

**Time Together.** *poetry by Naomi Beth Wakan. photography by Elias Wakan.*

Brunswick, ME.: Shanti Arts. ISBN 978-1-956056-41-9 Cdn \$29.95  
120 pages. 54 full-color, high resolution photographs  
review by Phyllis Reeve

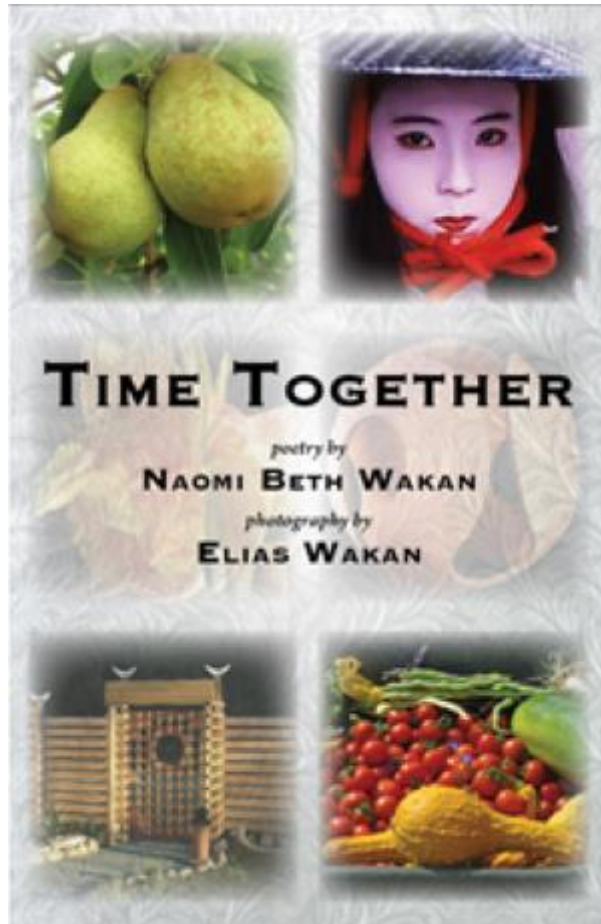
to reach an age  
when things fall away  
unneded  
as spent petals from a flower  
as skins of summer snakes

On the right hand page, this Tanka poem in black type on a grey background. Facing it on the left page a photograph in shades of white and grey of one bowl from a Japanese tea ceremony. Photo and poem, apparently simplicity exemplified, convey what this beautiful little book is all about, a shared life of many years, and now of letting go, but the things which fall away have been precious and details have been noticed.



Naomi and Elias Wakan tested much of the world before, in 1996, choosing Gabriola as the home-base for their parallel art careers. Naomi has been therapist, teacher, publisher, fabric-artist, essayist, poet and internationally known practitioner of Haiku and Tanka. Eli turned his Stanford math and philosophy

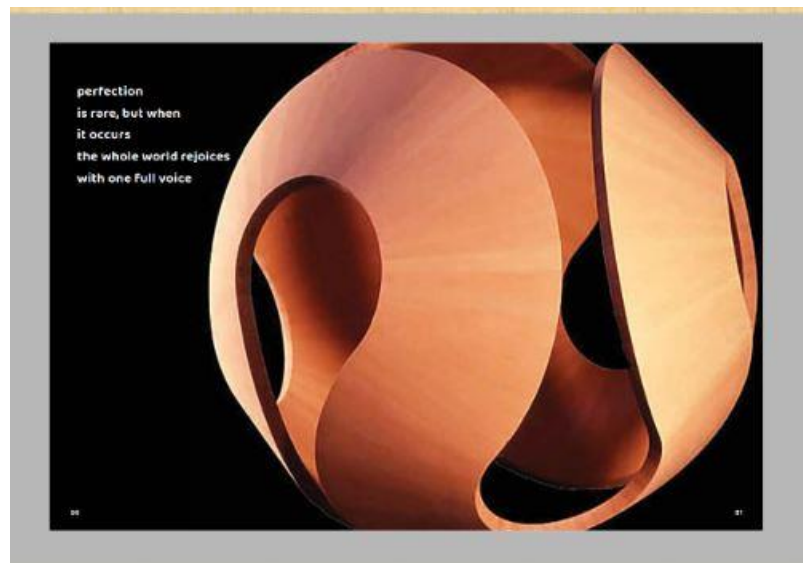
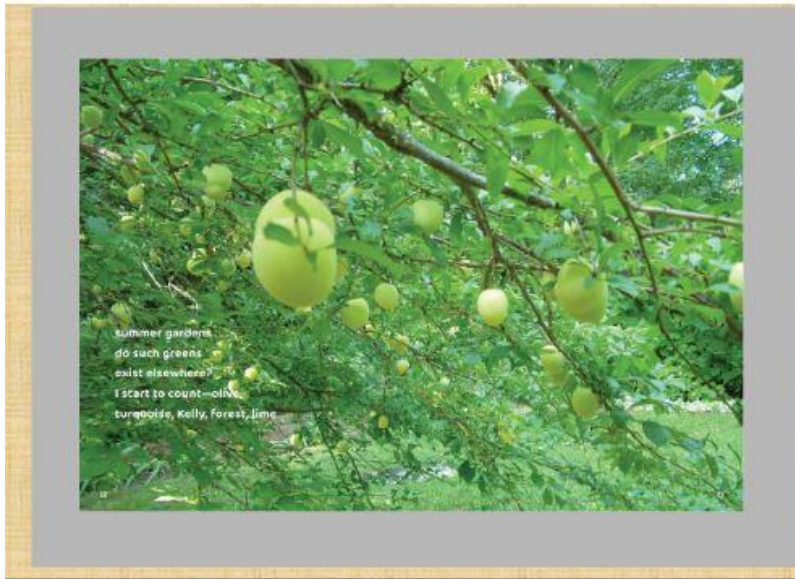
studies into algorithmic constructivism as an art form; i.e. incredibly complicated and endlessly detailed wooden sculptures now in collections far and wide in and out of Canada. He also creates photography of breathtaking clarity and beauty, Eli and Naomi have always proudly supported each other's work, and now collaborate in the aptly titled *Time Together*.



