

SOURCING THE FLOW

**PAINING, MOVEMENT,
THE INTENTIONAL FIELD
AND CO-CREATION**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel blessed to be drawn to study the dreaming process and the dreambody, to be in the current of curiosity and wonder as the process work community deepens its dreaming and begins to describe subtle gifts of wisdom found by attending to the sentient realm.

I have learned so much from my teachers; the knowledge they have shared has infused my perception and focused my orientation. The theoretical foundation of Process work is the anchor for my awareness practice. Arny and Amy Mindell notice and engage the dreaming as it arises through my work. They welcome and speak to what I almost know I feel and guide my discovery of forgotten parts of a larger self. The courage to explore my experiences is fostered by inclusion in our process work community; a community that welcomes diversity in the evolving experience of learning together. Sara Halprin provided an opportunity to share my learning when I assisted her in a class on Inner Work and the creative process offered in the PWI Intensive. We collaborated on a painting exercise based on my painting practice. It was warmly received and enjoyed by the participants and I loved doing it! The atmosphere in the room and the interest in the paintings increased my belief that such exploration provides an access to dreaming.

This encouraged me to invite others to experiment with the painting practice I developed in my studio work. Thank you to the friends who painted with me. Thank you to Rhea for sharing a studio space. Thank you to my friend Kristen who lent me the use of her back porch space as a studio. I am thankful to Jean Zee for teaching me authentic movement and sharing her practice with me. Jan Dworkin listened and explored with me the beginning sensations and expressions from the unknown with attention and love. Renata and Salome held me through out and were midwives to my frame of reference for the painting practice and the development of this contextual essay. Lisa DeCicco did the photos of my paintings. She hung them on the front of our building in the sun, I loved seeing them up on the storefront windows. Lisa also helped with formatting the final edition and attended to details for completion.

INTRODUCTION

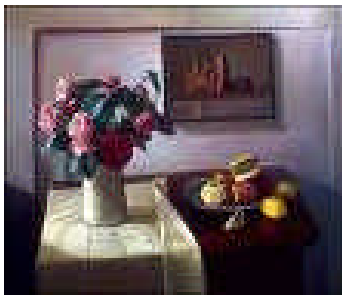
My college studies were in Fine Arts and Sociology at the University of Oregon, where I graduated with a B.S. in 1984. In the painting department, I loved the studio classes and would so enjoy the detailed study of still life, live model and landscape subjects - the way that I could merge with and explore what I was painting. My subjective and intuitive experience expressed in the painting became my expression of that subject.

The head of the painting department changed, the previously neutral Frank Okada was gone, replaced with Ron Graff, a teacher focused on technique and method. Ron's goal for his students was to achieve a realist product. He was very sharp with me and said: "If you want to do that touchy feely painting, move to California." I felt pushed out rather than pushed towards something. I did not understand we were having a stylistic difference. He also had the judgment that I needed to paint seven hours a day to see if I could be any good at it, sell paintings and become "known". I was working at a Special Education pre-school and doing a co-major in Sociology.

His message was: Do it my way or give up.



works by Frank Okada



works by Ron Graff

I left the painting department and found a teacher, George Kokis, who was interested in the creative process. George worked in clay, so I transferred to the ceramics program. He spoke about the creative daemon, mythology and the source of artistic inspiration. We studied the paintings of the bison found on a cave wall in France and energetic places like Stonehenge and Delphi. We dreamed back to the beginning of the human timeline and discovered the unknown mystery, the bringer of food, water, life and death. I felt creative impulse as an affirmation of life inspired as a call for blessings to sway the fates. Incorporating this depth of meaning gave purpose to the resulting expression. Art making arose from this creative sense of connection to the spirits behind and within what manifests. The roots of a collective myth gave rise to temples dedicated to these spirits.

Out of frustration and lack of resolution with the art/painting department, I entered the counseling program at the University of Oregon. My focus stayed with the artistic process, bringing out and explicating the motivation and intention in other people's expression. Much of this training was psycho-educational and involved helping people to change; to discover within them their motivations and providing more effective ways to express their concerns and achieve their goals. The mystery in the background still flirted with me as I watched children express complicated and unspoken dynamics within their families through their play and the emotive power in their drawings. There was no

discussion at that time about the complications of a system that, for good reason, interrupted the lives of children and removed them from their homes. My position was to support families in the face of a foster care system that impacted the children as the legal system moved to terminate the parents' rights, if that was their fate.

DEVELOPING MY RESEARCH QUESTION

Looking back at my time in the art/painting department, I see now that my interest to do art was two-fold: When painting I entered a creative atmosphere that was strong and inexplicable, I wanted to make art, study the process of creativity and combine my artistic endeavors with an intellectual understanding of the artistic experience. At the art department of the university the focus was on mastery of material and quality of product. The message I got was to either become a professional artist or choose another focus for a master's degree. Training within the department did not involve the study of emotional or proprioceptive experiences. I was and still am in conflict with that approach, as for me the interest is more in the process that inspires and guides the making of art. In my experience, art starts within the artist, an experience or visceral moment that quickens and pushes one to expression. To be guided by the desired outcome pre-empts the creative process. Pre-judgment and interpretation of creative expression make me uncomfortable because both extrapolate from rather than tune into to the creative energy of the process.

My memory of painting relates to an atmosphere and a state associated with a sense of place, the studio. Within that experience was a recollection of a sense of freedom and joy in expression. The desire to return to a practice I call painting was the motivation to return to the studio. I am in love with the creative atmosphere, expression for its own sake, separate from interpretation or purpose of product. When there is a method that is part of the process, like rolling out snakes of clay to hand build a coil pot, there is repetition within the creative act of building the vessel. The purpose or intended use may arise with but is a result of creative expression. The view of art making that looks at its practical or therapeutic uses or even its intrinsic value follows after the inspiration. What is a natural postscript to the creative impetus can become an assignment to access inspiration through intension. Often there is a development of artistic style or form that is explored over a series of works, like Alexander Calder's mobiles that float gracefully in air. I'm focusing on the moment such exploration spontaneously begins, the source of inspiration.

One of my fascinations is the medium of fluid color. I love the way color lays out and appears on the surface of paper or canvas. I can immerse myself in the subject for a long time as if to merge with and explore what moves me to express a particular something in paint.

