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Hello everyone. Everyone should be able to hear me. Hello and welcome to the release party for *The Nature of Things: Essays of a Tapestry Weaver* by Tommye McClure Scanlin. My name is Jillian Murphy; I am the Assistant Managing Editor for the University of North Georgia Press. I will be moderating the event. Please keep your mics muted to prevent background noise and please submit your questions for the Q&A at the end in the chat feature.

I will be joined by Tommye Scanlin, author of *The Nature of Things*, from the Department of Visual Arts to introduce Tommye.

Pamela Sachant: Thank you very much. Thank you for inviting me to introduce Tommye Scanlin on this momentous occasion: the publication of *The Nature of Things*. The collected essays on her art and life are part memoir, recollection of moments and moods, events and achievements, and part guide.

Now, before Tommye reacts in horror to the suggestion that she intended her book as a guide, or that she herself is a guide, let me give some context. I have known Tommye since I arrived in Dahlonega 15 years ago and I have felt her hand gently guiding me throughout the years as she guided so many others in her role as artist/educator at UNG from 1972–2009. She describes her journey to become one of the first faculty members at North Georgia College in the Department of Fine Arts, as in large part thanks to others showing *her* the path and helping her to take the first steps. But she traveled the road and completed her Bachelor of Art Education in 1969 and her Masters of Art Education in 1973, both at the University of Georgia (UGA).

As a faculty member in the Department of Fine Arts, Tommye was always aware of the many roles  
explored their artistic research. She was their mentor during their creative growth at the college. By the  
time I arrived at the North Georgia College and State University, Tommye had retired as a full-time

I went to North Georgia College as a student. I came back as an instructor and I stayed for many years. North Georgia is where my heart is and always will be, and so thank you for that wonderful introduction. Also, thank you to [yV8h @ u](#) [K](#) [k](#) [K](#) [U](#) <#> [h](#) [@](#)

Both my sister and I were raised with the expectation to do our best no matter what we pursued and each accomplishment was celebrated with us. My sister and I chose different paths, each in the teaching field. She loved sports and became an early childhood physical education teacher. I loved art and became an art teacher. Mother was proud of both of us. My journey to becoming an artist began simply years have been spent close to the mountains where I grew up. Everyday, I still find something to see and wonder about and respond to in a physical way. Maybe in a photograph, sketch, or a tapestry. *The Wizard of Oz* said it best: things where I lived for most of my life and the artworks that came from those observations.

As long as I can remember, I wanted to draw pictures. As a child, I heard others say I was the class artist and that encouraged me to think I could be a real artist when I grew up. What I thought an artist did was two-room school building behind the class of 1954-55 that you see. My second grade picture is -room school the whole time, but we in the rural North Georgia schools I attended. Even so, the kids in our class happily cut out stenciled holiday decorations for each season that we colored with crayons and taped to the windows and doors. We drew with pencils on our lined notebook paper and illustrated reports and in our spare time, several of us girls drew horses and pretty dresses while some of the boys filled pages with elaborate battle scenes between cowboys and Indians.

One Christmas under the tree, I found

I wound up at North Georgia College to study early elementary education. I did not want to be an elementary education major; I wanted to be an art . . . person, whatever an art person happened to be. At North Georgia, I was an elementary education major because, financially, we needed assistance for me to go to college and I happened to get an education degree-seeking scholarship. In the course of doing classes for elementary education, I happened upon Bob Owens, whose picture you see. Bob was teaching some art ed classes for the School of Education and at the time, there was no art education program at North Georgia. Meeting Bob Owens, taking classes with him, and expressing to him my

Oh my goodness, what was that? I had no clue that such a thing existed. So, because of Bob Owens, he directed me as an informal advisor and mentor to the degree program I wound up in, and [I] became an

u 'U better part of a lifetime going into classrooms and standing in front of students. Young ones, old ones, and all ages entered college as an elementary education part of my future. Yes, I now know one can be an artist while occupied with another job while occupied education program at the University of Georgia (UGA) that Bob guided me to opened up the way to be intimately connected to the making side of art. Not only were art education, theory, and practice courses part of the curriculum but also studio art classes were required, and those were most important to me.

The three years I spent in middle and high school art classrooms right after graduation offered many pieces of the larger teaching puzzle I began to put together. Each day, I faced teenage students who were either eager to jump into art making or unsure and unafraid to try things. Then there were a few goof-offs, the kids who were putting up with the system while they did as little as they could to get by. I began to see that almost anyone could become motivated to make something in the art class depending

on the approach I used when presenting a project. I also realized that I needed to say the same thing in different ways. Some students could easily see what to do with the demonstration; others had to have a demo and verbal instructions, and a few only needed to refer to a handout. Some would rather plunge right in and try it their own way.

