

ARTIST PROFILE

Jan Bailey is a well-respected poet and the author of three poetry collections. She continued to write until the death of her mother several years ago. After this pivotal event, she found herself with a serious case of writer's block at the age of 63 (figure 13).

"To be frank, I didn't want to write the usual loss-of-mother poems, and I found myself completely bored with my thoughts," she explains with a wry smile. She considered exploring visual arts instead of words, but she hesitated ... until she found a solution: "I was terrified of paint, brushes, and palettes, but there was nothing frightening about holding a pencil!"



figure 13

Jan Bailey
Writer's Block, 2008
Colored pencil on paper

JAN BAILEY

1944–



figure 14

Jan Bailey
Up a Lazy River, 2007
Colored pencil on paper
11 x 7 inches (27.9 x 17.8 cm)
Courtesy of the Artist

The urge to create took a new direction and emerged in her passionate drawings of everyday items—a cat on a chair or a vase of flowers. These common objects were handy references for her vivid imagination. She calls her artwork "play" and gleefully describes how she often broke pencil points while pressing down hard on the paper to create areas of satisfyingly rich color (figures 14 and 15).

Originally from South Carolina, Jan has lived for many years on Monhegan Island, Maine—a tiny oasis of beauty 12 miles out to sea. The jewel-like palette of her works attests to her love of light and color. During the dark northern winter, she craves color, and through her work is able to tap into a warmer, brighter place.

—Katherine Aimone

AM I THINKING [WHEN I DRAW]? AM
I WRESTLING WITH MY THOUGHTS?
NOT MUCH. I DO KNOW THAT I AM
TAPPING INTO THE CHILD INSIDE,
AND IT FEELS DELICIOUS.

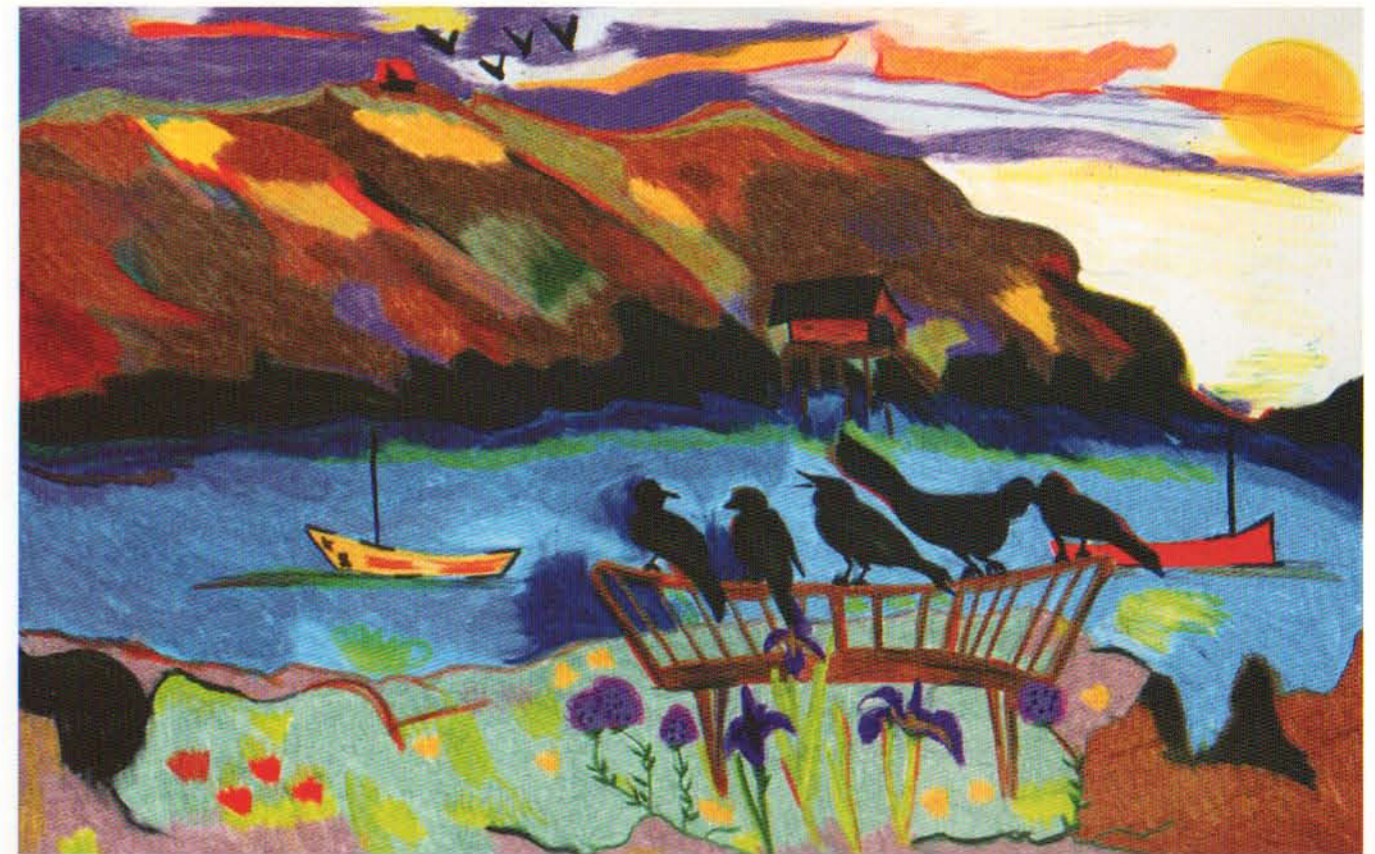


figure 15

Jan Bailey
The Coffee Hour, 2007
Colored pencil on paper
11 x 7 inches (27.9 x 17.8 cm)
Courtesy of the Artist