I had yearned for a theoretical framework, an understanding of how inspiration happens, and how to connect with what is behind all creation. When I came in contact with process work, I learned about ways to access that wisdom and to teach it to others. Process work's philosophy and therapeutic tools supported my experience of the creative process, valued my intuitive knowing of and love for the creative process and encouraged me to deepen my understanding. Process work supports the attention to every aspect of experience including subtle shifts in awareness, something I had always known

intuitively. I witnessed and experienced creative inspiration when new wisdom emerges in response to this unfolding into the unknown. Process work could explain my previous dilemma of product versus process. The idea of a “me” that is identified with a goal, an outcome, a product, something that I want, - which is more my primary process, - and everything else that is “not me”, the process guiding the creative expression, what happens to me as I am painting, my own dreaming process, the force field in the background that I become in touch with, the “big you”, the source where everything comes from, the place of one-ness and non-duality.

By noticing shifts in attention, vague sensations, shy feelings and subtle impulses, I can develop a deeper keel and a stronger sense of connection with these different currents as they combine to amplify in my dreaming process. Focusing on the shifts within gives the first sounding of my expression of these energies. These experiences form a language of sensations that are near the source in my dreaming process.

This essay describes my journey, a journey of discovering deep currents that flow and bubble up in my dreaming process. This contextual essay accompanies a series of paintings that were made in my own unique style of combining process work inner work methods, authentic movement, and painting. I also taught a class to fellow students as a pilot project to see if the findings from the study of my own experience could be validated.

My project was inspired by my need to feel and my desire to be with the deeper dreaming, to reach in or down or out to touch with the sentient realm. I returned to the creative expression of painting that had brought me close to this realm before, yet without the specific tools of focus that I now know from my process work-studies. I wanted to use my new learning and apply it to painting to see if I could access those deeper currents in me, the source of my impetus to paint, and to reconnect with the inspiration again that I knew to be within my painting experience. Previously, these ecstatic states would happen spontaneously in me and I had no theoretical framework to understand them or reliable tools to access them. Hence, my passion to find out what my love for painting really was all about.

PROCESS WORK THEORY

In order for the reader to understand my work, I need to introduce a couple of central concepts of Process Work and how they relate to my work.

DREAMBODY

Arny Mindell was working as a Jungian analyst focusing on night dreams. He discovered that his client’s body symptoms often resonated with the images and energies within the dreams. Amplifying the body symptom experiences gave access to messages from a source he called the dreambody.

Conceived by Arny Minell to combine multiple levels of experience within one concept, dream experiences and body experiences within the same information giving system, the Dreambody.

“...dreambody work promotes the process of individuation, which is a progressive unification of the personality. Individuation means that the eyes, skin color, lips, hand

motions, body posture, voice tone, words and fantasies all manifest one and the same piece of information, the real personality, a living myth.”

(Arny Mindell, 1982 p197)

Within the dreambody is the totality of our experience. The Jungian concept of Self was further articulated in the concepts of an individual self and a Larger Self, a “little me” and a wise elder. Both the “little you”, the everyday self that has the dreams and the body symptoms and does the everyday doing of life and the “Big U” The wisdom elder that guides our growth and development.

“The little you is a person with your name, the unfolding of a piece of this community. The big you is the community, made up of you and those oppressive (or wonderful) situations that the little you compulsively focuses on. Your fate is to act out and express the viewpoint of the little you. But the Dreaming that creates you is creating me, and is partly created by me. In other words, your individual feeling and processes are mine as well. We are all creating that incredible drama called Life which is looking at itself.”

(Arny Mindell, 2000 p.217)

This expansion describes both the experience one is having and a greater awareness that sets in motion an intention that manifested in a given experience. This is not to say the intention and the experience are causal, more that a subtle and powerful impulse is seeking ways to express and know its self and, as part of life, I give expression to that impulse through expressing “my” life force. To study and experience this dynamic creates meaning for the experience of life.

“It is always foolish to oversimplify complex problems. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of Dreaming, regardless of the complexity of your life, you can have only one problem-ignoring the Dreaming background of reality. Ignoring the Dreaming means marginalizing the deepest unformulated experiences that create your actions in everyday life. Every time you ignore sentient, that is, generally unrecognized dreamlike perceptions, something inside of you goes into a mild form of shock because you have overlooked the spirit of life, your greatest potential power.”

(Arny Mindell, 2000, pgs.6&7.)

When I accepted an outside judgment and put down my paints the problems in that disagreement that I did not understand stayed with me and dampened my spirit. My dreaming guided me to train and develop my awareness. Using my process work training I have explored the experience that I could not represent and stand for earlier. This art project held me as I stretched to reconnect with the spirit that paints with me. The spirits or energies that emerge from the collective essence of all matter and energy are expressions of the intentional field. The source of this conceptualization is described in Amy Mindell’s writings on creativity.

“In our seminars over the past several years, my partner Arny and I have focused on a force that subtly guides and sets our lives into motion and brings the material world to birth. It is a force akin to the Aboriginal Australian concept of the Dreaming, the invisible flow which gives rise to the material world. Arny had called it the intentional field.” (Amy Mindell, 2005 p.15)

The intentional field is the dreaming background to the many dimensions of experience. The dreaming is present all around and within us and can be noticed on different levels.

SENTIENCE

“If you become aware of your sentient experience instead of marginalizing it, you are lucid. Lucidity means awareness of sentient experience, which precedes everything you think, see, hear and do. Lucidity leads to a new viewpoint about life, to wisdom or insight of Dreaming. When you are lucid, you sense tendencies as well as actualities.” (Mindell, 2000, p 36)

This quote of Arny Mindell describes an experience that is possible, an awareness that I train to achieve. Arny and Amy Mindell’s teachings on the Big U and sentience give a formulation to the experience that I could not name. I envision an expansion of the concept of collective unconscious to include all sentient beings, spirits, energy and matter. This perception is akin to Aboriginal knowledge of Great Spirit and western concepts of Gaia and eastern Taoism. Sentience resides before the emergence of duality and is the realm of that which can’t be spoken but can be felt.