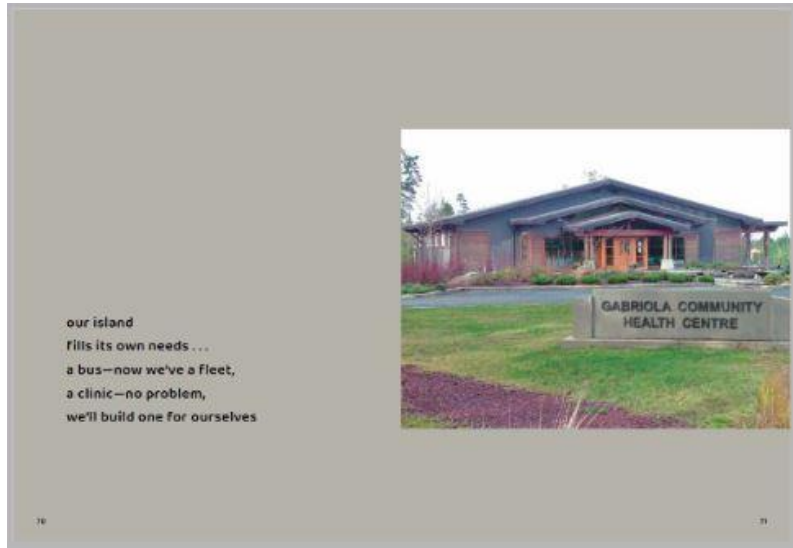
The unassuming cover does not prepare the reader for the richness within. Three sections, "Nature", "Human Nature" and "Creativity" overlap, as they do in life. Each photo has its corresponding Tanka, a tiny perfect 5-line poem based on the Japanese tradition.

Some photos are double-paged with poem superimposed, as in this of the Wakans' giant Japanese Shiro plum tree ("summer gardens/ do such greens/ exist elsewhere? I start to count - olive,/ turquoise, Kelly, forest, lime") or the one of

Elias's sculpture *Triumph*, now in a UK collection ("perfection/ is rare, but when/ it occurs/ the whole world rejoices/ with one full voice."

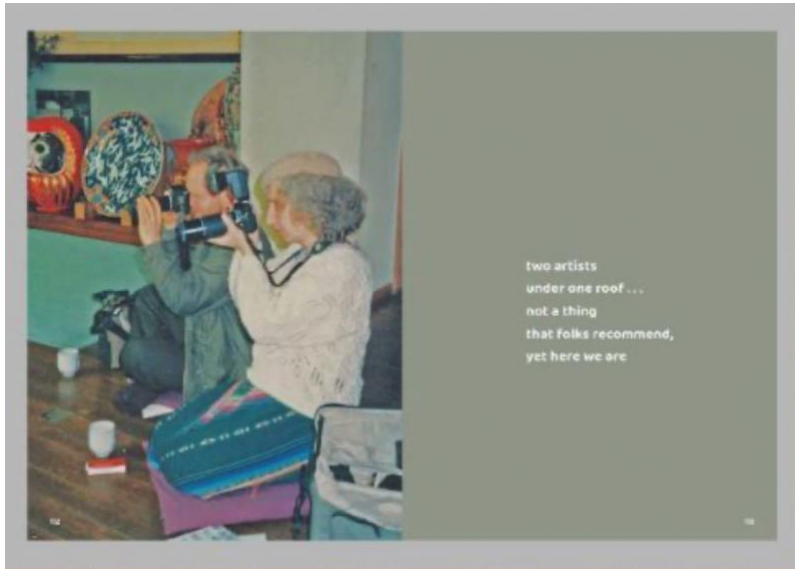


Sometimes the poem has its own space, facing its photo on the opposite page.



Some are local and specific to Gabriola - the ferry, the clinic, the Tunnel, the fall fair. Some are personal - friends in the garden, Eli taking one of his famous swims off Drumbeg Park, Naomi's annual gathering of Haiku aficionados, their dining-room table elegantly spread for guests, Eli's sculptures, Naomi's knitting. Others are more universal, and yet in a way even the most local and personal are also universal, if it is the artist's role to "see the world in a grain of sand" - to quote William Blake, artist/poet par excellence. After all, as Naomi proclaims "one does not write/ because the goldfish play/ at the bottom of the water fall,/ but because not everyone/ can see them."

In the book's final double-page an unknown photographer captures a slightly younger Eli and Naomi aiming their cameras at something in Kyoto, Japan. "two artists/ under one roof/ not a thing/ that folks recommend,/ yet here we are."



Here they are, still enriching our world.

You can find *Time Together* at the Li'l Market at



and at the Library.