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early 1980s. Because I loved drawing and painting so much, though, I continued to be drawn to image making with the fiber and fabric methods I was exploring. These are some examples of what I was doing before I was doing tapestry. In 1988, because of a very wonderful summer of serendipity, I finally began to weave tapestry. And now, over 50 years since my first real art class, I still want to be an artist and three decades after beginning to weave tapestry, I still find it to be a challenging medium in which to work. In spite of those challenges, the beautiful surface quality of tradition handwoven tapestry still  
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yarn when I weave tapestry.

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A bit of a closer look at tapestry. I explain it a bit in the

trees. Poems by Billy Collins and Wendell Berry expressing their encounters with nature also moved me. - ) gs held eloquent insights and observations of the natural world that went far beyond simple descriptions. Quotes like By = k @ V waters roil and run . . . @walk in the woods or fields of North Georgia.

u \ u O ‡ @ @ @ U andering hikes offer plenty to contemplate any time of the year. One of the things I wonder about is what a walk in these u been huge like the few that remain in Old Grove Forest, like the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest in North Carolina. No contrails from passing jets would be seen or 4-Wheelers heard. But when I walk amidst the canopy of leaves in the summer, the buzz of insects and the melody of bird songs fill the air, just as surely as they did in the 1800s. In late October and November, the brilliant colors of fall visually shout against the bluest skies in the world. In winter, my feet crunch in the frost covered ground and my breath precedes me on the trail. My heart hurts from the sublime beauty of the new greens of spring.

[Referring to the pictures on screen] u the creek that my husband and I go to periodically V # u Hambidge Center in extreme North Georgia. And the Lillian E. Smith Center. All of these places are ones I return to whenever I can. As I roam through the woods, I wonder how I might possibly represent some @ @ @ @ feel. I realize noticing is the first step of many on my way from a fleeting observation to finished tapestry. Many hours of making and refining images are ahead of me as I attempt to create a tapestry that will create the essence of the place, the time, and my feelings of the experience brief though it may have been. The woods and valleys of the Blue Ridge mountains of Southern Appalachia give me a wealth of subject matter to contemplate. My hope is that something of the sense of wonder and gratitude I hold for the nature of things breathes through the spirit of the tapestries I weave.

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of color represented a different day of the year. In 2015, I continued to do a small section each day of a different color but decided to add a pictorial imagery throughout the month. In 2019, sticks and stones  
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underway this year, 2020.

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instruction out in the world, as well as video and online courses. So my introduction in the book is simply that, an introduction. I do have a resource list in the back that gives a number of places that one can go together with the help of Sam at Home Depot. I wanted to assemble it there before I brought it home to packages and screwing u and elbows together, and he seemed to be very curious about what I was doing, after all.

I hope you enjoy seeing the world through my eyes and reading my words in *The Nature of Things*, if

Jillian Murphy: Thank you so much, Tommye, for sharing that. It really was, level 3 (et) 3 (th) 8 (ty) 12 (w) 000912 (the) 80.00 and transition into the Q&A portion of the event.

Q: What projects are you working on now? What in nature is currently inspiring you?

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What struggles did you experience trying to write about tapestry, which is a visual medium?

I think writing about tapestry is related to weaving tapestry. You spend so much time with a piece that there are a lot of thoughts that go through your head that go through my head, at least that relate to the imagery, that relate to the reason the image is being made. And I think in thinking through those reasons for making tapestry, the words came from that.

Q: Have you ever considered redoing an old tapestry?

I have. I've done a couple of pieces that I've done years later in a different scale, and my technique was much better than it was the first time around. I think I made a better tapestry the second time around. I've done a couple of pieces that I've done woven leaves quite a lot. I return to thematic ideas.

Q: For our last question: What piece of encouragement would you give to others who want to write books about their art?

A: Start writing. And rewrite and rewrite and rewrite. When I was in the work with Schiffer Publishing, I rewrote many times over. I read, reread, and then turn things over to trusted editors, like you and Pam and Margot and Nancy Peacock, Carol Posgrove, people whose eye and minds I trust deeply to take a look at my words and, with honesty and compassion, give me good advice. The advice to somebody writing about their work: Write. Do it.

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You can buy the book from any major retailer or you can buy the book from our local, independent bookstore, Bear Book Market, or request it from your favorite independent bookstore and ask for them . . . . . ‡ . . . . . . Thank you so much. This event link . . . . . yV8 h . . . . . -press. That is where you can find more information about the book, a sample chapter, reviews, and all sorts of wonderful things.

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Jillian: Thank you again everyone. We hope you enjoyed the reading. [Applause and goodbyes]