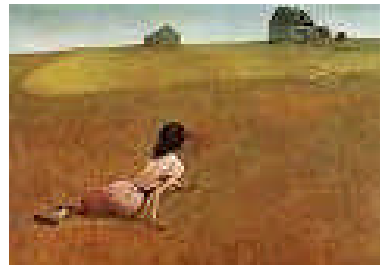
This affirmed my search for a deeper source outside my own polarities, projections and conscious intentions, journeying below dreamland moving with the dreamtime. I sat with the paints at hand and used my lucid attention to become a conduit for some just emerging impulse. I tried to connect with my sentient experience, to stay tight with the impulse, and then give expression to the emerging energy. This on-going exchange between sensing and expressing is a co-creative act. The understanding of the sentient level has brought out a fuller presence of subtle essences, which repeat like threads appearing in the weave of my dreaming process.

DIMENSIONS OF REALITY

Arny Mindell (2000) shows a diagram of the levels of reality and how essence arises into consciousness through the different dimensions of reality (p. 15). The levels are: consensus reality, dreamland, and sentience. Consensus Reality is the everyday reality, where you and I live, and the things we agree upon. It is our everyday life. Dreamland is the area of dreams, body symptoms, and relationship troubles. There are polarities that are expressed with dream figures, in myths and stories that are subjective and not necessarily agreed upon. There are things that catch our attention that have a bit of dreamtime within them for us to explore, these are called flirts, they flirt with our consensus focus and invite us to use our lucid awareness to sense the atmosphere and the gift within the flirt. The sentient level of reality, or the level of dreamtime is the place of non-duality, the source of whence all experiences arise and take form. The sentient level contains vague feelings and intuitions that have no words yet and take a lot of attention to feel.

I will use works of art to describe these different levels of reality. Painters depict a certain reality within their style and genre. Different styles can be seen as examples of different perceptions of experience that depict these levels in their works of art. The most apparent day-to-day observations and shared agreements of meaning are referred to as

consensus reality portrayed in realistic paintings. As a representation consider the details of observation in a work by Rembrandt, Andrew Wyeth, Mary Cassatt or Ron Graff. You can recognize and know what the images represent and what the atmosphere of the day is within the painting. This perception is necessary so we can share time and space without colliding, values the achievement of embodiment in physical form and the uniqueness of life. Consensus reality marginalizes what we cannot see so it misses out on the diversity of experience. When subjectivity enters the picture Dreamland begins.



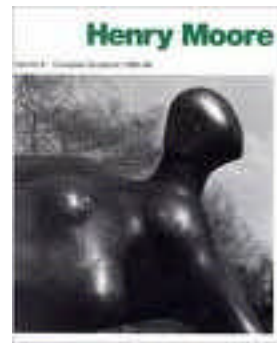
CONSENSUS REALITY

The dreaming level moves into an area where perception is not wholly agreed upon and separations can blur and things can become amplified like Georgia O’Keeffe’s flowers so big that they burst the limits of consensus reality. The dreaming reality includes all that is “not me”, talks about and shows energies that are disavowed by consensus reality, that are troublesome to our everyday identity. Those energies are amplified and embodied in the qualities of dream figures. Some artists choose to depict these dream figures, like Marc Chagall, who has them hover as spirits over the everyday people he paints. Frida Kahlo includes her hopes and fears in her self-portraits; she depicts her suffering from an injury as the broken column of her spine, or shows her removed and bleeding heart. She brings images of her dreaming process into the painting, and represents her emotional and physical pain, a proprioceptive experience, in strong visual images. Hieronymus Bosch depicted both disturbing and delightful images from dreamland. His paintings of paradise and hell include wild creatures, both grotesque and sublime. Salvador Dali has dripping clocks in his painted surrealist visions. Remedios Varo creates a visual alchemy that bridges worlds and speaks strongly of dreamtime, figures look through veils between worlds as in “To Be Reborn”. In this surrealist world different objects or forms might flirt with us as we look at her paintings. Something that catches our eye and intrigues us in a surprising way is a flirt, an invitation into that world.



DREAMTIME

Further abstractions are still recognizable, as their qualities approach the essence level. The deeper dreaming level includes impressions of the female form as seen in the works of Matisse and Picasso who allude to a body shape with a movement that represents the figure of a woman. Matisse gives us a view of tables and chairs flattened into forms and shapes that describe the essentials of everyday objects; atmosphere is expressed through patterns on background shapes within the paintings. From deeper still into the earth, Henry Moore's female reclining figures are barely raised out of the ground. Paul Klee uses color, shape and symbols. He includes different things that might resonate with our own dreaming and appear suddenly to have significance to our experience. What attracts becomes an invitation to dreaming; in the essence of the flirt dreaming qualities are imagined as something we want more of inside us. It's the space where each person looking at the painting might start to connect with their own inner dreaming, see figures, make associations to color and see them selves reflected in certain ways.



Amy writes about this area of newly hatched inspiration in her book The Dreaming Source of Creativity.

“The murky area between the Essence and the Flirt holds the as yet formless mystery that is in the midst of unfolding. If you have the courage and heart to stay in this area with a creative, empty mind, wade there, interact and reflect with it you will discover innumerable worlds and beings wanting to come to birth. Some may surprise you!”

(Amy Mindell, 2005, p. 61)

An atmosphere still closer to essence can be perceived in Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock or Frank Okada's work. I used to spend hours in a small room at the Philips museum where there were four large Rothko's, one on each wall. The focus is on the medium. The subjective experience of the painter becomes the subject and the expression of emotional and spiritual life in painting is fundamental. Others focused on an intellectual and emotional composition to access a lucid atmosphere, like a music composer, Kandinsky worked in this way.



NEAR ESSENCE

Bringing the subjective experience into expression through multiple levels of perception within one piece of work is the intention of many artists I meet today. Here is a quote from an artist that goes out to be in the landscape and brings himself there fully.

“I love big juicy brushes slathered in paint and how the palette gets out of control after a few hours of pushing gobs of paint around. I love the Russian roulette quality of this. I don't have or want the kind of control that bears out plotting or anticipation. I really don't know where I am going. Only what random bonanza made me pull the car over and set up on that particular vista. In a basic sensual way, like exploring variances in earth smells, I am just probing around, not really sure where a painting goes. I believe whoever invented the modality of spontaneous Plein Air painting left a lot of room for exploration. And this is what I am aiming to explore.”—Nick Coley's Artist Statement—

This synthesis of emotion and spirit is included in his painting of the physical world. Other artist look for symbolic representations of complex experiences that represent a combined emotional and intellectual response to every day life, artists continue to adapt and create different approaches to articulate a relationship with more dimensions of experience than consensus allows.



