

**Pat B. Allen, Ph.D., ATR**, is an author, artist, videographer, and art therapist. Her books – *Art Is a Way of Knowing* (Shambhala, 1995) and *Art Is a Spiritual Path* (Shambhala, 2005) – explore the borders between art, psychology, spirituality, and social action. Her recent work has been in the area of permaculture design and she integrates body based learning about ecological issues using the Open Studio Process of intention, art making and witness in natural settings. Also see [www.patballen.com/pages/cv.html](http://www.patballen.com/pages/cv.html)

**S**ystematic review of review of ecopsychology research in five databases (Thompson, 2009)\* reveal mental health professionals documenting the effects of nature-based therapy for adults, children and families (Berger and McLeod, 2006) as well as conducting empirical research exploring why, even with a growing public awareness of environmental issues, many people fail to adjust behaviors known to effect mental and physical health (Cetera, 2004, Metzner, 1995). Contemporary industrialized culture values doing more in less time encouraging multitasking and an “autopilot” mentality disabling the quality of mindfulness in daily living (Amel, Manning and Scott, 2009). Mindful individuals are more likely to seek out choices that embody their highest values, do less harm to the environment, and take into account the well being of others. Winter (2004) advocates mindfulness as a key to reducing overly consumptive behavior. Carl Jung is among the antecedents to the contemporary efforts to study and incorporate spending time in nature to balance and deepen time spent in intellectual pursuits. Jung found in nature verification for the imaginal work that forms the basis of his psychological theory (Sabatini, 2002). Janine Benyus demonstrates the wealth of insight and practical information available through the close study of nature in her work in biomimicry to revolutionize how we invent technologies, heal ourselves, conduct business and feed the world (1997).

Assuming that we can know something without having direct experience is a characteristic of modern life that is proving to have limited worth (Milton, 2009). Reading the research of scholars is insufficient to effect change. For that reason this experiential course will introduce the Open Studio Process (Allen, 1995, 2005) as an embodied practice of close observation of self in the natural world through which we rediscover awe, quiet the mind and restore our native wisdom. We come into intimate contact with the myriad life forms that usually elude us in our busy lives. The tools of intention and witness guide us in beholding the artistry of the world and awaken our intuitive capacity to learn from nature.

The experience of embodiment provides a link between worlds. Through feeling our way into what we see and find as beautiful we unify our inner and outer experience. This linkage has been lost by many of us in the modern world, engendering dissociation from the environment that allows our behavior to range from apathetic to destructive of the living system of which we are a part (Rozak, 1995).

Participants will learn to apply the basic principles of mindfulness in nature and biomicry in the design of nature-based techniques in their personal and professional practice based on their own art based research.

Art making will employ natural and found materials at the site. No prior art, writing or meditation experience is required. This course is relevant for artists, therapists, environmentalists, activists and educators. Participants should bring along a sketchbook/journal and portable simple art materials. Much of the class will take place outdoors regardless of weather; plan clothing accordingly.

### **Monday**

Principles of mindfulness. Observation as the basis of research.

### **Tuesday**

Review of current literature in nature-based therapy and research in environmental change efficacy. Exploration of surrounding area. Finding the research question.

### **Wednesday**

Engaging the creative process in nature.

### **Thursday**

Distilling the research into a form that can be shared. Applying design principles to a professional challenge in therapy, education, or supervision. Designing a research tool to be taken into one's home environment to assess and effect change behaviors.

### **Friday**

Dreaming the work onward. Sharing the results of research and the design solutions with the group. Slide show documenting art projects, performances and research findings.

\*References can be found at <http://www.cape.org/2010/allen.html>