

## **Artist Statement**

### **Nancy Stroupe**

In many ways "Love Letter" is unlike most of my work, but it does share elements with the painting and printmaking I have done for over 40 years. Maybe the best way to explain its form and origin is to begin by reading the artists statement which accompanies it.

"In the autumn of my life I remember a springtime. This picture is about that time. It is a love letter to my husband John, fashioned from love letters he wrote to me sixty years ago. I had saved the letters all those years, and last summer we agreed to read through them together and then dispose of them.

The summer passed, and John died in November, his letters still unread. I read them alone in February, remembering our courtship and appreciating even more now the man who had written them. I decided then that I must preserve them in some way without betraying their content to the world. This picture is their preservation--colored and shaped words depicting the home and love we shared.

Equinox is both spring and autumn, light and darkness--elements present in every life, every human encounter. In the making of "Love Letter" I was able to remember the spring and autumn of my life with my husband and hopefully to honor him with the work of my hands--this picture. Initially I intended it as a private act, a way of saying goodbye, but that changed as time went on, and I began slowly to share with family and friends what I was doing.

The doing evolved as well. Eager to start while shut in with covid, I searched the studio and found an empty canvas of the right size. A pencil drawing of the composition followed, and then I began to dye the letters with liquid watercolors I had saved from another project. Tearing these and cutting some, I taped shapes together on the canvas to test the harmony and then glued them down with acrylic matt medium when they seemed right. I felt it was important to allow the nature of various letter papers to show as writing or as creases which had been folded to fit envelopes. The object of this undertaking, after all, was not perfection; it was preservation.

Inevitably there were mistakes as I developed the image over many months, and when these occurred I would peel off the offending paper and restate it until it seemed right. At some point in this whole process the critic took over. I wanted a balance of color, value and composition in the tribute to my husband, something I would be comfortable viewing in the years ahead. The artist's ego wanted a perfect picture about a treasured time. Finally I had to fire the critic and that picky artist and acknowledge that it was the doing that really mattered--the remembering, the preserving, the loving--a picture not perfect, but a picture treasured and a picture finished.