Turning my gaze both inward and outward, representing dreaming, flirts and feelings was the starting point for my studio work. I did not experience a relationship with the inspiration that came upon me spontaneously. I could paint from and wanted to get to know the source of my expression.

ART THERAPY

I need to talk about art therapy for a moment, as this is the field where consensus reality wants to put my area of study. As an artist and emerging counselor, I found that in the professional fine art sphere there is a separation from any interest in the emotional and psychological art making experience. The exploration of the experiential qualities of art making have been relegated to the art therapists. So, whenever I would look for books on the creative experience, I would find the little information that was available in the art therapy section. Some of it was useful. Art therapy would talk about the creative experience of the artist, but mostly this was in the context of a treatment use. The bulk of its message referenced the experience rather than exploring the experience itself. Art therapy does study the emotional and psychological experience. However, I was at odds with the psychological paradigms and the psychological constructs art therapists employ to interpret the expressive experience and the final artistic product.

One art therapist who inspired me is Shaun McNiff. In his book Art as Medicine he writes about an understanding of the experience that addresses the questions I had of myself as I returned to the studio.

“If you are able to watch and respond to thresholds that emerge in their time, the process offers unending depth, surprises, and challenges. Creation is a sentient and instinctual flow that determines where to go and what to change or omit.” (McNiff, p.13)

McNiff talks about a sentient experience of creation. He has a very similar perception of the creative process as I do and explores the dreamland level of reality by enacting dream figures from his paintings. He writes theoretically about the study of the creative experience, but lacks the theoretical framework that process work brings to really articulating and tracking moment-to-moment experiences within the altered atmosphere of that creative realm.

There are some other creative therapy practices and books that describe how-to methods or provide general theoretical information for tapping into the creative flow. I studied the works by Michelle Cassou, Life Paint and Passion and Point Zero, Creativity Without Limits. I appreciate her focus on removing creative blocks and her desire to “stir up the creative potential and awaken creative passion” (2001, p.1). She has developed a process of questioning any ego intrusions that judge or limit the creative expression. She encourages people to express and elaborate images and I see her work more on the dreamland level. Painting from inspiration moves outward to dreaming and image making, which is all wonderful and magical. There is a deep appreciation for the creative.

“Creation is never about changing yourself; it is about meeting yourself, probing deep into your own core. Creation wants only to fulfill your deepest desire: to know and accept yourself as you are.”(Cassou, 1995 p.12)

Her books have an emotional philosophy that creates a specific method of experiencing painting.

I wanted to find and follow the deeper dreaming in me and discover the “Big U” intention in my pull towards painting. I wanted to explore that moment of inspiration and connection and hear, feel and see its message. I needed to go inward and study what was arising and follow the flow back to its source. No one else could teach me to rest in creation. I needed to practice that alone.

I am drawn to the sentient realm; the intentional field, where dualism ceases and thought and image have not yet formed, where energies swirl and all currents are as one ocean. I wait where the impulse emerges. There is a story in what drew me there and what I found. I now have a new appreciation for repetition and know that with practice a method builds a relationship with the mediums and techniques of expression. Through painting I experienced a direct relationship with my movement from its source and through repetition I could recognize it.

FORMS OF SENTIENT MOVEMENT EXPLORATION

There is a tradition in Process work of spinning the pen to choose who facilitates, a movement that is obviously left up to the Tao. I experience a similar exploration in sentient movement, letting my body be the pen, being open to being moved by the Tao. Arny has an understanding of physics and indigenous wisdom that informs his evolving use of vectors and pilot waves in the intention field. I have developed an experiential trust of this even though the background understanding remains somewhat of a mystery to me.

I want to mention Authentic Movement as a movement exploration that informed sentient movement in process work. Authentic Movement is a practice developed by Mary Whitehouse within the Jungian tradition. The focus is on physical exploration within a frame of reference, done in pairs, a mover and a witness. One practices being moved by a tug push or pull originating within the body without conscious intent. A witness observes both the mover and their inner experience in response to the mover. The movement is done with the eyes closed. This helps to keep one’s attention on the arising movement impulse. The movement impulse is then followed; it may amplify into a bigger movement and complete itself, or shift into something else which then becomes a new impetus for the next movement. This engenders a sense of being moved and a body memory that hints at organic forms and archetypes. The movement qualities can develop a strong expression that the mover is a participant in and not the director of the movements, which occur naturally and are guided by a background force within nature’s process.

SENTIENT EXPERIENCE IN GROUP WORK AND THEATER

The practice of allowing oneself to be moved, to follow impulses that are not orchestrated by consensus reality, are also part of Augusto Boal’s “Theatre of the Oppressed” and Jacob Moreno’s psychodrama. The theater of the oppressed explores improvisational expression within the field, the actor on stage and the unknown field of the audience. In his work, The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy, Boal describes his method originating from an incorporation of the audience’s honest responses to an unfolding drama.

“Simultaneous dramaturgy consisted of this: We would present a play that chronicled a problem to which we wanted to find a solution. The play could run its course up to the

moment of crisis “ the crucial point at which the protagonist had to make a decision. This point, we would stop performing and ask the audience what the protagonist should do. Everyone would make there own suggestions. And on stage the performers would improvise each of these suggestions, till all had been exhausted.” (Boal, 1995, p.3)

Boal began his theater of the oppressed by welcoming feedback from the audience and then moved further to welcome the audience into the action of the unfolding drama. He opened his actors and the audience to be influenced by the field.

Moreno’s psychodrama approach was an effort to use theatrical representation of a family scene or a problem in order to actualize the dynamics and bring the past into the present. The protagonist, the person working on his or her problem, chooses people to play the roles necessary for a particular scene. Then the protagonist teaches the “stand-ins” how to play the various roles. In this unfolding drama new possible behaviors and solutions can be explored and practiced. A similar method has been utilized in process work groups exploring methods of unfolding family relationships and personal histories. Here the “stand-ins” would use sentient movement in addition to the information they were given by the protagonist. A situation is described and individuals enter roles within the scenario. Participants dream into their role and begin to move very slowly within a tableau.

The participant starts with letting his or her vision go clouded; have a soft focus to allow for second attention or tuning into the background dreaming. She senses the impulse to move and very slowly goes with the movement impulses she becomes aware of. As the movement reveals creative shifts in perception, the mover dreams into the unfolding of the initial concern. What may have begun with roles and signals deepens to the preverbal level and can bring forth information from the sentient realm.

