

The Art of Living

Great art is not restricted to painting, writing, sculpture or music. There is another art at which we all can excel. It is what Henry Thoreau, American author and naturalist, called the highest of arts – the art of living.

People who practice it are not artists in the usual sense. They are people who, through the nobility of their lives, have affected what Thoreau called *the quality of the day*.

Years ago, Myles Connolly, the playwright, wrote a piece dealing with what Thoreau was talking about. Connolly pointed out that there are countless obscure people who practice this art – good people who quietly affect the lives of those about them without even being aware they are doing it, winning no commendation and expecting none.

“Everybody at one time or another has known such people, strangers, relatives or friends,” Connolly said, “who have changed the quality of the day for others. They come into a room in a dark hour – a sickroom, say, or a death room, a room without hope, or merely in an hour when we are lonely or discouraged. They may say little, if anything. But the shining quality of goodness radiates from them, from their mere presence, and where there was dark there is light, where there was cowardice there is courage, and where there was listlessness there is love of life.

“These friends and relatives – or wonderful strangers met at a picnic or a hospital waiting room – all these, humble and unaware, carry with them the kindness and generosity of their lives. These are the greatest artists,” said the playwright. “They practice the highest of arts – the art of living, the art of life itself.”

You know people such as these described by Thoreau and Connolly, and so do I. And I am thankful for the thousands of them who give themselves daily to the practice of the art of living in the centers of Life Care and Century Park and in the work of Life Care at Home.

They are, indeed, artists of the highest sort.

--Beecher Hunter