this Art and Soul exploration, even if you were never to show them to anyone. More generally, please feel free to have near you during our calls any 'art' or objects that are significant to you.

In addition to journaling and gathering as you prepare for *Art & Soul*, we suggest you keep a regular dream journal. If you're having any trouble remembering your dreams, have a long conversation with yourself as soon as you get into bed about the precise reasons why you're interested in recalling your dreams. Review and explore as many of your genuine reasons as you can. Store each reason in a different body part so you can remember them all, and keep up this review until you fall asleep. Have your pen and journal ready at your bedside. Before you turn off the light, write the next morning's date and the words *Dream Report* at the top of a fresh page of your journal. As soon as you wake up, don't move an inch until you have replayed your dream in your imagination. Perhaps give it a title before you move. Then reach for your journal. Transcribe your dream in the present tense as if you are recording actions and experiences that are occurring as you write them. Include all the emotions. It's best not to ask anyone, including yourself, what your dream "means." Instead, spend as much of the day as you can "living within" the dream, submitting yourself to its images and feelings, so that the dream can do its work on you.

Recommended reading: Any of Bill Plotkin's books ~ *Soulcraft*, *Nature & the Human Soul*, *Wild Mind* and *The Journey of Soul Initiation*.

We are looking forward to gathering with you virtually for Art & Soul!

Wildly, *Doug Van Houten* doug@dougvanhouten.com



Doug Van Houten has an eye for the heartbreakingly beautiful and a wild heart that sings in the dark night of his own soul. He is beekeeper, artist, brave explorer of the “darker than darkness”, student/facilitator of the Great Work, and Animas trained vision fast guide. In his own backyard of the rolling Kentucky hills, Doug organizes retreats/conferences/workshops/drumming circles, and festivals in celebration of Earth spirit. Lit by the luminescence of his own dreams, wanderings and visions, his firsthand enraptured experience is a deep exploration of his own dark wounding. Doug has taken a vow to soul, (that would kill him to break), to live consciously with grace and to stay awake. Here, he dances with shadow, hones his artistry, and answers the call to support the soulful opening of others.