It is very important to stay with the atmosphere within and the qualities of the movement. Specific aspects, not consciously intended, which are meaningful in their pattern and purpose unfold into dreaming and can begin to form a symbolic language within the dreaming experience. This is a subjective experience and every effort is made to stay tight with the creative process. Interpretation, extrapolation and flights of imagination are given a short leash as this tendency can take away from the creative focus and become musings that lose the grounding of direct experience.

THERAPY AS A SENTIENT CO-CREATIVE EXPERINCE

In therapy a person often deals with strong positions that were formed in response to trauma and difficulties. There are hidden tensions that often limit different or new ways of looking at the world, and the person’s access to their full self and their dreaming. Therapy at its best is a co-creative process where an elder, a therapist who can hold everything, can provide a container where diverse positions can be seen, valued and explored and in the process become more fluid and available. This then offers the possibility of a freer, less static response to the person’s experience of the world.

The challenge for the therapist is to develop into this elder who can hold everything and welcome the creative collaboration with another person. Learning to co-create within dreaming is central to the therapeutic relationship. The theoretical paradigm of process work encourages the therapist to join the client in their dreaming process and journey

with them in building a closer awareness and relationship to their dreaming process. Process work's focus on the awareness training and personal development of the therapist supports the development of the elder. The necessary on-going inner work a therapist needs to practice is training in a co-creative act between the self and different dream figures and between different levels of perception.

One of the early therapists engaged in collaborative work and a co-creative process with his clients was D.W. Winnicott. He developed a "Squiggle game" where he took turns creating images while talking with children about their experiences. He would draw a squiggle and ask the youth to make something out of it, then the child would draw one for him to complete. In this co-creative process he held what emerged as an expression of deeper experiences that were troubling or confusing the child. Winnicott was also mindful of the awareness necessary to enter into this exchange with integrity. Although the language is outdated and from another theoretical paradigm, I believe Winnicott gives great advice about some difficulties present in maintaining awareness in the co-creative process.

"There must be a capacity in the therapist to contain the conflicts of the patient, that is to say, to contain them and to wait for their resolution within the patient. There must be an absence of the tendency to retaliate, and any system of thoughts which provides an easy 'solution' can tend to close off the process."

(Winnicott, 1971)

The development of a capacity for relationship with my deepest impulses and essential tendencies is core to my learning needs. I need to know myself as deeply and fully as possible to trust that the source of what I do not know and am yet to discover is with me in an enlivening way that will guide me on my path to Self. In the creative act I go to meet these energies. This is also a part of what I discover with people who I work with therapeutically, whatever role I have in the relationship. Having the ability to hold the ambiguous moment and know that by reaching for a flirt or following an impulse we invite in the new without naming its function or purpose.

Developing a creative engagement with one's existence gives personal meaning to life and to relationship. How does a therapist learn the co-creative process and be able to join the client in exploring him or herself? A self who includes personal history and aspects of experience that create inner conflict. I suggest that by familiarizing oneself with the currents as they arise to direct our intentions, by noticing the diverse expressions of others as aspects of ourselves, and by reaching in and down to experience the enlivened force(s) that holds us to the earth.

Gendlin describes this sense of finding the creative new something that is not a thought or a feeling but a new reference point for describing experience. Below is a quote from Gendlin's description of his theory of how we find the new out of the unknown.

"Consider a poet, stuck in midst of an unfinished poem. How to go on? The already written lines want something more, but what? The poet reads the written lines over and over, listens, and senses what these lines need (want, demand, imply). Now the poet's hand rotates in the air. The gesture says that. Many good lines offer themselves; they try to say, but do not say—that. The blank is more precise. Although some are good lines, the poet rejects them.

That seems to lack words, but no. It knows the language, since it understands—and rejects—these lines that came. So it is not pre-verbal;

Rather, it knows what must be said, and knows that these lines don't precisely say that. It knows like a gnawing knows what was forgotten, but it is new in the poet, and perhaps new in the history of the world. Now, although I don't know most of you, I do know one of your secrets. I know you have written poetry. So I can ask you: Isn't that how it is? This must be directly referred to (felt, experienced, sensed, had,). Therefore, whatever term we use for such a blank, that term also needs our direct reference.

The blank brings something new. That function is not performed by the linguistic forms alone. Rather, it functions between two sets of linguistic forms. The blank is not just the already written lines, but rather the felt sense from re-reading them, and that performs a function needed to lead to the next lines. A second function: If that stuck blank is still there after a line comes, the line is rejected. Thirdly, the blank tells when at last a line does explicate—it releases.” (Gendlin, 1995)

I appreciate Gendlin's research into the specifics of this experience of discovery. It is Gendlin's focus on the “aha” moment at the exclusion of all other distractions or purposes that resonate with my efforts to express my search to connect with the Intentional Field.

FOLLOWING THE EARTH'S DREAMING

Arny Mindell is a great role model of mine in the way he is attuned to noticing and attending to subtle shifts and flirts, adept at perceiving different levels and giving others a way to ask permission to notice deeply the experiences that go past in a blur. He encourages me to stay with a signal, symptom or voice as it emerges and to attend to the experience. I learn to honor the dreaming and through its doorway to explore the source, the pull of gravity and how gravity moves water; the way a plant reaches for sunlight and sends deep roots into the earth. I am learning to perceive the essence that enlivens everything. We all can foster this awareness to perceive and retain what is noticed - to track and to carefully study what is discovered and to teach what we learn from working with and training others.

Arny and Amy Mindell have developed creative ways to feel more strongly the energies that move in us. They emphasize a strong connection to the earth and nature; these are sometimes described as kinds of weather and other energetic forms connected to the earth. Imagining our challenging moods and states in relationship as a tidal wave, a thunderstorm, a hot dry desert or a landslide can help us name and know aspects of our experience through the powerful acts in nature and connects us with forces on earth. When we connect with our deepest selves and a landscape that resonates with our personal nature it affirms our place on earth. At a coast seminar Arny suggested that we spin until just dizzy and catch a flirt, image or sensation. I was wearing a loose sweater and as I spun the sweater lifted filling with air and a thought flirted of the spinning earth filled with space for breath for life and mass with room for water, with a straight central axis.

Indigenous cultures put great emphasis on the earth's field with its directions of North, South, East and West. Arny Mindell bases his work with "vectors" on these ancient traditions as well as knowledge from modern physics. He has created a practice of focusing on several aspects of one's experience, each having a direction, an atmosphere and its own dance. By sensitizing my perception and using my awareness to tune into the earth's gravitational field, I can get answers to difficult, challenging and encouraging parts of a question or problem. The earth will pull me into a direction that has a particular atmosphere and feel to it. Associations may come up as I stand facing a certain direction, feeling a subtle tug of that direction that I then follow to meet the dreaming that pulls me towards it. The gravity of the earth and the magnetic poles, the planets in their orbits, do they tug on me? Different moments in the past and the future are present within the dreaming as I experience each direction. Arny suggests noticing the qualities of how the vector is walked; pace, rhythm, and tempo, dream figures and flirts that accompany that direction. An altered state that allows for heightened perception often accompanies this experience for me. The altered state connects my own creativity and me with creation myths within dreaming. At a coast seminar Arny suggested we spin until just dizzy and access a sentient flirt, image or sensation. I was wearing a loose sweater and as I spun the sweater lifted filling with air and the spinning earth filled with space for breath, for life, for mass with room for water and air, with a straight central axis. WOW! I dreamed into being the earth. Being drawn to subtle dreaming in different moments has sensitized me further to the connection that holds me here. The meaning found resonates within me and increases my belief in the dreaming within the experience.

PAINTING THAT IS INSPIRED BY DREAMING

Developing a sense of personal myth or dreaming may be related to noticing emerging tendencies in creative expression. Getting to know how I reach out to relate and how I hold awareness brings new information about stylistic qualities in my work. I have benefited through Amy's class offerings; she creatively invites students to explore their personal therapeutic styles. Some of my learning described below occurred in Amy's classes at PWI. One research question of Amy's explores learning blocks as potential gifts at their essence. This possibility has increased both my self-awareness and my compassion for the deep beliefs that combine with their habituated edges to interfere with my learning of process work. I am amazed that going to the essence of these beliefs can reveal inner truths and related metaskills.

My use of paint and movement adds another medium to the practice of exploring, meeting and greeting an essence, as it emerges from sentience by noticing and resting in essential energies from the intentional field. I hope this brings a new aspect to this developing part of process work; the practice of staying with the initial impulse and exploring its expression. This work presents a context for the visual record of an experiential practice. It takes a very close and personal look at a state of experience, which, through process work training, we often dip into, and really holds the attention there in an effort to understand and map some of the topography of a little known region.

As author of the thesis and generator of the data studied, my experience is central to the project. The focusing element comes from outside the "little you" and connects me to an expression of the "big you". The first experience was of a cosmic wind blowing lightly

on the back of my neck, a subtle and affirming experience. I then noticed the repetition of several basic forms in my paintings. Then I found myself repeating a specific technique or motion with a three-dimensional material that became organically self-completing, revealing an unintended depth and spaciousness in the completed form.

The qualities of the creative experience are fascinating and varied; I have chosen to utilize one practice that I appreciate as a welcome guide in a vast sea. By documenting my experience within this larger field of experiences I hope to offer a possibility in the unknown where altered states and diverse currents can make one hesitant.

The photographic documentation of art pieces provides visual examples of the series of paintings that emerged into different expressions of resonant forms. The connection being explored is the possible relevance of this thesis to the understanding of sentience and the intentional field within the study of process work. The movement between levels of awareness, the sentient realm emerging into dreaming through an impulse to be moved, an arising or emerging impulse, noticed and attended within the dreaming process, which becomes organically self-completing in its expression. If I could demonstrate the sensation with my hands absent of paint and paper, you might imagine the movement on a Ouija board, how your hands are pulled along.

Though the exploration of the intentional field and its expression in the creative process I have felt in my work and observed in the work of others energetic qualities that emerge from and resonate with a sense of deep essence. A series of creative experiences possess a similar feeling quality, which intensifies awareness and perception as they connect. They resonate with each other and share qualities of movement, form and proprioception. In my imagination these are expressions of an essential energy that can be named in symbolic language and recognized through the atmosphere that is engendered as the form that is evolved through its expression.

This painting practice articulates experiential moments and amplifies subtle intent and purpose in natural tendencies. As qualities within each painting series became apparent they formed a palpable presence for me that you may experience in the images.

I began with paint on my hand and a movement on paper. The paint is fluid and provides a vivid image of the movement. A series of paintings formed and evolved these two sentient energies that move within me. These energetic qualities deepened and refined to express what I now sense to be two essences that enliven me; one like a sap rising within and reaching, another a turning like the curl of a wave or the spin of the earth, each reflect and enhance aspects of my dreaming process and my awareness. An experience of receiving two unexpected gifts that emerged through this painting practice.

The creative act is by nature unintended in some aspect, having a guide in the unknown can provide a structure of sorts while on the journey. Noticing and repeating a movement and following it can be like greeting a guide. This painting practice is a further exploration of a naturally occurring movement that creates an image or form within the creative process. Giving expression and definition to the qualities of the movement bring it more fully to manifestation. Staying with its elements gives focus and relaxing into and going with its movement qualities allows the unknown to emerge and find expression in the organic completion of an enlivened essential energy.

This observation encourages a practice of staying with and resting in its expression and exploration to further articulate the emerging energetic impulse. Through this exploration the element becomes its essential energy organically. The result resonates with and illuminates the dreaming process in an unintended and essential way.

What follows is a description of my creative process experience. The challenge of holding or making the space, studio space, difficult to enter and always right there, a quality of experience I need and seek out in life. The painting experiences familiarized me with essential qualities within, that I then could recognize as they emerged in other settings. This also assisted me in recognizing the essential elements within the works of others that participated in the class I gave later on.

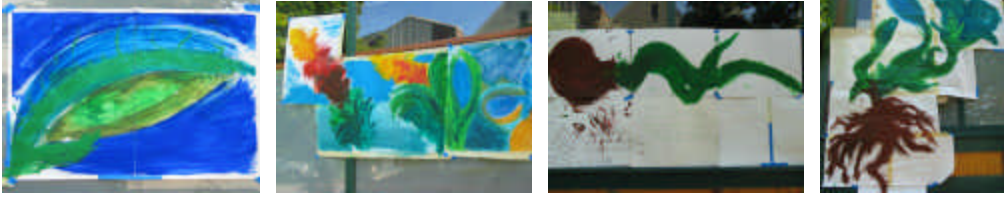
MY PAINTING PRACTICE

Over a number of sessions I developed a rhythm to my practice. First I would lay out several runs of a large roll of brown paper, which is very good for covering the floor. On top of that I put two sheets of white drawing paper 24 x 30 taped together and taped down, so the secured surface extends farther than my reach. I placed many large squeeze bottles of tempera paint around within easy reach; the tempera is cheap and has more flow than acrylic. I use lots of paint; its fluidity contributes to the ease of movement across the paper. The colors do dull some when the paint is dry.

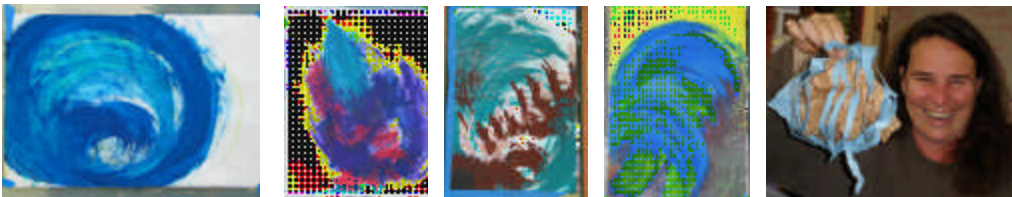
In an effort to describe my multi sensory experience when painting I offer the following prose. Sitting on the floor in front of the paint and paper: a sitting meditation, settled of intended thought, image or impulse. I wait to feel a pull to move, with an impulse to reach for paint; I pour the paint into my hand and now a fluid stretch moves paint, hand, arm, shoulder, my body going with and watching the hand and paint. Staying with and sensing the movement, the color, the reach of paint, the feeling presence and form of what is emerging through me. The experience of being moved, the feel of the paint against the paper, a movement visible in form becomes a synesthetic experience I am present to through the atmosphere, tone, and shape as a form emerges into expression.

Early in my studio time I experienced the first breath of a connection with some subtle wisdom guide, an essence I called the cosmic wind, like a light breeze on the back of the neck. Extending my attention connected me with a sense of myself as a conduit, reaching for a rising expression of essence into dreaming through a quality of spirit found in nature. I call this early piece “star seed”. A series of paintings followed that organically explored the growth of this seed.

Green, a seed growing into a plant, a reach of stem growing out green blooming and taking root. The seed was first a hand of green paint that spread across the paper in an arch, natural to my reach and was answered by a cupping or meeting arch (). The seed became a growing green stem, which formed a bud that flowered, a process natural to a seed. An undulating green stem reached for a source and an onion bulb form. This was a sprouted bulb that has all within it to begin growing. A green stem repeated in these variations and then becomes a plant reaching down with fully developed roots. This green growing essence evolved as plant growth emerges one from another, seed, stem, flower and roots.



The other essence form that flowed up and out is blue, a wave and a spiral. My hand of blue paint moved around and around making a circling motion outward to the full extent of my reach. The paintings came in series, spiraling inward in a vortex and circling out in a wave, repeating a movement with an intensity that remains present in the paintings.



These two expressions each evolved into a naturally unfolding story told through the pieces created over time. This description of my experience is reminiscent of the process I used when in the studio space. This also assisted me in recognizing the essential elements within the works of others that participated in the class I gave later on. The connection to the wave or spiral movement deepened through another medium.

FURTHER AMPLIFICATIONS

I explored a key from a dream; I created the expression in wire, wrapping the wire around a pencil. Effort and attention was in the task. As I worked this circular wrapping I became relaxed, knowing that the task was set. The qualities of the movement I knew as a spiral, focused inward and tight together.



I kept wrapping the wire and enjoying the atmosphere. I felt centered in the process. The strong and flexible qualities of the piece expanded my awareness of the spiral form. Space was created within the wire mass and in my consciousness as I repeated the movement required to make the spiral. With movement repetition, perception catches and stays within the awareness shift engendered through the movement. I felt a

spaciousness within that accompanied the task of repeating the circling into a spiral. The shift in material gave a three-dimensional experience with depth.

I made a hook at the end of the wire spiral and by connecting the two ends fashioned a hoop that I fastened around my ankle. This metal around my ankle resonated and expanded my dreaming of this part of my body and its related symptoms. Near the beginning of my Process work studies I dislocated and fractured my ankle and had metal put inside to hold the bones together. The metal in my ankle had a ridged structural purpose that brought a new sharpness and firmness to my understanding of dreaming. This spiraling wire contained a resonance of the calm and attentive state engendered in its creation. Now metal is present with flexibility and resonates with my spiraling inward nature. The magic ending to this piece unfolded organically: a gift that sheds a special angle of light on my process. A sense of fulfillment accompanied this experience. I recognize within the spin, spiral, wave, and essential energies that move with and through the earth and in me.

This resonates with a journal note from the beginning of this project.

“The earth I have a bond with in nature and my nature of feeling, sensing....

We spin in and with the universe. We are stardust. Sense it: my own experience has a megaphone and loudspeakers. The universe is whispering... tingling cool fresh soft breeze on the back of my neck; subtle, sensitive, a big galactic turning with an eternal intent.”

The images repeat over the years and deepen in my awareness. Each essence becomes more articulated and defined through expression. These representations are gifts that remind me of the sentient experience present at their creation.

The green growing essence connects me with plant life. I reach out sending new growth like the grapevine in my garden. I looked up and painted.



“If you stick to answers and marginalize the sentient experience, your life will become a series of questions and momentary answers. However, if you avoid marginalizing the sentient process, your life will be based on change, the Dreaming itself.”

(Arny Mindell, 2000, p.107)

These art pieces are like symbolic amplification of archetypes; they track my exploration and represent the dreaming that has bubbled up through me.

THE CLASS

In my enthusiasm over my own rich experiences using this unique painting practice, I put together a class and invited some friends to come and explore their painting process with me. The researcher in me was ready to experiment with what I had learned and make the method I had developed available to others.

I laid out a heavy drop cloth and rolled another cover of thick brown construction paper over the floor to cover and protect the rug. I taped several large pieces of thick drawing paper together with enough space for a long reach, then added more sheets as needed to further extend the reach of each person.

My suggestion to participants of the class was to wait for an arising impulse, then to move with the impulse and to stay tight with your awareness of any subtle body feeling or movement sensation. The emphasis was on staying very close with the movement as it expressed itself first in the painter's awareness as an impulse and then through the painter in a hand or brush stroke with paint on the paper.

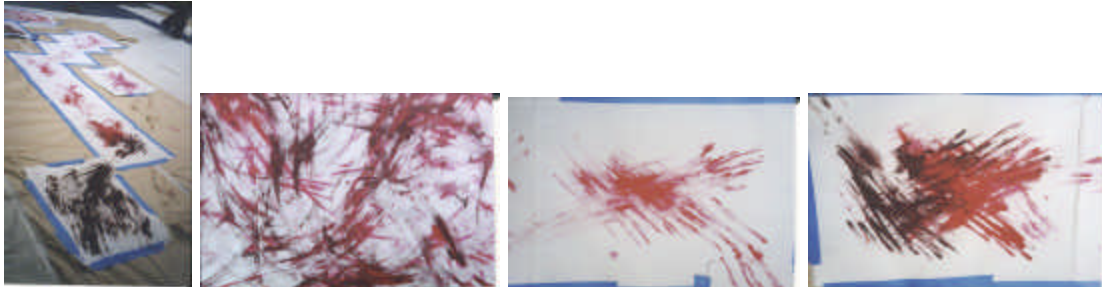
I noticed a unique energy and form taking place in each person's painting. People were finding their own sense of movement present in their paintings. Observation and further exploration gave access to their expression of connection with the intentional field. What follows are some examples of participants' experiences to illustrate the expression of the intentional field through the work when the painter pays close attention to subtle experiences and lets herself become a conduit for the creative process. I want to thank my friends for their willingness to come and paint and the enthusiasm they shared with me about the experience.

Katje noticed a quality of movement in her first painting that was further refined in her second painting. She added more paper as I invited her to keep going with the movement with the paint. As she kept going she discovered the movement's strongest qualities and noticed the nature of the form created by the paint. In her painting there is evident a sweep and a point, a flow and a mark. She heard the music from the Nutcracker Suite that emphasized the movement da da dun dun, da da dun dun, dad a dun dun, dada dada da. A song arose that brought a synesthetic response to the original movement. She associated this rhythm with her writing style, one of providing an expression or description that is then completed with a point made with emphasis. The movement flow in her painting helped her recognize and affirm a similar flow in her writing expression.



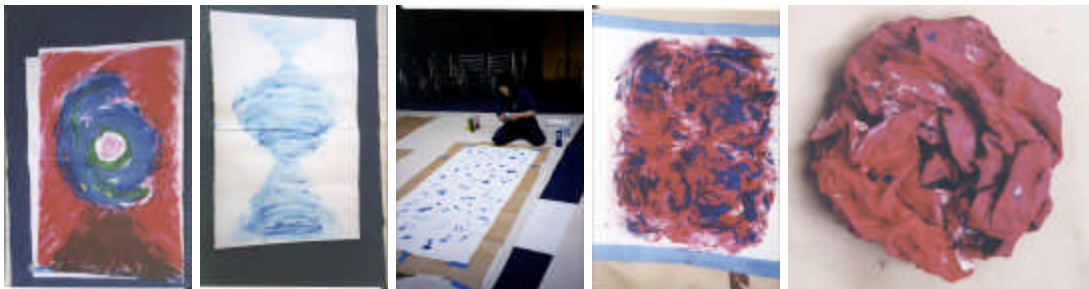
Annie's movement qualities had a whoosh that was fast and repeated in a crosshatch. I added more pages so she could go farther and reach out off the page to feel the movement more fully. Annie remembered a childhood dream figure of a witch and experienced that

energy in the cross hatches in painting. A strong sense of the figure's energy was present as she focused in on that movement in her series of paintings. Her movements developed an articulation of energies that fascinated and amazed me as I watched Annie discover her painting's language.



The following is from a note written at the end of the painting session by the painter, Annie Blair: "Sweeping hand motions with red and brown paint. Swirling, whizzing, light energy. In the second painting I hit a critic who said that I was not doing it right. In response, I picked out a * shape for a third painting which evolved into hatching shapes that move up and to the right toward energy. In retrospect, this is like the witch in my childhood dream. I also added a section in the lower left that in retrospect is like the town in my childhood dream. Looking at the whole thing, I felt the crosshatch section was incomplete. There was an accidental splotch on that part; so I took the splotch and crosshatch and made the fourth (painting) which feels like the essence of the energy that supports the manifestation of the witch."

Makiko began with an image, which appeared to her as an encircled void, a volcano and a snake eating its tail. Going into the energy of this form, her second painting was of the spiral in blue, depicting the whirling and turning around a central opening. The sense of spaciousness in the painting was in the atmosphere of the room and one I perceived in Makiko. Her next piece went further with the sense of spaciousness. Next time, Makiko made a representation of a strong compact and intense pressure in red, the volcano. Then red and blue combined in two images.



Makiko's paintings gave me a sense of connection with an aspect of her nature. Her painting and its and further amplifications have both spaciousness and density.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Artists find a mode of expression that articulates their experience and are inspired to repeat it. Within a body of work, personal style will reveal essential qualities that define the artist. The artist may find a resonance with an essence that is embodied and given expression through his or her style within the chosen medium. When I see a sculpture of Henry Moore's rising out of the ground, his reclining female forms, his woman of the earth, I recognize his work. The brush strokes can identify an artist. I know paintings by Vincent Van Gogh in the intense uses of his brush. Mark Rothko's creations are large fields of color with intricate layers giving a rich depth to the field and a delicacy to each edge. Georgia O'Keeffe has large areas of color that magnify the focus on her subjects, flowers, bones, and the colorful hills of New Mexico.

Painting has become a medium and method for me to get in touch with subtle forces that are always present. In the act of painting, I experience connection with an impulse that uses me to express itself. It is the essence of me and comes through me. Does it pick me or am I attracted to it? Choiceless awareness within the creative process welcomes specific aspects of our natures that are always present and enter powerfully into our creative expression.

I continue to develop a language of expression for my experience of and relationship to being and creating nature. Getting to know the atmospheres that accompany different energies and the symbolic language that I use to express them in my dreaming process helps me to stay tight with my awareness.



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